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**SUFFRAGE, SOLIDARITY AND STRIFE:  
POLITICAL PARTNERSHIPS AND THE  
WOMEN'S MOVEMENT 1880-1930.**

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*Thesis*

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of six mixed-sex political partnerships, all of which functioned within the context of heterosexual marriage. It considers these partnerships involvement in, and attitudes toward, the campaigns for women's enfranchisement over a fifty year period from 1880 - 1930.

The aim of this study is to contribute to our understanding of the gendered nature of political activity and identity through an examination of the women's suffrage campaigns, in particular the still under-researched, yet extremely important question of men's support for women's suffrage.

This thesis takes as its point of departure historical studies of gender, that is, a critical examination of the constructions of masculinity and femininity; ideas which have been informed and developed by women's history. It will consider the extent to which developments within the suffrage movement both challenged and reinforced gendered political identities and influenced attitudes toward the parts that men and women had to play in both the public and private spheres.

The partnerships studied demonstrate not only the diversity of opinion within the women's suffrage movement but also how this single issue affected familial politics at a variety of levels. Each chapter focuses on one political partnership and charts its involvement - whatever form it took - during one of the most dynamic periods in modern British history. The partnerships included in this thesis are diverse and are comprised of: Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst, James and Marion Bryce, John and Katharine Bruce Glasier, Emmeline and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, Annot and Sam Robinson, and Elsie Duval and Hugh Franklin.

This thesis is, therefore, a contribution to both suffrage history and to the study of political partnerships in relation to changes in British political culture during a period of intense debates about the symbolic and actual representation of women.

# CONTENTS

		Page
<b>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</b>		i
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>		iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>		v
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>Constructing Gendered Narratives in Parallel Lives.</b>	1
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>'Every struggling cause shall be ours': the fin de siecle politics of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst.</b>	35
	1.1 'Life is valueless without enthusiasm'.	45
	1.2 Lessons in political strategy.	68
	1.3 The end of an era.	74
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>Liberal alliances and divided loyalties: Bryce family politics and women's suffrage.</b>	79
	2.1 'Common sense, educated thought and wild experiments like women's suffrage'.	96
	2.2 'The domestic side of political huffiness...'	111
	2.3 'Returning to a new and unparalleled fierceness'.	132
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	<b>'Give the angels charge': the politics of a propagandist partnership.</b>	141
	3.1 'The Road to Socialism'.	143
	3.2 'The Religion of Socialism'.	159
	3.3 'The Meaning of Socialism'.	182

	<b>Page</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
<b>Sharing the Burden: the Pethick-Lawrences and women's suffrage.</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>4.1 '...The purpose to which we were born and for which we were mated'.</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>4.2 'A stain on the country's honour which will not be forgotten'.</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>4.3 The politics of war.</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
<b>An 'unsentimental journey': the political travels of Annot and Sam Robinson.</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>5.1 The Honeymoon Period.</b>	<b>281</b>
<b>5.2 Motherhood and Militancy.</b>	<b>296</b>
<b>5.3 Separate Spheres.</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>CHAPTER SIX</b>	
<b>More than just 'a sporting couple': the militancy of Elsie Duval and Hugh Franklin.</b>	<b>319</b>
<b>6.1 'Young bloods thirsting for rows'.</b>	<b>327</b>
<b>6.2 'Men in prison only embarrass us'.</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>6.3 Loyal Lieutenants.</b>	<b>368</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
<b>The distance of the house from the House.</b>	<b>382</b>
<b>APPENDIX ONE</b>	<b>396</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>416</b>

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		Page
Figure 1.	'The Parliamentary Female'.	41
Figure 2.	The Pankhurst family.	47
Figure 3.	Richard Pankhurst 'The Champion of the working classes'.	67
Figure 4.	James Bryce, Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1906.	105
Figure 5.	'The Other New Woman'.	106
Figure 6.	Marjorie Annan Bryce as Joan of Arc.	114
Figure 7.	The first NAC of the ILP, 1893.	157
Figure 8.	The Evangelists, John and Katharine Bruce Glasier.	158
Figure 9.	Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence	212
Figure 10.	Fred Pethick-Lawrence	213
Figure 11.	The Pethick-Lawrences going to the Law courts in 1908.	220
Figure 12.	Christabel Pankhurst and the Pethick-Lawrences outside Bow Street Police Court, October 1908.	241
Figure 13.	<i>Punch</i> cartoon on the split.	243
Figure 14.	The Pethick-Lawrences in 1949.	259
Figure 15.	<i>Punch</i> cartoon, January 1908.	283
Figure 16.	<i>Punch</i> cartoon, June 1908.	284
Figure 17.	The Robinson family.	285
Figure 18.	Annot Robinson with her daughter.	309

	Page
Figure 19.	<i>Punch</i> cartoon, July 1910. 328
Figure 20.	Male supporters at a WSPU rally, July 1910 329
Figure 21.	A Lancashire mill girl being arrested, 1907. 349
Figure 22.	Women munitions workers, 1915. 374
Figure 23.	<i>Punch</i> women war workers cartoon, 1916. 375
Figure 24.	Hugh Franklin and Elsie and Victor Duval. 376
Figure 25.	'Her Vote, what will she do with it' 380
Figure 26.	<i>Punch</i> 'Free and Independent' cartoon, June 1928. 381
Figure 27.	Statue of Mrs Pankhurst, 1930. 394

## ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	Actresses Franchise League
AR	Annot Robinson Papers
BP	James Bryce Papers
CCNSWS	Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage
CNSWS	Central National Society for Women's Suffrage
CLWS	Church League for Women's Suffrage
CUWFA	Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association
ELF	East London Federation of the Suffragettes
FSCU	Forward Suffrage Cymric Union
GP	Bruce Glasier Papers
HF	Franklin/Duval Papers
HWLA	Hyde Women's Liberal Association
ILP	Independent Labour Party
JLWS	Jewish League for Women's Suffrage
LRC	Labour Representation Committee
MNSWS	Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage
MLWS	Men's League for Women's Suffrage
MPU	Men's Political Union
NAC	National Administrative Council
NESWS	North of England Society for Women's Suffrage
NPG	National Portrait Gallery
NSWS	National Society for Women's Suffrage

NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
NUWW	National Union of Women Workers
P-L	Pethick-Lawrence Papers
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SP	E. Sylvia Pankhurst Papers
US	United Suffragists
WEU	Women's Emancipation Union
WFRL	Women's Franchise League
WFL	Women's Freedom League
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WLL	Women's Labour League
WLA	Women's Liberal Association
WLF	Women's Liberal Federation
WNLA	Women's National Liberal Association
WNLF	Women's National Liberal Federation
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union
WSC	Women's Suffrage Collection
YPWG	Young Purple White and Green Club

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During the course of my research, I have utilised a number of libraries and archives, the staff of which have been invariably helpful, and I would like to extend thanks to all concerned. In particular, I acknowledge the help of the Bodleian Library (Oxford), British Library of Political and Economic Science Archives, Colindale Newspaper Library, Manchester Central Library, Sydney Jones Library (University of Liverpool) and Trinity Library (Cambridge). It is of course necessary to single out the Fawcett Library and, in particular, David Doughan, the best friend a suffrage historian could wish for.

I have been immensely fortunate to have been part of a research team led by Dr Claire Eustance and Professor Angela V. John investigating male attitudes toward women's suffrage and I take this opportunity to thank the colleagues who were so influential in shaping my ideas - in particular, Dr Laura Ugolini for discussing her thoughts on John Bruce Glasier and Independent Labour Party men - and for setting me a hard act to follow. I would also like to remember Sean Mortimer whose absence will always be felt by his colleagues.

Especial thanks also to Dr Claire Eustance for too many things to

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Finally, this work is dedicated, with love, to my son, Leo. Like most seven year olds, he has constantly reminded me of my 'other identities' and provided me with a sense of perspective.

## INTRODUCTION

### CONSTRUCTING GENDERED NARRATIVES IN PARALLEL LIVES

This thesis is a study of six mixed-sex political partnerships, all of which functioned within the context of heterosexual marriage.<sup>1</sup> All of the partnerships were politically active and the individuals concerned were all involved in the campaigns for women's enfranchisement either as commentators or activists. Their collective involvement spans fifty years from 1880 -1930 providing a valuable insight into evolving political identities as well as demonstrating the diversity of opinion that suffrage attracted; some of the partnerships discussed were wholly supportive of women's suffrage, whilst in others there was ambivalence, and in one case the partnership was overtly opposed to it.

By using a case study approach, it becomes possible to explore the ideas and activities of these six political partnerships through the lens of women's suffrage at a particular moment in time, thus highlighting the complexities and significance of the suffrage campaigns in terms of how power relations were re-negotiated. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that there are limitations in this approach. I am not looking at the complete lives of individuals and whilst the case studies provide a point of comparison, they do not offer a definitive conclusion as to how men and women functioned, rather these case studies demonstrate the complexities of how power relations on a private and public level were being fought out.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix One for a full chronology and time-line of each partnership.

The term 'political partnership' can be broadly interpreted, encompassing partnerships between siblings, same-sex partnerships, parental/child(ren) and indeed whole political families. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I am defining a political partnership as being one where both parties were politically active (see page four) within the context of heterosexual marriage. The rationale for this is that during the period under discussion, heterosexual marriage was the most common type of partnership between men and women. Moreover, as Phyllis Rose has pointed out, marriage is, 'the primary political experience in which most of us engage as adults' and like any political experience it involves power and the management of power relations between men and women within a microcosmic relationship.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, although women, through movements such as Chartism, had been politically active, it was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that more husband and wife political partnerships emerged with both parties appearing as political subjects in their own right. The founding of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) in 1893, arguably, gave both men and women the opportunity to develop some kind of political role but it was the single issue of suffrage that became the point of politicisation for others.

In the section of this introduction that discusses sources, I point to the richness of suffrage literature available. However, this has not always been helpful in determining the questions I am asking of my political partnerships. It has been the recent work on masculinity and male support in conjunction with the other literature that has really enabled me to formulate my ideas and

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<sup>2</sup> P. Rose, *Parallel Lives*, (Vintage, London, 1994) p.15.

consider how partnerships identified with the inequality of gender relations at a personal and political level; how they reconciled their political activities within their personal lives; what marriage meant to them and to what extent they were involved in a conscious and active process of redrawing the defining boundaries of politics.

It is important to define my understanding of the concepts and terms I am using within this thesis and I shall now offer interpretations to those key words. Gendering, I understand to be the way in which men and women are perceived differently based on a preconception about their ability defined by their sex. The formation of the journal *Gender & History*, ten years ago, demonstrated the need for the centrality of gender relations to be studied in order to further our understanding of 'the ways in which societies have been shaped by the relations of power between men and women'.<sup>3</sup> This theme has been much developed during the last decade, in particular the ways in which masculinity and femininity are mutually connected as relational constructs.<sup>4</sup> As Nancy Cott has succinctly articulated, 'gender *matters* in social and historical

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<sup>3</sup> Introduction, *Gender & History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> See in particular, N. Cott, 'On Men's History and Women's History', in H. Brod (ed.), *The Making of Masculinities. The New Men's Studies*, (Allen & Unwin, Boston, MA, 1987) pp.205-211; J. Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *History Workshop Journal*, no.38, Autumn 1994, pp.179-202; 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 A.V. John and C. Eustance, (eds.), *The Men's Share? Masculinities, Male Support and Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920*, (Routledge, London, 1997), pp.1-37; C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class. Explorations in Feminism and History*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992), pp. 10-17.

analysis...because the disparate situations of the sexes cause them to experience or perceive events or circumstances differently'.<sup>5</sup>

The early historiography in women's history focused on the 'public and private' as being separate spheres, 'distinct physical sites' for men and women.<sup>6</sup> More recently however, historians have discussed the understanding of 'spheres' as physical rather than ideological as being unhelpful.<sup>7</sup> To locate men and women within these spheres is too convenient and only serves to set up the dichotomy between theory and practice. Women and men did cut across these 'separate spheres' and the increasing involvement of women, in particular, in public life, demonstrates this. Within this thesis, I am also defining the public and private at a more personal level in relation to the partnerships I am discussing. This is useful for discussing how and why personal and political life interacts and whether being supportive of women's suffrage necessarily implies particular personal relationships and personal practices.

I also advocate a broader definition of what has traditionally constituted 'politics'. Usually associated with governmental and, therefore public affairs, I use the term both to encapsulate political issues of interest to men and women whether deemed of governmental relevance or not and to describe the personal relations between men and women. In this sense, it becomes possible to view the shifting and multiple identities that these men and women had and to give

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<sup>5</sup> N. Cott, 'On Men's History and Women's History', in Brod, *The Making of Masculinities*, pp. 205-211.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

consideration to the construction and representation of those identities. I interpret identity as being fluid and relational as it meets the interface between the public and the private. These political partnerships 'occupied a place at the crossroads of several interlocking identities'.<sup>8</sup> In particular, I have found the work of Catherine Hall and John Tosh useful in interpreting concepts of shifting identities in order to understand the past.<sup>9</sup>

Historians have paid considerable attention to the way in which British society, politics and the state recomposed themselves during this period and as Jose Harris (1994) has observed:

Cutting across and complicating the major themes of Empire, state, social class and the nationalization of culture was what sounded to many like a more muted melody in a minor key: the issues of sex, gender and the legal and personal relationships between men and women.<sup>10</sup>

It was these issues specifically, that manifested themselves through the campaigns for women's suffrage and by the beginning of the twentieth century it was clear that gender roles were undergoing change to such an extent that

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<sup>8</sup> A. Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and 'Global Sisterhood' 1900-15, in *Journal of Women's History* 3 (2), 1991, p.69, quoted in J. Hannam, 'Women and Politics', in *Women's History Britain, 1850-1945*, p.225

<sup>9</sup> C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class. Explorations in Feminism and History*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992); M.Roper & J.Tosh (eds), *Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, (Routledge, London, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (Penguin, London, 1994) p.23; M. Langan & B. Schwarz, (eds), *Crises in the British State 1880-1930*, (Hutchinson, London, 1985).

'the very nature of those roles was increasingly contested and uncertain'.<sup>11</sup> The conflict between proponents and opponents of women's rights extended to more general discussions regarding the role of women and whether their future lay in the public or private sphere. These discussions were focused around a number of issues, including marriage, with specific questions being asked about the nature of what Harris has termed 'modern marriage' such as how the family would function in the future, what its status would be and how this would affect 'power relations' between men and women as well as the family and the state.<sup>12</sup>

Historians of later nineteenth and early twentieth century British history have, in recent years, as part of an evolving history of the women's movement, turned their attention to the position and role of married women and, latterly, the role of men as supporters of women's causes (focusing in particular on the campaigns for women's suffrage).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.31.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> See in order: P. Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics, 1860-1914*, (OUP, 1988); P. Levine, ' "So Few Prizes and So Many Blanks": Marriage and Feminism in Later Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 28, No 2, April 1989; *Feminist Lives in Victorian England, Private Roles and Public Commitment*, (Blackwell, 1990); A. V. John, C. Eustance, (eds), *The Men's Share? Masculinities, Male Support and Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920*, (Routledge, London, 1997); S. Strauss, 'Traitors to the Masculine Cause'. *The Men's Campaigns for Women's Rights*, (Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1982) whilst useful in identifying male activists, effectively replaces one gender with another rather than considering how they worked together. See also L. Ugolini, 'Independent Labour Party Men and Women's Suffrage in Britain 1893-1914', Ph.D, University of Greenwich, 1997.

Examining a number of political partnerships within the realms of women's suffrage campaigns serves two purposes. First it demonstrates that the women's suffrage movement provided a platform from which political partnerships could openly challenge the ways in which they had previously functioned - or had been represented as functioning - effectively creating a new and evolving form of political identity. It also provides an opportunity to explore how the ideas and activities of these partnerships were understood and represented through existing meanings of gender roles in both a political and familial context. The justification for looking at political partnerships through women's suffrage is its distinctiveness, in that this was the first time political partnerships were involved with a concerted campaign to obtain rights specifically for **women**. With the onset of militancy, women were able to demonstrate a particular type of political activism and men were able to offer support. Women's suffrage also provided political partnerships - whether wholly supportive or not - with an opportunity to show gendered partnerships working without the vote.

By exploring the gendered nature of these partnerships alongside their individual politics and subsequent activities, this thesis will show that by the early twentieth century, women's suffrage campaigns enabled political identities to be perceived and received in a different way - especially those of women - although this was the culmination of a longer campaign. Furthermore, suffrage provides the means for exploring these partnerships in a way that would not otherwise be possible. In this sense, a study of political partnerships also provides a new perspective in terms of its contribution to suffrage history not

least by integrating individuals whose participation has not previously been acknowledged. By focusing each chapter of this thesis on a specific partnership a useful insight is provided both in terms of furthering understanding of the 'gendered' nature of politics and in terms of contributing to the history of women's suffrage.

As Chadwick and de Courtivron (1993) have pointed out in their study of intimate artistic partnerships, while 'most...have not escaped social stereotypes about masculinity and femininity and their assumed roles within partnership, many have negotiated new relationships to those stereotypes'.<sup>14</sup> I shall argue that the campaigns for women's suffrage enabled partnerships to do precisely this as well as helping to give meaning to 'the richness of the private interactions that operate *within* relationships'.<sup>15</sup> Phyllis Rose, in her study of five Victorian marriages, has drawn attention to how marriages, or 'parallel lives', 'set two imaginations to work constructing narratives about experience presumed to be the same for both'.<sup>16</sup>

An exploration of the combined roles of men and women within the context of political partnerships enables the issue of gender within both politics and historical writing to be viewed *from a fresh perspective as well as initiating* a discussion of the basis of these partnerships. This thesis is therefore, a contribution to both suffrage history and the study of political partnerships in

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<sup>14</sup> W. Chadwick and I. de Courtivron, (eds), *Significant Others, Creativity and Intimate Partnership*, (Thames and Hudson, London, 1993) p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p.9.

<sup>16</sup> P. Rose, *Parallel Lives*, p.14.

relation to changes in British political culture during the period 1880-1930. The study will assume a biographical stance allowing a range of themes to be developed including the still under-researched, yet extremely important question of men's support for women's suffrage. I shall also explore conflicting concepts of masculinity and femininity, issues of feminism, pacifism and socialism, the significance of class background and the way in which individuals within partnerships and a wider familial context complemented as well as opposed each other.

ii

This introduction will now consider the ways in which historians have dealt with the political partnerships in question and their contribution to the movement. It will then outline the theoretical foundations upon which the thesis is based, explaining the various sources consulted and will conclude by giving a brief synopsis of each chapter.

Early accounts of suffrage history written prior to 1918, whilst in part acknowledging male support through organisations such as the Men's League for Women's Suffrage (MLWS), did not identify the existence of male/female partnerships working together even though some of those early contributors had, themselves, been half of such a partnership.<sup>17</sup> Sylvia Pankhurst's study of

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<sup>17</sup> 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); T. Billington-Greig, *The Militant Suffrage Movement*, reprinted in C. McPhee & A. Fitzgerald, (eds), *The Non-Violent Militant*.

militancy published in 1911, singled out Keir Hardie, a leader of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) as a male supporter of women's suffrage although not in the context of the political and personal partnership she undoubtedly shared with him.<sup>18</sup>

Accounts of suffrage history written in the years after 1918 consisted mainly of the autobiographies and histories of those directly involved in or close to the suffrage movement, most of which focused on their organisational affiliations in an attempt to create a 'dominant' history. From this, two broadly oppositional strands developed. First the account put forward by Ray Strachey in *The Cause* (significantly published in 1928 when all women over twenty-one were given the vote), which emphasised the importance of the constitutional National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) in relation to the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).<sup>19</sup> As Claire Eustance has pointed out, although variants of this approach have given relatively more emphasis to the WSPU, it is linked with concerns about liberalism and the Liberal party and suffrage and Liberalism.<sup>20</sup>

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*Selected Writings of Teresa Billington-Greig*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987); A.E. Metcalfe, *Women's Effort. A Chronicle of British Women's Fifty Years' Struggle for Citizenship (1865-1914)*, (Blackwell, Oxford, 1917).

<sup>18</sup> E.S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette. The History of the Women's Militant Suffrage Movement, 1905-1910*, (Gay & Hancock, London 1911). See also L. Ugolini, Ph.D, pp. 10-11

<sup>19</sup> R. Strachey, *'The Cause'. A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, (G. Bell & Sons, London, second edition, 1936). See also, L. Parker Hume, *The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, 1897-1914*, Garland, New York, 1972).

The second approach concentrated on the activities and actions of members of the WSPU, in particular the leadership of the Pankhurst family. Sylvia Pankhurst's account of the suffrage movement published in 1931 was, for many years, the polemic that influenced subsequent suffrage histories. Inevitably, it emphasised the significance of the WSPU through the activities of Pankhurst family.<sup>21</sup> Generally, accounts of the WSPU have concentrated on its autocracy and the increasingly militant tactics adopted in protest at being refused the right to vote. As Rita Pankhurst has observed, 'It would appear that the suffragettes have hijacked the movement's image as they hijacked the action at the time'.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, not all accounts of the WSPU have been celebratory, indeed they range from one end of the spectrum to the wholly condemnatory.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> C. Eustance 'Daring to be Free.. D.Phil University of York, 1993 p.14. See also, K. Dodd, 'Cultural Politics and Women's Historical Writing; the case of Ray Strachey's *The Cause*, in *WSIF*, 13. pp.127-37; C. Rover, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1914*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967); D. Morgan, *Suffragists and Liberals. The Politics of Woman Suffrage in England*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1975); R. Fulford, *Votes for Women. The Story of a Struggle*, (Faber & Faber, London, 1958).

<sup>21</sup> E.S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement. An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals*, (Longman, Green & Co., London, 1931). Whilst this book remains enormously influential, Jane Marcus provides a critical appraisal in J. Marcus, (ed), *Suffrage and the Pankhursts*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, Women's Source Library, London, 1988), pp. 1-17.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in L. E. Nym Mayhall, 'Creating the "Suffragette Spirit": British Feminism and the Historical Imagination' in *Women's History Review*, Vol. 4, Number 3, 1995, p.319

<sup>23</sup> A. Rosen, *Rise Up Women! The Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1974); A. Raeburn, *The Militant Suffragettes*, (Michael Joseph, London, 1973); D. Mitchell, *The Fighting Pankhursts*, (Jonathan Cape, London, 1967) and *Queen Christabel. A Biography of Christabel Pankhurst*, (MacDonald and Jane's, London, 1977).

In terms of how these histories came to be written, Laura Mayhall has emphasised the significance of the First World War in ‘shaping how former suffragists represented their political identities of the pre-war period’ concluding that the narrative of suffrage militancy was an attempt by women to claim a portion of the refiguration of political violence occasioned by the First World War in their post-war claims to citizenship. Locating suffrage accounts within the context of Paul Fussell’s term ‘gross dichotomising’ or ‘the “versus” habit’, (for example, constitutional versus militant) Mayhall asserts that the war experience as much as involvement in the militant suffrage movement informed these accounts.<sup>24</sup> Given that it was in the inter-war period that ‘the foundations were laid for a historical record of the women’s suffrage movement’, not least because of the compilation of the influential Suffragette Fellowship archive that served to represent the WSPU in particular, Mayhall argues that it is inevitable that considerations of the pre-war period have relied extensively upon these narratives without considering the conditions under which they were produced or how their narrative strategies have shaped what we know of that period in terms of suffrage militancy.<sup>25</sup>

The importance of these narratives is borne out by the experience of Helen Wilson, the daughter of Annot and Sam Robinson who are one of the partnerships being explored in this thesis. In 1930, she wrote to the Six Point Group who forwarded the letter to Edith How-Martyn.<sup>26</sup> Helen Wilson wanted

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<sup>24</sup> L. E. Nym Mayhall, ‘Creating the “Suffragette Spirit” ’ p. 320.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pp. 320-322.

details of the suffrage movement and was given a reading list which included *My Own Story* by Emmeline Pankhurst and books written by Sylvia Pankhurst and Annie Kenney. However, as Edith How-Martyn pointed out, 'a real [sic] good history of the movement has still to be written'.<sup>27</sup> Helen Wilson only had to wait a few months until the publication of Sylvia Pankhurst's seminal piece.

A few days later, Helen Wilson received another letter from Miss H. Atkinson who explained that she had known Annot Robinson. Although her description of Annot's activities was brief and extremely sketchy, she also suggested books to read, especially recommending those written by members of the WSPU; notably *My Own Story* and *Prisons and Prisoners* by Lady Constance Lytton. These would, according to Miss Atkinson, give Helen Wilson 'a good insight into the history of our campaign'.<sup>28</sup>

However, within these histories, the political partnerships I am considering are mentioned as partnerships only incidentally, or not at all and this pattern has remained. Rather, these accounts of suffrage emphasised the activities of predominantly middle class individuals within the movement, providing portraits of these characters based largely on organisational affiliation. Whilst the significance of the two main organisations, the NUWSS and the WSPU should not be

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<sup>26</sup> Edith How-Martyn had been an honorary secretary of the WSPU and was also active in the WFL.

<sup>27</sup> Annot Robinson papers, Manchester Central Library, (hereafter referred to as AR papers) Misc/718/83 Letter to Miss Robinson from Edith How-Martyn, 30 October 1930.

<sup>28</sup> AR papers, Misc/718/84 Letter from Miss Robinson from Miss Atkinson, 10 November 1930.

underestimated, it is important to acknowledge that there were many others active in Britain and Ireland at this time. This was not just a movement focused around London and Parliament.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, this model was to continue for nearly forty years until the posthumous publication of Hannah Mitchell's autobiography, *The Hard Way Up* in 1968. Based in Lancashire, Mitchell was a member of the ILP and the WSPU. This seminal work provided a fascinating insight into the early activities of the WSPU in Manchester as well as giving information on working-class support for women's suffrage within the realms of the ILP. In particular, she was able to comment on male ILPers attitudes towards women's enfranchisement and the often conflicting nature of those beliefs.<sup>30</sup>

Ten years later, Jill Liddington and Jill Norris published their conclusive study of a group of predominantly working-class Lancashire suffragists active in the period before the First World War.<sup>31</sup> Openly challenging some previous interpretations of the campaigns for women's suffrage, they showed how these 'radical suffragists' were an integral part of the labour movement highlighting the diversity of their interests and concerns in relation to women's suffrage based on class and political affiliations. Although primarily concerned with female activists,

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<sup>29</sup> See A.J.R., (ed) *Suffrage Annual and Women's Who's Who*, (Stanley Paul & Co., London, 1913) pp. 1-149 for a complete list of the suffrage societies (including membership) active in Britain and Ireland. See also J. Park, 'The British Suffrage Activists of 1913: An Analysis', *Past and Present*, No. 120, August 1988, pp. 147-162 for an analysis of this publication.

<sup>30</sup> H. Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, (Virago, London, 1977, first edition 1968) See also Ugolini, 'Independent Labour Party Men and Women's Suffrage in Britain 1893-1914', for a full discussion of male attitudes toward women's suffrage among ILP men.

<sup>31</sup> J. Liddington and J. Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us, The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (Virago, London, 1985 [1978]).

Liddington and Norris nevertheless include the ILP as an important element of their study demonstrating how women's attempts to transform politics were as much informed by socialist ideology as by more liberal ideas of equality. Additionally, they were, in part, able to move away from focusing on 'figureheads', providing an analysis of activists operating at grass roots level and the close connections between local organisations.<sup>32</sup> Two of the partnerships I am examining were active in the ILP and based in the north of England. They have been chosen, in part, to allow for an exploration of power relations between male and female activists within the labour movement and of the factors which contributed to *where* individuals found themselves located within the national movement. Moreover, by giving consideration to regional specificity a picture emerges of how local factors, including community networks, affected the development of suffrage identity in terms of both national and local political identities and the potential conflicts of interest this could provoke.<sup>33</sup>

Subsequent works on suffrage, informed by contemporary concerns about equality and difference began to explore the ideas of suffrage activists around

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, pp.188-92. See also J.Liddington, *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel. Selina Cooper (1864-1946)*, (Virago, London, 1984) particularly pp.153-5; 221-3.

<sup>33</sup> C. Eustance's work emphasises the importance of community networks within the Women's Freedom League. For other regional studies see, 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.159-188; L. Leneman, *A Guid Cause. The Women's Suffrage Movement in Scotland*, (Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen, 1991); M. Ward, "'Suffrage First-Above All Else!" An Account of the Irish Suffrage Movement', in *Feminist Review*, No.10, Spring 1982, pp. 21-32.

gender equality. Key texts include the studies by Les Garner and Sandra Holton.<sup>34</sup> Both chart a pattern inherent from the nineteenth century whereby the notion of equal rights was bound up in liberal ideas of citizenship running parallel with an awareness of the importance of extending women's role into the public arena. Central in identifying the complex nature of suffrage activists' perceptions of gender inequality was the continued emphasis on the difference between men and women. Holton makes the point that by insisting upon increased state intervention in areas considered to be part of women's domestic preserve and the need for women to be included in the work of the state, British feminists 'challenged the notion that domestic and public matters could be kept apart as the separate concerns of women and men respectively'.<sup>35</sup> I am particularly interested in exploring this theme further. Specifically, I am concerned with examining how women and men as part of a political partnership identified with the inequality of gender relations at a personal as well as a political level and the extent to which women's involvement in a developing feminist movement extending beyond 1918, enabled them to express their ideas and concerns.

### iii

I have drawn upon a diverse range of sources whilst researching the lives of my subjects including, given the biographical perspective of the thesis, a considerable amount of autobiographical and biographical material. There is a

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<sup>34</sup> L. Garner, *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty. Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1900-1918*, (Heinemann, London, 1984), especially pp. 1-10; S. Holton, *Feminism and Democracy. Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986) especially pp.9-28.

<sup>35</sup> Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, p.15.

need for caution given that material of this nature is intended for an 'audience' and therefore consideration needs to be given to the way in which individuals have perceived themselves retrospectively and the selectivity adopted in writing about their lives, as well as the way in which they have been constructed by others. However, this material has provided a useful insight into the gendered nature of writing, particularly with respect to the women's suffrage campaigns.

Feminist biographers have argued against the possibility of being able to find a 'real self' or reconstructing total pasts,<sup>36</sup> whilst discourse on masculinity in relation to biography has led Morgan (1990) to argue that in historical analysis men have hardly been given a gender identity: 'in the sense that their masculinity does not normally occupy the centre of a biographical account in the same way that women's biographies are usually gendered, as lives where issues of femininity and femaleness may be legitimately considered.'<sup>37</sup> Morgan's use of highly gendered experiences such as national service help to illustrate the significance of men's relations to other men which he sees as vital in constructing a history of men and masculinity. Men who supported women's suffrage found themselves experiencing something that set them aside from other men and affected their relations with other men in a number of ways. Fred Pethick-Lawrence's expulsion from the Reform Club is one example. Moreover, as other studies of masculinities have demonstrated, masculine identities have, historically, been constructed at the interface of social and

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<sup>36</sup> See their essays in *Gender & History*, vol. 2, no.1, Spring 1990.

<sup>37</sup> D. Morgan, 'Masculinity, Autobiography and History', in *Gender & History*, vol. 2, no. 1, Spring 1990.

psychological influences and power relations in respect of the 'Other' be that women or whatever other form it may take. These masculine identities should therefore be understood as fluid, constantly shifting and yet as Tosh has articulated, 'in the historical record it is as if masculinity is everywhere but nowhere'.<sup>38</sup>

In this sense, the highly gendered experience of being involved with campaigns for women's suffrage effectively enabled women to write autobiographies with 'a mind of their own' to such an extent that they either overstated or viewed their contribution as being of sufficiently great worth that it merited the story they told.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, however, it has been argued that within personal writings of the suffrage movement there is very little evidence of private life. The emphasis is on the public sphere, based on a desire to be viewed as individual political subjects in the same way as men. Hence a focus on campaigns and alliances, successes and failures.<sup>40</sup> As Philippa Levine has observed:

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<sup>38</sup> J. Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *History Workshop Journal*, no.38, Autumn 1994, pp.179-202; 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 A.V. John and C. Eustance, (eds.), *The Men's Share?*, pp.1-37.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of the construction of femininity and autobiography see K. Reynolds & N. Humble, (eds), *Victorian Heroines*, chapter 5, (NYU Press, New York, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> For a full discussion see T. Davis, M. Durham, C. Hall, M. Langan and D. Sutton, 'The Public Face of Feminism: Early Twentieth-Century Writings on Women's Suffrage' in R. Johnson et al (eds) *Making Histories, Studies in History Writing and Politics*, (CCCS, Hutchinson, 1982) pp.303-324.

Our traditional view of political commitment reserves no space or importance for the private lives of activists, men or women; biographers of “great” men and women generally comment on their personal relationships only in passing, unless some salacious detail is to be revealed.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, the diversity of opinion that existed at the beginning of the twentieth century over aims and objectives in tackling the ‘shared common assumptions about the political subordination of women’<sup>42</sup> can be better understood when considered in the context of individual lives. This applies equally (and in some cases, perhaps more so) to the partnerships being explored in this thesis in terms of how both men and women reconciled their political activities with their personal lives and what it meant to them both as a partnership and as individuals functioning within that framework. The extent to which suffrage politics of early twentieth century Britain embraced or were successfully compartmentalised from personal politics within familial dimensions raises questions, and, as Angela V. John has articulated, ‘the tricky issue for historians of gauging how power might be exercised within relationships’.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Levine, ‘“So Few Prizes and So Many Blanks”’ pp. 150-174; See also, G. Lerner, “Where Biographers Fear to Tread,” in *Women’s Review of Books* 4, no.12, (September 1987), pp.11-12.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Angela V. John, ‘“Chwarae Teg”: Welsh Men’s Support for Women’s Suffrage.’ Welsh Political Archive Lecture, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1998.

National and local newspapers as well as the suffrage press have proved invaluable sources, providing information about the activities of the subjects against a backdrop of broader discussions surrounding women's enfranchisement. Their use, however, is not unproblematic; the suffrage press was one of the most effective propaganda tools utilized by the movement and was set up partly to respond to a hostile press which more often than not, represented the views of the government of the day or the owner of the paper - many of whom were politically embroiled and unable to distance themselves from the debates.

Private papers including diaries and letters have been used to provide another perspective.<sup>44</sup> All of the partnerships featured in this thesis have left some personal material although quite often the bulk of the matter is geared towards one individual. Most of the subjects belonged to a number of organisations and access to branch records has been another route into exploring the complexity of their lives.

The Public Record Office houses a wealth of material including Home Office and Police files, which have provided a fascinating insight into how demonstrations and other suffrage activities were recorded. Surprisingly, this material has been under-utilized by historians although the files are not well catalogued and some records remain unavailable.

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<sup>44</sup> Although 'private' it would seem to be the case that in certain circumstances, material has been arranged in such a way to influence historians. For example, Bruce Glasier's diaries have been categorised and given headings.

The six partnerships chosen for this thesis meet a set of criteria that I felt necessary in order to justify their being written about. My rationale for selection was based primarily on the fact that they were all involved as partnerships in the campaigns for women's suffrage. Additionally, they were all married in successive decades thus allowing for an exploration of continuity and change in attitudes towards marriage over a substantial time period. Three of the partnerships included children, providing an additional facet in terms of distinguishing the impact of parenthood on the politics of the partnership.

Whilst some have been 'hidden from history' rather more than others, none of the partnerships have, hitherto, been presented in terms of a combined commitment either in favour of, or against suffrage.<sup>45</sup> It is important to recognise that the partnerships I am writing about form a tiny proportion of the many partnerships (whether married or not) that worked together.<sup>46</sup> The scope of these partnerships also needs to be acknowledged insofar as my research has uncovered married couples from very different backgrounds with widespread political and organisational affiliations.

Philippa Levine has identified a number of women in late nineteenth century England who worked to combine feminism and *marriage with*

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<sup>45</sup> With the exception of my recent work on the Pethick Lawrences, 'Sharing the Burden: the Pethick-Lawrences and Women's Suffrage', in John and Eustance (eds.), *The Men's Share?* pp.135-57. B. Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984) includes a chapter on the Pethick-Lawrences focusing on the inter-war period.

<sup>46</sup> For example, I have not included Millicent and Henry Fawcett in this study because although they were a political partnership, Henry Fawcett died in 1884 and they therefore fall outside of the scope of this work.

considerable success. Arguably, the success of a partnership was due in part to the freedom offered within the relationship. For example, Barbara Bodichon spent six months of each year apart from her French husband, Eugene. Other examples include Clementia Taylor whose husband Peter was the Radical MP for Leicester and supporter of a number of women's campaigns. Another MP, Russell Gurney, the husband of Emilie Gurney, helped to pilot a number of women's Bills through Parliament - in particular, those pertaining to married women's property.<sup>47</sup>

Although these marriages demonstrate that it was possible to embark upon marriage without necessarily compromising feminist principles, by the beginning of the twentieth century many women were not prepared to take the risk without some stronger guarantee. One of the questions I am asking therefore is: what did marriage actually mean to the men and women I am looking at? And to what extent were they involved in a conscious and active process of redrawing the defining boundaries of politics?

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In order to 'set the scene', some space is given here to other married couples I have identified who functioned within a political environment, offering a starting point in some cases for their inclusion into the historical record. The Leicester based partnership of Alice and Alfred Hawkins is one example of how a working class couple negotiated their own brand of suffrage

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<sup>47</sup> See Levine, "So Few Prizes and So Many Blanks" especially pp. 155-157; Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England*, *passim*.

politics. Originally members of the ILP, they became involved in suffrage militancy and Alice Hawkins was the first secretary to the Leicester branch of the WSPU as well as being President of the Independent National Union of Women Boot and Shoe Workers and a member of the Women's Labour League (WLL). She was imprisoned on four occasions for acts of militancy which included obstruction and breaking windows.

Her husband, Alfred Hawkins, had served in the Royal Navy and became actively involved in the Men's Political Union (MPU). He is best remembered as the victim of a particularly brutal ejection from St George's Hall in Bradford where Winston Churchill, then the Home Secretary, was speaking. This resulted in his leg being broken in two places. The commitment of the Hawkins to women's suffrage is made more remarkable by the fact they had seven children although by 1913 only five were living. They clearly suffered for the cause but this did not detract them from continuing to work 'with might and main for votes for women'.<sup>48</sup>

The Reverend Claude and Gertrude Hinscliff were co-founders of the Church League for Women's Suffrage (CLWS) whilst Lord and Lady Cecil declared themselves prominent advocates of women's suffrage. Lady Eleanor Cecil was chair of the Marylebone and Paddington branch of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association (CUWFA) and her husband, Lord Robert Cecil was, in 1913, the Unionist MP for Hitchin. Other titled couples included Sir William Bart who presided on the Executive Committee of

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<sup>48</sup> A.J.R. (ed), *The Suffrage Annual and Women's Who's Who*, pp.261-2.

the MLWS and his wife, Lady Chance who held membership of the NUWSS and the CUWFA.<sup>49</sup>

Edith and Charles Mansell Moullin were also prominent figures in the suffrage movement. Both firm advocates of women's suffrage, Edith Mansell Moullin held membership of several suffrage societies and organised the Welsh contingent in the Suffrage Coronation procession of 1911. She founded and became honorary organiser of the Forward Suffrage Cymric Union (FSCU) in 1912. Her husband, the surgeon Charles Mansell Moullin was a Vice-President of the MLWS and both spoke and wrote against forcible feeding. He was also the surgeon who performed the unsuccessful operation on his wife's friend, Emily Wilding Davison after she threw herself in front of the king's horse at the 1913 Derby.<sup>50</sup>

Demonstrating that combined support for women's suffrage extended beyond England, Robert Lockhart and his wife, Jeanette Sutherland Davidson of Kirkcaldy in Scotland were also supporters. They belonged to the NUWSS and Jeanette was Vice-President of the Kirkcaldy branch.<sup>51</sup>

The Nottingham based Dowson family provide a useful insight into long term attitudes towards women's suffrage. Mrs Helena Brownsword Dowson was Hon. Secretary of the Nottingham branch of the NUWSS. Her father, Anderson Brownsword had, according to his daughter, taken the chair at the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. See also A.V. John's forthcoming entry on Edith Ruth Mansell Moullin in the *New DNB*.

<sup>51</sup> A.J.R. (ed), *The Suffrage Annual*, p.293.

first Suffrage meeting held in Nottingham. Her husband, William Dowson was a member of the MLWS and his mother, Mrs Alice Dowson of Melton Mowbray, had been the Hon. Secretary of the Nottingham branch of the NUWSS until c.1890. Additionally, her unmarried daughter, A. Maud Dowson, was Hon. Secretary of the East Midland Federation of the NUWSS.<sup>52</sup>

Herbert Jacobs was the founder and chairman of the MLWS, director of the International Women's Franchise Club and Vice-President of the Jewish League for Women's Suffrage (JLWS). He was married to Madame Agnes Larkcom who held membership of the Women's Freedom League (WFL) and the Actresses Franchise League (AFL) thus revealing that it was possible to support a movement through involvement with a number of organisations.<sup>53</sup> What is also interesting, is that many of the entries in *The Suffrage Annual* clearly demonstrate active involvement (although individuals wrote their own contributions) and yet many of these individuals have been excluded from subsequent accounts of suffrage history.

## vi

This thesis is divided into six chapters, each one focusing on a particular partnership. It is chronological only insofar as the date of marriage determines the location of the chapter. However, this is useful in providing some sense of developments in the campaigns and changing identities. The themes I have

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.228-9.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. pp.275;287.

highlighted weave their way through each chapter alongside the partnerships which, as this thesis will demonstrate, share common ground as much as differences. In taking this approach, narrative is an integral part of this thesis allowing me to 'tell the story' not just of specific partnerships but of an incredibly dynamic period in British political and cultural history. By introducing these partnerships into the suffrage arena it is possible to see how political differences could, on occasions, transcend friendships and yet, at other times, did not. The thesis is not, however, simply an attempt to 'recover' men and women who have been hitherto neglected in terms of their combined political contribution. In some respects this work builds upon the model established by Sandra Stanley Holton in *Suffrage Days* (1996). In a re-configuration of the suffrage movement, Holton focuses on 'reconstructing stories that have become largely hidden in the patterns formed by previous history-making' revealing an alternative dynamic to the suffrage movement.<sup>54</sup>

A shake of the kaleidoscope and different aspects of the historical pattern may move to the fore, altering our view of the relationship between the parts. Though the separate components of that pattern remain unchanged, the pattern itself may now look very different.<sup>55</sup>

In this thesis, the kaleidoscope has been shaken to reveal a hitherto unexplored relationship between the suffrage movement and gendered ideas of politics

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<sup>54</sup> S. Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days. Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (Routledge, London, 1996) p.2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p.1. See also, K. Israel, 'Writing inside the Kaleidoscope: Re-Representing Victorian Women Public Figures, in *Gender & History*, Vol.2 No.1, Spring 1990, pp.40-1.

within the context of political partnerships allowing for if not an alternative, certainly another dynamic to both these categories.

Whilst there are some general questions I am asking of all the political partnerships, there are others that apply only to some, or even one partnership. For example, the impact of children on a political partnership only applies in three cases and the dynamics of overt anti-suffrage activity in only one. Within this thesis I am not attempting to produce a narrative of complete 'life stories', nor do I claim to be writing a history of the women's suffrage movement. Rather, I take as my point of intervention, those moments at which the political partnerships under discussion and women's suffrage become connected.

## vii

The first chapter concentrates on the partnership Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst shared from 1879 until 1898 when *Richard Pankhurst died*. By focusing on their combined activities during this period, the Pankhursts can be scrutinised not as mainstays of suffrage but as political activists whose ideals were able to develop and diversify as a result of the campaigns for women's suffrage. Their political partnership has scarcely been recognised in accounts of suffrage history. Rather, the female members of the Pankhurst family have been presented in a variety of guises ranging from the heroic to the harridan.

Sylvia Pankhurst's obvious admiration for her father resulted in a highly gendered portrayal of her parents in which Richard Pankhurst, the educated 'Doctor', played teacher and mentor to the immature, naive and rather

incompetent Emmeline.<sup>56</sup> Other suffrage histories have tended to compartmentalise Emmeline Pankhurst within the organisation of the WSPU whilst Richard Pankhurst is mentioned as a separate entity entirely, located within a different time period.<sup>57</sup> It is as if Emmeline Pankhurst only came into existence in 1903 when the WSPU was formed and yet she and Richard Pankhurst enjoyed a political partnership that lasted almost twenty years. By charting their mutual political journey in the last decades of the nineteenth century, we are confronted with a rather different representation of 'The Pankhursts'.

James and Marion Bryce provide the focus for the second chapter. Their partnership spanned thirty-three years, embracing one of the most vibrant periods in modern British political history. James Bryce, a very public figure appears in the historical record as a distinguished politician and historian. In 1927, five years after his death, he was eulogised in H.A.L. Fisher's two volume biography as the epitome of a great statesman.<sup>58</sup> Marion Bryce, on the other hand, has been largely written out of historical accounts of the period despite being a key figure in the Women's National Liberal Association (WNLA) and one half of a political partnership.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps if she had been in

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<sup>56</sup> See Sylvia Pankhurst's account of her parents in Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p.3-59.

<sup>57</sup> See for example, S. Strauss, *Traitors to the Masculine Cause'. The Men's Campaigns for Women's Rights*, (Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1982).

<sup>58</sup> H.A.L. Fisher had been a member of the Oxford University branch of the MLWS and his wife, Lettice Fisher had been associated with the Oxford Students' Suffrage Society and the Oxford branch of the NUWSS.

favour of women's suffrage she would have been written about more extensively. And yet, it is precisely because of the Bryces' views on the suffrage question that I have included them in this thesis.

An exploration of their partnership allows for some insight into how political partnerships could work successfully without the vote and the ideology that formed the basis for their opinions. It is apparent that James Bryce was heavily influenced by his wife's political ideas and that she perceived herself not as powerless but as a knowledgeable woman who gained power from that knowledge.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the suffrage question had a profound impact on the Bryce's wider familial relations as opposing opinions brought them into the public arena on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Bryce family are especially interesting to examine in this context for several reasons. James Bryce, whilst not a supporter of women's suffrage, was heavily involved with a range of issues pertinent to women, not least women's education. As author of *The American Commonwealth*, he offered his own analysis and interpretation of women's suffrage in America and compared the movement in both Europe and Britain.

In terms of the kinds of themes that I am considering, the Bryce family make an excellent case study. They demonstrate not only the diversity of opinion within the women's suffrage movement but also how this single issue affected

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<sup>59</sup> With the notable exception of being included in P. Jalland's study of *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860-1914*.

<sup>60</sup> See S. E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage*, ( University of Wisconsin Press, 1997) for a discussion of how anti-suffrage women mobilised to protect gendered class interests and their positions as influential political strategists.

family politics at a variety of levels. Within this chapter I shall be considering several themes including the relationship between female emancipation and older liberal politics, the perceived threat of socialism, a comparison of attitudes toward British and American suffrage and not least the way in which the Bryces as both a partnership and part of a larger family dealt with the issue of suffrage and the ways in which it impacted on them personally.

Chapter three examines the partnership of John and Katharine Bruce Glasier who worked together for the socialist cause for twenty seven years from 1893 until John Bruce Glasier's death in 1920. The tensions between socialism and suffrage can be seen clearly when analysed through this partnership. During this period the Bruce Glasiers earned their reputation as foremost propagandists of socialism and this chapter is primarily concerned with the way in which they functioned as a political partnership. It will chart the development of their partnership alongside *an examination of gender and class and the extent of their significance*, and the specific issue of women's suffrage which dominated the political arena at a time when they were both very politically active. Consideration will also be given to how representative the Bruce Glasiers were in *terms of the politicisation of individuals in the late nineteenth century and how they negotiated their affiliation (as individuals and as a partnership) to the ILP into their broader philosophy*.

The fourth chapter considers the partnership of Emmeline and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence arguably, the most committed and well-known partnership in relation to women's suffrage. Until recently, very little has been written about the crucial part they played in the campaigns for women's enfranchisement

although their involvement in the WSPU has been well documented in other histories.<sup>61</sup> Their partnership spanned more than fifty years and this chapter focuses on the uniqueness of the political partnership in the context of gendered support.

An examination of their partnership with particular emphasis on how, as a couple, they both challenged and reinforced the gendered nature of political work, will raise questions about the ways in which Fred Pethick Lawrence both used and dealt with his masculinity and the reactions to this initiating a broader discussion of how the ideas and actions of male and female supporters of women's suffrage were understood and represented through existing meanings of gender roles in an organisational, political and familial context.

Chapter five is a study of the Manchester based partnership of Annot and Sam Robinson. Helen Wilson's enquiries, mentioned earlier, were, in effect, the first step towards Annot Robinson's inclusion in the history of the suffrage movement and the discovery of her papers has led to her mention in a number of accounts of suffrage and other political organisations.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, she has been the subject of

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<sup>61</sup> See my MA Historical Studies dissertation, 'A Political Family: the Pethick-Lawrences and Women's Suffrage', University of Greenwich,(1994); my chapter in John and Eustance (eds.), *The Men's Share*; Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, for a discussion of the Pethick-Lawrences during the interwar period.

<sup>62</sup> See for example, C. Collette, *For Labour and For Women: The Women's Labour League, 1906-1918*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1989); P.M. Graves, *Labour Women. Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918-1939*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984); Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*; K. Rigby, 'Annot Robinson: A Forgotten Manchester Suffragette' in *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol.1. No.1 1987.

an unpublished MA dissertation which provides a useful insight into her life.<sup>63</sup> Ironically, Sam Robinson, Annot's husband, has figured very little in accounts of the labour movement and is now the more obscure character of the partnership. Nevertheless, the focus of this chapter is the political partnership of Annot and Sam Robinson which was based on a mutual socialist ideology. An exploration of the way in which the partnership functioned and developed will demonstrate the ways in which women's suffrage affected the gendered nature of politics in the early twentieth century as well as highlighting the problems of combining a political career with a family. In this respect, Sam and Annot Robinson can be identified as more conventional than other political partnerships - it was only Annot who went to prison for her militancy unlike the Pethick Lawrences and Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval. Moreover, consideration needs to be given to the extent of Sam Robinson's support for women's suffrage. Whilst it is evident that he supported suffrage in principal, how this equated to their own family dynamics requires discussion. The dichotomy between the 'personal and the political' was to prove problematic and is demonstrated in the writing of Annot Robinson. Interestingly, their two children, Cathy and Helen came down firmly in favour of a different parent, each having very different perceptions of their parent's relationship. Examining the partnership of the Robinsons will also allow for an analysis of regional and local politics and how this worked in conjunction with an ever-growing national movement.

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<sup>63</sup> K.A.Rigby, 'Annot Robinson: Socialist, Suffragist, Peacemaker, A Biographical Study Unpublished M.A. dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University, May 1986.

Whilst it is clear that women's suffrage was an integral part of the Robinsons' political ideology, it was only ever part of the much broader political agenda they endorsed. Many other issues including those relating to employment and welfare were at the root of their convictions and Annot Robinson, in particular, chose to emphasise the role of women in these areas. Both Annot and Sam Robinson remained loyal to the ILP although Annot also affiliated herself with a number of other organisations. The reasons for this are complex, being bound up in an evolving political identity as well as financial necessity.

*The political partnership of Annot and Sam Robinson was short-lived, spanning only six years if dated from their first meeting in 1906 and even less taking their marriage in 1908 as a starting point. The reasons for the breakdown of their political partnership are, inevitably, bound up in the failure of their personal relationship and within this chapter I shall be considering the impact of one upon the other as situations and circumstances altered. However, this is not an attempt to find who was at fault. Rather, the focus of this chapter is to consider those areas that affected the development of a political partnership in Manchester at the beginning of the twentieth century.*

The final chapter looks at Elsie Duval and Hugh Franklin. Both were involved in the suffrage campaigns of the early twentieth century and yet the level and extent of their commitment has not been acknowledged in subsequent histories and accounts of suffrage. Between them, they have attracted no more than a few lines or a footnote and most references refer to their individual activity rather than locating them as a partnership. This chapter will consider the political partnership of Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval by examining their individual activities and

motivation for becoming involved in the suffrage campaign and the ways in which this both created and reinforced their continuing separate identities. I shall also consider the extremities of their actions, the ways in which they were represented and how this subsequently affected both their personal and political activities.

Both Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval were members of politically active families in terms of the campaign for women's suffrage. By exploring their families' involvement and commitment to key suffrage organisations it becomes possible to see how ideas around identity at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially religious identity, informed actions and arguments. Additionally, an exploration of Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval provides an opportunity to examine the tensions that existed between two militant organisations; namely the WSPU and the MPU and the extent to which membership determined friendship and impacted on what some saw as ever-increasing gender divisions.

*The analysis begins however, with a shake of the kaleidoscope that highlights the political partnership of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst and allows for a rather novel approach to the literal pattern.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### **'EVERY STRUGGLING CAUSE SHALL BE OURS': THE FIN DE SIÈCLE POLITICS OF EMMELINE AND RICHARD PANKHURST.**

In most contemporary and subsequent accounts of suffrage, it is the Pankhursts who feature as the main focus of suffrage activity both in terms of organisation and participation. Other activists have tended to be represented either as mere appendages, or directly in location to the Pankhurst family structure, although in recent years there has been a re-focusing of emphasis. Moreover, 'the Pankhursts' have been categorised as an exclusively female group comprising of Mrs Pankhurst and her daughters. Perhaps too much of our understanding of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst is necessarily based on what their own offspring wrote about them as there has been no credible biography of either one, let alone both of them.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the political partnership of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst in the same manner as other partnerships in this thesis. In this sense, they will be subjected to the same degree of scrutiny as their peers and will be examined not as mainstays of the suffrage campaign but as political activists whose ideals were able to develop and diversify as a result of the campaign for women's suffrage. With the exception of Sandra Stanley Holton's work<sup>1</sup>, Emmeline Pankhurst has received little attention before 1903 when the WSPU was founded.

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<sup>1</sup> Holton, *Suffrage Days*, especially chapters 1-4.

There is no doubt that in many respects, the Pankhursts *per se* deserve to be represented as a 'political family'; their commitment and enthusiasm for the causes they supported is evident although the individual journeys they took demonstrate how political ideas when juxtaposed with family loyalty, can create unresolvable situations and differences. Additionally, exploring the political partnership of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst provides a starting point for understanding the changing nature of the Pankhurst family's subsequent political affiliations. This chapter will begin by examining the political backgrounds of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst which formed the basis for subsequent political activity and the development of their children's political ideals.

Richard Marsden Pankhurst (1835-1898), is one of only a handful of men to be awarded the appellation of feminist by Olive Banks.<sup>2</sup> Whilst his early life has not been well documented, a strong picture emerges of his Radical sympathies and early support for women's rights in the writings of his offspring.<sup>3</sup> As a contemporary of John Stuart Mill and the Chartist, Ernest Jones, it is not surprising that Richard Pankhurst was influenced sufficiently to become involved in the suffrage cause, forming an alliance with the Manchester suffrage activist, Lydia Becker.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> O. Banks, *The Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists, Vol One, 1800-1930*, (Wheatsheaf, Brighton, 1985) p.153.

<sup>3</sup> See E.S.Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement* for a detailed account of Richard Pankhurst's activities.

<sup>4</sup> Lydia Ernestine Becker (1827-1890) was born in Manchester, the eldest of fifteen children. Her father Hannibal Leigh Becker, was a calico printer and Lydia's interest in women's suffrage stemmed from hearing a paper entitled,

The significance of this alliance should not be underestimated. It was an apprenticeship that gave him the confidence to embark on the personal and political partnership he subsequently formed with Emmeline Goulden. For several years, Pankhurst and Becker worked closely together for the suffrage cause; his legal expertise, combined with her oratory skills, ensured that the suffrage question was rarely out of the public eye.

In her account of the suffrage movement, Sylvia Pankhurst placed great emphasis on the influence of her father upon Lydia Becker. Whilst acknowledging that 'she appealed to him at every turn', it was 'her confident reliance upon his aid which caused many observers to anticipate a romance which never materialized'.<sup>5</sup> Audrey Kelly, in her study of Lydia Becker, endorses Sylvia Pankhurst's assertions, referring to correspondence between Lydia Becker and her brother, Leigh, in which Becker explained that: 'I like Dr Pankhurst - he is a clever little man with plenty to say - and some strange ideas - it is refreshing to meet with people whose actions get out of the ordinary groove'.<sup>6</sup> Becker also commented on Pankhurst's 'extraordinary sentiments about life in general and women in particular' adding that he has 'so much to say on them that it is really dangerous to venture into his den'. She was referring to an occasion when she had visited Pankhurst at his Chambers,

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'Reasons for the Enfranchisement of Women', given by Madame Bodichon at a Social Science Association meeting in Manchester in October 1866.

<sup>5</sup> Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p.35.

<sup>6</sup> Letter book of Lydia Becker, no. 249 quoted in A. Kelly, *Lydia Becker and the Cause*, (Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster, 1992) p.30.

intending to stay only a few minutes, but ‘found it impossible to escape under two hours’<sup>7</sup> They corresponded frequently and after the campaign to have women householders included on the electoral registers Becker wrote to Richard Pankhurst in order to:

endeavour to express to you my sense of gratitude and obligation to you for consenting to act for us, and admiration of the great powers of reasoning and of oratory you have displayed. It has been a hard, uphill fight - against hopeless odds, but if any man could have won - you are he! Though defeated in the immediate objective your efforts will not have been thrown away - they will form the basis of more extended arguments, and will in the end prove to have been a powerful means of accelerating the success, which is, after all, only a question of time.<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting that commentators on the relationship between Becker and Pankhurst choose to focus on a speculative romantic element as if it were not possible to conceive of a partnership between men and women other than one with sexual or romantic overtones. Needless to say, during the whole of the suffrage campaign there were men and women who worked together without romantic involvement although it may also have been precisely because of men’s support for suffrage that some women felt drawn to a particular type of man. This would certainly appear to be the case for several partnerships, including the Pankhursts among others.

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<sup>7</sup> Women’s Suffrage Collection, Manchester Central Library, (hereafter referred to as WSC, followed by the reference). M50/1/3 Lydia Becker to Sarah Jackson, 7 June 1868.

<sup>8</sup> Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p.41.

A lawyer by profession, Richard Pankhurst was called to the bar in 1867, the year in which the Second Reform Act was passed. Pankhurst was an early male supporter of the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage (MNSWS) formally constituted in August 1867 and in the same year he was appointed a member of the executive committee. In 1868, Pankhurst spoke at the first public meeting in favour of women's suffrage and articulated his support for women's right to vote. He also expressed his support in an essay published in the *Fortnightly Review*, writing:

The basis of political freedom is expressed in the great maxim of the equality of all men, of humanity, of all human beings, before the law. The unit of modern political society is not the family, but the individual. Therefore every individual is *prima facie* entitled to all the franchises and freedoms of the constitution. The political position of women ought, and finally, must be determined by reference to that large principle....The grant to women of equal political rights is a proceeding not only just in itself, but is a really indispensable security of good government for all.<sup>9</sup>

Pankhurst's liberal ideas based around the rights of the individual are clearly espoused in the piece and give an indication of the political progressiveness that he and many of his contemporaries underwent during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The MNSWS concentrated its efforts on the 'Persons' Campaign, in protest at the exclusion of women from the Second Reform Act. The main aim of the campaign was to prove that the majority of Manchester's female rate-

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<sup>9</sup> R.M. Pankhurst, 'The Right of Women to Vote Under the Reform Act, 1867', in *Fortnightly Review*, vol 4, July-December 1868 p.250.

payers wanted the right to vote by placing as many of their names as possible on the new electoral registers for 1868. Male support was considered vital and in addition to Richard Pankhurst, other male members of the society included, Jacob Bright, T.B. Potter, B. Whitworth and F.W. Myers.<sup>10</sup> Archdeacon Sandford, another supporter, added an air of respectability although as Joan Parker has noted, opposition to the campaign was largely mooted around the ideology of the Church as expressed through the pages of the *Manchester Courier* where it was pointed out that 'Men generally prefer that their wives should devote themselves to the duties for which their Maker seems especially to have designed them.'<sup>11</sup>

Involvement in the campaign carried risks regardless of gender and the commitment of those individuals who suffered personal and public attacks should be recognised. Lydia Becker who was a frequent correspondent with, among others, Josephine Butler wrote of her 'horror of newspapers' explaining that she had taken to avoiding reading them.<sup>12</sup> Richard Pankhurst, as will be seen, was subjected to a number of personal attacks by political opponents and, indeed, by old Liberal allies. Whilst his radicalism generally may have contributed to his suitability for office being questioned, it was his views on specific subjects including women's suffrage that riled those who did not share his developing political ideology.

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<sup>10</sup> J. Parker, 'Lydia Becker: Pioneer Orator of the Women's Movement', in *Manchester Regional History Review*, Vol V. no.2 Autumn/Winter 1991/2, p.15.

<sup>11</sup> *Manchester Courier*, 16 April 1868, quoted in Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> WSC, M50/1/3 Lydia Becker to Josephine Butler, 18 September 1868.



### THE PARLIAMENTARY FEMALE.

*Father of the Family.* "COME, DEAR; WE SO SELDOM GO OUT TOGETHER NOW—CAN'T YOU TAKE US ALL TO THE PLAY TO-NIGHT?"

*Mistress of the House, and M.P.* "HOW YOU TALK, CHARLES! DON'T YOU SEE THAT I AM TOO BUSY. I HAVE A COMMITTEE TO-MORROW MORNING, AND I HAVE MY SPEECH ON THE GREAT CROCHET QUESTION TO PREPARE FOR THE EVENING."

As with the later campaigns, the presence of men at meetings did, on occasions, prove helpful in dealing with troublesome elements although as Lydia Becker proved, she herself was a force to be reckoned with. In one instance, she was interrupted by a drunken heckler whom she dismissed as a 'specimen of a class of individuals who conclusively proved their incapacity to govern women by showing their utter incapacity to govern themselves'.<sup>13</sup>

Richard Pankhurst had, by now, gained a reputation in Manchester as a supporter of educational and social reform and his skills were put to good use in 1869 when he acted as counsel in a suit claiming women's enfranchisement on the basis of ancient statutes.<sup>14</sup> In December 1869, at the second Annual Meeting of the MNSWS, Pankhurst was instrumental in getting Jacob Bright and Charles Dilke to introduce a women's suffrage Bill during the next Parliamentary session. He then drafted the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill introduced by Bright in 1870 which stated:

That in all Acts relating to the qualification and registration of voters or persons entitled or claiming to be registered and to vote in the election of Members of Parliament, wherever words occur which import the masculine gender, the same shall be held to include females for all purposes connected with and having reference to the right to be registered as voters, and to vote in such elections, any law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Parker, 'Lydia Becker', p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> In the case of *Chorlton v. Lings*, the Court of Common Pleas ruled that the uninterrupted usage of centuries had greater weight than the statutes stated. Thomas Chorlton, who acted for the Society was a lifelong advocate of women's suffrage and member of the Society. He also came to Lydia Becker's rescue on one occasion when she was being harassed by a Mr Benson at a meeting.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Rosen, *Rise Up Women!*, p.14.

Richard Pankhurst spent the next few years actively involved in the work of the MNSWS however, by 1874, a split over suffrage policy resulted in the permanent termination of Pankhurst's alliance with Lydia Becker. Pankhurst was one of the executive committee members who opposed Lydia Becker's support for amending the private members' enfranchisement Bill of 1874 to exclude married women. Although not married at this time, it is interesting that Richard Pankhurst was absolutely committed to the rights of married women. According to Margaret Ashton's Fabian Tract on 'The Economic Foundations of the Women's Movement', Lydia Becker is reported to have replied to a married woman, who said that she too, would like a vote, 'My dear, a good husband is much better worth having than a vote'.<sup>16</sup>

It is useful to briefly consider the nature of the suffrage movement at this point for it demonstrates the Radicalism of the early period and also helps to make sense of the later movement. Until the advent of militancy in the early twentieth century, one could be forgiven for believing that there existed a unified movement - such is the emphasis given to the departure of organisations like the WSPU and the Women's Freedom League (WFL) from their forerunners. However, the turbulence of the early movement as supporters of women's suffrage sought to identify and consolidate their individual and inevitably differing agendas, should not be disregarded. By the late 1880s tensions were such that the National Society for Women's Suffrage (NSWS) split after a successful move to alter the society's rules to allow for any

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<sup>16</sup> S. Alexander (ed.), *Women's Fabian Tracts*, (Routledge, London, 1988) p.280.

women's organisation supportive of women's suffrage to be affiliated. Lydia Becker and others including Millicent Garrett Fawcett feared that the movement would be hijacked by Women's Liberal Associations and this resulted in the formation of an alternative society which maintained the old policy of the NSWS.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, the 'new rules' society had the support of a number of leading suffragists including Walter and Eva McLaren and Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst. Both societies adopted new, similar and rather confusing titles<sup>18</sup> and were more commonly identified by the location of their central offices; the old rules being known as the 'Great College Street' Society and the new rules as the 'Parliament Street' Society. Nonetheless, despite Becker's description of the Parliament Street Society as left-wing and extreme, Richard Pankhurst found himself unsuccessful in securing support to outlaw measures that excluded married women.<sup>19</sup>

During the early 1880's, the Pankhursts continued to be active in the MNSWS and they were both on the Executive Committee in the Annual Report of 1881.<sup>20</sup> In the Annual Report for 1885, the allegiance of the Scottish and Irish MPs was discussed and it was optimistically recorded that, 'The opinions of Scotch and Irish members are not so well known...There is,

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<sup>17</sup> Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p.75.

<sup>18</sup> The 'old rules' society became the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage (CCNSWS) whilst the 'new rules' society adopted the title, the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage (CNSWS).

<sup>19</sup> Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p.75.

<sup>20</sup> WSC, M50/1/4/14 Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage 1881.

however, no reason to suppose that these countries will ultimately be found to be behind England on a question of the just representation of the people'.<sup>21</sup> After 1885, the Pankhursts are absent from MNSWS records, having moved to London but in 1893, Mrs Pankhurst returned to the Executive Committee whilst her husband was notable by his absence.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.1 'LIFE IS VALUELESS WITHOUT ENTHUSIASM'.

Richard Pankhurst was twenty-three years older than Emmeline Goulden when they met in 1878, although it was not uncommon for men to marry women considerably younger than themselves at this time. According to Christabel Pankhurst, her father 'had resolved to remain unmarried for the sake of his public work' but within a year they were married.<sup>23</sup> Correspondence between Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst during their brief courtship reveals the basis for their union, described by Christabel as 'never a self-absorbing love'.<sup>24</sup> Writing to his future wife, Richard Pankhurst explained:

In all my happiness with you, I feel most deeply the responsibilities that are gathering around us...Every struggling cause shall be ours....So living, we even in the present enter, as it were, by inspiration into the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, M50/1/4/18 Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the MNSWS, 9 December 1885 p.14.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, M50/1/4/19;26 Annual Reports of the MNSWS 1886;1893.

<sup>23</sup> C. Pankhurst, *Unshackled, the story of how we won the vote*, (Hutchinson & Co., London, 1959) p.21.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

good time yet far away and something of its morning glow touches our foreheads, or ever it is, by the many, even so much as dreamt of.<sup>25</sup>

In considering how they could best conduct their commitment to social causes, Richard Pankhurst made a heartfelt plea to Emmeline for her to

Help me in this in the future, unceasingly. Herein is the strength - with bliss added - of two lives made one by that love which seeks more the other than self. How I long and yearn to have all this shared to the full between us in equal measure!<sup>26</sup>

In 1879, Richard Pankhurst was actively campaigning to secure the passage of the Married Woman's Property Act (passed in 1882). Given that he was by now engaged to Emmeline, the passing of the Act held special significance not least because of Emmeline's suggestion that they live together, delaying marriage until the Act was safely passed.<sup>27</sup> In the event, Richard Pankhurst's middle-class conventionality prevailed and in the Autumn of 1879 they were married.

Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) was raised in a Radical environment, her father had supported the Anti-Slavery campaign and the Anti-Corn Law

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> She was, perhaps, influenced by the example of Elizabeth Wolstenholme and Ben Elmy who united themselves without any legal ceremony. However, according to Sylvia Pankhurst, when Elizabeth became pregnant, Ursula Bright persuaded them to marry claiming that their refusal would damage the suffrage cause. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p.31. See also, 'Free Love and Victorian Feminism: The Divers Matrimonials of Elizabeth Wolstenholme and Ben Elmy', in *Victorian Studies*, Winter 1994, vol 37, no.2. pp.199-222.



Richard Pankhurst in 1879



Emmeline Pankhurst at the time  
of her marriage



Sylvia, Adela and Christabel Pankhurst c. 1892.

League, and as a teenager she had attended suffrage meetings with her mother. Thus, Emmeline Pankhurst already had a political awareness when she first met Richard Pankhurst, although his influence should not be under-estimated. Unusually for the time, Emmeline had been chosen instead of her brother to study abroad and whilst in France she broadened her political experience encountering Republicanism, a pet subject of Richard Pankhurst's. In most accounts of the Pankhursts by themselves and others, Richard Pankhurst is portrayed as a great academic whilst Emmeline is represented as flamboyant and politically ignorant at the time of their meeting. Rebecca West, in her essay on Mrs Pankhurst from *The Post-Victorians* (1933) described their union as 'an astounding match' adding that 'he was a saint who had put all weaknesses behind him and wore himself out in acts of benevolence' whilst Emmeline 'was just a wicked little thing, fond of pretty clothes and French novels'.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, West concedes that Emmeline was totally committed to her husband pointing out that 'Not the bitterest critic of Mrs Pankhurst ever suggested that her husband did not find her, from beginning to end of the nineteen years of their marriage, a perfect wife'.<sup>29</sup>

It is fair to assume that a set of common ideals formed the basis for the union of Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst and within a short time of their marriage, Richard Pankhurst attempted to enter the mainstream political arena, standing unsuccessfully as an Independent candidate at a by-election in

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<sup>28</sup> R. West, 'A Reed of Steel', in Jane Marcus (ed) *The Young Rebecca, Writings of Rebecca West 1911-1917* p.246.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid p.246-7.

Manchester in 1883. It may well have been the case that marriage had given Richard Pankhurst the added confidence to pursue his political aspirations at a time when many 'political wives' were being recognised as having a useful part to play in the male dominated political arena. Emmeline may have been *politically naïve at the beginning of the contest but by the end she had first hand* experience of propaganda techniques which she was to develop and utilise in later campaigns. Although not elected, Pankhurst polled a quarter of the votes cast and his campaign expenses were £500 in comparison to the £5000 spent by his opponent. Undoubtedly, the twenty-five year old Emmeline injected vitality into the campaign demonstrating that she could not only support her husband but was perfectly capable of contributing in her own right. Her subsequent involvement in the electoral campaigns of 1885 and 1895 are testimony to the political learning curve she experienced.

The result of the by-election also brought to a head relations of a personal nature. Richard and Emmeline, with their two *small children*, Christabel and Sylvia, had been living in the Goulden family home since their marriage and although Emmeline's father had supported Richard Pankhurst thus far in his political endeavours, after the by-election Robert Goulden made his displeasure of Richard Pankhurst's social-extremism clear. The result being that the Pankhurst family left the Goulden home and Emmeline severed all ties with her father.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> According to various accounts, Emmeline Pankhurst's dispute with her father was based upon his refusal to give her a property - something he had apparently promised her when she married.

At this point it is worth considering how Richard Pankhurst influenced Emmeline's later views, in particular her decision to allow Frederick Pethick-Lawrence to play such an integral part in the campaign for women's suffrage at the beginning of the 20th century. There were strong similarities between the two men in terms of profession and political ideals and perhaps Emmeline saw Fred Pethick-Lawrence as a political substitute for Richard Pankhurst. Moreover, Fred Pethick-Lawrence's gift of a flat to his wife Emmeline on the first anniversary of their marriage can only have served to reinforce Mrs Pankhurst's initially high opinion of him, given her own experience of patriarchy and property.

Undeterred by his failure to win a seat in Manchester in 1883, Richard Pankhurst stood again two years later in Rotherhithe, London. Emmeline's support for her husband in his endeavours and her own political acumen are revealed in a letter she wrote to Caroline Biggs before the General Election of November 1885. Asking if 'anything would be done by our Suffrage friends in London to assist metropolitan candidates favourable to the cause in the approaching general election', Emmeline was clear in her request for support, writing:

'My husband as perhaps you already know is the Liberal candidate for...Rotherhithe. He has been unanimously chosen by the Liberal and Radical Association and is being very cordially and earnestly supported. Will the women of London assist him in his Candidature? Dr Pankhurst's long connection with and the services he has rendered to the cause of Women's Suffrage justly entitle him to any aid they may give in the contest which no doubt will be a severe one. Should he be successful women will have gained an earnest advocate of their cause in the House of Commons. Knowing as I do what he has done and suffered to promote the happiness independence and well being of all

women I feel justified in asking that those women who have it in their power to assist his candidature should in that way mark their appreciation of long and faithful public service in the great cause of Humanity....We share with you the desire to make life worth living for the great masses who are now helpless and hopeless.<sup>31</sup>

In her 1959 account of the Rotherhithe election, Christabel Pankhurst wrote that 'Mother now rather more free of maternal cares, entered into the Rotherhithe campaign' entering the field in advance of her husband.<sup>32</sup> Given that at this time Emmeline had four young children it is perhaps inevitable that Sylvia Pankhurst subsequently felt resentment at the fact that Christabel as the first born had been nursed by her mother whilst she and her other siblings were left in the charge of nannies. However, it was not uncommon during this period for children of those who could afford it to be cared for by charges and it can also be seen as indicative of Emmeline's organisational skills as well as her commitment to her husband in his political endeavours.

The Rotherhithe seat proved to be a dirty contest and Pankhurst's Tory opponent, Colonel Hamilton was vitriolic in his attempts to undermine his status in a number of ways. During the campaign, Richard Pankhurst's religious views were brought under the microscope. He was accused by Hamilton of being an atheist and although his supporters rallied to his defence with character references, the accusation was to prove too damaging. Jacob Bright

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<sup>31</sup> E. Sylvia Pankhurst papers, the International Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, available on microfilm at the British Library of Political and Economic Science, (hereafter referred to as SP papers).333, Letter from Emmeline Pankhurst to Caroline Biggs, August 1885.

<sup>32</sup> Pankhurst, *Unshackled* pp.24-25.

speaking at a meeting in support of Richard Pankhurst at the Drill Hall, Bermondsey on 3 November 1885 explained to the audience that ‘when it was difficult to find anything in a man’s character to attack it was not an uncommon device to say that he was an atheist’.<sup>33</sup> Richard Pankhurst had the full support of the Manchester press and several letters were read out at the meeting including one from Henry Dunckley, the editor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times* also known as ‘Verax’ who wrote:

Dear Sir,

I see...that Colonel Hamilton, the Conservative candidate for the Rotherhithe division says...The great question is where has he (Dr Pankhurst) been all his life for nobody knows him in Manchester. Permit me, as a Manchester man, intimately connected with Manchester politics for the last thirty years, to assure you, as a friend of Dr Pankhursts that no statement could be more utterly and ridiculously untrue. Everybody in Manchester knows Dr Pankhurst. Anybody who says that he does not know Dr Pankhurst does not know Manchester. He is known, moreover, and has been known for many years past, as one of our ablest speakers and most advanced politicians....His friends in Manchester may be counted by thousands, who admire him for his lofty enthusiasm, and I will venture to add, for his blameless life.<sup>34</sup>

Another advocate of Richard Pankhurst, Hugh Mason, MP for Aston-under-Lyne, sent apologies for not being able to attend the meeting but felt compelled to act as a character witness for him. Remembering the ‘Great Bishop’ of Manchester’s description of Pankhurst as ‘a little man with a big brain’, Mason added that ‘he is a sound politician and a very clever fellow’.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> SP papers, 339, *Manchester Examiner and Times* 4 November 1885.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

In promotional literature announcing his candidature, emphasis was placed on Richard Pankhurst's commitment to several causes including the right of women to vote. Described as:

an assiduous student of the Science of Politics though always a man of advanced opinions and devoted to principle, he is no mere doctrinaire, but is distinctly a practical man in politics, both Imperial and Local, as attested by public work done. Holding "firmly as the foundation of his public life, the great leading principles of free government, and progressive politics," he has always been at once consistent and active in all the great political and social movements of his time.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, Richard Pankhurst became involved in a libel case after his description of the Holy Ghost as 'the foggy member of the Trinity' and apparently, in true barrister style, stated that he should like to examine the Holy Ghost's credentials in the witness-box.<sup>37</sup> According to West, Richard Pankhurst felt compelled to bring a libel action, 'not so much for his own sake as to bring a test case which would show how far socialist [sic] candidates could find remedy in the new libel law for the flood of slanderous abuse that was turned on them at every election'.<sup>38</sup> During the court case, Emmeline Pankhurst was unequivocal in her assessment of the circumstances that had led to her husband's court appearance, accusing the judge of colluding to:

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 'Dr Pankhurst, the Liberal Candidate for Rotherhithe'.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in P. Brendon, *Eminent Edwardians*, (Secker & Warburg, London, 1979) p.148.

<sup>38</sup> Rebecca West, 'A Reed of Steel', p.248.

a conspiracy to crush the life of an honourable public man. It is to be regretted that there should be found on the English bench a judge who will lend his aid to a disreputable section of the Tory party in doing their dirty work; but for what other reason were you ever placed where you are?<sup>39</sup>

This is an early example of the spirit shown by Emmeline Pankhurst in later years and the first of several attempts to get herself imprisoned for contempt of court. According to Piers Brendon, the judge *wisely* (my emphasis) chose to ignore this act of provocation, ‘recognizing a member of the “shrieking sisterhood” when he heard one’.<sup>40</sup>

Christabel Pankhurst believed it to be the case that her father’s defeat at Rotherhithe was due to the Irish vote cast against all Liberal candidates in an effort to secure Home Rule for Ireland. Patricia Romero’s observation that the ‘question mark’ concerning his religious views brought about his defeat, coupled with his stance on republicanism, including his call for the House of Lords to be abolished, seems more plausible.<sup>41</sup>

Although unsuccessful, Richard Pankhurst’s efforts were acknowledged by the Rotherhithe branch of the Liberal and Radical party in a sycophantic tribute:

Sir, we are desirous of placing upon record our most cordial appreciation of your work as representative of the Liberal and radical

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<sup>39</sup> Brendon, *Eminent Edwardians*, p.148.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. It is also worth noting that the term “shrieking sisterhood” was not even in use at this time.

<sup>41</sup> Pankhurst, *Unshackled* p. 24; P.Romero, *E. Sylvia Pankhurst. Portrait of a Radical*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1987) p.8.

party in the Rotherhithe Division of the Borough of Southwark in the General Election of Nov 1885.

Emphasising his commitment and professionalism it was noted that:

Your persistent refusal throughout the contest, under circumstances of the greatest provocation, to make use of, or reply to personalities obtained our heartiest approval and warmest sympathy whilst your lucid and exhaustive expositions of Liberal principles supplied that political education for which we as a party can never fail to be grateful.

Whilst commiserating with Pankhurst's failure they confidently assured him that

...the day is not far distant when your brilliant intellect inspiring eloquence, timeless energy, dauntless courage, and invincible principles will be known in the House of Commons.

Most importantly, they acknowledged that Richard Pankhurst had benefited from the support of other key individuals during the campaign and to that end they recognised that,

as a record this memorial would be incomplete did it omit mention of the energetic work done by Mrs Pankhurst for the noble spirit of wifely devotion and self denying patriotism she has shown, we have felt the greatest admiration.<sup>42</sup>

Whilst the tribute is most revealing about contemporary language, it is interesting that Emmeline's efforts were publicly acknowledged and could be interpreted as recognition of the Pankhursts' joint political endeavours and interests.

It is worth considering how both Richard and Emmeline's respective political careers have been represented by others, not least their own children.

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<sup>42</sup> SP papers, 339, Tribute to Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst, 4 March 1886.

According to Christabel, 'Mother's career began with her marriage. This admitted her to a share in the political activities of her husband and so exercised and developed her own innate powers'.<sup>43</sup> Richard Pankhurst, on the other hand, had his career thwarted as a result of his support for women's suffrage and never got the recognition he deserved:

His championship of woman suffrage was the action that counted most against him, especially when he began it, in the 1860's....The cause was ridiculed then, as indeed it was, even if in decreased measure, until women's militancy struck the smile from the face of the scoffers.<sup>44</sup>

Emmeline's career of motherhood started shortly after her marriage. Between 1880 and 1885, she gave birth to four children; Christabel in 1880, Sylvia in 1882, Frank in 1884, and Adela in 1885. In 1888, Frank died from diphtheria and in 1889, another son, Harry was born. The early years saw the Pankhursts leading a semi-nomadic existence, constantly on the move. After Richard Pankhurst's defeat at Rotherhithe, they stayed in London and Emmeline, unusually for the time, opened a shop, *Emerson and Company*, selling items influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, including the designs of William Morris. The shop was not a success financially and, arguably, Emmeline had spread herself too thinly, attempting to accompany her husband on his frequent trips to Manchester.

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<sup>43</sup> Pankhurst, *Unshackled*, p.23.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p.24.

From 1885 onwards, Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst became involved with a number of organisations including the Fabian Society, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and, in 1889, after the birth of their last child, they were involved in the formation of the Women's Franchise League (WFRL).<sup>45</sup> The WFRL had been founded, primarily, to support equal voting rights for married women and its two main objectives were first, 'to extend to women, whether unmarried, married, or widowed, the right to vote at Parliamentary, Municipal, Local and other elections on the same conditions which qualify men' and second, 'to establish for all women equal civil and political rights with men'.<sup>46</sup> Given the basis upon which the Pankhurst's partnership had been founded, and the significance of married women's rights in their own relationship, this would have been an ideal opportunity for them both to have been involved in something of the utmost importance to them personally and politically. Both Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst were on the Executive Committee alongside Mr and Mrs P.A. Taylor, Mr H. N. Mozley, Mrs Fenwick Miller and Mrs M'Ilquham. Alice Scatcherd was the Treasurer, Agnes Sunley the organising agent and Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy the Secretary. In explanation as to why it had been necessary to found the League, it was stated:

This League has been founded by some of the oldest and most devoted of the friends of justice to women, partly because of their profound dissatisfaction with the conduct of the existing Women's Suffrage

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<sup>45</sup> In order to distinguish from the Women's Freedom League (WFL), I am using the abbreviation WFRL.

<sup>46</sup> WSC, M50/2/32/1 Women's Franchise League Pamphlet.

Societies, whose actions show them to be what one of their members recently declared them to be, “hopelessly divided on the question whether wives should have votes”.<sup>47</sup>

This was a direct reference to Lydia Becker who had written to the *Manchester Guardian* on 16 April 1889 and whom Richard Pankhurst had fallen out with some fifteen years previously. The League, however, finding itself at odds with other suffrage societies which preferred to concentrate on the enfranchisement of unmarried and widowed women, pursued its stated aims and this led to a degree of animosity with the League in a pamphlet entitled *Is Marriage a Failure?* accusing other suffrage organisations of pursuing a ‘cowardly policy’. The WFRL also served as a platform for Richard Pankhurst to draw attention to other causes unrelated to women’s suffrage and through the organisation he published a pamphlet entitled *The House of Lords and the Constitution*.

It is also significant that the WFRL made a point of explaining that its membership was open to men and women although, arguably, given the nature of its stated aims, it would have been more likely to attract married women and, ergo, an element of male support:

The League...is not an organisation of women only, since one of the root principles of its promoters is, that neither by man alone, nor by woman alone, but by the conjoint and collective action of the two halves of humanity can justice be secured. The Provisional Committee, therefore, cordially invite the co-operation of all men who believe that so long as injustice reigns within the family, and poisons the relations of men and women, so long it is idle to look for ascendancy of justice in social and international relations.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Richard Pankhurst had, several years prior to his marriage, been an advocate of married women's rights and this was, perhaps, one of the reasons why Emmeline was attracted to him.

At the Inaugural Meeting of the WFRL held on 25 July 1889, Richard Pankhurst spoke at length of the 'equal participation of men and women in political and social rights and duties' explaining:

That whatever reasons there were for that principle 25 years ago, those reasons are immensely greater now. We see how necessary to a great people public virtue, public spirit, public enthusiasm are; and we know that any excluded class is injured in itself and is a loss to the State. No excluded class is safe in its rights, nor is it ever equal to its duties. Every class must come into the political system, both to get justice and to do justice. Therefore we may formulate our principle on the political side by saying: we demand the equal citizenship of all - men and women alike. Equality of citizenship, - that is one great maxim of modern politics.<sup>49</sup>

The WFRL attracted interest on both sides of the Atlantic and another early supporter was Harriot Stanton Blatch, the daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the American Suffragist.

The League's leadership was comprised of two generations of Radical suffragists and as Holton has observed, 'it was in this organisation that the Radical perspective on women's citizenship at last found full expression'.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, M50/2/32/2 Report of proceedings at the Inaugural Meeting of the WFRL, 25 July 1889.

<sup>50</sup> Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p.76.

Moreover, women's suffrage was perceived by Radical suffragists as an essential, integral measure if the rights of married women were to be advanced. Alice Scatterd endorsed this at the inaugural meeting, stating 'I, for one, am perfectly tired of joining societies which fight only for the little bit, a little shred, a little fragment of freedom'.<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, there were tensions within the WFRL membership in relation to other issues that were soon to impact on the leadership. Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, the Secretary, and her husband Ben Elmy had been advocates of the Fair Trade League whilst Jacob Bright had wholly endorsed the principle of free trade. In 1886, Wolstenholme Elmy had personalised their differing viewpoints in leaflets written for the Fair Trade League.<sup>52</sup> When Ursula and Jacob Bright made their presence felt in the League, Wolstenholme Elmy was suspicious of the motivation behind their involvement and was, apparently, convinced that Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst had conspired to get the Brights involved as part of a ploy to re-establish Charles Dilke (a mutual friend of the Pankhursts and the Brights) into mainstream politics on a ticket combining the rights of women and the independent representation of labour.<sup>53</sup> Wolstenholme Elmy subsequently resigned as secretary of the League but had hoped that the differences between her and the rest of the leadership could be resolved at a special executive committee meeting. However, when

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<sup>51</sup> WSC, M50/2/32/2 Report of Inaugural proceedings, p.22.

<sup>52</sup> Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p.77.

<sup>53</sup> See *Ibid.* p77-78. Charles Dilke had been involved in a divorce scandal which had harmed him politically.

the committee did not reinstate her as secretary, Wolstenholme Elmy resigned from the League completely and her position was jointly filled by Harriot Stanton Blatch and Ursula Bright.<sup>54</sup>

As Holton has discussed, the impact of the League is hard to assess as few records have survived<sup>55</sup> but the innovative nature of the organisation for its time cannot be underestimated. Also interesting, is the semi-autocratic leadership of the League from which dissenters were expelled. Indeed, it could be argued that there would seem to be a direct comparison between Wolstenholme Elmy's fate and that of the Pethick-Lawrences at the hands of the WSPU leadership.

Wolstenholme Elmy went on to establish another organisation entitled the Women's Emancipation Union (WEU) with aims almost identical to those of the WFRL. However, there was one key difference that resulted in a direct confrontation between the supporters of both organisations. Whilst the WFRL refused to accept any measure that did not explicitly include married women, the WEU, though not supportive of bills which expressly excluded married women, were prepared to lend support to measures bringing less than full equality in the franchise laws.

In 1892, Sir Albert Rollit, the Conservative MP, introduced a new women's suffrage Bill which was not an equal suffrage measure. However, it would have permitted those women who already held local government

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<sup>54</sup> For a full account of Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy's involvement with the Women's Franchise League see Holton's chapter on her in *Suffrage Days*, pp.7-26.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid p.79.

franchises to vote in parliamentary elections which would have included some married women. The League was strongly opposed to the Bill and this seems to have provoked Wolstenholme Elmy into offering the ultimately unsuccessful Bill her vigorous support.<sup>56</sup>

The WFRL issued a call asking working men and women to attend a London demonstration being held in support of the Bill in April 1892, 'in support of labour and justice to all'.<sup>57</sup> Three members of the Executive Committee including Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst wrote to the editor of the *Daily News* to make a categorical statement about the League's position, explaining that it was 'the old and true members of the League [who] opposed the Bill of Sir Albert Rollit'.<sup>58</sup> The call was signed by a number of people including, Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst, Ursula Bright, Alice Scatcherd and George Lansbury. On the day of the meeting, Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy and her husband arrived at the hall to prepare for the meeting whereupon they found the WFRL and its supporters already present and busy leafleting seats prior to attempting to take over the platform. Although they were prevented from doing so, once the meeting was underway, Herbert Burrows, a member of the SDF who had signed the call and was representing the WFRL, 'stormed the stage from the floor of the meeting, overturning the reporters' table in the process'.<sup>59</sup> Needless to say, the press had a field day with both sides

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.84.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.85.

<sup>58</sup> SP papers, WFRL Letter to the Editor of the *Daily News*, 28 April 1892.

<sup>59</sup> Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p.85.

claiming to have been the victims of violence. After the incident, Harriot Stanton Blatch defected from the WFRL and Herbert Burrows was asked to provide the League with a written account of the day's events (which he apparently declined to do).

It would seem to be the case that Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst remained committed to the League at this time with Ursula Bright writing to Emmeline Pankhurst that Harriot Stanton Blatch 'is not a strong soul like old Mrs Cady Stanton'.<sup>60</sup> Bright also relied on Emmeline Pankhurst for advice on how to mobilise political forces revealing the extent of Pankhurst's own political experience by now. In the years that followed, the key personnel of the League diversified their interests and by 1897, Alice Scatcherd was the mainstay of the organisation until it faded away completely. The WFRL never affiliated itself with the NUWSS which was formed in 1897 as arguably, it considered its aims as being wider than those advocated by the NUWSS. Nevertheless, the WFRL continued to use any occasion possible to bring the question of women's suffrage to the fore including the Queen's *fiftieth Jubilee* when a memorial of 3000 'representative women' was organised.<sup>61</sup>

In 1893, the Pankhurst family left London, moving first to Southport and then to Disley, in Chester, until Dr Pankhurst's health improved whereupon they returned to Manchester. The WFRL disbanded and Emmeline Pankhurst became a member of the executive of the Lancashire and Cheshire Union of

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<sup>60</sup> SP papers, 325 U. Bright to E. Pankhurst, 5 November 1893.

<sup>61</sup> Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p.101.

Women's Liberal Associations thus demonstrating her continued involvement in political activity.

Like other partnerships, the Pankhursts underwent a political transition in terms of the development of their beliefs and this was reflected in the causes they chose to support and undoubtedly influenced by the company they kept. Certainly, Richard Pankhurst's legal work brought him into contact with a number of eminent figures, including James Bryce.

Arguably, one of the reasons the Pankhursts were attracted to the fledging ILP was that women, allegedly, had the opportunity to play a central role in formulating party policy and as speakers. Whilst other parties had formed women's sections the ILP did not appear to restrict the involvement of women and had among its early supporters a number of well-educated women including Enid Stacy, Carolyn Martyn and Katharine St. John Conway.

In September 1894, the Pankhursts formally joined the ILP and within three months Emmeline Pankhurst had succeeded in being elected as the ILP candidate to the Chorlton Board of Poor Law Guardians. In May of the following year, Richard Pankhurst was selected as the ILP candidate for *Gorton, an industrial suburb of Manchester*. In 1894, Richard Pankhurst had demonstrated that his commitment to the Labour cause overrode his own views on religion when he supported Frank Smith, a Christian Socialist who was fighting a by-election.

The General Election of May 1895, was to prove disastrous for the ILP; not one of the 28 candidates put forward was elected whilst Keir Hardie lost his West Ham seat. Accounts of Richard Pankhurst's election experience at

Gorton are interesting. Gorton had been a Liberal seat but the sitting MP, Sir William Mather, had chosen not to stand again. According to Sylvia Pankhurst, it was only when her father's candidature was announced that the Liberal Association decided to enter another candidate. Although Pankhurst had the support of the retiring Liberal MP, the President of the Liberal Association agreed to contest the seat but withdrew less than a week later.<sup>62</sup> The Manchester press debated whether Richard Pankhurst should receive Liberal support and Emmeline Pankhurst was unsuccessful in securing the Irish vote on behalf of her husband. A similar scenario to the Rotherhithe election was taking shape and once again Pankhurst was the victim of his own circumstances. Whilst he was clearly admired at an individual level, the party which he was representing was an unknown quantity and the Gorton electorate as elsewhere were not prepared to endorse Pankhurst's faith in the ILP and perhaps, more importantly, in the figurehead wearing a cloth cap. Undeterred, Richard Pankhurst lost no opportunity to eulogise Keir Hardie, reminding the voters that 'When Keir Hardie stood up in the House of Commons for the people, with a faithful, earnest, manly appeal, he stood alone...are you not going to send other men to support him?'<sup>63</sup> In the event, the answer was no, although as Howell has remarked, Pankhurst clearly attracted support from the great majority of normally Liberal voters, gaining 42.1 per cent of the vote.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement* p.133

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p.134

<sup>64</sup> D. Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888-1906*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983) p.223.

Moreover, Pankhurst emphasised the military element of the contest describing it as ‘“a soldiers” battle’.<sup>65</sup>

Christabel Pankhurst’s account of her parent’s move towards Socialism emphasises their mutual belief that the movement would succeed where other parties had failed and specifically for Emmeline that there might exist ‘the means of righting every political and social wrong’.<sup>66</sup> However, she also points out that it was Emmeline who was keener to join and perhaps, in part, this explains why the Pankhursts did not formally join until a year after the ILP was founded. According to Christabel, her father’s hesitation was based on past experience and a fear of being snubbed by colleagues: ‘Sympathy might be given from outside; identification would be a different and a serious thing’.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps, more relevant, is Christabel’s observation that he questioned whether he had the ‘life and strength left to fight the position’. Nevertheless, Richard Pankhurst is presented as being ‘the first man of his sort and standing in the city, perhaps in the whole country, to join the Labour movement’.<sup>68</sup> Although Christabel’s claim is grossly exaggerated, there was one incident which was to bring the Pankhurst family to prominence within the labour movement and is of value to a study of political partnerships. This incident has also been neglected by recent feminist historians despite its importance in aiding our understanding of the Pankhursts.

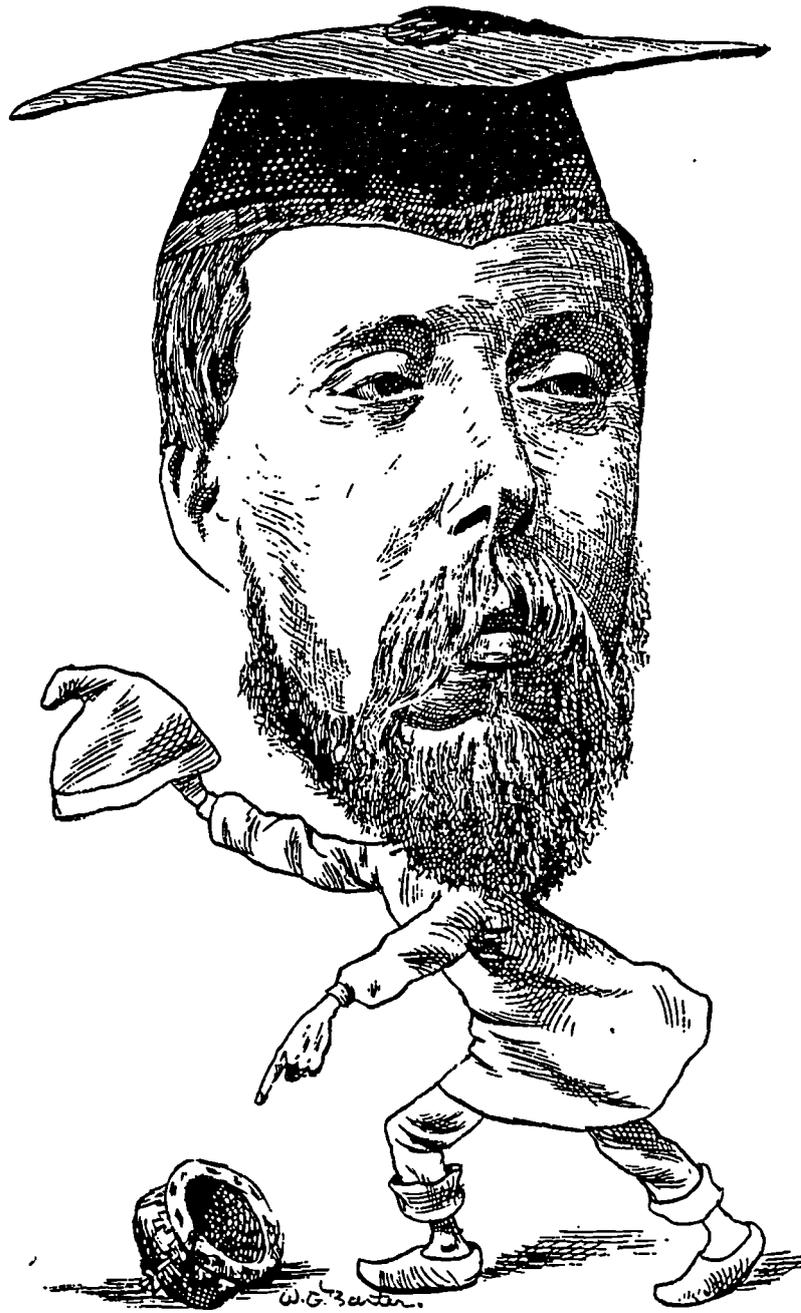
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<sup>65</sup> SP papers, *The Manchester Examiner and Times* n.d.

<sup>66</sup> Pankhurst, *Unshackled* p.32.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



DR. PANKHURST.

"THE DOCTOR". W. G. Barter's impression of Dr Richard Pankhurst, champion of the working classes

## 1.2 LESSONS IN POLITICAL STRATEGY.

In the spring of 1896, Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst became involved in the 'Boggart Hole Clough' dispute and this was to prove to be of great importance in the political development of Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia. Boggart Hole Clough was an area of land which had been used by the Manchester ILP for meetings every Sunday during the summer months for a number of years. In May 1896, the city's Parks Committee took the decision to ban ILP meetings. The rationale given was that 'they detracted from the serenity of the Clough' but as Rosen has observed, the decision was more overtly political - the chairman of the Parks Committee had been opposed by the ILPer, John Harker, in a recent election.<sup>69</sup>

On Sunday 10 May, police informed the ILP speakers that if they did not stop the meeting they would be booked. The speakers refused and although their names were taken, no charges were brought forward. Attempts to ban the meetings were viewed as a direct threat to the concept of free speech and by definition, the very ethos the ILP espoused. It was, therefore, unsurprising that the following week a crowd of approximately 1200 people gathered, keen to see how their presence would be dealt with. John Harker was charged with 'occasioning an annoyance' and was defended in court by Richard Pankhurst.<sup>70</sup> Harker was found guilty and fined ten shillings. Pankhurst appealed against the verdict but was unsuccessful in getting it overturned.

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<sup>69</sup> Rosen, *Rise Up Women!* p.19

<sup>70</sup> See the *Labour Leader* 23 May 1896 for a full account.

Harker's arrest did not deter a meeting being held the following week and on this occasion, seven people were charged. Once again, Richard Pankhurst defended them pointing out that, 'the holding of a meeting was a lawful act, and a lawful act could not be an annoyance'.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, all seven including, once again, Harker, were found guilty and fined. Despite Pankhurst's lack of success, the ILP must have found him an extremely useful ally at this time and it is highly improbable that he would have charged for his services. It is also possible to perceive the attraction of Fred Pethick-Lawrence (who represented hundreds of suffragettes in court) for Emmeline Pankhurst. A few years later he was to act effectively, on behalf of her husband as much as for her and the other women.

By 7 June, the situation was becoming more serious with crowds of around 4000 reported to have travelled to the Clough.<sup>72</sup> Yet again, Harker was summonsed along with eight others, including for the first time, Emmeline Pankhurst. Interestingly, the case against her was dismissed which no doubt prompted her into continuing her protest - if the courts were going to dismiss her actions on the basis of her gender, she was clearly going to take a stand. For nearly twenty years Emmeline Pankhurst had publicly endorsed equal rights and believed that they should include her right to the same treatment as her male comrades.

By now, Harker and another defendant, Leonard Hall, had been imprisoned for their refusal to pay the fines imposed on them and Emmeline

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<sup>71</sup> SP papers, accounts in the *Manchester Guardian* 4 and 13 June 1896.

<sup>72</sup> Rosen, *Rise Up Women!* p.20.

Pankhurst was fully prepared to follow their example. Two weeks after her first summons was issued, she spoke at the Clough to a crowd of 12,000 people. The propaganda techniques of the ILP, largely due to Emmeline Pankhurst's entrance into the dispute, were obviously effective in drawing ever-increasing numbers to the meetings and were undoubtedly helped by the press coverage given to the continuing saga. It may well have been the case that many attendees came out of curiosity rather than a strong sense of conviction, but nevertheless, it must have been a boost to the ILP and, in particular, Emmeline Pankhurst to receive that level of support. It was this endorsement of the rightness of her actions, if she needed it, that would have encouraged her to continue and it was a very effective way of ensuring that the public gaze was focused upon her. Additionally, it also proved to be good experience for the public speaking she was to undertake on the subject of women's suffrage to vast crowds a few years later.

At the meeting, Emmeline chose to talk about the life of William Cobbett, not least because Cobbett had addressed outdoor meetings and, perhaps less coincidentally, was the grandfather of the Manchester Corporation's prosecuting lawyer.<sup>73</sup> Once again, Emmeline was summonsed and at this point it is worth questioning how both Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst felt about the prospect of Emmeline spending time in prison. With four children aged between seven and sixteen, they must have discussed the implications of Emmeline's actions but decided that the benefits in terms of generating propaganda outweighed their children's temporary loss of a mother.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

There is also no reason to suppose that the older children, who were aware of the dispute, would not have been supportive of their parent's decision. Moreover, at a protest meeting held after Emmeline's 'Cobbett' speech, Richard Pankhurst made his position crystal clear informing the audience that his wife 'would accompany, no doubt, their excellent comrades Hall and Brocklehurst to prison, for nothing that could be undergone to maintain the sacred right of free speech was too great', further adding that 'he, very probably, would be one of the next to follow'.<sup>74</sup>

As a barrister, Pankhurst may have been better placed than others to estimate the likelihood of his wife being imprisoned and, arguably, he was able to articulate his sentiments confident that Emmeline would remain at liberty. As to his remark that he would follow her, again, it is unlikely that this would have been the case; his legal services were needed and up to that point he had not been directly identified as a speaker or organiser. Nevertheless, it was a bold statement and one that Emmeline never lost sight of in future campaigns, especially given the fact that he was in direct opposition to the very people who on many other occasions had employed his services. His commitment to supporting his wife and the LLP arguably cost him financially if his daughters' claims that he was denied work as a result of his beliefs is correct. It also demonstrates that the Pankhurst partnership was, in some respects, significantly 'ahead of its time'. Although one can only speculate as to the form and direction their partnership (in both a political and personal sense) would have taken had Richard Pankhurst lived to see the early part of the twentieth

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<sup>74</sup> SP papers, report in the *Manchester Guardian*, 30 June 1896.

century, the influence of Richard Pankhurst and the events at Boggart Hole Clough were of seminal importance in terms of influencing Emmeline Pankhurst's future political strategies.

Employing tactics used in later suffrage court cases, when Emmeline Pankhurst was tried on 3 July 1896, it was reported by the *Manchester Guardian* that she explained to the court how she was:

fully prepared to take the consequences of her act in speaking at the meeting, and she was aware when she spoke that very likely proceedings would be instituted against her. If the magistrates decided - illegally as she thought - to convict, she would not pay the fine, and she would be very indignant if anyone paid it on her behalf. She would not be bound over to keep the peace, which she had not broken. She put upon the bench the full responsibility of committing her to prison, and she was determined to repeat her conduct upon the first possible occasion.<sup>75</sup>

However, unlike later court cases involving Emmeline Pankhurst, the magistrate on this occasion adjourned the case for one week stating that his subsequent action would depend on what occurred the following Sunday. That evening, Emmeline Pankhurst told a crowd of 10,000 that she had been 'prepared to pass the night in Strangeways Gaol, and it was no fault of hers that she was not there' whilst Keir Hardie pointed out that the only reason she had not been imprisoned was that she was a 'women of the middle class' and the magistrate was fearful of the consequences of sentencing such a woman to prison.<sup>76</sup> It would have been interesting had the ILP found at this time, a

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, *Manchester Guardian* 4 July 1896.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

working-class woman to promote their cause but by this stage the attention Emmeline Pankhurst was attracting was obviously considered to have better value. Additionally, Emmeline Pankhurst may not have been willing to give way to a potentially better 'martyr' to the cause.

In direct response to the magistrate's 'wait and see' policy, the Pankhursts made Sunday 5 July a family affair bringing their daughters, Christabel and Sylvia to Boggart Hole Clough. They were accompanied by Keir Hardie and, in an early example of suffrage spectacle, drove to the Clough in an open barouche. Figures as to the size of the crowd were estimated to be between 25,000 and 40,000 and provide testimony both to the charismatic appeal of the Pankhursts and the innovation of their tactics at this time. Christabel and Sylvia were deployed to collect money for the ILP and Emmeline Pankhurst was not imprisoned for her deliberate act of defiance.

The following week, Leonard Hall was released and greeted by a crowd of 500 at the prison gates, a tactic later used by suffragettes. Given that most ILP supporters had to work during the day, that evening there was another gathering which according to Rosen, attracted 10,000 well-wishers.<sup>77</sup> When Brocklehurst was released on 18 July a ceremonial breakfast was held in his honour (which included the Pankhursts), not dissimilar to those held in the honour of suffrage prisoners upon their release.

By August 1896, the City council had succeeded in passing a new by-law prohibiting public meetings in all Manchester parks unless prior permission was obtained from the Parks committee. The clear aim behind this legislation

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<sup>77</sup> Rosen, *Rise Up Women!* p.22.

was to prevent the ILP from holding further meetings - the committee had no intention of granting them permission, but in a surprising twist, the Home Secretary refused to sanction the new by-law thereby ensuring that meetings could continue to be held in Manchester parks.<sup>78</sup>

As Rosen has observed, once the dispute was settled, attendance at ILP meetings dwindled considerably and in that regard, the saga of Boggart Hole Clough was not of signal importance so far as the history of the ILP is concerned.<sup>79</sup> However, Boggart Hole Clough was clearly a watershed in the political development of Emmeline Pankhurst and, arguably, her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia. Not only had they succeeded in gaining substantial publicity but they had also augmented a style of political agitation that was to prove crucial in promoting the cause of women's suffrage.

### 1.3 THE END OF AN ERA.

Richard Pankhurst died on 5 July 1898 from a perforated stomach ulcer. Emmeline had taken Christabel to Geneva and was returning to Manchester when she read of his death in a newspaper.<sup>80</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst was determined to ensure that a fitting memorial to her husband ensued and the words of Walt Whitman (a favourite of Katharine Bruce Glasier's) were

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> See Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp. 146-52 for Sylvia Pankhurst's account of her father's death.

inscribed on his headstone: 'Faithful and true - my loving comrade'. It would be churlish to suggest that their partnership had been anything else. Richard Pankhurst's funeral was attended by many from within socialist circles, including John Bruce Glasier who spoke tenderly beside the grave.<sup>81</sup>

Richard Pankhurst died intestate and in debt. It has been suggested that after his death, Emmeline Pankhurst lost interest in political matters but it was out of necessity rather than complacency that she gave her attention to work that would provide an income for her family. She refused to use money raised from the readers of Robert Blatchford's, *The Clarion*, to provide an education for her children arguing that the donators could not pay for their own children's needs. Instead, Emmeline used the money to build a Pankhurst Memorial Hall specifically for the use of Socialist societies. It subsequently materialised, however, that the branch of the ILP designated to use it refused to admit women.<sup>82</sup> This would, aside from the insult she felt, have been a contradiction of all that Richard Pankhurst stood for and must have impacted on her subsequent review of the ILP in general and specifically, its attitude towards women.

Nevertheless, the legacy of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst's political activism was sufficiently embedded in their children by the time of Richard's death that when the Boer war broke out the following year, Emmeline and her children actively opposed it. This resulted in Adela and Harry being physically

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Brendon, *Eminent Edwardians*, p.150.

and mentally abused at school but also cemented the general political commitment of the Pankhurst children.<sup>83</sup>

Although the political partnership of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst ended in 1898, before the intensification of the suffrage campaigns in the first decade of the twentieth century, it is significant to consider how Richard Pankhurst was being represented when militancy was at its height. On 12 April 1913, when the 'Cat and Mouse' Act was on the verge of being introduced, an anonymous contributor to the *Manchester City News* wrote the following memoir of Richard Pankhurst. It was almost fifteen years after his death:

There were two characteristics of Dr Pankhurst which beyond all others stick in the memories of those who knew him, his smile and his voice....The smile was not the smile of gaiety, nor of amusement. It was not the twinkle of the humorist. It was a smile of universal kindness and goodwill - such a smile as the visage of St. Francis may have worn. The voice was a natural alto, a thin piping treble, heaven knows how many octaves above the normal pitch.

It used to be amusing, in a way, to hear the Doctor, with that smile and in that voice, propounding the most blood curdling theories of government, and denouncing wrath to come on Kings, and Priests and Aristocrats. You knew that he would not hurt a fly, much less a fellow creature....<sup>84</sup>

This rather patronising description of Richard Pankhurst was, presumably, designed to be read as the antithesis of his widow and daughters and their activities.

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<sup>83</sup> Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, pp.155-6.

<sup>84</sup> *Manchester City News*, 12 April 1913.

Pankhurst's obituary in the *Manchester Guardian* emphasised his commitment to the idea of citizenship and referred to his involvement in the Boggart Hole Clough campaign:

In the pursuit of what he deemed the public good he was indifferent to considerations of a personal interest. Uncompromising in his opinions, he never entertained ill-will towards his opponents. Indeed his disposition was always kindly and genial.<sup>85</sup>

However, Helen Moyes, a former suffragette and journalist perceived him in rather different terms recalling in an interview with the American historian, Patricia Romero, that 'Men I knew who knew Dr Pankhurst and knew all about him said he was a "difficult" person and "rather arrogant" and "dogmatic" and he was rather likely to "antagonize rather than win people".'<sup>86</sup> This was precisely the sort of description given to the suffragettes and Pankhurst's family in particular. Also, it must be observed that this interview was recorded in 1976, almost 80 years after his death.

Although in some ways Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst may have appeared an unlikely match, this does not justify Piers Brendon's portrait of Richard Pankhurst, who 'with his carrot beard and a piping treble voice which often caused him to be mistaken for a woman, seemed an improbable key to bliss'.<sup>87</sup> Brendon, writing in the late 1970's and attempting to emulate the 'scandalising style' of Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians*, casts aspersions

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Romero, *Portrait of a Radical*, p.18.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Brendon, *Eminent Edwardians*, p.145.

on Richard Pankhurst's masculinity. However, the 'shrieking sisterhood', in other words the Pankhurst women, 'were all blessed with a vigorous longevity - the female of the species was more vital than the male':<sup>88</sup> a cheap shot at the premature deaths of Richard and Emmeline's two sons and of Pankhurst himself.

By examining the political partnership of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst in the late nineteenth century, it becomes possible to assess how the rest of the Pankhurst family's political partnerships developed in conjunction with an ever-changing political climate. Of course, one can only speculate as to the nature of Richard Pankhurst's involvement in the campaigns of the early twentieth century had he lived, although given his activism and commitment for women's enfranchisement, there is no reason to suppose he would not have continued to offer his full support.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, it is probable that he would have occupied the position afforded to Fred Pethick-Lawrence.

The Pankhursts, as a relational construct, figure in the other chapters in this thesis not as dominators of the suffrage campaigns but as contributors, who like many other individuals charted different paths which sometimes crossed, thus demonstrating the complexities of the familial dimensions of women's suffrage. In some cases however, these complexities were rather too close to home, as the next chapter demonstrates.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid p.147.

<sup>89</sup> Certainly other male family members, such as Emmeline Pankhurst's brother-in-law who joined the MLWS, demonstrated support.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **LIBERAL ALLIANCES AND DIVIDED LOYALTIES: BRYCE FAMILY POLITICS AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE**

Viscount James Bryce was a jurist, historian and politician and is perhaps best remembered as the author of *The Holy Roman Empire* (published in 1864) and as Britain's ambassador to Washington from 1906 - 1913. However, this chapter whilst not dismissing his role as a statesman and academic is more concerned with the involvement of James Bryce and his immediate and extended family, in the women's suffrage campaigns of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Neither James nor his wife, Marion Bryce, were in favour of women's suffrage but other family members (from both sides) held radically different opinions. As the suffrage and anti-suffrage campaigns developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they were to impact on Bryce familial relations in quite an extraordinary way. The Bryce family generally and specifically the partnership of James and Marion Bryce demonstrates the diversity of opinion within the women's suffrage movement, exposing how this single issue affected familial politics at a number of levels.

This chapter will firstly consider the backgrounds of James and Marion Bryce, offering some insight into their own brand of Liberal politics and how this was juxtaposed with the complex relationship between female emancipation, Victorian liberalism and the perceived threat of socialism. This will be followed by an analysis of the influences that shaped the respective beliefs of the Bryce family

and of how those altered and developed with the debates on women's suffrage. There are several reasons why, within this context, the Bryce family is of particular interest. First, James Bryce, whilst not a supporter of women's suffrage, was heavily involved with a range of issues pertinent to women, not least women's education. As author of *The American Commonwealth* (1888), he offered his own analysis and interpretation of women's suffrage in America and made comparisons to the movement in both Europe and Britain. Moreover, as Bryce was Ambassador to Washington during the years of suffrage militancy, this chapter will encompass some consideration of the international perspective of women's suffrage, allowing for a discussion of how women's suffrage in England and America was perceived on both sides of the Atlantic and the extent to which American politics reinforced the Bryce's personal political views.

James Bryce's wife, Marion Bryce, chose to support her husband's anti-suffrage opinions, although there is evidence to suggest that she was not as fundamentally opposed to the idea as he was. Moreover, she was a politically active woman who was a key member of the Women's National Liberal Association (WNLA) and came from a political background. Her father was Thomas Ashton, a banker and a prominent Liberal in Lancashire and her sister was Margaret Ashton who was also a politically active liberal. Unlike her sister Marion, Margaret did not marry and, when the issue of women's suffrage came to the fore in liberal politics, chose to support the cause wholeheartedly. In this respect, the split within the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF) over the suffrage question can

be discussed from the personal perspective of two sisters and their conflicting loyalties.

James Bryce's brother was John Annan Bryce and as well as both being Liberal MPs the brothers shared the view that women's suffrage was not desirable. This accorded with the anti-suffrage stance of their two sisters, Mary and Katharine Bryce. However, John Annan Bryce was married to Violet L'Estrange who agreed with Margaret Ashton that women should be enfranchised.

In terms of the nature of the themes that I am considering, the Bryce family make an excellent case study. Examining the political relationship of James and Marion Bryce and then locating it within a broader and familial context will also mean considering the way in which Marion and James Bryce perceived their 'political selves' both independently and in relation to each other. It is particularly important to consider how women understood the structures of authority in their own world which necessitates looking at women's language and the meaning of their politics.

As Jane Rendall has pointed out, 'without entering into women's private worlds it is impossible to grasp the range of women's political activities.'<sup>1</sup> This also means acknowledging the extent of the relationship between gender and class in the political culture of both men and women during this period.

Neither the Bryce family nor the Ashtons have been written about in any great detail although James Bryce was the subject of H.A.L. Fisher's two volume biography first published in 1927. Pat Jalland (1986) gives a brief introduction to

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<sup>1</sup> J. Rendall (ed), *Equal or Different*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987), p.4.

the Bryce family and the contentious suffrage question in her analysis of the social and political roles and attitudes of politician's wives. In her exploration of the personal experiences of over fifty women from political families she devotes two chapters to 'political wives' observing that these women's lives were considerably more complex and diverse than 'conventional tributes and passing references in political biographies have suggested.'<sup>2</sup> Brian Harrison (1978) discusses Bryce's anti-suffrage views within the context of his association with men and women who were influential in developing an anti-suffrage network, especially through Oxford connections.<sup>3</sup>

The way in which James and Marion Bryce have been written about separately is indicative of a quintessentially Victorian tradition that prevailed in their thinking well into the twentieth century. In this respect, the approach I have taken in this chapter is, by necessity, more formally structured reflecting their own positions. Consideration of the circles they moved in and a discussion of their friendships is important in establishing how and why James Bryce dominates, both in their partnership and in this chapter.

James Bryce (1838-1922) was born in Belfast and was the eldest son of James Bryce the younger. He spent the first eight years of his life in Ireland and then moved to Glasgow when his father was appointed as a schoolmaster in the Glasgow High school. At fourteen, Bryce went to live with his uncle, the

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<sup>2</sup> Jalland, *Women Marriage and Politics*, p.228.

<sup>3</sup> B. Harrison, *Separate Spheres, The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, (Croom Helm, London, 1978).

headmaster of the Belfast Academy, where he studied until entering Glasgow University in 1854. He studied the classics excelling at almost everything including non-academic pursuits such as climbing.

In 1857, Bryce won a scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford where one of his contemporaries described him as 'that awful Scotch fellow, who outwrote everybody'.<sup>4</sup> A prolific prize winner, Bryce graduated in 1862 and was elected a fellow of Oriel College retaining his fellowship until his marriage. Many of the friendships he forged at Oxford continued throughout his life and it was there he first met A. V. Dicey and E. R. Freeman.<sup>5</sup>

Bryce entered Lincolns Inn in 1862 and the following year went to study law at Heidelberg which was where Marion Bryce's father, Thomas Ashton, had studied. In 1867, Bryce was called to the bar and joined the Northern circuit where he remained until giving up his practice in 1882. During this period he also spent time employed as an assistant commissioner making reports for the Schools Inquiry Commission (1864-1867) and in a letter to Freeman apologising for the absence of communication, he explained that it was caused 'by zeal for the service of my country and of the fair sex; for the examination of ladies' schools is a very important branch of the duties imposed on the Commissioners'.<sup>6</sup> In his report on

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<sup>4</sup> E.I. Carlyle, 'James Bryce' in J.R.H. Weaver, (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1930*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1937) p.128.

<sup>5</sup> Brian Harrison makes the connection between the anti-suffrage leadership network and Oxford in *Separate Spheres* pp.94-96. For an account of E. A. Freeman, see J. Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography* (MacMillan, London, 1920), pp.262-92.

Lancashire schools published in 1867, Bryce emphasised the need for educational co-ordination urging that any scheme should include universities, boys' and girls' schools, and elementary and secondary schools as part of a single plan. He also stressed the importance of improving the standard of female education and through his friendship with Emily Davies was involved with the establishment of Girton college. Bryce was also a regular correspondent with Henry Sidgwick, the philosopher and political economist, whose wife Nora, became principal of Newnham College in 1892. From March 1894 until August 1895 Bryce acted as chairman of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education (the Bryce Commission). It would have been whilst working the Northern circuit that James Bryce first met Richard Pankhurst and according to Christabel Pankhurst, James Bryce was a frequenter of meetings at the Pankhurst house where issues including peace, arbitration, industrial and social questions and women's suffrage were discussed.<sup>7</sup>

It is feasible to suggest that at this stage James Bryce had not formed particularly strong views on the suffrage question but as the debates gained impetus it became necessary for him to adopt a more formal position. Many of his peers at Oxford had already voiced their opposition to women's suffrage and in 1874, his friend, Goldwin Smith, an ardent opponent of women's suffrage, advised James Bryce against supporting it, writing to him: 'that is a point on which you will have

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<sup>6</sup> Bryce Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, (hereafter referred to as BP), MS Bryce 9/72 Letter from J.Bryce to Freeman, 22 May 1865.

<sup>7</sup> C. Pankhurst, *Unshackled*, p.28.

to be firm or to give up Liberalism and perhaps politics altogether'.<sup>8</sup> However, Goldwin Smith, found himself the subject of a poem after a letter he had written to a friend in England concerning the inadvisability of granting women's suffrage and refuting Mrs Fawcett's claims, appeared in *The Times*. Some extracts of the anonymous poem entitled 'To a Male Scold', follow:

Oh! Goldwin Smith, great Goldwin Smith,  
Who set such store by manly frith,  
You have a most effeminate fashion  
Of getting in a towering passion!  
Your last attack's a regular rough rage  
Excited by that Female Suffrage  
Which Salisbury, a solid person  
Can look at without a shriek or curse on  
I seem to see your angry jaw set  
Against the pleas of Mrs Fawcett.  
Since you took quarters with the Yankee,  
Your temper has been getting cranky...<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting that the author of the poem chose to describe the traits that Goldwin Smith was displaying as an example of the worst elements of 'femininity'. Presumably, as well as being insulting to him it was also making the point that despite the 'antis' arguments about women's 'emotional' nature making them unfit to vote, men also possessed this characteristic. It is also worth noting the implication that American politics had played a part in shaping his opinions. Nevertheless, Smith's views on suffrage remained sufficiently strong to prompt him

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<sup>8</sup> BP, MS Bryce 16/34 Goldwin Smith to James Bryce, 5 June 1874.

<sup>9</sup> WSC, Manchester Central Library, M50/2/1/83 Poem to a Male Scold, (n.d.).

to tell Bryce over thirty years later, 'I would almost rather see the Tories in power than vote for the last [women]'.<sup>10</sup>

Bryce's first attempt to be elected a Liberal MP in 1874 was unsuccessful but in 1880 he became the MP for Tower Hamlets, addressing the German immigrants in their own tongue. In the 1885 general election he won the safe seat of South Aberdeen which he held until retiring from the House of Commons in 1906. Upon entering parliament Bryce was soon dubbed 'the Professor' by Joseph Chamberlain and it has been suggested that despite his membership of three Cabinets, politics never held the prominence for him that it did for some of his contemporaries.<sup>11</sup> James Bryce was described as being a contrast to his brother, John, who was evidently a more extrovert character. James Bryce, 'while a Parliamentarian, was essentially bookish, and only as a diplomatist has he blossomed forth as an entertainer'.<sup>12</sup>

In particular, the Irish question was to prove difficult for Bryce and in the first few years of his parliamentary career it occupied much of his attention. In 1881, Bryce had reluctantly voted for the Coercion Bill although afterwards he thought he had made a mistake and the following year he voted against the Crimes Act. By 1885, Bryce had formed the opinion that Home Rule for Ireland was inevitable and he was to become heavily involved in the debates surrounding this eventually becoming Chief Secretary for Ireland in December 1905. When

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<sup>10</sup> BP, MS Bryce 17/28 Goldwin Smith to James Bryce, 3 March 1905.

<sup>11</sup> Carlyle, *D.N.B.*, p.130.

<sup>12</sup> BP, MS Bryce 505/18 *Eastern Morning News*, 31 December, 1909.

Gladstone came into office in February 1886, Bryce was offered the post of under-secretary for foreign affairs. As Pat Jalland (1980) has observed, Gladstone's decision to make no special provision for Ulster in 1886 was not based on complete ignorance of the problem, or a deliberate attempt to suppress it. Indeed, as John Morley revealed, Ulster was one of the 'knottiest points' discussed in the Cabinet.<sup>13</sup> Bryce took both his position and the threat which Ulster posed at this time seriously and after two visits to Ulster, his native country, he explained his views in the Feb 1886 issue of the *Nineteenth Century*. He warned that a serious risk of collision existed unless Ulster was given some measure of local autonomy to protect the Protestant minority and Ulster's economy: 'England ought to realise that here lies a difficulty which she cannot evade without dishonour nor neglect without the risk of civil war'.<sup>14</sup> Bryce presented his case more formally to the Cabinet early in March, but his advice was rejected and the Irish Secretary's personal view that the Ulster agitation was largely artificial, seems to have influenced the Cabinet more strongly.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, as Claire Hirshfield has pointed out, the Conservative government's Coercion and Crimes Acts of the early 1880's moved women who

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<sup>13</sup> P. Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland. The Ulster Question in British Politics to 1914*, (The Harvester Press, Brighton, 1980), p.53.

<sup>14</sup> J. Bryce, 'Alternative Policies in Ireland', *Nineteenth Century*, XIX (February 1886), p.326.

<sup>15</sup> PRO/CAB 41/19/29, Cabinet paper, 12 March 1886, quoted in P. Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland*, p.53.

had previously resisted active political involvement. Equally, the Liberal party's endorsement of Home Rule for Ireland attracted a significant number of women who regarded the Irish question as test of moral conscience to work for them.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, it was a subject that could potentially unite those who were divided over the suffrage question including prominent figures like Mrs Fawcett and A.V. Dicey. Indeed, responding to a request from Mrs Fawcett for a good report of a speech he had made, Dicey speculated on the difficulties of getting people to understand that it was possible for him to be in favour of women being granted the right to obtain university degrees and, at the same time, be opposed to Irish Home Rule. Given that Mrs Fawcett herself occupied a Unionist position, Dicey felt compelled to point out that 'if there were any inconsistency in advocating the admission of women to the Universities & opposing [sic] the concession of Home Rule to Ireland, you are the chief offender & no doubt have heard more than eno' [sic] about the matter'.<sup>17</sup> Concluding with the question 'are not our Unionist politicians living in a fool's paradise?' Dicey opined, 'I don't believe that Home Rule is dead, tho' [sic] I do believe that with energy and resolution we could now kill it.'<sup>18</sup>

In addition to his friends from Oxford, James Bryce had the support of his two unmarried sisters who, despite opportunities, had chosen to remain single and

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<sup>16</sup> C. Hirshfield, 'Fractured Faith: Liberal Party Women and the Suffrage Issue in Britain, 1892-1914', in *Gender & History*, no. 2, pp.172-97

<sup>17</sup> WSC, M50/3/1/22 Letter from A.V. Dicey to Mrs Fawcett, 7 March, 1896.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

dedicate their lives to furthering both James's and his brother John's careers. Pat Jalland has remarked on the intimate nature of letters written by the sisters to James which contained lines reading: 'Have we not much to be thankful for in our love for each other increasing as the years go on. My loving wishes dear one'<sup>19</sup> concluding that they could be read as those of a wife. It was Mary Bryce who thought that James should write a book about America in order to ingratiate himself with Gladstone and upon completion it was she who organised its publication and for A. V. Dicey to review it.<sup>20</sup> However, this relationship was to alter radically with the marriages of both brothers within six months of each other.

Marion Bryce (1853-1939) was the second daughter of Thomas Ashton, a prominent Manchester businessman who was an active member of the Manchester branch of the National Education League. Although a leading Liberal in Manchester, he declined invitations to stand for parliament leaving parliamentary politics to his son who was elected Liberal MP for Hyde in 1885. Marion Ashton was one of nine children of whom six were girls. Four of her sisters married local business men and municipal affairs were a shared common interest. Her sister Margaret Ashton (1856-1937) was the only daughter to remain single. Prior to her marriage to James Bryce, Marion was very involved in committee work for the Hyde Women's Liberal Association. With her sister Margaret, she sat on a number of committees which included finding employment for young girls, assisting young

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<sup>19</sup> Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p.266.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

teachers and helping in election campaigns. Another family connection was Eleanor Rathbone who was Marion and Margaret's cousin.

In October 1888, Marion Ashton attended her first meeting as president of the Hyde Women's Liberal Association. Her demeanour revealed her to be hesitant about her ability to fulfil the role. She explained she felt 'unfit for the post' and had never before 'stood upon a platform to address anybody' although she then proceeded to discuss the relationship between politics and the promotion of 'the full and rational exercise of all the rights of citizenship...'<sup>21</sup> Presiding over the following months meeting, a more confident Marion Ashton spoke about the election of County councillors. She called attention to the fact that whilst women could not stand they could vote and should do so in a climate where women were 'taking a much more intelligent interest in political and public questions'.<sup>22</sup> It is notable that Marion Ashton's increasing confidence coincided with the development of her relationship with James Bryce.

James Bryce met Marion's father, Thomas Ashton when he was in Lancashire working for the Schools Commission and subsequently when he was a barrister on the Northern circuit. It was this connection that led to James and Marion meeting and their subsequent marriage in July 1889. Earlier the same year, John Annan Bryce, James's brother had married Violet L'Estrange and, according to Jalland, the two marriages had a devastating effect on Mary and

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<sup>21</sup> BP, MS Bryce 497/19 Report of the October meeting of the Hyde Women's Liberal Association. 25 October 1888.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce, 497 18 Report of the Hyde Women's Liberal Association meeting, 29 November, 1888.

Katharine Bryce; the result being that by the end of 1889, both sisters had left the family home unable to cope with Violet Annan Bryce as the new mistress of the household.<sup>23</sup> It was perhaps prudent that Marion and James Bryce did not reside at the family home - the two sisters found Marion more acceptable than Violet - probably because she was less ostentatious and clearly made an effort to get on with them.<sup>24</sup> However, Marion at this time had problems closer to home; her sister Margaret was not in favour of James Bryce as a brother-in-law and Jalland asserts that Marion delayed the engagement for this reason.<sup>25</sup> Whilst this may have been a contributing factor, consideration also needs to be given to the response of Mary and Katharine Bryce to the news that they were 'losing' another brother and by implication losing their political power, albeit in terms of influence. Nevertheless, when Margaret finally conceded 'the worst', she wrote to James Bryce warning him that 'he would hardly be a welcome visitor'.<sup>26</sup> Whether Margaret Ashton's objections to Bryce were based solely on his suffrage views is difficult to ascertain as it is quite likely that she too would have felt resentful about losing her sister, not only in terms of their combined political activity but also to a band of anti-suffragists.

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<sup>23</sup> Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p. 266-8

<sup>24</sup> See for example, correspondence between James and Marion Bryce prior to their marriage which includes discussions of the success of meetings with his mother and sisters. BP, MS Bryce 449/1, 9 and 10 March 1889.

<sup>25</sup> Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p.34.

<sup>26</sup> BP, MS Bryce Adds 41, Margaret Ashton to James Bryce.

Writing to James Bryce prior to their marriage, Marion Ashton had already set the terms of how they, as a partnership, would function. Explaining to him that her feelings towards him made her feel humble at one level, she also felt proud and was,

more than ever determined to be a better woman than I have been, in order that I might help you the more...the thought that you have chosen me to help you in your life is a happiness so intense that sometimes it is almost pain.<sup>27</sup>

She was also aware (and rightly so) of how his friends might feel about James Bryce, the 'bastion' of male society, about to embark upon a marriage and hoped that 'they will look kindly upon me for your sake'.<sup>28</sup> Certainly, as John Tosh has articulated, masculine identity is developed and partly validated through male peer-groups<sup>29</sup> and James Bryce as part of an élite academic community and as a Member of Parliament would have been identified by his peers as holding a masculine identity of the highest order.

Shortly after his marriage, Bryce wrote to E.A. Freeman explaining,

...I want you to understand that my wife far from being a disjunctive particle wishes to be admitted among our friends...she says she doesn't

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce, 449 7 Letter from Marion Ashton to James Bryce, 11 March, 1889.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> J. Tosh, 'The Making of Masculinities The Middle Class in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain' in A.V. John, C. Eustance, (eds.), *The Men's Share?*, p.40.

understand how or why a wife can desire and draw a husband away from his friends.<sup>30</sup>

It is evident that Marion Bryce wanted to participate fully in her husband's circle but realised that it would have to be on the terms dictated by his friends and that she would have to win their approval. Given the circles that Bryce moved in, Marion Bryce could never hope to have anything other than a peripheral role and as Harrison has pointed out, both bachelors and married men lived largely as bachelors with clubs catering for their needs. In this sense Marion Bryce would only ever occupy a segment of her husband's time which rather contradicts Harrison's comment that 'she shared to the full the far-flung travels and numerous activities of her husband'.<sup>31</sup> However, exclusion from club membership was not always simply based on gender or class divisions and Winifred Holt's book, *A Beacon for the Blind*, about the life of Henry Fawcett, provides an illuminating insight into the kind of prejudices that male members of Victorian society were subjected to if they held anything less than full manhood. Henry Fawcett who had overcome the barrier of blindness and succeeded in being elected as an MP found himself the subject of some controversy when he attempted to gain membership of the Reform Club. The committee refused his application on the grounds that 'he would be helpless and in the way'. Although Fawcett received this news

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<sup>30</sup> BP, MS Bryce 9 282, Letter from James Bryce to E. A. Freeman, 22 August, 1889.

<sup>31</sup> Harrison, *Separate Spheres*, p.97. This comment is obviously based on H.A.L. Fisher's assertions in his biography of Bryce.

apparently with good humour, the novelist, William Thackeray, who was a member of the club was outraged and argued Fawcett's case to such an extent that the Reform Club reversed their decision.<sup>32</sup>

James Bryce had known Henry Fawcett and they had moved in the same social circles. When Holt's book was published in 1915, James Bryce wrote the foreword. Describing Fawcett as 'an old friend', Bryce spoke of how Fawcett secured not only the 'confidence of his political friends but the respect of his political opponents'.<sup>33</sup> Although Bryce located himself as a friend, their views on the suffrage question were clearly diametrically opposed. Nevertheless, as members of the same party, Bryce saw that allegiance as taking precedence. If, however, Fawcett had lived to see the events of the early twentieth century unfold it may well have been the case that suffrage would have impacted more on their friendship. Certainly, Mrs Fawcett commenting on the women's suffrage campaigns recalled when James Bryce spoke against suffrage in the House of Commons and later when,

the victory in the Commons was complete and sweeping but how would they fare in the Lords? We had great and important friends there including Lord Selborne and Lord Lytton but great and important enemies also. Lord Bryce, Lord Lansdowne and Lord Curzon, President of the Anti-Suffrage League.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> W.Holt, *A Beacon for the Blind. Being a Life of Henry Fawcett The Blind Postmaster-General*, (Constable & Co.Ltd., London, 1915), p.127.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, introduction.

<sup>34</sup> M. Garrett Fawcett, *What I Remember* (T. Unwin Fisher, London, 1924) p.235; 245.

James Bryce held membership of many clubs during his lifetime<sup>35</sup> and, indeed, five years after his death, a club was set up in his honour- perhaps the most masculine accolade possible. Rule two outlined the object of the club as being 'to discuss everything and drink mulled claret'.<sup>36</sup> At a special General Meeting of the Eighty Club, of which Bryce was a member, held at the National Liberal Club, on July 22nd 1884, a resolution was passed that was proposed by James Bryce and seconded by J.D.Fitzgerald.

That the members of the Eighty Club pledge themselves to use every exertion and to do all in their power, by assisting in organization, and by speaking, if required, at meetings, to secure the early passing of the Franchise Bill.<sup>37</sup>

In the previous month, Bryce had spoken in a House of Commons debate where he had asserted: 'There can be no more baseless assumption than that the polling-booth is the main source of influence in politics....Women already enjoy greater influence in other ways, both public and private, than the franchise would give them.'<sup>38</sup> Although he was opposed to extending the franchise to women, Bryce was

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<sup>35</sup> These included being president of the Alpine Club and a member of the Radical club alongside Mrs Fawcett.

<sup>36</sup> BP, MS Bryce 497/34 Rules of the Bryce Club.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce 304/57 Eighty Club pamphlet.

<sup>38</sup> Hansard House of Commons debate 12 June 1884, c.168, quoted in Harrison *Separate Spheres*, p.81 and Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p.189.

prepared to advocate parliamentary reform that would increase the male electorate. However, by 1890, James Bryce was acknowledging his concern over the advent of socialism, writing that 'a knot of socialists have sprung up in Aberdeen [his constituency] and made themselves rather offensive'.<sup>39</sup> Whilst he was confident that they would not do any harm, he was of the opinion that it did not bode well for the Liberal party.

## **2.1 'COMMON SENSE, EDUCATED THOUGHT AND WILD EXPERIMENTS LIKE WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE'.**

At the time of the Bryce's marriage, Mrs Humphrey Ward's, 'The Appeal' (which argued against the proposed extension of the Parliamentary suffrage to women) had just been published and by August 1889, almost 2000 names had endorsed the article. However, a number of prominent Liberal women were reluctant to be connected with it as the WLF sought to reach agreement on where they stood on the suffrage question. As she only became Mrs James Bryce in July, Marion was understandably wary of drawing unwelcome attention to herself especially in view of Mrs Fawcett's claim that the list of anti-suffrage names included 'a very large preponderance of ladies to whom the lines of life have fallen in pleasant places'<sup>40</sup> and there is no evidence to suggest she signed. Nevertheless,

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<sup>39</sup> BP, MS Bryce 9/290 Letter from James Bryce to Freeman, 19th April, 1890.

<sup>40</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, July 1889, pp.88-9 quoted in B. Harrison, *Separate Spheres*, p.116.

James Bryce was keen to see some kind of formal anti-suffrage organisation; an idea he expressed privately in 1889 and 1890 to Louise Creighton and Ethel Harrison who were at that time both anti-suffrage.<sup>41</sup>

The general political climate, juxtaposed with the debates around women's suffrage and the role that women had to play in political life during the early days of the Bryce's marriage, was summed up rather well in a poem published in the *Women's Penny Paper* (WPP). Entitled " 'A New Type', The Conservative-Liberal-Unionist-Home-Ruler", it read:

"Where are you going to my pretty maid?"  
"I'm going a canvassing, sir," she said.  
"Do you want my vote, my pretty maid?"  
"O yes if you please, kind sir," she said.  
"What are your politics, my pretty maid?"  
"Lord Salisbury's my leader, sir," she said.  
"Pray will you kiss me, my pretty maid?"  
"That would be 'Bribery,' sir," she said.  
"Pray will you marry me, my pretty maid?"  
"That is 'Coercion,' sir," she said.  
"I'll give you my fortune, my pretty maid."  
"Then you'll be *Liberal*, sir," she said.  
"Then you will marry me, my pretty maid?"  
"Yes, we'll be *Unionists*, sir," she said.  
"And when we are married, my pretty maid?"  
"Then *I'll* be *Home Ruler*, sir," she said.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> BP, MS Bryce UB 4, Louise Creighton to James Bryce, 30 June 1889 and UB 8, Ethel Harrison to James Bryce, 26 June 1890. Quoted in Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres*, p.117. Both Louise Creighton (1860-1936) and Ethel Harrison (1851-1916) signed The Appeal although Mrs Creighton, who had once worked closely with Mrs Humphrey Ward, later became a proponent of women's suffrage.

<sup>42</sup> *Women's Penny Paper* (WPP), 16 August, 1890, p.508.

Against a background of what has been termed 'Victorian Liberalism', retrospectively seen as encompassing free trade, individualism and self-help, by the 1880's there was a growing emphasis on state intervention at the expense of individual rights. As Pugh (1982) has pointed out, education was one area that radicals (like Bryce) concluded needed state intervention because of the inadequacy of individual effort.<sup>43</sup> The work of Jose Harris on political thought and the welfare state draws on the ambitious attempt of A.V. Dicey to analyse the supposed transition from individualism to collectivism in British public opinion after 1870 but as she rightly points out, ideas around "social welfare" can 'migrate unexpectedly across the political spectrum, and that preconceived assumptions about the left/right implications of particular policies are often false'.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the political transitions made by both men and women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries cannot necessarily be seen a straightforward 'switch' from one party to another. Rather, they have to do with evolving and developing ideologies and the policies formulated as a result of this. Certainly for women like Margaret Ashton, her eventual allegiance to 'socialism' was, in effect, the manifestation of the liberal ideals she and others like her had long held.

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<sup>43</sup> Martin Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics 1867-1939*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1982) p.29. See also chapters 1-5 for a general discussion of the evolution of British politics and political parties during the period under discussion.

<sup>44</sup> J. Harris, 'Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy' in *Past and Present*, no.135, May 1992, p.118-9.

In September 1890, the idea of more men being formally organised in order to promote the cause of women's suffrage was mooted by Marion Leslie in a letter to the Editor of the *Women's Penny Paper* (WPP). Asking why there should be separate men and women's Liberal Associations in the same district, Leslie proposed a union in support of suffrage, which would be composed of both sexes. Pointing out that 'we hear a good deal about men educating women in political questions, but with regard to female Suffrage women must educate and proselytise men' she reported that her husband was willing to join a union with her and asked, 'can any other lady report a male convert?'<sup>45</sup>

In the early 1890's, the suffrage question became the subject of considerable debate within the WLF and as Hirshfield has noted, some of the more politically experienced members viewed the organisation as forming 'the base of operations for their claim to the parliamentary franchise'.<sup>46</sup> For example, Bertha Mason, a member of the Executive Committee, believed that 'Women have become necessary to the success of the party organisations and to deny them the power of quietly going to a polling booth to record a vote is no longer rationally possible'.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, within the WLF there was a body of women, loyal to the anti-suffrage stance of the Gladstonian leadership and, inevitably, this caused conflict within the organisation resulting in the formation of the WNLA where those women not in favour of women's suffrage, including Marion Bryce, found a

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<sup>45</sup> WPP, 6 Sept 1890 p.547

<sup>46</sup> C. Hirshfield, 'Fractured Faith', p.177.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

home. Increasingly, the WLF identified itself as an organisation that could lobby on women's issues as well as on behalf of the Liberal party.<sup>48</sup>

The Union of Practical Suffragists, an organisation within the WLF, published a number of pamphlets including one entitled, 'Women's Suffrage and Liberalism'. It was primarily concerned with those women who described themselves as "Liberals first and Suffragists afterwards". It sought to define what constituted Liberalism arguing that the party was divided on everything from Home Rule to the Eight Hours Bill and that the work of the Liberal party had always been that of enfranchisement, 'that of setting the people free to help themselves'. To deny 'political self-help' was to deny Liberalism. It was therefore the case that women's suffrage followed from the Liberal principle of self-help and that whilst men who were opposed to the women's movement usually viewed women 'not as an integral part of the community, but rather as its domestic furniture' they were not as bad as the woman who believed her sex was no bar to citizenship and yet was not prepared to demand power to perform a citizen's duties - for she was being false to the very principle of Liberalism.<sup>49</sup>

In *The American Commonwealth*, first published in 1888, Bryce dedicated a chapter to women's suffrage declaring:

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<sup>48</sup> For a fuller discussion of the part women played in party-affiliated organisations including the WLF and the WNLA, see J. Hannam, 'Women and Politics' in J. Purvis, (ed.), *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945*, (UCL Press, London, 1995), p.217-45; C. Hirshfield, 'Fractured Faith'; L. Walker, 'Party Political Women: A Comparative Study of Liberal Women and the Primrose League 1890-1914', in J. Rendall, (ed.), *Equal or Different, Women's Politics 1800-1914*, (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987), pp.165-91.

<sup>49</sup> Union of Practical Suffragists, Leaflet no. XVI, Fawcett Library (1901).

All those who have speculated on the foundations of human society and government have long been confronted by the question how far differences of sex ought to imply and prescribe a distinction of civil rights and functions between men and women. Some of the bolder among philosophers have answered the question by simply ignoring the differences.<sup>50</sup>

He then proceeded to take his readers on an historical journey, charting ideas of women's role in society from Plato through to the Middle Ages and Christianity.

Relating this to the situation in America he observed:

...it does not seem to have occurred to any one that the principles of the Declaration of Independence might find application no less to women than to men; but as they were not to be applied to men of any other colour than white, this need the less be wondered at.<sup>51</sup>

For Bryce, the anti-slavery movement had forced questions not only of 'ownership' but also of where women were located in terms of equality. In what, on first sight, seems a promising assertion Bryce took this further asking:

If equality be an absolute and, so to speak, indefeasible truth and principle, what does it import? Does it cover merely the passive rights of citizenship, the right to freedom and protection for person and property? or does it extend to the active right of participating in the government of the Commonwealth? We demand freedom for the negro. Do we also demand a share in the government? If we do, are not women at least as well entitled? If we do not, it is because we see that the negro is so ignorant and

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<sup>50</sup> James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth, vol 3, Public Opinion; Illustrations and Reflections; Social Institutions*, (AMS Press, New York, 1973, First edition, 1888), p.289.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p.291.

altogether backward as to be unfit to exercise political power. But can this be said of women? The considerations which might apply to the case of the liberated negro do not apply to her, for she is educated and capable. How, then, can she be excluded?<sup>52</sup>

However, he concluded that those women in America who were demanding political rights were doing so in an abstract way and that there had not really been any substantial demand for them.<sup>53</sup> Writing of the Wyoming experience (where women enjoyed the privilege of voting) Bryce deemed that overall it was felt to be an unfavourable situation. Having been heavily influenced by 'one of the most trustworthy authorities' who wrote that respectable women did not vote regularly and only on 'purely emotional' issues such as temperance and that it was the 'worst classes' who voted with alarming regularity it explains how Bryce's own objections were reinforced.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the granting of the vote to the women of Wyoming on 4 July 1890, was seen as a very positive omen by the veteran American campaigner, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who wrote 'It is fitting that on the same day women's independence should be celebrated: her escape at last from masculine domination in Government'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. pp.291-2.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p.292.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p.296.

<sup>55</sup> WPP, 19 July 1890, p.463. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) worked for women's suffrage on both sides of the Atlantic and was the mother of the suffrage campaigner, Harriot Stanton Blatch (1856-1940) who lived for twenty years in England.

Comparing the movements in England and America, Elizabeth Cady Stanton asserted, 'The Saxon race is destined, I believe, to carry the new gospel of women's equality to all nations of the earth. Thus far England and America have kept pace, step by step in this direction...'<sup>56</sup> thus reinforcing the view of white superiority overriding gender.

From the time of her marriage to James Bryce, Marion seems to have worked hard to earn herself the title 'a partner in politics' posthumously accorded to her by Jalland. Equally, James Bryce was prepared to accompany her to WNLA meetings and they both attended the London conference of the WNLA in June 1901. James and Marion Bryce were both opposed to the Boer war and their anti-war stand was not well-received by the Scottish press. They were accused of hijacking the conference with Mrs Bryce being the principal orator on one day followed by her husband the next.<sup>57</sup> Certainly, James Bryce had made his views on the Boer war clear in a letter to Henry Sidgwick writing, 'it seems unnecessary - a war which reasonably fair and prudent diplomacy might have avoided, and which opens up a prospect of nothing but evil'.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, Marion Bryce was considered by H. W. Nevinson to be both cantankerous and charming at meetings to discuss the Boer war.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> BP, MS Bryce 329/46 *The Scotsman*, 13 June, 1901.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce 15/202 Letter from J. Bryce to H. Sidgwick, 5 November 1899.

<sup>59</sup> Nevinson diaries, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS ENG Misc.E.1901, E611/1, 18 and 24 April 1901.

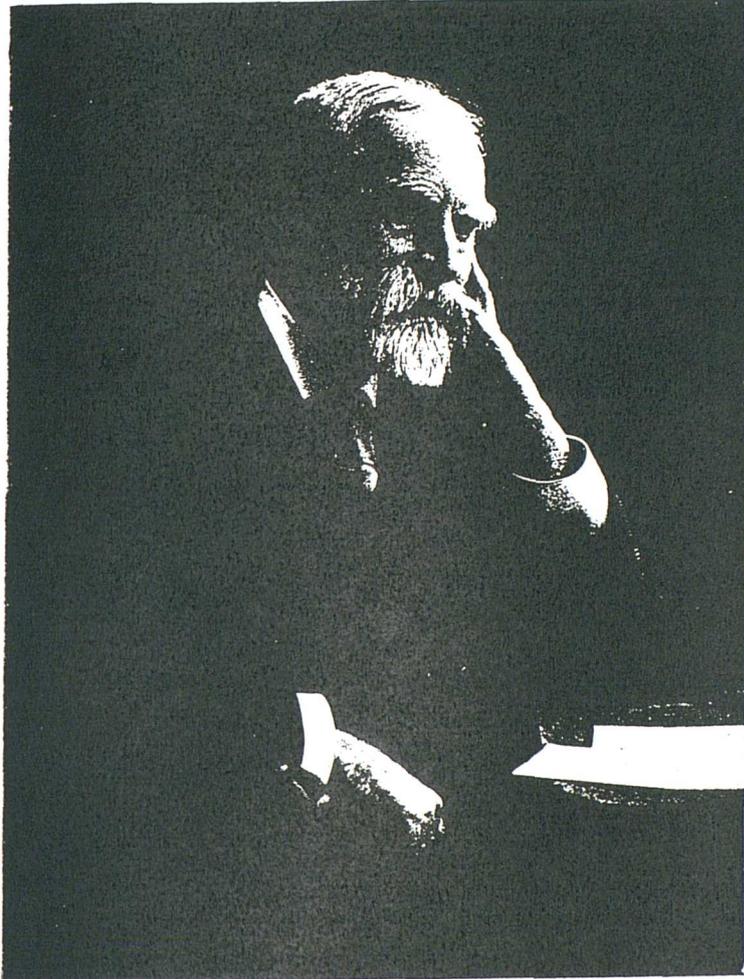
And yet, as Jalland recognises, despite Marion's obvious political knowledge and desire to be in the forefront of things, she often found herself left to deal with the more mundane aspects of their lives alone. Still attempting to adjust to life in Dublin after his appointment as Irish Secretary, she was reluctant to endorse Bryce's willingness to take up the post of Ambassador to the United States in 1906, but her stoicism prevailed as she organised the transatlantic expedition.<sup>60</sup> As Irish Secretary, James Bryce had entertained a faint hope that the Irish might be satisfied with less than full Home Rule, in view of the land reforms and local government reforms introduced by the Unionists. This hope was however, as short-lived as Bryce's term of office and he was swiftly replaced by Augustine Birrell.<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless, she continued her involvement with women's liberal politics and on April 5th, 1905, Marion Bryce, President of the WNLA, the anti-suffrage organisation which seceded from the WLF in 1893, was the principal speaker at a meeting of the Norwich Women's Liberal Association. In her address she stated that she 'did not propose to say a great deal about the Government, for the reason that there was some doubt as to whether we really had a Government at all'. The main theme of her speech was the decline in what she termed 'Liberal principles' which had manifested itself in, 'a certain indifference to political duties: a certain

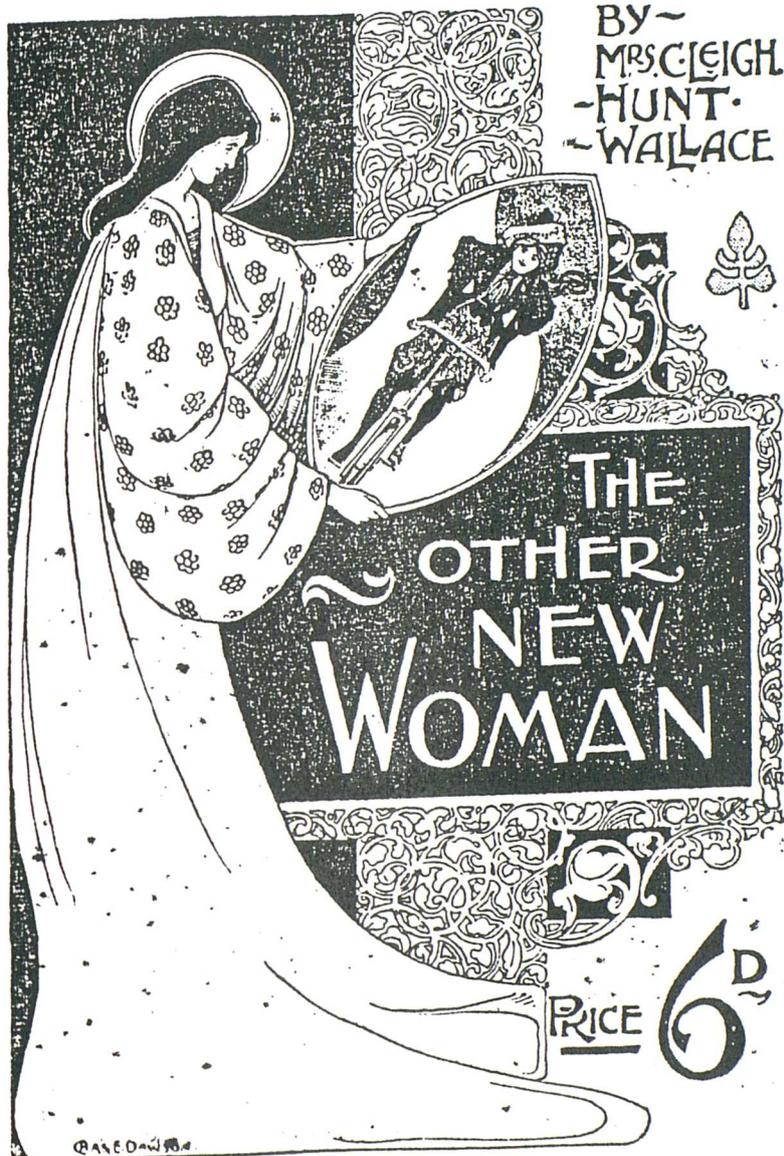
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<sup>60</sup> Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, pp.232-3.

<sup>61</sup> Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland*. p.25.



*James Bryce*  
1906  
*Chief Secretary for Ireland*



decline in the observance of the duties of citizenship.<sup>62</sup> She explained this as a lack of interest in politics generally; it was not enough just to cast a vote at a general election strongly advocating that women should be more politically active.

Correspondence between James and Marion Bryce reveals that they discussed the suffrage question regularly and in 1906, Marion Bryce wrote to her husband offering him her condolences over the fact that Mrs Cobden-Sanderson wanted to see him. She wrote of her:

She is a most excitable unbalanced person, and the letter she wrote to the papers after her release, abusing the Government and decrying everyone who did not agree with her, gave me the impression of a thoroughly unscrupulous and prejudiced woman who did not know what truth was, and felt that she must wreak her temper on those in authority.<sup>63</sup>

Her attack on Cobden-Sanderson became even more personal when she stated:

One cannot forget that the mother of these Cobdens was a Welsh woman and it is difficult for that race to speak the truth. If you have to see her I should be very careful what I said to her and I should absolutely refuse to let any friends come with her...and above all don't trust that woman even as far as you see her.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> BP, MS Bryce 492 82 *Eastern Daily Press*, 6th April, 1905. Address by Mrs Bryce.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce 456 119, Letter from Marion Bryce to James Bryce, c.December, 1906.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Clearly, Marion Bryce was opposed to militant action of any kind, suggesting her husband ask Cobden-Sanderson if 'brawling in public places and kicking and scratching the police is likely to convert hostile opinion'. She was unequivocal about the consequences of militancy, asserting that prison sentences were being given 'not for their views on the suffrage but for creating disturbances'.<sup>65</sup> Despite voicing these opinions to her husband privately, Marion Bryce was, at this time, reluctant to become embroiled in the debate publicly. When asked by Mrs Frederic Harrison what those who were opposed to suffrage could do to make their voice heard and whether she would write something on the subject, she declined on the grounds that as the wife of a member of the Government it would not be advisable. However, she was prepared to talk to her.<sup>66</sup>

It is worth considering why Mrs Cobden Sanderson wanted to see James Bryce in late 1906. She had been one of ten women imprisoned for six weeks after attempting to hold a meeting in the Lobby of the House of Commons when Parliament reassembled on 23 October. There had been violent scenes and the press had alleged that the women had been biting, scratching and kicking. As Sylvia Pankhurst described it, 'Officialdom everywhere treated this militancy as a pernicious form of hysteria'.<sup>67</sup> Mrs Cobden Sanderson was the daughter of Richard Cobden and her arrest would have caused consternation within Government circles although this held no sway in the court where, according to Fred Pethick-

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce 456.120.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> E.S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p.229.

Lawrence, her attempt to defend herself was cut short by the magistrate.<sup>68</sup> Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was one of the other women imprisoned and as Fred recalled, in these circumstances emotional barriers were broken down and the traditional English reserve, in particular the masculine trait of keeping a 'stiff upper lip' completely disintegrated as 'Mr Cobden Sanderson came and literally fell on my neck'.<sup>69</sup> As discussed in chapter four, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence found her first prison experience difficult to deal with but the remaining prisoners, including Annie Cobden Sanderson, remained in Holloway until 24 November when they were unexpectedly released. The treatment of these women caused even those opposed to militancy, such as Mrs Fawcett, to write a letter subsequently published in the press in which she explained:

I, in common with the great majority of Suffrage workers, wish to continue the agitation on constitutional lines; but I feel that the action of the prisoners has touched the imagination of the country in a manner which quieter methods did not succeed in doing.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, Mrs Fawcett was sufficiently appreciative of the methods the women had employed to organise a banquet for Mrs Cobden Sanderson and the other released prisoners at the Savoy Hotel.

Presumably, Mrs Cobden Sanderson wanted to speak with James Bryce about the treatment meted out to women and perhaps to attempt to convert him. It

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<sup>68</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.72.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in E. S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p.239.

is worth noting that she was a member of the ILP and it was at this time that Margaret Ashton, Bryce's sister-in-law, left the WLF to join the socialist movement. Given Ashton's apparent dislike of Bryce, she may well have instigated the situation. This period was certainly a crucial time for Marion Bryce and whilst apart from her husband in November 1906, she wrote to him expressing her loneliness and telling him that she was thinking of compiling some of her reasons and objections to Woman's Suffrage. Although as she pointed out, 'reasons not necessarily barring it out'.<sup>71</sup> She believed there was still much to be thought out which the militants had not considered but begged him not to tell her sister Margaret Ashton this and not to 'tease [sic] her or argue with her on the subject' as 'she is quite unreasonable and it will do no good and may only cause sore feeling'. Marion concluded the letter by telling her husband that only if he was asked by Margaret why the women should have harsher sentences than men was he to enter into conversation with her and he 'may tell her that she is mistaken and the men would have got more under similar circumstances'.<sup>72</sup> Despite the polarisation of the two sisters' views on women's suffrage, Marion Bryce was concerned to keep it within a containable level and was anxious that it did not impinge on the family.

In a piece entitled 'Political Ideals Past and Present', on the suffrage question, Marion Bryce reiterated that women were not a class and that the idea that women were necessarily powerless without the vote and that the only way of

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<sup>71</sup> BP, MS Bryce, 456 115 Letter from Marion Bryce to James Bryce, 29th November, 1906.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

influencing public opinion was through suffrage was not one to which she subscribed. Ultimately, it was not about what was good for women but what was good for the state.<sup>73</sup> At a more general level, this is in line with Jalland's comments on political wives, that 'they enjoyed the protection of class, wealth and privilege, which could be more powerful than consciousness of gender'.<sup>74</sup>

## 2.2 'THE DOMESTIC SIDE OF POLITICAL HUFFINESS...'

Violet Annan Bryce's position on the suffrage question appears to have developed in parallel to increasing militancy although she did not identify with the militant section of the movement. In an interview with the local press in Inverness in October 1904, Violet Annan Bryce patiently answered numerous questions about her family and opinions on domestic matters not least her role as a dutiful wife which included accompanying her husband on climbing expeditions which she viewed as 'unprofitable exertion'. Eventually, she was able to express her desire that 'women should take a much more active interest in politics than they do and that those who were qualified to do so should lose no opportunity of enlightening others.'<sup>75</sup> At this time, in Scotland with her husband John Annan Bryce who was the prospective candidate for the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 492 149, Marion Bryce, 'Political Ideals Past and Present'. n.d.

<sup>74</sup> Jalland, *Marriage, Women and Politics*, p.210.

<sup>75</sup> BP 504/70, October 1904; BP 504/68, *The Highland Times*, 3 November 1904.

Inverness Burghs, Violet Annan Bryce was attending meetings of the local WLA which offered her husband their full support.<sup>76</sup> This was in contrast to the WLF, who in 1902, adopted a policy forbidding assistance to anti-suffrage candidates.

By 1908, Violet Annan Bryce had begun to be more vocal on the suffrage question although she was still advocating constitutional methods as being the best way forward. The press sought to define her position, writing:

Mrs Annan Bryce sets a charming example as a suffragist who is- dare one say obedient? - at any rate, deferential to marital wishes. She hurt no home prejudices by making an excellent speech on Votes for Women in her beautiful music room...but she does not march. How the processionists would have welcomed her tallness, her beauty, and her distinguished dress on last summer's muster to Hyde Park! But though her presence would have been decorative, her absence was a gracious lesson.<sup>77</sup>

Two years later, however, Violet Annan Bryce became the focus of press attention when she publicly declared that she would not support her husband in the forthcoming election. The WSPU had sent Adela Pankhurst to start campaigning in Inverness in May 1909, perhaps because of the difficulty involved in fighting in the Liberal's Scottish strongholds observed by Sylvia Pankhurst.<sup>78</sup> The controversy over Violet Annan Bryce's refusal to support her husband was far reaching and attracted much press attention even being reported in Sweden. John Annan Bryce

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 504/38 *Dundee Advertiser*, 22 October 1904.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 505/11 *The Sketch* 11 November, 1908.

<sup>78</sup> Leneman, *A Guid Cause*, p.76.

had seconded the rejection of the First Conciliation Bill in July 1910 which it was reported 'was received with ironical cheers...since he had to admit in his first sentence that he was opposed by "his own household" '.<sup>79</sup>

In late 1909, Violet Annan Bryce had travelled to America spending some time at the home of her brother-in-law, now the British Ambassador for Washington, James Bryce and there was speculation that whilst there, she was forbidden to make the question of votes for women an object of British diplomacy.<sup>80</sup> It is not clear how long she originally intended to stay in America but at some point in 1910, she decided that she would not return to England to assist in her husband's attempt to get re-elected. The children of John and Violet Annan Bryce had by this time also formed very definite views on suffrage. Roland L'Estrange Bryce, their oldest son, was a member of the Oxford Men's Society for Woman Suffrage and as Marjorie Bryce explained, 'my younger sister of fifteen is interested [and] even my younger brother at Eton has very decided views about it'.<sup>81</sup> Marjorie Bryce's involvement in the suffrage campaign became immortalised when she participated in the Women's Coronation Procession as Joan of Arc in June 1911. Reports described her as making a tremendous hit although an article in the *Tatler* begged to point out to suffragists 'that beautiful as this girl-hero's appearance and symbolism are, she is out of place in a feminist revolt'.<sup>82</sup> This was because 'the real Joan most undoubtedly died to put a king on the throne...not only

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<sup>79</sup> BP, MS Bryce 505/22 M.A.P. July 23rd, 1910.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 505/18 *Woman's Journal*, Jan 29th, 1910.



Marjorie Annan Bryce, dressed as Joan of Arc at the Women's Coronation Procession, 17 June 1911.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid MS Bryce 505/25 *Tatler*, June 28th, 1911.

a man, but a very weak and unappreciative specimen of manhood indeed'.<sup>83</sup> The *Daily Express* described her as 'smiling serenely in the devout consciousness of who knows what terrible vows'<sup>84</sup> The connection to James Bryce was made very clearly with headlines pointing out that she was the niece of the British Ambassador to the United States.<sup>85</sup> Lisa Tickner (1988) discusses the symbolism of Joan of Arc as 'the archetypal militant, continually evoked in the final years of the WSPU campaign...not only perfect patriot but perfect woman', asserting that for those involved in the movement she served as 'the paradigm both for female militancy and for its persecution'.<sup>86</sup>

Once Violet Annan Bryce had made the decision to remain in America rather than return to Scotland to help her husband's election campaign she became the focus of attention. In an interview she explained that her position was rather embarrassing, stating:

I have been a strong Liberal ever since I was 18 years old, and I have always taken a prominent part in Mr Bryce's campaigns. Of course I want him to get in this year, but I cannot work for him as has been my custom. I feel that to do so would not be consistent with the loyalty which I feel toward the cause of woman suffrage.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce 505/25 *Daily Express*, June 19th 1911.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, *The Daily Graphic*, June 19th, 1911.

<sup>86</sup> L. Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women, Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14*, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1988), pp.209-12. For a fuller discussion of the imagery of Joan of Arc see M. Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1981).

When asked about her husband's views she used it as an opportunity to implicate her brother-in-law as well. Explaining that her husband did not believe in women's suffrage she went on to say:

...I am afraid there is very little prospect of his being converted. As for me, it is one of the cardinal doctrines of my political faith. I have not said very much about it since I arrived in America because I have been visiting my brother-in-law, the Ambassador, in Washington and he is very much opposed to giving the ballot to women. He didn't wish me to talk at all to representatives of Washington papers because there is always a danger that anything said by a member of his family might be construed as an official utterance.<sup>88</sup>

Violet Bryce also expounded on the comparative situations of Britain and America in terms of suffrage as a political issue. She was of the opinion that American women did not participate in politics to the same degree as their British counterparts, declaring that women in England who had any kind of family relationship with an MP were expected to make campaign speeches at a moment's notice. She then took this further by using her husband as an example, describing how during the general election of 1906, he had said to her, 'I feel so ill that I fear I shall not be able to keep my appointment to speak at the meeting this afternoon, and you will have to go in my place'.<sup>89</sup> As it was, he recovered sufficiently and was

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<sup>87</sup> MS Bryce, 505/21 *The Sun*, (New York City) January 24th, 1910.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

able to speak but it is interesting that even those avowedly opposed to women's suffrage were quite willing to use women as a political platform when it suited. The difference in Violet Bryce's attitude towards supporting her husband between the general elections of 1906 and 1910 was based on the fact that she did not believe suffrage to have been a political issue at all in 1906. Although her husband had opposed it then, she had remained confident that she could 'win him over' and was able to get women to support him on those grounds. However by 1910, the situation was very different and she realised that women were not prepared to support Liberals who were anti-suffrage. Violet Bryce was clearly in a difficult position and admitted that she did not want it thought that suffrage had broken up her family - a charge that she believed 'people would be only too ready to make'.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, she was also anxious that people in Britain should remain unaware she was doing nothing to support her husband. The best way to solve this dilemma was to stay in America until after the election. It is obvious that Violet Bryce had divided loyalties but if she thought that by removing herself from the situation it would resolve itself, she was mistaken. The British press quickly picked up on the story and it also became a contentious issue within the suffrage press. In a letter to the editor of the *Common Cause*, it was asserted that her political faith should have meant that she returned to England - she could have avoided being 'unwifely' by opposing Liberals in other constituencies. Moreover, the point was made that the names of the individuals concerned should not have been reported in the *Common Cause* as:

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

the thirst for glory will spread, and that the "Suffragist wives of Anti-suffragist husbands," instead of responding to the familiar appeal to "Go home and do your washing," will come out and do it in the public press.<sup>91</sup>

Whilst she did not practise militant methods, she 'realized they had been most efficacious', declaring Mrs Pankhurst to be 'a wonderful woman'<sup>92</sup> and was keen to endorse her approval of them.<sup>93</sup> As the wife of an MP she was concerned about harming her husband politically and did not ally herself with any specific suffrage organisation. The American press were quick to remark that 'the antics of Mrs Annan Bryce have not been pleasant for her austere brother-in-law and the scarcely less severe Mrs James Bryce' as well as pointing out that whilst James and Marion Bryce had the 'respect and good will of all...the butterfly element would be happier if Mrs Bryce would use more of the ten thousand a year allowed for incidental social expenses for their benefit'.<sup>94</sup> There was a clear contrast between the rather flamboyant Violet Bryce and her sober sister-in-law.

It is also interesting to consider how Violet Bryce compared the working of gender relations in Britain and America. According to her, American men were far more chivalrous and broad-minded than Englishmen and this was one reason why American women did not have to employ militant tactics. Describing the

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<sup>91</sup> MS Bryce 505/22 *Common Cause*, 26 February, 1910.

<sup>92</sup> MS Bryce, 505/21 *Sun* (NYC), 24 January, 1910.

<sup>93</sup> MS Bryce 505/16 *New York American*, 20 December, 1909.

<sup>94</sup> MS Bryce 505/21 *Town Topic* (NYC) 13 January, 1910.

attitudes of Englishmen she stated: ‘...they put their hands to their ears, or waving you aside say, "if you can't talk something besides suffrage, don't say anything"’.<sup>95</sup> It was for this reason that militant methods were used to gain attention. John Annan Bryce was alleged to be opposed to women's suffrage not on intellectual grounds but because women were 'naturally conservative'. Other people were soon embroiled in the debate including Ethel Arnold, the sister of the anti, Mrs Humphrey Ward. Upon her arrival in America, she was asked her opinion of Violet Bryce's actions to which she responded by saying she thought that Violet Bryce should support her husband. Although Ethel Arnold was in favour of women's suffrage, she was vehemently opposed to militancy believing it had set back the cause in Britain to such an extent that American women would probably be enfranchised first.<sup>96</sup> The argument surrounding John Annan Bryce's opposition to women's suffrage and his personal life was debated in the press. Thus one family provides a neat microcosm of the different responses to suffrage at a familial level. One report stated that 'the circumstances of the domestic life of Mr and Mrs J.A. Bryce...is appalling to contemplate', denigrating Violet Bryce for making impudent remarks about her husband and dismissing the notion that women would automatically vote Conservative, asserting

...in the case of women who want votes, as opposed to normal women, there is everything to show that, so far from being Conservatives, they are

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<sup>95</sup> MS Bryce 505/20 *Washington Post*, 3 January, 1910.

<sup>96</sup> MS Bryce 505/20 *New York Tribune*, 4 January, 1910.

almost to a woman violent red-flag revolutionaries and haters of every kind of established decency.<sup>97</sup>

Whilst in America, Violet Bryce attended a meeting of the Equal Franchise Society at which the Rev. Dr. Henry Nash was the main speaker. She found her circumstances not dissimilar to his for he was 'pro' but his wife was an anti, although as the meeting progressed Violet Bryce found some of his observations rather contentious. Nash was advising his audience 'not to be hysterical... and copy the silly and inane methods of the suffragettes across the water' at which point Violet Bryce was driven to defending English militancy. Comparing the suffragettes activities to those of the Irish, she explained that 'No-one paid any attention to them [the Irish] until they became obstreperous, and now everyone admits that the Irish vote is very important' confidently anticipating that Home Rule and votes for women would be policy soon.<sup>98</sup> As the meeting concluded, Nash was having to fend off objections to giving women the vote by some of his audience, including the argument that women's suffrage would ruin men's manners. He responded by stating that certain men did not have manners and that 'when a man urges that objection to woman suffrage I watch to see how he behaves, and he's always the kind that doesn't get up to give his seat to a tired shop girl in the subway'. Clearly for men like Nash, their opposition to militancy was bound up in a set of masculine

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<sup>97</sup> MS Bryce, 505/20 *Northern Chronicle*, 5 January, 1910.

<sup>98</sup> MS Bryce 505/19 *New York Tribune* 31 December, 1909; *New York City*, December 1909.

codes which could endorse political parades but not women 'tying [themselves] to chairs and railings.'<sup>99</sup>

The role that Violet Bryce accorded herself needs examination. She believed that she had converted hundreds of women to the cause by canvassing in an unobtrusive manner and 'working among the highest classes', explaining that most of the suffragettes who lectured were not of that class.<sup>100</sup> Clearly, Violet felt that her status as the wife of an MP and the fact that she was of 'good breeding' were attributes that would help further the cause. She felt so strongly about suffrage that no member of the Anti-Suffrage League was allowed into her home which prompted Mary Bryce to write to her brother James explaining 'it is all very vexing'.<sup>101</sup> Just as Violet Bryce did not belong to an official suffrage society, presumably those opposed to votes for women who did not hold membership of an organisation could come in: for example, her husband! Discussing the family divide over women's suffrage, she told the press:

I cannot understand any one so brilliant and intelligent as my sister-in-law, Mrs James Bryce, taking a stand against woman suffrage. She is, I think, the most brilliant woman speaker in England, and yet she will not say anything for the great suffrage question.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> MS Bryce 505/18 *New York Evening Telegram*, 30 December, 1909.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p. 234.

<sup>102</sup> MS Bryce, 505/18 *New York Evening Telegram*, 30 December, 1909.

Violet Bryce thought that the victory of votes for women would be just as much a victory for men; 'by giving women power and responsibility you raise the standard of the family and of the race'.<sup>103</sup> She was also at pains to point out that Americans could scarcely comprehend how unjust the laws in England were to women, complaining that Englishmen were apt to argue that they had done a lot for women in the 1880's. She was referring to the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 and could not contain her sarcasm when she said, 'Kind of them wasn't it? So you see we must not ask for the vote today, because men did that for us thirty years ago.'<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, the way in which Violet Bryce chose to articulate her views was not necessarily progressive and it is worth noting that both Violet and Marion Bryce used the difference between men and women in formulating their arguments.

Violet Annan Bryce's presence in America proved vexing for James and Marion Bryce and Marion Bryce actually returned to England in 1910. Again speaking at the WLA in Norwich, Marion Bryce gave an address entitled, 'On being asked an opinion on Woman's Suffrage'. She began by saying:

You ask me to tell you whether my views about Woman's Suffrage have altered during the last few years, and in asking this question you seem to believe that I have up till now been an advocate of it. As a matter of fact I have always refused to advocate Parliamentary Woman's Suffrage because

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<sup>103</sup> MS Bryce, 505/17 *The Evening World*, 29 December, 1909

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

I have never been able to convince myself that it would really be a benefit to the community at large or to the women themselves.<sup>105</sup>

In order to justify how she had reached this conclusion she made the point that:

The fact that I know a great many women who are just as competent to exercise their vote as any man (and indeed much more so than many) does not alter my feeling that on the whole such a change would be inexpedient....A vote is not a "right" but a "privilege"....If once the vote is given to women - even a restricted vote - it will end before long in universal suffrage, and I am not prepared to increase the electorate in England at present by adding to it a great mass of voters who, by reason of the conditions under which they live and the duties which as women they have to perform, have not the opportunity, even if they have the desire, to fit themselves to be competent voters. The argument that because we have already given the vote to numbers of incompetent men we should also give it to incompetent women has never appealed to me.<sup>106</sup>

Marion Bryce was prepared to sacrifice her own right to vote if it meant that universal suffrage could be avoided. The whole question of suffrage was not for her a gender issue, ultimately it was about class, and perhaps more crucially, for whom that class would vote.<sup>107</sup> Anxious not to completely alienate those who did

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<sup>105</sup> BP, MS Bryce 492/106-108. Marion Bryce, 'On being asked an opinion on Woman's Suffrage', 24th June 1910.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Marion Bryce had been in America for four years when she wrote her opinions on women's suffrage and was, no doubt, influenced by the developments of the American anti-suffrage movement during this time. See S.E. Marshall, *Splintered Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Campaign Against Woman Suffrage*, for an insight into the mobilisation of anti-suffrage women in a bid to protect gendered class interests and their own positions as influential political strategists. See also, C. Bolt, *Feminist Ferment*, pp.65-76

not share her view, she stated that she was not being offensive in her use of the word 'incompetent' and that it was always the few "competent" who suffered. She was also keen to explain that:

It is not a good argument to say that because a certain number of women have behaved in a foolish, reckless and violent way therefore women are unfit to have a vote. But it is a good reason for wishing to withhold a vote from individuals so obviously unfit to exercise it just as one would refuse firearms to a hysterical woman or to a madman...<sup>108</sup>

It would seem that Marion Bryce's objections to women having the vote were rather more complex than her earlier explanation. The fact still remained that despite her anti-suffrage stand, she fundamentally believed that some women (including herself) had earned the right to vote. Nevertheless, she chose to use one of the most common anti-suffrage arguments to back up her assertions when she said that:

...the behaviour of certain women (even some intelligent and educated women) in this question of recent years has made many people realise more strongly that things affect women quite differently to men and that even under the same conditions they will reason and act quite differently to men and that the results of their voting would probably be quite different to what might have been expected.<sup>109</sup>

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for a comparative discussion of the anti-suffrage movements in England and the USA,

<sup>108</sup> BP, MS Bryce 492/106-108. Marion Bryce, 'On being asked an opinion on Woman's Suffrage', 24th June 1910.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

Marion Bryce had succumbed to the anti-suffrage arguments that women were both 'naturally conservative' and would vote with their hearts and not their heads. Her address concluded that political expediency aside, she was against women's suffrage instinctively as she did not want women to try to be "like men" and that if women entered the national political arena with men much of the 'real power' women possessed would be lost. Moreover, men's sense of obligation and responsibility towards women would be destroyed. However, her final comments reveal that despite her opposition she was partially resigned to the fact that in due course it was inevitable that women would get the vote although she would not be joining in to help them achieve their aim.<sup>110</sup>

In 1910, when Marion Bryce wrote her thoughts on suffrage, men's sense of obligation and responsibility towards women, rather than being destroyed, was actually increasing with the formation of organisations such as the Men's League for Women's Suffrage (MLWS) in 1907, and the militant Men's Political Union (MPU) in 1910. Indeed, men like Hugh Franklin of the MPU felt so strongly about the way in which women were treated that when he witnessed Winston Churchill inciting the police to manhandle a woman, namely Mrs Sanderson Cobden, he threatened and subsequently attempted to dogwhip him. (See Chapter Six for a full account of Hugh Franklin's involvement with suffrage.)

Addressing the Women's Canadian Club in April 1911, James Bryce was reluctant to bring to the fore the suffrage question. His assertion that 'it makes no difference whether or not they [women] have votes' was followed by

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

the comment, 'Heaven forbid that I should take up that subject this afternoon'.<sup>111</sup> According to Bryce, in England the country was governed by public opinion and to that end women had as much to do in the formation of public opinion as men. Conceding that 'their judgment, when they take the trouble and pains to investigate the facts of any case, is just as good as a man's judgment', Bryce was agreeable to women being involved in the discussion of public questions and 'taking an interest in the affairs of the nation'.<sup>112</sup>

Whilst James Bryce and his sister-in-law Violet were expressing their differing views in America, Margaret Ashton contributed to the debate in England, needless to say articulating views very different to those of her sister, Marion. Margaret Ashton is best known for her involvement in local government.<sup>113</sup> She viewed it as 'essentially joint work' that should cut through 'separate spheres' stating:

The best results can only be got when, regardless of sex, the best intelligence and experience is brought to bear on the difficult administrative problems affecting the social and sanitary conditions of the whole community.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce, 330/63 *The London Advertiser*, 24 April 1911.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> See P. Hollis, '*Ladies Elect*'. *Women in English Local Government 1865-1914*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987) for an account of Margaret Ashton's long involvement in Local Government.

<sup>114</sup> *The Englishwoman*, no.20, Sept, 1910.

She was also aware that women being able to vote in local government had limited effectiveness, mainly because most female voters were older and had 'not the habit of intervening in public life and claiming the attention due to them as citizens'. At this point whilst fully in favour of women's suffrage, Ashton realised the importance of recruiting more women into local government believing that this would open up the prospect of social reform and concluding:

By better administration comes the desire for better legislation, and though women cannot as yet affect this, the real root of progress, they can even now so prune and tend the plant that better results may be obtained.<sup>115</sup>

Although it is difficult to know exactly how relations were between Margaret Ashton and her sister and brother-in-law, the polarisation of their respective views on women's suffrage must have been problematic although they all shared an abhorrence of militancy. Writing to Mrs Fawcett as President of the Lancashire and Cheshire Union of Women's Liberal Associations, Margaret Ashton condemned militancy, describing 'the action of these few violent women who have...injured the reputation of women politicians in Lancashire'.<sup>116</sup> In a letter to *The Englishwoman*, Ashton was very definite about the fact that men's opposition to women's suffrage was because 'they are engaged in the old struggle of the ruling class to keep their own privileges at the expense of those they govern'. She found the gender divide 'pitiful' arguing:

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> M50/2/1/225 M.Ashton to Mrs Fawcett, 16 January, 1906.

It is the struggle to retain the last vestige of uncontrolled power over those weaker and more helpless than oneself that seems inherent in human nature, and that has been defeated in every fight for liberty that the world has seen. But that men enjoying freedom themselves should withhold it from us-should force this struggle on the women of their own homes, reared in the same love of liberty-makes the darkest side of this strife, and deals the heaviest blow at that mutual respect and trust which is the crown of human friendship.<sup>117</sup>

The MNSWS stated 'the Education Bill should be a grave warning and an object-lesson to all who are interested in the position of women in England'.<sup>118</sup> James Bryce was involved with the passing of the bill which effectively removed the School Boards on which some women at least had been elected, replacing them with unelected local education authorities. Ashton was prominent in the MNSWS debating on a number of issues. She was an advocate of women declining to pay taxes and believed that women should not support parliamentary candidates 'who are not responsible to them for their future actions in the House of Commons'.<sup>119</sup> She was a key speaker at a debate on women's suffrage between the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League and the North of England Society for Women's Suffrage, held at the Free Trade Hall in October 1909, speaking alongside the anti-suffragist, Mrs Humphrey Ward.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> WSC, Manchester Central Library. M50/1/4/30 Report of the Executive Committee.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, M50/1/4/36 41st Annual Report. 22 November, 1907.

James Bryce's friends included many figures in high authority and he was kept informed of the debates and developments of women's suffrage in England by a range of people including the Speaker of the House of Commons. Writing to Bryce on the 18th July 1910, he told him how 'extraordinarily interesting' the Woman Franchise debate of the previous week had been, stating that members had spoken with a greater sense of responsibility than in previous debates. Nothing, he wrote, 'could be more dramatic than the way in which occupants of the two front benches rose to speak in opposition to those sitting down beside them'.<sup>120</sup> The intensity of the debate was summed up by his comment, 'I was thankful that I had not to vote...and that I had not to formulate the reasons for my vote and many members envied my immunity'.<sup>121</sup>

James Bryce and A.V. Dicey had many discussions about women's suffrage over a long period of time and many of the ideas formulated in their conversations were recorded in Dicey's 1909 polemic, *Letters to a Friend on Votes for Women*. In a series of letters to his friend 'C', Dicey explained how he made the journey from initially being an advocate of women's suffrage to becoming a convinced opponent. Drawing on many of the arguments used by other anti-suffragists, Dicey explained that over a number of years he had

reached the firm conviction that the right to a Parliamentary vote ought not to be considered the private right of the individual who possesses it. It is in reality not a right at all; it is rather a power or function given to a citizen for the benefit not primarily of himself, but of the public...My conviction as to

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<sup>120</sup> BP,MS Bryce 14/7 Speakers corner, Letter to J.Bryce, 18 July 1910.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

the true nature of a Parliamentary vote led inevitably to the conclusion that the expediency, or what in such a matter is the same thing, the justice, of giving Parliamentary votes to English women depends on the answer to the inquiry, not whether a large number of English women or English women generally, wish for votes, but whether the establishment of woman suffrage will be a benefit to England? To this question I am unable to return an affirmative answer. I have become, therefore, of necessity an opponent of woman suffrage.<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, by 1911, Bryce was of the opinion 'that woman suffrage, which we both think an evil, will be established before the next 3 years are over'<sup>123</sup> and the following year Dicey wrote to Bryce about the rejection of the Conciliation Bill. In his letter he acknowledged that good and well-respected women regarded it as a calamity but pointed out that it was 'one among many signs of their political capacity - few of them were I believe prepared for this blow'.<sup>124</sup> Dicey himself had thought that the bill had a considerable chance of success but now believed that 'the best chance of getting votes for women has been lost'<sup>125</sup> and he did not expect to see it in his lifetime, predicting it might be up to fifty years before women's suffrage was established. Despite his opposition to suffrage, he felt compelled to explain to Bryce that a charge brought against him by Henry James, the novelist, namely that Dicey was known to hate women, was not correct. Accepting that he had many

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<sup>122</sup> A. V. Dicey, *Letters to a Friend on Votes for Women*, (John Murray, London, 1909), pp. 7-8

<sup>123</sup> BP,MS Bryce 3/82 Letter from James Bryce to Dicey, 23 March 1911.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce 3/109 Dicey to the Bryces, 31 March 1912.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

faults, he believed contempt for women was not one of them.<sup>126</sup> Brian Harrison asserts that a charge of misogyny could not possibly be sustained against Dicey or any of the other anti-suffrage men, including Bryce, 'for theirs is a story of much-loved and influential mothers'.<sup>127</sup>

In 1913, Dicey wrote to James and Marion Bryce informing them he had just sent a letter to *The Times* protesting against 'each and all of the Bills for giving the Parliamentary suffrage to women'.<sup>128</sup> James Bryce was quick to respond and writing to Dicey from America, he condemned the outrages of the suffragettes, further stating:

Can anybody really suppose that to double the electorate by adding millions of women who know and care nothing about public affairs will improve our Government? The only real argument seems to be that more attention will be given to questions affecting women. That has not been the result in Australia, nor in the States which have in the U.S. adopted woman suffrage.<sup>129</sup>

Speaking of the issue in the U.S. he thought that it would spread to other states despite there not being the slightest justification for it concluding,

If Plato were living he would comment on the willingness to let everybody have what they clamour for it's the note of a Democracy. If you say that

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Harrison, *Separate Spheres*, p.91.

<sup>128</sup> BP, MS Bryce, 3/135 Letter to Marion and James Bryce, 21 Jan 1913.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce 4/48 Bryce to Dicey 22 Jan 1913.

this disposition will have something to do with the concessions of Home Rule I should be unable to deny that the remark has force.<sup>130</sup>

Certainly, the arguments that Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence put forward at her trial in relation to the benefits the vote had brought to the women of Australia and New Zealand (see Chapter Four) contradicted Bryce's point about this not happening.

### **2.3 'RETURNING TO A NEW AND UNPARALLELED FIERCENESS'.**

When he returned to England after an absence of six years, Bryce was given a peerage and became Viscount Bryce of Dechmont in January 1914. However, he was perturbed by the changes he saw: new men, new policies, militancy, Ireland and the rise of the ILP.<sup>131</sup> Irish Home Rule which had previously occupied much of his time was still the issue of the day and Bryce believed it was vital to get a Home Rule Parliament established in Ireland even if it did not, at that time, include Ulster on the grounds that if it worked well, Ulster would join.<sup>132</sup>

Ever philosophical, he drew analogies between Cicero and St. Paul and men of his age and women suffragists, writing in a letter to Sidgwick that, 'the Roman could hardly have understood what St. Paul was driving at. They had not common premises'. It therefore followed that when men like Bryce spoke to 'the

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> H.A.L. Fisher, *James Bryce, Vol.II*, p.122

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. pp.122-3.

young sentimental woman suffragist', they could see no relevance in the inquiry 'whether the great mass of women know or care anything about politics. It is quite enough...that they are human beings. As such they have a right to vote'.<sup>133</sup> Reminiscing about the days when he wrote essays on reform in 1866, he remembered that they had argued that working men were fit for a vote, both parties assuming that fitness had to be proved.<sup>134</sup> However, he believed that it was now the case in England that 'abstract ideas' held real power, a phenomenon that had developed since the turn of the century:

Democracy is worshipped as much as it used to be in America. The word connotes all sorts of excellence - equality, humanity, sympathy, justice - whereas it is really...as Aristotle said nothing but the rule of a numerical majority.<sup>135</sup>

At the heart of this discussion was what had brought about this change in England making 'half or more of the best young Oxford men Socialists.' He argued that even if they believed socialism to be an improvement in the condition of the masses, Oxford had taught them little if they could not see the need for considering means as well as ends especially in 'the light of the permanent tendencies of human

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<sup>133</sup> BP, MS Bryce 4/144 Letter from J.Bryce to N. Sidgwick, 15 September 1917.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. In another letter to Sidgwick, he explained that his reflections on Democracy had convinced him that there was no such thing.

nature'.<sup>136</sup> He used De Tocqueville as an example of someone who (like himself) had spent time contemplating democracy, stating:

[he] brooded so much over equality as being both the cause and the result of Democracy that he sometimes seems to confound the two, but of course he knew the difference. He says somewhere that even if Democracy vanishes equality will remain.<sup>137</sup>

Correspondence between Bryce and Dicey, particularly from the time Bryce returned to England, shows an increasingly anti-democratic position being adopted and as Pugh has observed, the importance of America in influencing Bryce's early politics had turned to disillusionment by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>138</sup> Bryce's evident concern for the growth of socialism particularly among the Oxford set was reflected in correspondence to Sidgwick. Describing the way in which 'a wave of opinion seems to sweep over the youth of a country, just like influenza' he explained, 'though I cannot catch it, I am trying hard to understand it'.<sup>139</sup>

Towards the end of the First World War, Bryce had several misgivings which became stronger during the early days of peace. His main areas of concern

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid. MS Bryce 4/129. He also applied this argument to women's suffrage stating that 'people fancy that the more voters you have the more wisdom you have at the service of the State.'

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, pp.25 and 94.

<sup>139</sup> MS Bryce 4/129 Letter from J.Bryce to Sidgwick, 28 Jan 1917.

included Indian nationalism, Ireland and women's suffrage. In late 1919, corresponding with Charles Eliot he was convinced (although admitted he could not prove it) that the 'tremendous Liberal defeat' was largely because of women's suffrage. In addition to advocating the collapse of Bolshevism in Russia Bryce made the point that 'to the women, 5/6ths of whom know nothing about politics, Lloyd George means something for they were told that he had won the war and was going to hang the German Emperor'.<sup>140</sup> He was alarmed at the speed of change including the move by both sexes towards socialism and the feminist movement generally, stating that 'the results of the wide extension of the suffrage have begun to be felt' and bemoaning the 'extraordinary tolerance' of the respectable classes.<sup>141</sup>

In November 1917, Bryce wrote to Dicey about the potential impact of women getting the vote. He asserted that 'this addition of some ten millions to our voters, most of them, nearly all the women, with little political interest and even less political knowledge is amazing. We shall not be here to see the results.'<sup>142</sup> By September 1918, Bryce, now in his eightieth year, was clearly resigned to women being enfranchised, writing that 'politicians here live from hand-to-mouth. Everything is unstable. There is an ignorant and unknown woman vote of over

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<sup>140</sup> Fisher, *James Bryce, Vol. II*, p.230.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, p.240/241

<sup>142</sup> MS Bryce 4/157 James Bryce to A. V. Dicey, 6th November 1917.

eight million'.<sup>143</sup> However, he was also concerned about the nature of the Peace Treaties, believing them to be too severe on Germany, Austria and Hungary.<sup>144</sup>

The last years of his life were spent undertaking an elaborate study of modern democracies which he started in 1904. By this time Bryce viewed the feminist movement as 'an amazing departure from ancient and deeply rooted custom with hardly a parallel in the history of society' but conceded when writing of the emancipation of women in the United States, 'that women mostly vote as men do...that administrative government is in the woman suffrage states neither better nor worse than in others and that the general character of legislation remains much the same!'<sup>145</sup> When he wasn't in London, he spent most of his time at Hindleap, the Bryces' country home in Ashdown Forest, Sussex. According to his wife, Marion, life there was very quiet 'for he desired above all things an undisturbed time for meditation'. She was, however, permitted to read to him in the evening and if they travelled to London on the train, Bryce would dictate letters to his wife.<sup>146</sup>

Fifteen years younger than her husband, Marion Bryce may well have found these later years a contrast to her earlier life although she continued to be politically active in the WNLA and, in 1919, when the WNLA and the WLF amalgamated, Marion Bryce became a vice-president. James Bryce died in his sleep

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<sup>143</sup> Quoted in H.A.L. Fisher, *James Bryce, Vol. II*, p.195.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* p.204.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.* p.269/270.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* p.263-5.

on 22 January, 1922 and after his death, Marion Bryce continued to live at Hindleap and their London flat. According to an obituary, her homes were 'a meeting-ground for English and Americans. Younger men and women did not seek her society to hear reminiscences of Victorian times, but to discuss current questions with a woman of wide experience and shrewd judgment'.<sup>147</sup> In 1924, Marion Bryce spoke at the Manchester High School for Girls. She emphasised that for girls, school was now the beginning of training for citizenship and that they should understand the greatness of the opportunity that was now theirs.<sup>148</sup>

Marion Bryce survived her husband by almost eighteen years and in 1927, Viscountess Bryce, president of the Common Interests Committee English Speaking Union of the British Empire, had a lunch held in her honour. Still maintaining the role of being in the shadow of her now dead husband she said in her speech:

It is impossible for me to rise to any great heights because a great deal of my husband's work and my husband's influence...was due to his personality and to his character and I am an entirely different character.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> BP MS Bryce, 497/37 *Times Obituary*, 29 December, 1939.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce, Marion Bryce, speech at Manchester High School for Girls, 3rd October, 1924.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, MS Bryce 492 123/4 Viscountess Bryce's speech.

It may well have been the case that James and Marion Bryce had very different characters but Marion Bryce had always argued that women had a very important role in politics, with or without the vote.

From correspondence in the Bryce papers and his own acknowledgements, Fisher had the full co-operation of Lady Marion Bryce who, it seems, almost conspired with him to create a representation of Bryce that is most notable for what it chooses to exclude. This was reinforced by Marion Bryce's own comments on her husband after his death. It is also worth noting that Fisher had been in favour of women's suffrage (see Introduction) but clearly the Oxford connection and Fisher's reputation as an historian was more powerful. According to Fisher, the Bryces marriage was 'founded upon a perfect communion of tastes'. The fact that Mrs Bryce 'shared the opinions, took part in the travels and comprehended the various activities of her husband' as well as being educated, having a grip on politics and being devoted, made her 'the perfect wife'.<sup>150</sup> In a short chapter entitled 'Marriage and Politics', passing reference is made to the marriage with no further mention of Marion Bryce.

Fisher's two volume biography of Bryce was written quite soon after his death and was heavily influenced by Marion. In an American review of Fisher's two-volume biography the point is made that

the form is the form of biography, but the voice is the voice of history...The American biographical method of giving those little intimate glimpses of home life, those characteristic stories of purely personal events, which do more than anything else to bring the reader close to a full and affectionate appreciation of the subject of a

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<sup>150</sup> H.A.L. Fisher, *James Bryce* vol I, p.278.

biography, is not Mr. Fisher's method. Possibly it is distasteful to him. Perhaps, it would be to many of his countrymen who are unable to understand how we in America, can be content to live in houses whose lawns are open to all the world instead of being shut in behind high walls and thick hedges...It is most sincerely to be hoped that Lady Bryce can be persuaded some day to write her own reminiscences. In those pages her distinguished husband would live again. Some of the most attractive passages in the volumes now before us are from her pen.<sup>151</sup>

Unlike many of their contemporaries, neither Marion Bryce, Violet Annan Bryce nor Margaret Ashton published autobiographies and Margaret Ashton left only a few letters.<sup>152</sup> Whatever their respective views on the suffrage question they all lived long enough to see the extension of the franchise in 1928, to all women over twenty-one, and continued to participate in politics whether at party political level, within local government or over single issues. Violet Annan Bryce, for example, found herself arrested in October 1920, when she arrived at Holyhead en route from Ireland where she was to address a meeting about Irish reprisals. She was deported to Kingstown where she was held without charge for four hours. Eventually she was released and her husband, John Annan Bryce, furious at the treatment of his wife by the Military, lost no time writing several letters to *The Times*.<sup>153</sup> Thus Violet

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<sup>151</sup> BP 497/31, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 23 April, 1927.

<sup>152</sup> See WSC, Manchester Central Library; also Lady Simon of Wythenshawe, *Margaret Ashton and Her Times*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1949); P. Hollis, *'Ladies Elect': Women in English Local Government 1865-1914*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987).

<sup>153</sup> BP, MS Bryce, 507/94; 507/95. *The Times*, 1 & 9 November, 1920

Annan Bryce experienced a taste of the kind of treatment dished out to women involved in the suffrage campaigns.

In 1912, Bertha Mason had observed that 'women members of the Anti-Suffrage League 'get deeper and deeper into politics year by year in their determination to keep out of politics'.<sup>154</sup> Although they never held formal membership of an anti-suffrage organisation, both Marion and James Bryce found themselves immersed in the debates and for Marion in particular, there was an issue of divided loyalty. Ultimately, she chose loyalty over her own intellect but perhaps would not have been dismayed to learn that in her obituary she was, 'not an opponent' of women's suffrage and had the ability to make 'one feel ashamed of weak knees and scattered brains'.<sup>155</sup> There still exists the scope for further research, especially into the life of Marion Bryce but space does not allow for it here as we turn to those 'offensive socialists' so feared by James Bryce.

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<sup>154</sup> B. Mason, *The Story of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, (Sherrat & Hughes, London, 1912).

<sup>155</sup> BP, MS Bryce, 497/37. *The Times*, 29 December 1939.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **'GIVE THE ANGELS CHARGE': THE POLITICS OF A PROPAGANDIST PARTNERSHIP.**

John and Katharine Bruce Glasier worked together for the socialist cause from the time of their marriage in 1893 until John Bruce Glasier's death in 1920. During this period they earned their reputation as foremost propagandists of socialism and the expression 'give the angels charge' was a term they frequently used and accurately reflects the prevailing philosophy they endorsed throughout their lives.

This chapter is primarily concerned with the way in which the Bruce Glasiers functioned as a political partnership. By charting the development of their partnership alongside an examination of gender and class and the specific issue of women's suffrage, which dominated the political arena at a time when they were both very politically active, an assessment of how gender issues might complicate political priorities can be offered.

The first section will offer some background material by considering the separate experiences of John Bruce Glasier and Katharine St. John Conway prior to their marriage and to this end to look at how representative they were in terms of the politicisation of individuals in the late nineteenth century. It will also examine how they initially perceived their partnership in both political and private terms and

how they negotiated their affiliation as individuals to the ILP into their broader philosophy.

The second section will look specifically at their respective and combined attitudes toward women's suffrage in the first decade of this century, locating the significance of suffrage within socialism and allowing for an exploration of the extent to which their relationship was gendered by contemporary thinking. It will also consider the way in which suffrage impacted upon ILP internal politics and how the Bruce Glasiers negotiated their personal politics around the subject.

Perhaps unusually, neither John nor Katherine Bruce Glasier wrote an autobiography although they were the subject of a biography by Laurence Thompson, entitled *The Enthusiasts*, (1971). Described as a biography of them both, the dominating subject is John Bruce Glasier and the jacket sleeve confirms this by saying of him:

A biographical study of this remarkable man, whose career embraces the whole of the early history of the Labour movement in this country, has been long overdue and Laurence Thompson...brings that history intensely to life by focussing upon the man whose behind-the-scenes influence was so considerable and enduring.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the importance of Thompson's biography cannot be understated in terms of elevating John Bruce Glasier's status some way towards that of his contemporaries,<sup>2</sup> it largely reduces Katharine St. John Conway to a woman 'saved' by her marriage to John Bruce Glasier and promotes him as a latter day saint.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in L. Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, (Victor Gollancz, London, 1971).

There has been considerable discussion of gender and biography in recent years<sup>3</sup> and it is interesting to note that the author of the Bruce Glasiers' biography was invited to write it by Malcolm Bruce Glasier, their son. One has to question to what extent Thompson was being asked to create a representation of the Bruce Glasiers that satisfied Malcolm Bruce Glasier and, therefore, how this might have affected the way in which the Bruce Glasiers are interpreted and represented in Thompson's book.. There will be a more detailed discussion of representation in the final section of this chapter but *The Enthusiasts* is nevertheless useful in providing some insight into the respective backgrounds of Katherine and John Bruce Glasier.

### 3.1. 'THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM'.

John Bruce Glasier (1859-1920) was illegitimate, something he had in common with Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald (aside from the fact they were all Scottish). However, Glasier's parents lived together and the reason they were not married was because Glasier's father had eloped with his mother, leaving behind a wife and several children. John Bruce Glasier believed he was born in Glasgow in

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<sup>2</sup> Ramsay MacDonald and Keir Hardie in particular, have been written about far more extensively although they were, of course, party leaders.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, K. Israel and L. Stanley's essays in *Gender & History*, vol. 2, no.1, Spring 1990; M. Roper and J. Tosh, (eds.), *Manful Assertions, Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, (Routledge, London, 1991); David Morgan, *Masculinity, Autobiography and History*, in *Gender & History*, vol. 2, no.1, Spring 1990.

1859 although his birth was not registered. He lived with his parents, Isabella McNicholl and John Bruce until his father's death in 1870 when Bruce Glasier was eleven years old. Significant emphasis has been attached by Thompson to three main factors of his childhood; firstly, that he was illegitimate, secondly, his father's atheism, and, thirdly, the isolation of the Ayrshire hills where he grew up.<sup>4</sup> Thompson writes that Bruce Glasier was 'too young to be consciously influenced by his father's atheist opinions,'<sup>5</sup> but having to endure his father scoring out religious words in school books, must have, arguably, affected him - even to the point of turning him towards religion. Two years after his father's death, the family moved to Glasgow, a stark contrast to the countryside to which Bruce Glasier was used. It was then that Glasier's mother adopted the surname Glazier, later to be spelt Glasier. Glasgow was Glasier's home for the next twenty years and in later life, responding to the question of what made him become a socialist, he would state 'Glasgow'.

Glasier's apprenticeship as an architectural draughtsman has been attributed to his mother who gave him the opportunity to follow a skilled trade by selling a small annuity and as Huffman has pointed out, 'like many of the male feminists in the socialist ranks, Glasier was greatly indebted to his mother whose sacrifices did not go unappreciated'.<sup>6</sup> Whether Glasier was a 'male feminist' is open to debate and

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<sup>4</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, pp.19-21.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.20

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in J.B. Huffman's entry in J. Q. Baylen & N. J. Gossman, (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals, Vol 3, A-K, 1870-1914*. (Wheatsheaf, Brighton, 1988) p.320.

certainly his views on women's suffrage would seem to contradict this. Nevertheless, it is clear from correspondence over a long period that he adored his mother and was very close to his three sisters. Like Marion Bryce, (see chapter two) Katharine Bruce Glasier had to work hard to be accepted.

The adolescent John Bruce Glasier was an avid reader with a love of poetry. He also wrote poetry but very little was published.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, this did not deter him from writing and perhaps an early indication of Glasier's spirit comes from a teenage diary entry in which he wrote that enthusiasm [sic] was the most prominent characteristic of his nature.<sup>8</sup> This enthusiasm manifested itself in a variety of ways throughout his life but there is a degree of irony that one of his earliest 'callings' was religion. This particular 'calling' was, however, short-lived after the discovery of Darwin and Huxley. Initially denouncing them for daring to disturb the faith of God's people, he later wrote '...it is possible I did so more for amusement than because I believed them wrong. As I was somewhat of a hypocrite in my real belief to those who knew me only from my essays.'<sup>9</sup>

Whilst it is obvious that John Bruce Glasier did not share the comfortable middle-class upbringing of many of his contemporaries, to what extent he was truly 'working-class' is debatable. The fact that his mother had a small annuity would have been almost unheard of in a Scottish working class family and his training as

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<sup>7</sup> John Bruce Glasier's sister, Elizabeth Glasier Foster, privately printed *Bruce Glasier and His Poetry* (n.d.) after his death.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.22

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.23

an architectural draughtsman would have ranked him above traditional working class occupations such as mining. Moreover, until he eloped with Isabella McNicholl, Glasier's father was a successful butcher with his own shop in a prime location. Having said this, John Bruce Glasier did have first hand experience of what it was like to be unemployed in Glasgow as evidenced in diary entries for 1879:

12 June: out of employment these months back...For a week I did nothing else but sit in the Mitchell Library. December 24: Another year ebbing fast away-I have never got any permanent occupation yet. Have been doing some diagrams for Professor Jas McCall of the veterinary college. Drawing Horses' stomachs, [sic] legs etc., what an occupation for an architect still less a poet(?)! <sup>10</sup>

What is also apparent is the continuing aspiration to be recognised as a poet - something that was never satisfied.

In 1880, John Bruce Glasier did find employment working as a draughtsman in Glasgow but from then until he married Katharine St. John Conway in 1893, unemployment was a regular feature in his life. Laurence Thompson identifies at least two occasions when John Bruce Glasier was sacked because he had to choose between his political activities and his job but adds that 'one should not, perhaps, blame Glasgow employers too harshly'.<sup>11</sup> His justification for this comment is based on the amount of time Glasier spent organising rallies for the unemployed, speaking from a soap-box and supporting strikes. However,

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p.29

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

eventually he was able to create two identities; 'Glasier the Socialist agitator and Glasier the conscientious draughtsman'<sup>12</sup> by gaining employment outside of Glasgow.

One of John Bruce Glasier's earliest political allies was James Shaw Maxwell who remained a friend for life. Shaw Maxwell was the editor of *The Mace*, an occasional publication of the Glasgow Parliamentary Association and lent Glasier £4.9.0 in order that he could print a thousand copies of a long poem entitled *Empire Against Liberty*. The writing of the poem and subsequent responses to it reveal more about John Bruce Glasier personally and politically at this time than any other single factor. He was certainly not shy about exposing his poetry to the widest possible audience and sent copies of *Empire Against Liberty* to, amongst others, Joseph Chamberlain, Gladstone, William Morris, Garibaldi and Tennyson. The responses he received varied from no response at all in the case of Morris, (although this did not affect the high esteem in which Bruce Glasier held him), to having the doctrines described as subversive by Joseph Chamberlain, whilst Matthew Arnold believed the poem to have spirit and feeling.<sup>13</sup> Sales of the poem were minimal and a diary entry of Glasier's states:

Among my friends few have given me any praise or encouragement to write more - not one attempting to say he likes such a passage or disapproves such a passage. But I have always found it so. If ever I take a position in the literature of my country - I will have myself alone to thank. Some poets have been pestered with flattery of their friends. I have always been chilled by the total lack of either criticism or praise.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.26

This desire to rank alongside Burns et al. continued for many years although as he matured so did his acceptance of the fact that it was unlikely to happen.

The revolutionary trait expressed in *Empire Against Liberty*<sup>15</sup> can be seen in the kind of causes that attracted John Bruce Glasier's sympathy. His first serious political activity was involvement with land reform in Ireland and Scotland and his friend Shaw Maxwell, who stood unsuccessfully for Parliament on behalf of the Scottish Land and Labour League, undoubtedly influenced him in this respect. It has also been pointed out by Joan Huffman that Glasier's attachment to the Irish Nationalist leader, Michael Davitt was symptomatic of a preference to support rather than lead.<sup>16</sup> This was to be a trend that continued throughout his political life although whether it was a conscious choice in his later years is open to discussion.

Throughout the 1880's, John Bruce Glasier was involved with a variety of causes and had links with several organisations. It would seem logical to conclude that this time was, in many respects, a political journey of discovery with his attention being focused initially on a range of single issues such as the land question in Scotland and Ireland, and then the Lanarkshire miners' strike in the late 1880's. Of course, this kind of political journey was by no means exclusive to John Bruce Glasier and many of his contemporaries (including his future wife) followed a similar path, finding socialism through specific causes. It was during this period that

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p.25-6

<sup>15</sup> J. Bruce Glasier, *Empire Against Liberty: A Song For Nihilism*, (written under the name Hyperion) 1880.

<sup>16</sup> Baylen & Gossman, *Modern British Radicals*, p.320.

John Bruce Glasier acquired a reputation for being 'one of the most active socialist propagandists in Scotland'<sup>17</sup> whether as a member of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) or its rival organisation, the Socialist League which was led by his idol, William Morris. Glasier contributed to the League's journal, *Commonweal*, and his lecture topics were reported on regularly. Both the aforementioned organisations suffered from internal conflicts and by 1890, Glasier was no longer associated with any socialist group in Scotland although he did have nominal connections with the Hammersmith Socialist Society in London.<sup>18</sup> However, he continued to contribute to journals such as *Commonweal*, possibly because other outlets for his writing were limited. The revolutionary trait seen in both his writing and his actions at this time became an area of political conflict for John Bruce Glasier and although he did not fully reject militancy until the Boer War, by the last years of the nineteenth century, in pamphlets such as *Socialism and Strikes*, he was advocating the ballot box as the solution for the working class.<sup>19</sup>

Until the creation of the ILP in 1893, John Bruce Glasier continued to be a Socialist without any strong affiliations. By 1892, however, he was being described in *The Workman's Times* as 'Scotland's foremost propagandist'<sup>20</sup> and he was

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> BLPES, London School of Economics, ILP 6, Box 13, Francis Johnson MSS, Bruce Glasier Biography Material. This contains a London syllabus for the 1891/92 session showing John Bruce Glasier as lecturing on Socialism on 23 December 1891.

<sup>19</sup> University of Liverpool, Sidney Jones Library, Glasier Papers, (hereafter referred to as GP.) GP/V/38 J. Bruce Glasier, *Socialism and Strikes*, (National Labour Press, Manchester, 1900.)

speaking from a variety of platforms as well as contributing to several organs. Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie have made the point in *The First Fabians*, (1977) that 'Bruce Glasier, like his future wife, Kate Conway, came to socialism through a crisis of faith' and that 'by 1892 he had become one of the movement's itinerant missionaries.'<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the MacKenzies describe the sense of rootlessness experienced by other 'new evangelists' such as Ramsay MacDonald, Keir Hardie and Robert Blatchford, as responsible for the emphasis that was given to fellowship which acted as 'a substitute for stable personal relationships'.<sup>22</sup> This found an expression in 1891, when the Labour Church was formed enabling both men and women a platform that was both political and spiritual.

Katharine St. John Conway (1867-1950) was the eldest daughter of a family of seven. Her father, the Reverend. Samuel Conway, was a Congregationalist minister and Katharine spent most of her youth in Walthamstow where her father preached. Both her father and her mother, Amy Curling Conway held the view that girls were entitled to an education on a par with boys, and until Katharine St. John Conway was ten, she was educated at home by her mother who had herself been educated like her Oxford don brother.<sup>23</sup> When Katharine was

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<sup>20</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.51.

<sup>21</sup> N & J MacKenzie, *The First Fabians*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London,1977), p.187.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Education was a topic upon which Katharine and John Bruce Glasier disagreed; Katharine held the same view as her parents whilst Bruce Glasier saw all formal academic schooling as wrong, regardless of gender.

fourteen, her mother died after giving birth to her seventh child, Amy. Given the closeness of the relationship between Katharine and her mother it is understandable that this had a fairly profound effect upon her and also explains in part the prevailing philosophy she advocated later in terms of the family unit being the 'bedrock' of society.<sup>24</sup> Four years after her mother's death, her father remarried and it has been suggested that Katharine disliked her new stepmother. Thompson comments that Katharine was ordinarily 'a copious writer about most aspects of her life, but about those adolescent years there is a significant silence'.<sup>25</sup>

In a letter to John Bruce Glasier just prior to their marriage, Katharine delighted in the fact that his mother would also become her mother:

But the mother! Oh Bruce, - I have never had one for 13 years. Tell her that, and that I long for her almost as I longed for my prince in the months before he came...I would like never to take you away from her breast. - if we wouldn't bother her Bruce. I cannot bear that my gain should be others' loss and they would miss you so.<sup>26</sup>

In 1886, when she was nineteen, Katharine went to study Classics at Newnham College, Cambridge. She was in receipt of a Clothworkers' scholarship and when she left in 1889, she was officially placed second in the College Tripos although her son Malcolm was adamant that 'Miss Gladstone proved that she was first; she was

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<sup>24</sup> K. Bruce Glasier, *Socialism and the Home*, (ILP, London, 1909).

<sup>25</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.61.

<sup>26</sup> GP I.1. 1893/46 Katharine St. John Conway to John Bruce Glasier, 30 May 1893.

above the males'.<sup>27</sup> In defiance of a system that refused to grant degrees to women until the 1920's,<sup>28</sup> Katharine insisted upon writing 'B.A.' after her name and this appeared in many of her publications. Although the use of this title was perfectly justified, it would have had the additional benefit of adding an air of respectability to her both as a female and within what could be at times, a somewhat sceptical socialist circle.

After leaving Cambridge, Katharine became a Classics teacher in Bristol and it was there that she had what Thompson describes as her 'Road to Damascus' experience.<sup>29</sup> Women workers in the city had been involved in a number of strikes and the Bristol Socialist Society had taken the opportunity to use their plight for propaganda purposes. Women cotton-workers went on Sunday morning marches to different churches and in November 1890, they entered All Saints, Clifton which was where Katharine worshipped. According to Thompson, in a chapter entitled *A Pretty Little Lady Finds Her Way*, this was the moment of Katharine's conversion<sup>30</sup> although when she first went to the Socialist Society's Headquarters in Bristol, she was, states Thompson, 'received with the reserve thought appropriate in SDF

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<sup>27</sup> Baylen and Gossman, *Modern British Radicals*, p.325

<sup>28</sup> Women with degrees from Cambridge had to wait until the 1940's.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.65.

<sup>30</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the way in which people converted to socialism and the dominant influences, see Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', *History Workshop Journal*, issue 4, Autumn, 1977.

circles to middle-class young ladies who had suddenly developed social consciences'.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, the society was hardly in a position to turn people away and Katharine's initiation began with a copy of Edward Carpenter's *England's Ideal* to read. This had a fairly significant effect on her but during the next two years she was, by her own admission, 'lost in a very bog of ideas, muddled, and more than a little miserable'.<sup>32</sup> In the same way that John Bruce Glasier spent a number of years trying to find an acceptable political home, Katharine became involved with different organisations and individuals including the Clifton and Bristol branch of the Fabian Society and the Fabian Circle; a group of provincial Fabian members who discoursed on a variety of topics in a notebook which was circulated between them. Carolyn Steedman (1990) has asserted that it was not only the content of the ideas that was important but also the excitement with which they were expressed across class and gender divisions.<sup>33</sup> Anita Fergusson, writing later in the notebook after various members, including Katharine, had had their say, stated:

Let me with Katharine cry out at having to act up to a "character" such as is given by the autocrat of O. I would at once disclaim any pretensions to 'greatness' either on Women's Trade Unions or any other subject. Why I happen to be especially identified with that branch of work here is because

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<sup>31</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.65.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p.67.

<sup>33</sup> C. Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain*, Margaret McMillan, 1860-1931, (Rutgers University Press, 1990) p.122.

it happens to be the one that most needs doing. All work for the cause is the same to me!<sup>34</sup>

It is Dan Irving and his wife who have been the focus of most attention in material pertaining to Katharine's early political career. Dan Irving was a member of the Bristol Socialist Society who had lost a leg as a result of an accident on the railway where he had worked. In late 1891, Katharine moved in with the Irvings and also gave up teaching classics, choosing instead to teach in a Board school in a working-class area of Bristol. These two major changes to her circumstances would appear to have had far-reaching consequences. Her family were outraged that she was no longer putting her Cambridge education to good use and there has been speculation as to the exact nature of her relationship with Dan Irving<sup>35</sup> although the latter would seem to be a standard assumption applied to many politically active women of the period.

Whilst Katharine was with the Irvings she was expected to carry out the bulk of household chores as well as teaching full-time. She saw herself as a 'spirit wife'<sup>36</sup> but described her time with the Irvings as 'Bristol Hell'<sup>37</sup> and was clearly

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<sup>34</sup> GP/II./3.1. MS Notebooks of Katharine Bruce Glasier, *Our Fabian Circle*, p.59.

<sup>35</sup> See Thompson's general account of Katharine Bruce Glasier's early relationships with men in *The Enthusiasts*.

<sup>36</sup> Like a number of other Fabians, Katharine Bruce Glasier developed an interest in spiritualism which played a fundamental part in her public and private life.

<sup>37</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts* p.71.

relieved when she was invited by W.S. De Mattos (Lecture Secretary of the Fabian Society) to become a Fabian lecturer travelling to different parts of the country. It was at this time that she came into contact with people like the Webbs as well as being the subject of considerable gossip. As Thompson has pointed out, 'Fabians were no more immune from the pleasures of gossip than lesser mortals, and the reports seem to have been widespread'.<sup>38</sup> Far from being seen as her rescuer, De Mattos quickly developed a reputation as a seducer, no doubt assisted by the likes of George Bernard Shaw who wrote to Sidney Webb, "I hear from Oxford that De Mattos is ravishing every maiden in the country".<sup>39</sup> Katharine's later description of those 'early dangerous days'<sup>40</sup> should be understood in the broadest context.

As Sally Alexander has pointed out, 'Socialism was as necessary as political democracy was unavoidable, but it must be a socialism based on the study of facts not the encouragement of feelings (except collectivist ones)'.<sup>41</sup> To this end, Sidney Webb, who was antipathetic to the political aspirations of the provincial Fabians, was also sufficiently concerned about their 'utopian state of mind' to write to Katharine St. John Conway in May 1892. He explained that he was:

persuaded of the need of thorough personal study by all Socialists, of the *facts* of modern industry rather than the aspirations of Socialists...Once we

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p.73

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> GP II.3.31 Katharine Bruce Glasier MS. Portrait of Isabella O. Ford by K. Bruce Glasier in the *Bradford Pioneer* (n.d.).

<sup>41</sup> Sally Alexander (ed) *Women's Fabian Tracts*, (Routledge, London,1988) p.4.

have got our faith we should, I think, do better to spend our nights and days over books like Charles Booth's than over William Morris - who is for the unconverted, not for those who have already found 'salvation'.<sup>42</sup>

The main reason for Webb's concern was that at this time the socialist movement was attracting what the MacKenzies describe as 'voracious but undisciplined readers, articulate but rhetorical speakers'.<sup>43</sup> However, there is evidence to suggest that Webb's concern may have been more focused on women socialists and it was his wife, Beatrice Webb who elaborated on this theme when she responded to an invitation from Pease to speak at a Fabian meeting: 'The hidden masculinity of Sidney's views of women are incurable in his decided objection to my figuring among the speakers. See how skin-deep are these professions of advanced opinion, with regard to women, among your leaders of the forward party!'<sup>44</sup>

Katharine gave up lecturing for De Mattos and became a regular contributor to the *Workman's Times*, the pages of which she used to advocate 'a government of the people, fully representative of a nation of men and women with equal political rights'.<sup>45</sup> In September 1892, she attended the Trades Union Congress meeting in Glasgow where according to Thompson she met and promptly forgot John Bruce Glasier.<sup>46</sup>

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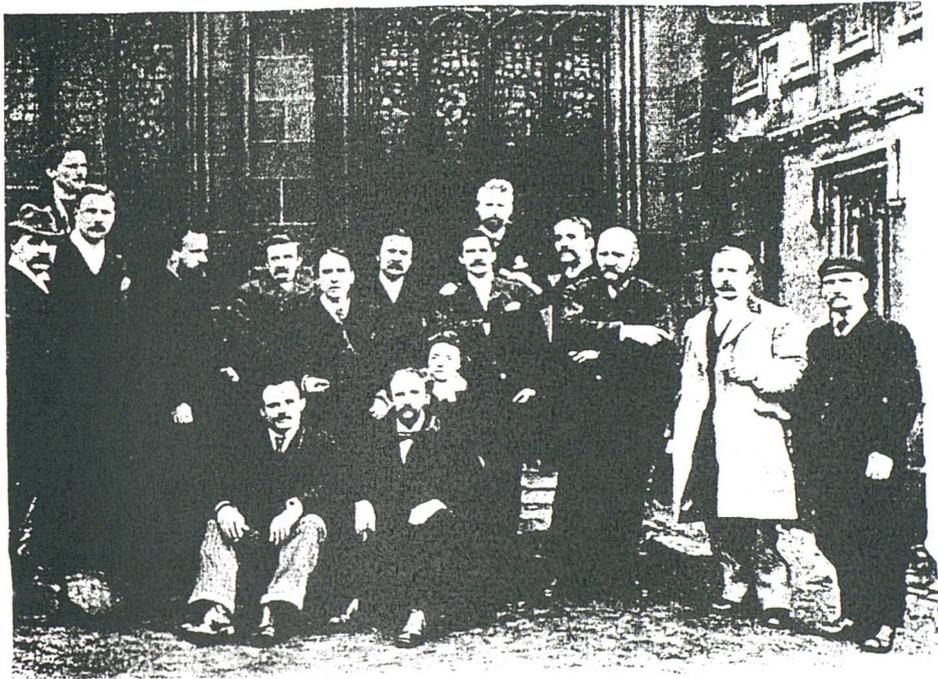
<sup>42</sup> Quoted in MacKenzie, *First Fabians*, p.185.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. pp.184-5.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Beatrice Webb to E.R. Pease, 18 April, 1892, quoted in MacKenzie, *First Fabians*, p.193.

<sup>45</sup> *Workman's Times*, 25 February, 1893.

At this time, Katharine was appointed as the only female organiser in preparation for the advent of the ILP in 1893 and it was within this organisation that she found the socialist home she had been seeking. Huffman has expressed a



The first National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party, 1893. Katharine Conway seated behind Shaw Maxwell, with Pete Curran on his right. William Small standing third from right, behind him John Lister.

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<sup>46</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.74.



The Evangelists, John and Katharine Bruce Glasier.

degree of cynicism as to the reasons for Katharine's initial involvement - the building had to be cleaned and prepared for the occasion - but acknowledges that it was this kind of dedication that led to her being the only woman on the first National Administrative Council (NAC) of the ILP.<sup>47</sup> There was however, a degree of male support for Katharine St. John Conway which was articulated by J. Ogilvie in a letter to Keir Hardie. He emphasised the necessity of women being admitted to the House of Commons so that:

Miss Conway might stand on the floor of the House side by side with you [Keir Hardie] and John Burns...Could you not give notice or bring in a bill entitling women to be returned as MPs...You would get the credit for having moved in the matter first. Never mind though they don't at present have the vote. That surely is no reason why men may not vote for such women as Miss Conway.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.2 'THE RELIGION OF SOCIALISM'.

The courtship of John Bruce Glasier and Katharine St. John Conway seems to have been brief and was conducted primarily by post although in April 1893, Katharine stayed at the Glasier's Glasgow flat where, according to Thompson, John Bruce Glasier 'perhaps deceived by her reputation as a New Woman, had attempted to make passionate love to her'.<sup>49</sup> Clearly he hadn't quite grasped the new woman's

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<sup>47</sup> Baylen and Gossman, *Modern British Radicals* p.326.

<sup>48</sup> Francis Johnson collection, ILP 4, 1893/22, Letter from J. Olgivie to J. Keir Hardie.

*Credo*, as written by Katharine herself, "Liberty, Equality, then Love"<sup>50</sup> although Thompson's assumption of how 'new women' were perceived is also interesting. Katharine, it would seem, had several admirers including George Bernard Shaw who wrote to her, inviting her to climb a mountain 'that I may make him understand what I think of him, or he of me, or something or other-he is rather mixed...'<sup>51</sup> Bruce Glasier was vitriolic in his opinion of Shaw who allegedly proposed to Katharine on more than one occasion. Thompson states that Katharine refused on the grounds that marriage and children were not compatible with her work but Shaw was to remind her of this when she married Bruce Glasier. In response to her reply stating that her marriage would not interfere with her work, he sent her a typically Shavian postcard: 'Invite me to the christening', which Katharine tore up.<sup>52</sup>

Katharine's doubts about marriage and children warrant deeper investigation for several reasons. Firstly, it is clear from correspondence between them prior to their marriage that she was not prepared to conform to the ideal of Victorian marriage. In one letter she wrote:

What does a poet think of a woman with ink on her finger and a hole in her stocking? What would he say to two *thick* ankles? [sic] What part or lot could he have with a woman who lost her garter and deliberately bound up a black stocking with the dirty lace from her neck and *roared* at the abominable slattendom as if it were a joke...*What would he say to a woman*

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<sup>49</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.79.

<sup>50</sup> K. St. John Conway BA, *Husband and Brother*, (Bristol, 1894).

<sup>51</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.80.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p.81.

*who would sooner eat bread and butter and drink milk or buy fruit for dinner than cook it?...Again, what would a poet say to a woman who liked earning money and enjoyed the thought of being breadwinner as well as wife that the husband might never have to sell even a hair of himself, but just give give all the time - and that she might hug herself in the glory of the gift and be proud like a peacock not a pea hen at all.*<sup>53</sup>

Obviously, she was making it very clear that the pre-conceived notions of gender roles within a marriage could not and would not apply in their case but this extends beyond the domestic sphere as she was advancing a total reversal of roles to the point where her response to the possibility of such an arrangement becomes almost masculine. In a flurry of letters they seem to have negotiated a set of ground rules that were to form the basis of their partnership, although how successful they were in adhering to them remains to be seen. John Bruce Glasier wanted children but he was prepared to accept that a family was not compatible with their combined work. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which one feels he was quietly confident that Katharine would eventually change her mind. Certainly, he advocated the institution of marriage and the family as an essential unit of the state.<sup>54</sup>

Additionally, consideration needs to be given to their respective political careers at this time. Whilst they both lectured, it was Katharine who was the most popular speaker, albeit not necessarily for the right reasons, and by committing herself to marriage, it was she, who potentially, had most to lose. If their marriage

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<sup>53</sup> GP I.1. 1893/30 Letter from Katharine St. John Conway to John Bruce Glasier, 18 May 1893.

<sup>54</sup> ILP 6, Box 20, ILP Archive, J. Bruce Glasier, 'Charles James Fox and Votes for Women (n.d.), Uncatalogued Miscellanea.

is to be seen as the start of their political partnership then it is significant that it was made clear that marriage would not interfere with Katharine's propaganda and literary work and that she would also retain her own name. No such announcement was made about Bruce's work and it was Katharine, not Bruce, whom the local paper chose to interview immediately after their wedding ceremony, on the future of Socialism.<sup>55</sup>

The marriage itself took place on June 21st 1893, and has been described by Pat Jalland (1986) as 'by far the most unconventional' of the late nineteenth century political figures she looked at in her chapter on the Rituals of Courtship and Marriage.<sup>56</sup> Glasier's agnostic tendencies meant that a church ceremony was out of the question and the occasion seemed to be an opportunity to 'inaugurate the new era' which resulted in them marrying in the presence of two witnesses with no official representation. Shortly after, Bruce wrote, 'standing close by the sea-shore with the fair moon shedding her tenderest light upon us I placed a ring upon Katharine's finger...and took each other for man and wife. We are therefore wedded according to the simple and beautiful manner of old Scotch custom and common law'.<sup>57</sup> However, in an earlier letter to the Yorkshire school teacher, Barbara Fraser, in which John Bruce Glasier had informed her, 'My comrade, Katharine Conway and I are to be mated, married-or something of that kind', he made the

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<sup>55</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.83.

<sup>56</sup> Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p.40.

<sup>57</sup> GP I.1. 1893/25 Letter from John Bruce Glasier to Barbara Fraser, 26 June 1893.

point that they were both propagandists and intended to solve the dilemma of being mated and still giving full commitment to the cause. He also believed that as well as being able to make her a more effective propagandist, he could 'make her a better woman'.<sup>58</sup> Katharine's disassociation with her family remained despite her marriage and she forbade John Bruce Glasier even to write to them stating:

My relations would kill all they could *see* of our joy-and therefore it were best they saw it not at all till it were complete - A congregationalist parson with a rich bourgeois wife must be spared the agony of a boundless love that laps over all his miserable canons and rate of respectability and scales of income.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, they still had to overcome potential resistance to their partnership from within the socialist ranks and they both wrote separately to those they considered most influential including Edward Carpenter, who responded to John Bruce Glasier's letter by stating, 'It is only on the surface that we have been sometimes disappointed by her. [Katharine]' However, after consideration he felt able to conclude, 'that you two together will be like a fire and the sword to the Philistines and the Capitalists'.<sup>60</sup> What is significant is that despite her obvious popularity as a speaker and her already proven commitment to the socialist cause, it was not considered that by marrying John Bruce Glasier, *her* reputation would be

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<sup>58</sup> GP I.1. 1893/24 Letter from John Bruce Glasier to Barbara Fraser, 6 June, 1893.

<sup>59</sup> GP I.1. 1893. See correspondence between John and Katharine Bruce Glasier 24, 26 and 28 May 1893.

<sup>60</sup> GP I.1. 1893/13 Letter from Edward Carpenter to John Bruce Glasier, 10 June, 1893.

damaged in some way. Rather, the advantages and disadvantages of the union were mooted in terms of how they would impact on John Bruce Glasier.

After their marriage, they continued to lecture all over the country but attempted to fix their engagements so that they could meet up between times when away from home.<sup>61</sup> The MacKenzies' description of the life of these peripatetic propagandists as hard, exhausting and financially meagre<sup>62</sup> is accurate and there are several references to financial worries in the correspondence between the Bruce Glasiers. Even if you gave the angels charge, train fares still had to be paid. Nevertheless, just prior to their marriage there was clearly a romanticism in John Bruce Glasier's description of their being, 'two penniless propagandists! And Maggie McMillan too! Brave Girl!'<sup>63</sup> Extra income was earned through writing (although this was not always successful) and early on in their partnership they wrote a joint piece entitled *The Religion of Socialism* which was probably more notable for cementing their political partnership and reinforcing their new identity than for its content. It did, however, indicate how socialism could provide a means of achieving spiritual fulfilment.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Francis Johnson clearly intended to write a biography of the Bruce Glasiers and among his notebooks are details of their respective engagements after their marriage. Katharine Bruce Glasier corresponded with him on the subject shortly before her death but the only artefact produced was a biographical sketch entitled *An Apostle of Socialism*. ILP 6, Box 13 Francis Johnson MSS, Bruce Glasier Biography Material.

<sup>62</sup> MacKenzie, *First Fabians*, p.184.

<sup>63</sup> GP I.1 1893/24 John Bruce Glasier to Barbara Fraser, 6 June, 1893. For a full discussion of the life of Margaret McMillan see C. Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain*.

Katharine Bruce Glasier's early writings include short stories on the theme of the New Woman. A perusal of these works reveals them to be largely autobiographical and direct correlations can be made between her early experiences and the work she produced. In *Husband and Brother, A Few Chapters in a Woman's Life of To-day* (1894) Katharine appears to have been less than subtle in her choice of characters' names. Certainly, one could speculate that the characters of John and Barbara Gilfillan and Levitia Veron are partly based upon John Gilray and Barbara Fraser who were part of the 'Fabian Circle', John Bruce Glasier's younger sister, Elizabeth and Katharine herself.<sup>65</sup> She even dedicated 'this little volume' to 'Lizzie, sister and comrade'.<sup>66</sup> In the story, Levitia Veron is a well-travelled woman who tells her friend's husband, Mr Blane, 'I have studied people with a big P till I am tired.' Blane suggests that she 'Try a unit of the masculine gender for a change,' and on the same evening he introduces her to his cousin, John Gilfillan.<sup>67</sup> Levitia and John marry but the reader is informed:

John and his wife did not live alone. His youngest sister, Barbara, or "Baby" as she was generally called, had been bequeathed to him as a sole bequest by a somewhat prodigal father. A thorough education—three years at Oxford—and a home till she married, such was his conception, and "Baby" at twenty-two years of age did him credit. "I think you will like her," he had

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<sup>64</sup> K. St. John Conway, J. Bruce Glasier, *The Religion of Socialism, Parts I and II*, (Labour Press, Manchester, 1895), see especially pp.10-16

<sup>65</sup> John Gilray and Barbara Fraser were to be married in 1893, causing Margaret McMillan to write to John Bruce Glasier that 'Marriage is bad and free love is worse'. GP I.1 1893/81 2 February 1893.

<sup>66</sup> K. St. John Conway, BA, *Husband and Brother*, (Arrowroot, Bristol, 1894) introduction.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid* p.8.

told his wife. She was a little anxious on the matter at first. "I like so few women, you know," she confessed ruefully; "and if they take to liking me, it sometimes gets harder than ever."<sup>68</sup>

The book was reviewed by Esther Wood in the "New Woman" column of the *Labour Leader* and was very well received:

As a work of art, this little story is a masterpiece - brilliant, dramatic, analytic, subtle, enthralling from the first page to the end. But it is much more than a story. It is a manifesto of revolted womanhood - revolted not in the vulgarest, but in the worthiest sense of the term. It is a challenge, a battle-song, an inspiration, a prophecy.<sup>69</sup>

As well as reviewing the book, Esther Wood offered an insight into the author's politics:

Mrs. Bruce Glasier - for by that name the author is now best known to us - does not write as a mere spectator of the present-day struggle (deplorable in many of its aspects, comical in some, yet desperate and pathetic in all) towards a free and self-dependent life for women. She writes as one who knows the bitter cost of revolt as well as its grave necessity...and with a reverence as unwavering as her courage, she assails the institution upheld by law, by religion, by the power of money, by custom, and by the lust of men - the institution of marriage as it exists to-day.<sup>70</sup>

Given Katharine's public statement that she would be retaining her maiden name, it is somewhat surprising that she did not in fact do this. Perhaps there was still an issue concerning respectability which she couldn't quite overcome. However,

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. pp.13-14.

<sup>69</sup> *Labour Leader*, 1 December, 1894.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

correspondence between the Bruce Glasiers and Keir Hardie, who in 1897 was editor of the *Labour Leader*, reveals more of the practical difficulties of being a political partnership - particularly when literary talent was being debated. Esther Wood's review, whilst salutary, was not acceptable to Katharine who felt that she had missed the meaning of the book. The situation became exacerbated when the *Labour Leader* printed an unfavourable review of her next novel, *Aimee Furness* (1897). John Bruce Glasier wrote to Keir Hardie expressing his astonishment at the publication of such a review but Hardie's response made it perfectly clear he was not prepared to give way and that he found Glasier's reaction rather ridiculous:

I only want you to understand that there is no bias in the matter and I can well imagine with what humour you would have poked fun at anyone else who wrote on the lines of your letter. I trust you keep better, and that we may have a chance soon of settling the matter over a smoke.<sup>71</sup>

An examination of Katharine's response to the review reveals how the paradox of writing literary politics as opposed to political literature could not be satisfactorily resolved. In a letter to Keir Hardie she explained that she had written *Aimee Furness*, 'with my whole heart in it longing to be allowed to get at my readers hearts and consciences and to wake them to the sorrows and sufferings of their fellows about them so that they may be induced to work with us in our movement and not against us.'<sup>72</sup> She did concede that there was a tendency for propagandists

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<sup>71</sup> GP I.1. 1897/14 Letter from Keir Hardie to John Bruce Glasier, 8 March, 1897.

<sup>72</sup> GP I.1. 1897/15 Letter from Katharine Bruce Glasier to Keir Hardie, 16 March 1897.

to take themselves too seriously but felt that as a 'good socialist' she had earned the right to the assistance of the paper in the same way that good socialists would ensure lecturers an audience.<sup>73</sup> For Katharine Bruce Glasier, her literary endeavours, in addition to being another source of income,<sup>74</sup> were another outlet for spreading the word of socialism and on those grounds alone deserved being treated with a respect that was not forthcoming. The fact that it was the socialist press who were condemning her efforts made the situation considerably worse.

Feminist historians and literary critics who have written of the women's movement of the 1890's, have acknowledged the 'explicitly didactic and feminist' tone of the literature, and the challenge it presented to conventional ideas about marriage and sexual relationships.<sup>75</sup> Katharine Bruce Glasier's work is representative in this respect, however, the novel was only one of the forms she used to articulate her ideas and it was utilised by her to produce the lessons in Socialism which were to be found in her other writings. Lucy Bland has pointed out that many of the 'new woman' writers were feminist and were writing to help the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, sales of *Husband and Brother* were not high and she received a cheque for only £6.13.4 for the first years sales. GP I.1. 1895/1 Letter from J.W.Arrowsmith to Katharine Bruce Glasier, 31 January, 1895.

<sup>75</sup> L. Bland, 'The Married Woman, the 'New Woman' and the Feminist: Sexual Politics of the 1890's', in Jane Rendall, *Equal or Different*, p.142; See also, L. Bland, *Banishing the Beast. English Feminism and Sexual Morality 1885-1914*, (Penguin, London, 1995), especially pp.143-9; E. Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle*, (Virago, London, 1992), especially pp.38-58.

cause of other women<sup>76</sup> and whilst this is true of Katharine's work, it needs to be examined within a broader socialist context.

In *Husband and Brother*, Katharine skilfully uses the written word to make some very strong points about women's rights and position and the hypocrisy surrounding the status of unmarried women, whilst at the same time offering her own rather utopian view of love and relationships. When John Gilfillan refuses to allow his sister, Barbara to work in a Board school, Levitia, his wife intervenes. In conversation with Barbara she explains:

...But seriously, Barbara, it is every woman's right economic freedom, as they call it now-a-days. Soon I hope the world's wheels will be geared up sensibly, and we all, men and women alike, shall be sure of being allowed to earn our bodie's [sic] needs without selling their powers to anyone else. But that day hasn't come yet. And your work, please, is not to furnish another hideous instance for the reformers of the present night of things. It is to show what a woman can do when she has got room to grow.<sup>77</sup>

To the disgust of John Gilfillan, his sister, Barbara, leaves and goes to London where she begins a journey of exploration totally alien to her brother culminating in her joining 'a couple of women's clubs'.

"But who *are* all these women?" demanded her husband. "The women who are tired of being hens, I suppose," said Levitia with an assumption of indifference which she did not feel. "And if the world outside their poultry yards isn't a very safe place for them just now, it is hardly their fault. They have had little enough hand in the making of it. The sooner they all scramble out and set to work on it, to make it fit for themselves to live in, the better." "Great Scott!" cried her husband over his teacup, "what a clucking there will be!" "And what an awful noise the cocks will make!"

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> K. St. John Conway, *Husband and Brother*, pp.39-40.

returned his wife with a distinctly malicious enjoyment of the prospect. "But surely women don't want the whole world to live in?" "Oh dear, no! They only want as much right to choose their place in it as you have had hitherto,- the wiser of them probably will not be content till the opportunity is equal for everyone alike," said Levitia demurely.<sup>78</sup>

Eventually, John Gilfillan comes to accept Barbara's decision to live her life in any way she chooses, and when she returns for a visit she tells Levitia, "I know now who it was that you married". However, the most significant description of this scene is that 'Levitia's desk had been replaced by a work-basket and her feet were on a stool'.<sup>79</sup> Now pregnant, her status has completely altered as she prepares for motherhood. The final climax of the story however, demonstrates the thin veneer of men's support for equality; Barbara has fallen in love with a married man, Miller, who does not love his wife and wants to be with her. John Gilfillan hears the story and is sympathetic to Miller's plight, pointing out that his generosity in marrying a fool had cost him dearly. Gilfillan also acknowledges that under Levitia's influence he had concluded that Miller and his new love should be able to be together. However, he is unaware that Barbara is the 'other woman' and when this is explained to him he shouts, "Barbara! - Miller! - the scoundrel!" Levitia's response to this is to turn away from him saying, "It was always some brother's sister."<sup>80</sup> It is worth noting that Katharine Bruce Glasier was probably pregnant when she wrote *Husband and Brother* and Chris Waters has observed the transition in her writing

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p 93-5.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.124.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p.158.

from chronicling 'the bitter struggle of a woman to secure her independence' to the suggestion in *Aimee Furniss* 'that independence can be realised by embracing a social cause'.<sup>81</sup>

The separate experiences of John and Katharine Bruce Glasier are well represented in their early writings as are those of many of their contemporaries. Their politicisation seems to have followed a predictable pattern but it was their combined commitment to socialism that allowed them the scope to either negotiate or indeed ignore areas that were potentially conflictual. The ILP provided them with a public identity which gave them the freedom to pursue those areas of particular interest to them as a couple as well as individuals.

The Bruce Glasiers first came into contact with the Pankhursts in 1896 at Boggart Hole Clough, near Manchester. The North Manchester Fabian Society had been meeting there regularly on a Sunday but when political meetings were prohibited by the Parks Committee, the ILP took the issue on board in the name of free speech. Two ILP members, Fred Brocklehurst and Leonard Hall, were jailed for breaching the ruling and as a response to this, Emmeline Pankhurst was asked to speak, presumably to see if the authorities would be prepared to jail her too. Thompson's comment on this is that 'women were not yet, fortunately, the equals of men. It was one thing to send Socialist agitators to prison, quite another to send a lady...'<sup>82</sup> Thompson's account of the Boggart Hole story reveals more about the

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<sup>81</sup> C. Waters, 'New Women and Socialist-Feminist Fiction: The Novels of Isabella Ford and Katharine Bruce Glasier', in A. Ingram & D. Patai, *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals British Women Writers 1889-1939*, (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1993), pp. 25-42.

biographer's own views of Emmeline Pankhurst than anything else for he used it as an opportunity to lament the premature death of Richard Pankhurst in 1898, pointing out 'that there is no statue to him, as there is to his noisy and rather tiresome wife...'<sup>83</sup> The most significant aspect of this situation however, is that Mrs Pankhurst took the chair for Bruce Glasier, although Bruce Glasier was never imprisoned despite not paying his fine. In that sense, it has to be acknowledged that had Mrs Pankhurst been sent to prison, she would have gone because she represented Bruce Glasier. Yet the way in which he wrote about the prospect of being sent to prison in 1896, gives the impression he was resentful that he did not get the opportunity to be a martyr for the cause. In a letter to his sister, Elizabeth Foster Glasier, he wrote as if he were actually in prison: 'We do not have hard labour. We are treated as ordinary prisoners and have a certain amount of work to do every day-and plenty of time for thinking and sleeping'.<sup>84</sup> In another letter to his mother, he discussed the possibility of himself and Katharine spending 'a months quiet retirement under her Majesty's keeping'<sup>85</sup> - even better that they could both be martyrs for the cause.

An examination of the relationship between the Bruce Glasiers and the Pankhursts is a useful way of charting the development of and the conflicts caused

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<sup>82</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.100.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> GP I.1. 1896/3 Letter from John Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 2 July, 1896.

<sup>85</sup> GP.I.1. 1896/4 Letter from John Bruce Glasier to Mrs Glasier, 24 June, 1896.

by the Votes for Women campaign. In 1896, Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst, together with their children, were proof that it was possible to combine motherhood, marriage and political work. According to Sylvia Pankhurst, it was her brother Harry's joy at seeing his mother return home (accompanied by the Bruce Glasiers) that changed Katharine's mind about having a child.<sup>86</sup> Given what Sylvia subsequently wrote about her own mother with regard to responsibility for caring for her children and indeed what Katharine's son Malcolm intimated about his own upbringing it is interesting to note that the debate surrounding combining work and family (not only continues but) was never truly reconciled by those who thought they could do so. No coherent alternative to conventional marriage could have any validity until the vital issue of children was addressed and arguably, the ILP retarded the cause of women because while exalting motherhood they failed to address the fundamental issue of childcare.

The birth of the Bruce Glasiers first child, Jeannie, in 1897 has to be seen as significant although it impacted upon them in different ways. Their socialist preachings on the importance of the family took on a new dimension but they now had to address what had previously been a theoretical issue. They were fortunate in enlisting the presumably low or unpaid services of Jenny Davies, described by Elizabeth Glendower Evans as a 'home friend, rescued from the mills in

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<sup>86</sup> GP I.1. 1950/3 Letter from Sylvia Pankhurst to Malcolm Bruce Glasier, (n.d) but offering condolences after reading of Katharine Bruce Glasier's death in *The Times*.

Lancashire'.<sup>87</sup> Without her, Katharine Bruce Glasier would not have been able to continue lecturing and there is no evidence to suggest that John Bruce Glasier ever played an active role in caring for his children. Indeed, John Bruce Glasier spent a considerable amount of time on lecture tours and assumed a major leadership role within the ILP - he was elected to the NAC in 1897 and Chairman of the ILP from 1900-1903. Diary entries of Katharines record several occasions when the children travelled with her and it is also apparent that they were often deposited with John Bruce Glasier's family in Glasgow. An entry for October 27th, 1900 reads; 'Go to Glasgow and leave Jeannie Bell'.<sup>88</sup> In answering a correspondent on the acceptability of socialists employing home helps, Katharine Bruce Glasier told 'Agnes H' that

there are many of our Socialist women who have "lady helps" and get on beautifully with them. It is with "lady helps" as with friends, sweethearts, and husbands, their suitability depends upon, whether they are suited to each other. The wages paid vary according to the position of the lady herself. In the kind of household you mention the wages would be about the same as that of a general servant.<sup>89</sup>

John Bruce Glasier's obvious delight in learning of his wife's first pregnancy prompted him to write a poem to his mother announcing the pregnancy and to request that she 'come down and be a wee mother to Katharine when the harvest is

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<sup>87</sup> ILP 6, Box 13, Francis Johnson MSS, Interesting People I Have Known by Elizabeth Glendower Evans, *The Springfield Sunday Union and Republican*, 4 June, 1933 p.2e

<sup>88</sup> GP/II/2 Diaries of Katharine Bruce Glasier, 1900, 1906-8, 1915, 1918, 1920-23.

<sup>89</sup> *Labour Leader* 23 February 1906.

all gathered in'.<sup>90</sup> Katharine continued to work after her daughter Jeannie was born and went on to have two more children, Malcolm in 1903 and Glen in 1910. As their family grew so did the emphasis given to the family unit in their particular brand of socialist thought.

The question of suffrage was problematic for both Katharine and John Bruce Glasier and their public and private reactions to developments in the movement are revealing. In 1901, Katharine was sharing a platform with Christabel Pankhurst and in 1903 when Malcolm Bruce Glasier was born, Emmeline Pankhurst sent congratulations.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, according to Sylvia Pankhurst, Katharine Bruce Glasier was by this time berating the aggressive attitude of the Pankhurst family, declaring Mrs Pankhurst no longer 'sweet and gentle' and John Bruce Glasier's ambivalence towards suffrage caused the friendship between the Pankhursts and the Bruce Glasiers to be 'strained to breaking'.<sup>92</sup>

In 1904, John Bruce Glasier became editor of the *Labour Leader* and it was not long before the activities of the suffragists forced a more formal response from the ILP. In late 1904, John Bruce Glasier was still principally in agreement with Mrs Pankhurst's demands whilst recognising that although the claim for adult suffrage would be more democratic, it would be virtually impossible to attain.<sup>93</sup> He

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<sup>90</sup> GP.I.1. 1897/7 Letter from John Bruce Glasier to Mrs Glasier, 9 March, 1897.

<sup>91</sup> *Labour Leader*, 23 March, 1901; GP I.1. 1903/72 E. Pankhurst to K. Bruce Glasier, 10 June 1903.

<sup>92</sup> Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p.168.

also pointed out that in his view the movement for adult suffrage 'was chiefly inspired by poor Lady Dilke as a weapon for her husband and a group of Radicals who have no sympathy with our Socialism'.<sup>94</sup> In the summer of 1905, John Bruce Glasier described Emmeline Pankhurst as, 'thoroughly kind-hearted' and as having 'amazing energy and courage',<sup>95</sup> and when, in October of that year, Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested, Glasier's support was obvious:

The business was altogether shameful as the *girls were most rudely and* ungallantly handled. Miss Pankhurst undoubtedly lost her head somewhat, but we can hardly wonder at that when we consider how intolerably insulting it must have been for her to have policemen in plain clothes laying violent hands upon her and dragging her with her arms held fast behind her like a low criminal through the streets.<sup>96</sup>

The language used by John Bruce Glasier suggests a degree of friction between his differing notions of masculinity in class terms. Manliness, when applied to his definition of workers was manifested in terms of strength and physical toil but when that strength was used in another context, his own perceptions of masculinity in terms of male chivalry and gentlemanly conduct create a paradox further

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<sup>93</sup> GP. I.1. 1904/17 Letter from John Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 18 November, 1904

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> GP.I.1. 1905/12 Letter from John Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 30 June, 1905.

<sup>96</sup> GP.I.1. 1905/16 Letter from J. Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 20 October 1905.

complicated by his description of Christabel Pankhurst as a 'girl' which suggests a vulnerability rather different to that of a 'lady'.

In terms of the question of women's suffrage itself, he stated: 'Many of us do not believe that the question is so all important as she [Christabel] and others believe it to be, but at least we must stand by our own bairns especially when they are good bairns and acting solely from a sense of right'.<sup>97</sup> Here, John Bruce Glasier was able to reconcile his conflict by considering the problem in terms of family solidarity and supporting an individual's sense of justice.

John Bruce Glasier's views on the issue of women's suffrage have to be considered from both a private and public perspective. At a private level, he would advocate that he practised equality within his marriage and perhaps saw that as overriding any personal conflict with the issue. Nevertheless, correspondence reveals that as the size of their family increased, so John Bruce Glasier spent far more time away from home than Katharine did. Moreover, in personal letters he would make reference to the way in which Katharine dealt with the children, leaving a strong impression that his time at home with them was very limited.<sup>98</sup> As Liddington and Norris (1978) have noted, the issue of women's suffrage was an irrelevance to him as it was not important whether everybody was enfranchised as long as the division was based on sex rather than class lines; men of all classes would satisfactorily represent their female counterparts and women would then be

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> See correspondence between John and Katharine Bruce Glasier GP I.1. 1899/8 30 August, 1899, 1900/35 (n.d.), 1908/17 29 August, 1908.

free to specialise in non-political activities.<sup>99</sup> Given that he was in a partnership that could not have been more political, the dichotomy between these two positions is rather puzzling and raises questions concerning John Bruce Glasier's gendered definition of politics. Additionally, the notion that men would adequately represent the best interests of women of their own class was a view definitely not shared by Katharine.

At a public level the situation was very different. Given the role that Bruce Glasier had within the ILP and maybe the fact that he was the only one of the 'big four'<sup>100</sup> not in Parliament, he found himself having to mediate - especially on the issue of women's suffrage. As an advocate of adult suffrage, Hardie's continuing involvement with the Pankhurst's and ergo, the question of women's suffrage, caused Bruce Glasier considerable angst. Even before the rift within the ILP on the subject there were indications of Bruce Glasier's growing impatience towards the issue of women's suffrage in general, and the Pankhursts in particular. Talking of Emmeline and her daughter, he said:

A weary ordeal of chatter about woman's suffrage from 10pm to 1.30 am - Mrs and Christabel Pankhurst belabouring me as chairman of the party for its neglect of the question. At last get roused and speak with something like scorn of their miserable individualist sexism, and virtually tell them that the ILP will not stir a finger more than it has done for all the women suffragists in creation. Really the pair are not seeking democratic freedom, but self-importance....Christabel paints her eyebrows grossly and looks selfish, lazy

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<sup>99</sup> Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, (Virago Press, London, 1978) p.127.

<sup>100</sup> The 'big four' (as described by Thompson) being, Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden and Glasier himself.

and wilful. They want to be ladies, not workers, and lack the humility of real heroism.<sup>101</sup>

Clearly, this description reveals how Bruce Glasier had already identified the issue of women's suffrage exclusively with the Pankhursts, and in that sense was unable to see the demand as anything other than a middle-class initiative.

When Hardie's leadership of the party was under threat in 1906, Snowden wrote, 'the Labour position is never put forward on any question. Hardie never speaks to me. He seems completely absorbed with the Suffragettes'.<sup>102</sup> Whilst Bruce Glasier still supported Hardie as leader, his increasing association with the Pankhursts continued to cause problems. Thompson has asserted that 'Glasier disliked the Pankhursts, was outraged by the violence which he believed had set back the cause of women's suffrage by many years, and considered that votes for women on the existing franchise were a middle-class red herring, diverting attention from the Labour demand for universal adult suffrage'.<sup>103</sup> This view, was of course, by no means unique to John Bruce Glasier but more interestingly, the evidence suggests that his view was not that clear-cut; rather, there existed a conflict of feelings. Whilst he acknowledged the shift from the old suffrage movement to 'our new and "more militant sisters"' and the complications that went with it, he was convinced that in the end they would win.<sup>104</sup> Additionally, he had problems

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<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.136.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p.148.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p.149.

<sup>104</sup> GP.I.1. 1906/13 Letter from J. Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 6 July 1906.

reconciling the actions of the militants with his own images of them, stating that 'poor little Adela Pankhurst' could hardly be perceived as an agitator, and being 'touched' by the thought of Mrs Knight, aged sixty-five, deciding to go to prison for six weeks.<sup>105</sup> (See chapter four for a fuller discussion of this case.)

Nevertheless, Glasier's changing attitude towards the militants must have been, in part, a response to the difficulties they were causing within the ILP. By September 1906, Glasier believed that they would 'inevitably become a purely political sect', stating, 'I cannot find that they have a single friend in the Trades Congress' and concluding that the Central Manchester branch of which the Pankhursts and Teresa Billington were members was 'virtually a family affair' taking no part in the socialist movement.<sup>106</sup> Shortly after the Congress meeting, Glasier was of the opinion that the Suffragists would fade out of view, especially once the 'dull season' was over<sup>107</sup> and with the resignation of Mrs Pankhurst from the ILP now imminent, there must have been a sense of relief that the issue would no longer have the priority it had previously enjoyed. His confidence was such that he removed the word social from the WSPU predicting that 'the WPU will not long have any Socialist flavour'.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> GP.I.1.1906/16 J. Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 7 September 1906.

<sup>107</sup> GP.I.1.1906/18 J. Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 14 September, 1906.

<sup>108</sup> GP.I.1. 1906/17 J. Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 9 September, 1906.

Far from fading, the suffrage campaign became, according to John Bruce Glasier, 'quite exciting' and in a letter to his sister concerning the imprisonment of women, including Mrs Cobden Sanderson, he declared them martyrs whilst warning that 'the agitation is however in a critical stage'.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, publicly (albeit as Iona), Katharine Bruce Glasier declared that Mrs Cobden Sanderson's views on the women's question were right, stating 'they are the same as my own'.<sup>110</sup> In October, 1906 Katharine Bruce Glasier gave a paper at the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) conference in Tunbridge Wells which John Bruce Glasier wrote, was well-received by Mrs Fawcett but Katharine felt that the rich suffragists were undemocratic bemoaning the fact that their gardeners had votes and they did not.<sup>111</sup> However, it was the issue of militancy that became the main focus of John Bruce Glasier's discourse at this time and he made two very definite points on the subject. Firstly, he emphasised that the release of Mrs Lawrence and Mrs Montefiore<sup>112</sup> from prison after a couple of days on the grounds of ill-health 'shows how little these people know what agitation means'. Secondly, he condemned the act of militancy itself by stating that, 'the rowdy tactics will if continued soon turn public sympathy against the movement'.<sup>113</sup> Again, this

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<sup>109</sup> GP.I.1. 1906/20 J. Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 28 Oct 1906.

<sup>110</sup> *Labour Leader* 2 March, 1906.

<sup>111</sup> GP.I.1. 1906/21 J. Bruce Glasier to Elizabeth Glasier Foster, 2 Nov 1906.

<sup>112</sup> See K. Hunt, 'Journeying Through Suffrage: The Politics of Dora Montefiore' in Eustance, Ryan, Ugolini, (eds.), *Seeing Through Suffrage*, (Cassell, London, forthcoming, 1999). K. Hunt is also working on a biography of Dora Montefiore.

demonstrates his own definition of masculinity being defined solely in terms of physical prowess; to be a successful agitator you had to prove you could endure physical hardship and 'ladies' just did not have the stamina. It therefore followed that they should not attempt militant tactics because not only was it 'unladylike', but it also crossed both the class and gender boundaries which were firmly entrenched in the mind of John Bruce Glasier and many others.

### 3.3. 'THE MEANING OF SOCIALISM'.

In February 1906, a women's column was introduced in the *Labour Leader*. Writing as 'Iona' it was the editor's wife, Katharine Bruce Glasier, who took responsibility for it. From the outset, Katharine Bruce Glasier sought to cater for the needs of as many women as possible. Stating that she was neither an old nor a new woman she explained:

I am not going to apologise for the existence of women, or for the shape of their bodies or the size of their brains. I believe that many women are, and most women can be made nicer, truer, and infinitely more useful and better beings in the world than most men will ever be, although nobody has greater admiration for men generally or greater love for at least one of them, than I have.<sup>114</sup>

Whilst Katharine Bruce Glasier was going to inscribe on her banner 'not only votes for women, but a true appreciation of the civic importance of women'

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> *Labour Leader* 16 February 1906.

she firmly located women's sphere as domestic believing that '...the keeping of a clean fireside for husband and children... is as noble as working in an office or a factory'.<sup>115</sup> This may have been partially in response to those individuals who had written to the paper when the idea of a women's column had been first mooted. Katharine Bruce Glasier emphasised that she would deal with 'quite domestic matters and with *everything* interesting to women' explaining 'I am not *always* going to discuss "women's politics," or any other politics.'<sup>116</sup>

By the second week, Iona was already commenting on the activities of Mrs Pankhurst, Annie Kenney and friends. Clearly anxious not to cause offence in any quarter she praised 'their wonderful zeal and courage' whilst explaining that 'few of us feel, perhaps that we could dare to do the work' and concluding that 'there are perhaps many earnest women who cannot quite see that the new method of agitation is best for the cause'.<sup>117</sup> At this time Katharine and John Bruce Glasier were publicly united in their mutual belief that although the women's 'alleged "hysterical and unwomanly" warfare may be jeered at by many... They will win. They will win.'<sup>118</sup>

In May 1906, Fred Pethick-Lawrence wrote to the 'Letter Box' column of the *Labour Leader* hoping that paper 'will dissociate itself from that chorus of disapproval which has greeted the action of the women who had the pluck to

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 23 February 1906.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

break the decorum of the House of Commons a few days back.' Identifying himself as a Labour man he asked, 'Surely we of the Labour Party are not going to go so back upon our past as to hold up hands of horror at the breach of antique forms and ceremonies?'. He was unequivocal in his explanation that

What is being done by these women is in the nature of revolution, and as such cannot be judged by the ordinary standards, but anyone who has traced the strictly-correct constitutional agitation in favour of woman's franchise, which has been organised for the past sixty years, and its complete barrenness of result must recognise that there is nothing left but revolutionary method with any chance of success.<sup>119</sup>

Although the *Labour Leader* published Pethick-Lawrence's letter, the division of feeling within the ILP was becoming apparent.

With her column already under attack less than a month after its inception, Katharine Bruce Glasier yet again emphasised the differences between men and women using this argument to justify the existence of separate women's organisations and separate space for women in the socialist press. 'The masculine and feminine principle runs through all animate and social life; that they are not one and the same, but that they are complements of each other'.<sup>120</sup>

Katharine Bruce Glasier's response to the women's actions is revealing:

The Editor has given me no hint as to the editorial attitude which the *Leader* will take on that much-discussed subject. he enjoins me to speak

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 4 May 1906.

<sup>120</sup> *Labour Leader*, 2 March 1906; See also Ethel Snowden's letter to the Iona column, 23 March 1906; 20 April 1906.

my own mind. "The Women's Outlook" is, he says, mine, not his. "You are a perfectly free woman", he adds, "so far as the *Leader* is concerned". 'Perhaps they did wrong; but they are fighting their fight...we who do not feel impelled to take the front rank in this agitation must not...sit in judgment like Lords of Commission on the wild acts of revolt of our more militant sisters.'<sup>121</sup>

It is fair to assume that Katharine and John Bruce Glasier would have discussed their contributions to the *Labour Leader* and although, in theory, Katharine had the safety-net of her pseudonym to protect her, the timing of the column's introduction could be viewed as an appeasement measure to demonstrate that the ILP was giving space to the suffrage issue albeit in isolation. Certainly, H. Russell Smart's observation that '...Women's enfranchisement...has been sprung upon us, with alarming suddenness...' whilst ignoring the suffrage campaigns of the late nineteenth century, was representative of how most ILP men responded to the issue.<sup>122</sup>

Women wrote to Iona on a number of issues including the attitudes of men. Responding to a letter from a 'Mrs S' of Woolwich who thought that Belfort Bax's attacks upon women needed to be dealt with, Katharine Bruce Glasier sarcastically articulated that 'he [Belfort Bax] is against God and

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<sup>121</sup> *Labour Leader* 4 May 1906. See also *ibid*, J. Keir Hardie's article on 'The Grille Scene'.

<sup>122</sup> *Labour Leader*, 9 August 1907. See also Ugolini, 'Independent Labour Party Men' pp.233-357 for a full discussion of the ILP's position on the suffrage question from 1905-11.

women. But he has twice married the latter, and I verily believe he will die a High Churchman or a Catholic'.<sup>123</sup>

Between 1906 and 1907 when conflict emerged as a result of the Labour Party's refusal to endorse a limited women's suffrage bill, Katharine found it increasingly difficult to maintain an acceptable line in the Iona column. Yet she did attempt to provide working-class women with a socialist-feminist forum, however inadequate it may have been at times. Opposing views to the Iona column were voiced publicly. Isabella Ford was critical of the space given to a women's column believing it to have created a division that had hitherto not existed<sup>124</sup> whilst George Thompson and his wife expressed the opinion, 'there is no column we appreciate more in the socialist papers'.<sup>125</sup>

At the 1907 Labour Party Conference, Keir Hardie announced that he might leave the party after the defeat of a motion urging the immediate extension of votes to women on the same conditions as men. John Bruce Glasier's response to this was predictable: 'Indeed all through I fancy I can detect a conscious desire on his part to figure in history as the women's champion'. The main objection Glasier had to this was, 'that his power to champion them is derived from us - our work and our cohesion - but that we must all serve and be sacrificed as reactionaries on

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid. 16 March 1906. Belfour Bax was a misogynist leader of the SDF.

<sup>124</sup> GP.I.1. 1906/5 Postcard from I.O.Ford to Katharine Bruce Glasier, 22 February, 1906.

<sup>125</sup> GP.I.1. 1907/95 Letter from George Thompson to John Bruce Glasier, 20 January, 1907.

the question, all to enable him to triumph'.<sup>126</sup> The conflict that the issue of women's suffrage was causing meant that Glasier had to re-examine his own prevailing attitudes in relation to those of his leader. He concluded of Hardie that,

He has, I fear, made a mistake. The Woman's movement is not socialist but individualist in feeling. The Pankhursts, Billingtons etc. are rebelling as much against honest work as against sex repression. They want to be public people, speaking etc; they hate work and obscurity. The giving of the vote will not help Socialism except that it will compel our socialist speakers to appeal more to the women and domestic side of things, which will be a good thing in its way.<sup>127</sup>

It is interesting to note John Bruce Glasier's definition of work and that a public profile is not included, for, essentially, that is precisely the type of work he undertook for the socialist cause.

Katharine Bruce Glasier was an active member of the Women's Labour League (WLL) from its inception in 1906 and her involvement raises questions, not only about her position on suffrage, but also about the way in which she and John Bruce Glasier negotiated their own politics. Explaining the need for a separate organisation, Katharine wrote:

If the Labour Party will forgive the plain speaking we have found as women that our men comrades too have something to learn that only women can teach them, of our needs as women, of the needs of the children and of the needs of the homes of the people if they are really to be homes and not mere work kitchens and sleeping dens.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.149.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* p.149-50.

<sup>128</sup> ILP 6, Box 20, ILP Personalities, Katharine Bruce Glasier 3 (n.d.)

As Christine Collette (1989) has pointed out, 'no women's organisation formed in the decade before the First World War could ignore the suffrage question'<sup>129</sup> although this was something that the League attempted to do, at least initially. At the first League conference held in Leicester in 1906, Isabella Ford successfully moved an amendment resulting in a clause being inserted stating that they wanted 'to obtain direct representation of women in parliament and on local bodies'.<sup>130</sup> Katharine's own views on the suffrage question seem to have been rather vague. Whilst described as an adult suffragist, she clearly saw representation of women as an integral part of the socialist philosophy she believed in:

Hitherto also women have been denied the right and protection of the vote, and although the members of the WLL gladly recognise the value of much of the protective legislation that has been passed in our interests by men we are certain that all such legislation and indeed all legislation would be greatly improved if women especially the wives and mothers had a voice in the framing of the laws of the land.<sup>131</sup>

The emphasis on the family is also interesting, as there had clearly been a shift from the position she was taking with regard to the different status of married and unmarried women in some of her early writings such as *Husband and Brother*. However, there was a warning that, 'for the woman who willingly acquiesces in the exploitation of the workers there is no room in the Women's Labour League. We

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<sup>129</sup> Christine Collette, *For Labour and for Women, The Women's Labour League 1906-18*, (MUP, Manchester, 1989) p.35.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> ILP 6, Box 20.

have no belief in the sincerity of a fight for women's freedom on the part of those who are willing themselves to play the part of the oppressor'.<sup>132</sup> This was clearly directed at the suffragettes for she went on to quote 'a single human instance here and I have done. The Suffragette and the single Girl.'<sup>133</sup> It would seem fair to assume she was making reference to the involvement of working-class girls in the campaign and specifically those who were involved with the WSPU.

If the ILP and more specifically, John Bruce Glasier were having difficulty with the Pankhursts because of their association with Keir Hardie, the WLL and therefore, Katharine Bruce Glasier, were no less immune from the WSPU which was perceived by some as a threat. Although there were individuals who held membership of both organisations, it was the growing disparity of their respective structures and methods, as well as the growing prominence of the suffrage issue, that caused the greatest conflict. The Cocker mouth by-election of 1906 was an early example of conflict where Teresa Billington Greig and Christabel Pankhurst - both at this time members of the ILP and the WSPU - went to campaign on the issue of votes for women. The Labour candidate, Robert Smillie of the ILP, was defeated and the ILP essentially interpreted the WSPU tactics as a deliberately hostile act towards their candidate. It became very clear that neither Christabel Pankhurst nor Teresa Billington-Greig were welcome in the ranks of the ILP.

Katharine Bruce Glasier was put on the spot somewhat as correspondents pushed her to declare who she favoured most, 'The WPU or

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

the WLL'. Again, explaining that the Editor (her husband) 'has quite generously allowed me a free hand on the question but I told him, and I tell you, that I am not going to take sides on the subject' she made it clear that her columns were not meant to divide women but to bring them together.<sup>134</sup> She then proceeded to speak of Mrs Pankhurst as

one of the most faithful and most spirited of women. She would strip herself bare for any cause in which she believes. She has a record of genuine service for Socialism and for every democratic cause which is simply unexcelled in our movement. And, although I don't always agree with her, I would plunge my hand in the fire rather than raise it against her.<sup>135</sup>

Yet by the end of June 1906, Katharine Bruce Glasier was articulating the opinion that men who opposed women's right to the vote were 'either whigs, prigs or pigs'<sup>136</sup>

After the Cockermouth by-election when tensions between the ILP and the WSPU were running high, Katharine Bruce Glasier was still attempting to diffuse the situation through the Iona column. Seeing herself as a peacemaker she nevertheless conceded that 'a militant policy of some kind is necessary if the franchise is to be obtained'.<sup>137</sup> However, a caustic letter from Mrs

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<sup>134</sup> *Labour Leader*, 6 April 1906. See also *ibid*, 16, 23, 30 March 1906 for a discussion of the WLL and the ILP and their relative merits.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*. 29 June 1906.

<sup>137</sup> *Labour Leader*, 17 August 1906. See also *ibid*. 24 August 1906.

Pankhurst accusing Iona of making frequent personal references to individual members of the ILP and the WSPU whilst 'covered by the veil of anonymity' prompted John Bruce Glasier as editor to defend the column (and in effect his wife), pointing out that Iona had done 'a great deal to stem the tide of prejudice against them [the suffragettes] at a critical period'.<sup>138</sup> This may well have been a turning point for John Bruce Glasier as he found it increasingly difficult to separate politics from his personal feelings. Moreover, as discussed in chapter five, the *Labour Leader* was being criticised for its lack of direction.

Still attempting to mediate between the ILP and women's organisations, Katharine Bruce Glasier lamented the fact that she could not attend the processions in London as she had prior ILP engagements but pointed at that whilst the WSPU had raised £15,000 in the last two years, it was the case that 'pounds come in to them, while pence are given for the teaching of Socialism'. Nonetheless, she remained optimistic that 'the women of the ILP know what they are doing and in all their work for their own enfranchisement they will stand by the Socialist flag'.<sup>139</sup>

As militancy increased, John Bruce Glasier commented to friends and colleagues on the situation, and when an opportunity arose to highlight it in order to further his own broader cause, he seized upon it. One such example of this is the imprisonment of Lady Constance Lytton in January, 1910. Responding to a letter from Ettie Unwin in which she had remarked on the case, John Bruce Glasier

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 24 August 1906.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 5 June 1908; 12 June 1908.

believed 'that much more might have been made of it on our side'<sup>140</sup> before proceeding to discourse on his perception of the situation:

The Suffragettes for weeks and months exclaimed against the horror of their being treated as ordinary criminals; on the platform and in the press they protested against educated and refined women being subjected to the indignities of prison life just as if they were vulgar law-breakers. The authorities on their part declared that in recognition of the fact that the women were educated and refined women and were not moved by vulgar criminal intent, they were as far as possible stretching the prison regulations in favour of the women. That being so...one feels it somewhat difficult now to turn upon the authorities and blame them for giving Lady Constance Lytton as a suffragette special consideration, while refusing to extend to her as Martha Waugh any such sympathy. In other words, the prison officials acted, so I gather, in accordance with the distinction in favour of cultured and gentlewomen suffragettes, which the suffragettes themselves insisted upon establishing. It is of course to be noted that Martha Waugh claimed that in breaking windows (or whatever was her offence) she was actuated by political motives, but apparently the prison officials either did not know of this or did not believe it - she not being a lady. You will not, I hope, think in saying all this I am playing the part of Devil's advocate: I am merely explaining or trying to explain the lack of public agitation....In connection with our Free Speech and Unemployed conflicts with the police, many of our men have suffered from a month to three or six months imprisonment and in no case has any leniency been shown them in prison. Nor is it likely had the suffragettes been all poor women that any leniency would in any instance been shown them...Lady Constance Lytton as Lady Constance Lytton and as a suffragette was granted that privilege, but as Martha Waugh a work girl unidentified as a suffragette, she was accorded the usual brutal prison treatment.<sup>141</sup>

There are several observations to be made from this. Firstly, Lady Constance Lytton's alias was Jane Warton and not Martha Waugh. The date of John Bruce Glasier's correspondence suggests that it was that occasion he was discussing and

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<sup>140</sup> GP.I.1. 1910/67 Letter from John Bruce Glasier to Ettie Unwin, 29 February, 1910.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

may be an indication of his lack of attention to detail. However, more important is his emphasis on the suffragettes being a middle-class movement with 'ladies' being treated in a preferential way. Given his comments on the treatment of Christabel Pankhurst in 1905 and his description of the way in which she was treated, it would appear that whilst he would not agree with prisoners being ill-treated, he saw the debate in purely class terms and used the example of Lady Constance Lytton to reinforce his argument. Moreover, his reference to other events such as free speech conflicts like Boggart Hole Clough are a clear indication that he was bitter at the political prisoner status afforded to many of the suffragettes, although one still wonders to what extent he resented not being among those 'men' who in 1896 had gone to prison.

In 1909, Katharine Bruce Glasier met a wealthy American widow, Elizabeth Glendower Evans, who was so impressed by the Bruce Glasier family that she decided to provide them with an income for life thus leaving them free to dedicate all their time to the socialist cause. To this end, John Bruce Glasier resigned as editor of the *Labour Leader* and Katharine gave up the Iona column. It was noted in the *Labour Leader* that Katharine Bruce Glasier would not be undertaking any lecturing work during 1910.<sup>142</sup> By now she was pregnant with her third child and had nearly miscarried.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Labour Leader*, 19 November, 1909.

<sup>143</sup> PRO 30/69/1376 MacDonald Papers, Katharine Bruce Glasier to Margaret MacDonald, 23 September 1909, quoted in Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics*, p.163.

John Bruce Glasier no longer had to suppress his feelings on the suffrage question. Writing about Hardie and Snowden protesting against the barbarity of forced feeding, Glasier stated ‘...I confess I can hardly see what the prison officials are to do with these women who as a protest against being treated as ordinary criminals for throwing stones etc. have resolved to starve themselves in prison. The whole business seems to me beyond the pale of rationality’. His urge to elaborate on the situation prompted him to continue: ‘Cannot for the life of me see what right of complaint they have. Their obvious and avowed intention is to render imprisonment a farce: ie, they claim the right to break the law and then to complain of the iniquity of being treated as law breakers.’<sup>144</sup> Bruce Glasier had travelled a long way from Boggart Hole Clough.

By the time militancy had reached its pinnacle, John and Katharine Bruce Glasier's involvement in the suffrage debate was overshadowed by other areas of more immediate interest. Whilst it has to be acknowledged that they were both actively involved in the debate, it was always going to be secondary to their work for the socialist cause because they did not perceive it to be a single issue to be dealt with. For the Bruce Glasiers' the paramount task was to spread the religion of socialism and in doing so the inequalities of class and, in theory, gender would be resolved. Women's suffrage was not a separate issue. In terms of the way in which they, as a couple, dealt with what was clearly potential conflict on the subject, it would appear that they did not discuss it at length, at least not on paper. Indeed, most of John Bruce Glasier's observations were written in his personal diary or in

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<sup>144</sup> Quoted in Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.170.

letters to his sister, Elizabeth Glasier Foster, and friends and colleagues, whilst Katharine Bruce Glasier's views were expressed through more formal channels such as ILP publications and the WLL. Certainly her sympathy for the women's cause is apparent in an ILP pamphlet prepared by her entitled, *Why Working Women Want The Vote* (c.1906) in which she acknowledged that 'the abstract argument of Women's Right to a voice in making the laws...has been so ably maintained and, I may add, so feebly opposed in this country, that we need not tarry to deal with it here'.<sup>145</sup> The main thrust of her argument was that 'the question of Women's Franchise is no longer merely a middle and upper class women's question' and that working women as both wage earners and wage spenders were entitled to vote. However, as a propagandist for the ILP she concluded by stating: 'The right of women to the vote is a commonplace of the Socialist and Labour Party platform. Naturally the chief strength of the working women's demand for a vote arises in and through the political party which has from its outset definitely espoused the Women's Cause.'<sup>146</sup> Given the internal wrangling within the ILP at this time over the suffrage question, this would appear to be an attempt to reassure those women who, since the formation of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), had been active in promoting trade union candidates to be returned in Parliament.

Both Katharine and John Bruce Glasier were committed pacifists and during the First World War they concentrated on writing of the atrocities of war

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<sup>145</sup> GP/V/56 Katharine Bruce Glasier, *Why Working Women Want The Vote*. p.1.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* p.4.

and working for peace. Katharine Bruce Glasier wrote regularly for *Labour Woman*, the official organ of the WLL and in 1916, she took over the editorship of the *Labour Leader* when Fenner Brockway was imprisoned as a conscientious objector. In 1915, Margaret Ashton wrote to Katharine Bruce Glasier requesting her to speak at the International Women's Congress to be held at the Hague but like so many women, Katharine was unable to go despite Ramsay MacDonald attempting to get clearance for her.<sup>147</sup>

In 1914, John Bruce Glasier was diagnosed as having bowel cancer but he continued as editor of the *Socialist Review* until 1917. Still writing prolifically, in 1915 he published a powerful piece entitled, *Militarism* pointing out that prior to the war, 'the absence of military display of any kind was...one of the distinctive characteristics of British life'. He further expressed his disgust that 'the idea is instilled into the little ones that the earth is consecrated to the British race'.<sup>148</sup> By the middle of 1918, Bruce Glasier was bed-ridden and although he had continued to be active within the ILP throughout the war years, the annual conference in April 1918 was to be the last he attended. Nevertheless, he was re-elected to the NAC on this occasion.

In the last two years of his life, John Bruce Glasier wrote two books, *The Meaning of Socialism* (1919) and *William Morris and the Early days of the Socialist Movement* (1921) although without Katharine's help this would have been

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<sup>147</sup> GP I.1 1915/1 M. Ashton to K. Bruce Glasier, 20 March, 1915; *ibid*, 1915/6 & 7, J. Bruce Glasier to E.G.Foster, 22 & 30 April, 1915.

<sup>148</sup> J. Bruce Glasier, *Militarism*, (ILP, London, 1915), pp.1-24.

impossible. Indeed, the extent of her contribution should not be underestimated. John Bruce Glasier died on 4 June 1920 and as Thompson has observed, the obituaries were 'respectful but cool'. The *Manchester Guardian* stated that 'Mr Glasier was no politician, and was not remarkable as a journalist. His place in the Labour movement was rather that of an evangelist'.<sup>149</sup> One of the more unusual aspects of their partnership is that according to Katharine Bruce Glasier, it continued after John Bruce Glasier's death. As their son, Malcolm Glasier explained, 'my mother...had an absolute belief in the life hereafter'<sup>150</sup> and in the year preceding John Bruce Glasier's death, Katherine wrote that he had asked her to continue doing *his* (my emphasis) work.<sup>151</sup>

Katharine Bruce Glasier outlived her husband by almost thirty years and never lost her commitment to the socialist cause continuing to campaign tirelessly on a number of issues including pit head baths for miners and nursery school education. She was still active in the Labour movement in the 1930s and played a key part in rebuilding the Labour Party after the disastrous election of 1931. Nevertheless, she was unrelenting in her anger towards men like Ramsay MacDonald and the Labour party's policies at this time, writing on a postcard MacDonald had sent her, 'What delusion still holds him about what he has done and is doing. *Poor, poor man.*'<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.228.

<sup>150</sup> GP III, Box 1.

<sup>151</sup> GP I.1 1919/22 K. Bruce Glasier to E. Glasier Foster, 13 February, 1919.

<sup>152</sup> GP I.1 1933/1 Postcard from J.R. MacDonald to K. Bruce Glasier.

Katharine Bruce Glasier died in her sleep on 4 June 1950 and in the *Daily Mirror's* obituary to her, it was stated that Katharine and John Bruce Glasier's marriage vow was 'to dedicate their lives to the Socialist movement but never to seek public office of any kind'.<sup>153</sup> The idea that neither of them would ever seek public office is rather at odds with the fact that John Bruce Glasier twice stood unsuccessfully as a parliamentary candidate and was a local councillor. Nevertheless, after John Bruce Glasier's death, Katharine was determined that his contribution would be recognised although when she sought the approval of his sisters, she found that 'an old, old, sorrow' had emerged. Their understanding of her relationship with John Bruce Glasier had always been 'imperfect' and this caused her great pain which perhaps explains why no biography of him was immediately forthcoming.<sup>154</sup>

Even prior to their marriage, in a letter to John Bruce Glasier, Katharine made reference to 'our biographer' and what *he* (my emphasis) would make of her letters.<sup>155</sup> However, when Thompson came to write their story, he was more interested in John Bruce Glasier and it has to be seen as significant that in *The Enthusiasts*, Katharine Bruce Glasier's life after John Bruce Glasier's death is worth only thirteen pages. Towards the end of her life, Katharine Bruce Glasier had frequent correspondence with Francis Johnson about him writing a biography of

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<sup>153</sup> BLPES, ILP 6, Box 13, Francis Johnson MSS, ILP Personalities, Katharine Bruce Glasier, *Daily Mirror*, 15 June, 1950.

<sup>154</sup> GPI.1 1920/111 J. W. Wallace to K. Bruce Glasier, 10 September 1920.

<sup>155</sup> G.P.I.1. 1893/45 Letter from Katharine St. John Conway to John Bruce Glasier, 29 May, 1893.

John Bruce Glasier. In 1928, the Bruce Glasiers' son Glen died in a freak accident and Katharine subsequently wrote *The Glen Book*, which she made clear was not a biography of his life. Rather, it was concerned 'with the fruit of the Spirit of the Whole, seen in Glen's brief life on earth' and this was central to her belief that 'Glen started in spiritual gift where his father left off, on this time side'.<sup>156</sup> She now wanted to write about John Bruce Glasier in the same way, 'not as my husband or our son but as examples of possession by the spirit of the whole'.<sup>157</sup>

In some of her correspondence with Johnson, the emphasis was on John Bruce Glasier: 'The time is ripe for just the book...on Bruce as the incarnation of the Socialist Life and the Whole Spirit' but at other times a joint biography after their death was mooted: 'For Bruce and his Katharine, it matters nothing about conventional recognition during their lives'.<sup>158</sup> Katharine wanted the biography to be published by Victor Gollancz in a cheap edition and she was confident that 'it will sell like hot cakes - this Bruce's Gospel of Socialism'.<sup>159</sup> Interestingly, Francis Johnson was also approached by Fred Glasier Foster, who wanted the inclusion of John Bruce Glasier's sister, Elizabeth's life within the biography. 'Somehow I feel her faithful story must be told. The way and means will be disclosed'.<sup>160</sup> In

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<sup>156</sup> K. Bruce Glasier, *The Glen Book*, (Hutchinson & Co., London, second edition, 1948), pp.10-14.

<sup>157</sup> GP I.1 1947/3 K. Bruce Glasier to F. Johnson, 2 February 1947.

<sup>158</sup> GP I.1 1947/8 & 4, K. Bruce Glasier to F. Johnson, 9 March, 13 February, 1947.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> GP. I.1 1947/13 F. Glasier Foster to F. Johnson.

Thompson's biography, Elizabeth receives one mention.<sup>161</sup> A biography of the Bruce Glasiers that develops some of the observations made in this chapter is long overdue.

The political partnership of the Bruce Glasiers may have been judged by many to be successful but it functioned within a limited framework. John Bruce Glasier was representative of most male ILPers who advocated the importance of women's domestic role yet offered little or no practical support in the home<sup>162</sup> and although Katharine managed to combine her political work with motherhood, it was still at considerable personal expense. Their respective attitudes toward suffrage demonstrate John Bruce Glasier's ambivalence and Katharine's compromise in a broader sense. As propagandists, which, it must be remembered, they were first and foremost, they were only comfortable in using suffrage as a tool to further socialism; something that was always going to be difficult to achieve. For other political partnerships however, the suffrage movement became their 'raison d'être' and no partnership exemplifies this more than that of the Pethick-Lawrences to whom we now turn.

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<sup>161</sup> Thompson, *The Enthusiasts*, p.19

<sup>162</sup> See, for example, Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, pp.96-103.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SHARING THE BURDEN: THE PETHICK-LAWRENCES AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a number of political partnerships such as the Webbs and the Bruce Glasiers. The specific cause of women's suffrage also attracted some notable names, including the Pankhursts and the Fawcetts and yet, there is one partnership that has to be seen as foremost in terms of its crucial role in the women's suffrage movement: that of Emmeline and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence. However, despite the importance of their contribution and the fact that they both published autobiographies and left personal papers, very little has been written about this partnership<sup>1</sup> although their involvement in the WSPU has been well documented in other histories. This chapter focuses on the uniqueness of their political partnership in the context of gendered support. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1867-1954) and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence (1871-1961) were married for more than fifty years and during that time fought for many causes. However, it is their combined commitment to the single issue of women's suffrage when it was at its most militant, for which they are best remembered. An examination of their partnership with particular emphasis on how, as a couple, they both challenged and reinforced the gendered nature of political work, will raise questions about the ways in which Fred Pethick-Lawrence both used and dealt with his

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<sup>1</sup> B.Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987) includes a chapter on the Pethick-Lawrences, focusing on the inter-war period. See also J. Balshaw's chapter in *The Men's Share?* pp.135-157.

masculinity and the reactions to this. Moreover, it will enable their political partnership to be explored by seeing how it functioned and developed during their involvement with women's suffrage, and how their ideas and actions were understood and represented through existing meanings of gender roles in both a political and familial context.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's background and upbringing were typical of one born into a comfortable middle-class family in the mid-nineteenth century. Her father, Henry Pethick, was a businessman and although as a young girl, Emmeline had viewed this 'distant and somewhat forbidding figure'<sup>2</sup> with awe, she had clearly inherited some of his characteristics. Emmeline had a good relationship with her father and when she was first arrested for her suffrage activities he reacted with pride:

...he was met by one of his colleagues on the Bench with expressions of sympathy. "Sympathy, my dear fellow," he replied, "I don't need sympathy. Give me your congratulations! I'm the proudest man in England!"<sup>3</sup>

They had long discussions about religion among other things and shortly before his death, Henry Pethick concluded 'that orthodox religion had led him into a trap out of which he had torn himself free'.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, he respected

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in O. Banks, *The Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists*, vol. one, p.157.

<sup>3</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, (Victor Gollancz, London, 1938) p.47.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.44.

Emmeline's mother's religious convictions and went to great lengths to hide his own doubts from her. As the second of thirteen children, five of whom did not survive infancy, Emmeline witnessed first-hand her mother's uncomplaining acceptance of her position and although there was nothing unique about the family size given the period, her father's comment, recounted in her autobiography, is significant:

I have only one fault to find with my Maker. Why did He not ordain that a man should share the burden of child-bearing with his wife? She could have had the first turn. There never would have been more than three in a family.<sup>5</sup>

This seems rather ironic given that Henry Pethick fathered thirteen children although he made this point in his later years.

Like other privileged Victorian women, Emmeline wanted to experience and contribute to the lives of those less fortunate than herself. In 1891 she became a "sister" at the West London Mission, founded by Mark Guy Pearse whom she had known since childhood. Here her Liberal ideas realigned themselves in a move towards Socialism. Her reading of novels such as George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and *Children of Gideon* by Besant had clearly led her in this direction and as Kate Flint has observed, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's practical reaction to the reading that so influenced her was to go and work with Katharine Price Hughes in the Working Girls' Club, which was part of the West London Mission. Thus, 'friendship between women *may* [my emphasis] lead not

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.23-4.

just to personal satisfaction, but to the breaking down of class barriers'.<sup>6</sup> Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence believed that the works of William Morris, Edward Carpenter and Walt Whitman had formed the basis of her political outlook and that of her generation, and she continued to emphasize the importance of literature throughout her involvement in the campaigns for women's suffrage.

In 1895, whilst working with Mary Neal, who also became involved in the suffrage movement, the Esperance Girl's Club was founded and this venture also incorporated a holiday home for girls and a co-operative dressmaking business. Not only were the workers paid a minimum weekly wage but they were afforded the luxury of only working an eight-hour day -almost unheard of at the time. This innovative scheme undoubtedly influenced later projects such as Sylvia Pankhurst's East End toy factory. Emmeline Pethick and Mary Neal had become frustrated by their distance from the poor whilst residing at the Sisters of the People home and when their request to live among them in their own flat was refused, they broke away to start their own settlement. Most of their time was spent with the Esperance Club girls and as Emmeline Pethick pointed out:

The conditions, not only of the home, but of the factory or workshop had to be taken into account. It became our business to study the industrial question as it affected the girls' employments, the hours, the wages, and the conditions. And we had also to give them a conscious

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<sup>6</sup> K. Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993) p.237.

part to take in the battle that is being fought for the workers, and will not be won until it is loyally fought by workers as well.<sup>7</sup>

To this end, Neal and Pethick gave regular lectures and organised occasional debates with a boys' club. Emmeline concentrated on the educational element whilst Mary taught the girls English folk songs and dances. Neal is recognised as being the chief protagonist of women's Morris dancing at this time and as Cecil Sharp conceded, although allowing women and children to Morris dance,

is not strictly in accordance with ancient useage, no great violence will be done to tradition so long as the dance is performed by the members of one sex only: none but the pedant, indeed, would on this score debar women from participation in a dance as wholesome and as beautiful as the Morris.<sup>8</sup>

It was whilst she was involved in this project that Emmeline Pethick met Frederick Lawrence.

Frederick Lawrence was born in 1871, the youngest of five children. His grandfather, William Lawrence, a Unitarian, was a strong proponent of the 1832 Reform Bill and also founded the business which created the Lawrence family fortune whilst two of his uncles held the office of Lord Mayor of London

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<sup>7</sup> E. Pethick, 'Working Girls' Clubs', in Will Reason (ed.), *University and Social Settlements*, (Methuen, London, 1898) p.104 quoted in Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women. Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Virago, London, 1985) p.233.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted (but not referenced) in Merrie England and the Morris Revival, <http://emrs.chm.bris.ac.uk/morris/CClarke>. The Esperance girls were to use their dancing skills in a number of ways including dancing daily at the Women's Exhibition in May of 1909. They were also the subject of a 1907 *Punch* cartoon.

between 1863 and 1868. His father, Alfred Lawrence, died when Fred was three and his uncle, Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, took over a parental role. Like Emmeline, Fred was sent to boarding school, an experience he didn't enjoy and at thirteen he went to Eton. Mathematics was Fred's forte and from Eton he went to Cambridge where he took a double first and was president of the union. In 1897 he won a fellowship at Trinity College but rather than settle into a life of academia, he spent two years travelling around the world. This desire to see how others lived stemmed, in part, from the influence of the economist, Alfred Marshall, of whom Fred later said, 'He really cared passionately that a knowledge of economics should be applied to bettering the lot of humanity and in particular of the underdog.'<sup>9</sup>

A further influence was Percy Alden who was warden of Mansfield House University Settlement of which Fred became treasurer whilst reading for the bar.<sup>10</sup> In addition to this fairly heavy workload, Fred also became a Liberal-Unionist parliamentary candidate at the suggestion of his uncle, Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence. Thus far, Fred's experiences were framed by exclusively male institutions and one of his contemporaries at Cambridge, Dr G.P.Gooch believed, 'he might have succeeded in half a dozen spheres, at the Bar, in the City, in journalism, as Professor of Mathematics or Political Economy no less as

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in V. Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence, A Portrait*, (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1963) p.21.

<sup>10</sup> Percy Alden subsequently became the Radical M.P. for the Tottenham Division of Middlesex from 1906-1918, and then Labour M.P. for South Tottenham from 1923-1924.

a Cabinet Minister'.<sup>11</sup> Yet instead, he channelled his energies into supporting the 'underdog'. Vera Brittain attributed this to the combined influence of Alfred Marshall, Percy Alden and Emmeline Pethick.

From their initial meeting in 1899, until their marriage, both Fred and Emmeline spent a considerable time contemplating their individual and mutual futures. Like other couples of their generation, they were initially divided over the Boer War. Fred viewed it as the inevitable outcome of Gladstone's 1884 Convention of London, which acknowledged the Transvaal as the South African Republic whilst retaining control of its foreign policy. Emmeline, on the other hand, saw it as 'organised murder for robbery'.<sup>12</sup> It was not however, this issue alone that made Emmeline refuse Fred's initial marriage proposal, for she had no intention of embarking upon a conventional Victorian marriage that accorded her only a secondary role.<sup>13</sup>

Fred determined to see the Boer situation for himself. He returned to England a pro-Boer, no longer harbouring thoughts of being a Liberal-Unionist MP but instead on the verge of converting to socialism. He purchased the *Echo* newspaper in a bid to put forward the pro-Boer viewpoint inviting Emmeline to sit on the council responsible for the paper's policy. Emmeline was evidently impressed by his actions and an extract from a letter she wrote to him at the

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<sup>11</sup> Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence*, p.20.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, p.246.

<sup>13</sup> For a contemporary discussion of marriage, see C. Hamilton, *Marriage As A Trade*, (The Women's Press, London, 1909, reprinted in 1981).

beginning of 1901, not only reveals an early recognition of his personality and thorough mind, but that she was already making effective use of them.

Dear Mr Lawrence,

I am thinking of writing a book and calling it "Imaginary Conversations with a Matter of Fact Man". If I do, you will perhaps cease to be plagued with books and papers. But in the meantime will you please read this little paper of Sister Mary's before it goes to the Publishers. I would like to know what you think of it & so would she - of course we do not get much criticism from our own circle!<sup>14</sup>

After a brief engagement, they were married in Canning Town, London on 2 October 1901. The wedding was attended by family and friends although Lloyd George's presence disturbed Emmeline's uncle, William Pethick and Fred's uncle, Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence refused the invitation on account of Fred's change of heart over the Boer War. As a public statement of how they intended to conduct their marriage, they combined their respective surnames henceforth becoming known as the *Pethick-Lawrences*.<sup>15</sup> *Emmeline* continued her work as president of the Esperance Social Guild, Fred devoting his time to the *Echo*. If anything, marriage to Fred had, in some ways, created new opportunities for Emmeline because of his wealth, causing her to write:

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<sup>14</sup> Pethick-Lawrence papers, Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge, hereafter referred to as P-L followed by the number. P-L 7/68 Letter from E. Pethick-Lawrence to F. Pethick-Lawrence, late January/early February 1901.

<sup>15</sup> This was, in fact, quite a common practice from the mid-nineteenth century onwards although it is worth noting that even the Pethick-Lawrences were often referred to as Mr and Mrs Lawrence by their contemporaries.

...now that all this loveliness had fallen into my lap I rejoiced in it, and wanted to share it, as Mary Neal and I had shared all that we had with our working girls and other friends. My husband was ready to encourage all my ideas, and to co-operate with me in carrying them into fulfilment.<sup>16</sup>

In her autobiography, Emmeline makes frequent reference to the 'family' which included friends, colleagues, the working class girls and children who holidayed at their various properties. In this respect, the Pethick-Lawrences as a 'political partnership' perceived themselves to be not only representing their own personal beliefs but also those of a much larger group; they realized that their strength lay in surrounding themselves with others who would work with them, running things on a day-to-day basis, thus enabling them to fulfil the role they had consciously created for themselves.<sup>17</sup>

Their correspondence during the early years of their marriage was romantic, very frequent and often repetitive. On their first wedding anniversary, Fred gave Emmeline her own flat at the top of the Clements Inn building, effectively giving her a 'room of one's own'. Vera Brittain saw this as a sign that 'already he was learning to be not only efficient, but human'.<sup>18</sup> This indicates a shift in their private life and the development of the equality that they advocated both in public and private. The early letters also indicate a strong combined

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<sup>16</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.130.

<sup>17</sup> Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, makes reference to the importance of mostly female servants and secretaries in terms of middle-class feminist achievement. p.11.

<sup>18</sup> Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence*, p.34.

sense of what they, as an equal couple, stood for. Nowhere is this clearer than in the following extracts from a letter written by Fred to Emmeline in April 1902:

...You and I were born to fight dear; ourselves and all the world and all the powers of darkness...Courage lady, sing a poem beloved that you and I are found worthy to stand up together and fight. Fight for the light against the darkness, for truth against the lie, for life against death.<sup>19</sup>

They both had, prior to meeting, a strong sense of justice but for Fred in particular, the meeting of their two minds extended this into a spiritual calling to embark upon a mission which together they could accomplish. Such dramatic sentiments had yet to be matched with a specific cause but it indicated the direction in which they were heading.

From 1901 onwards, the Pethick-Lawrences, under the influence of Keir Hardie, became more involved with the labour movement. Fred established links with various trades unions as a result of his involvement with Percy Alden and in 1903 took over publication of the Labour Annual.<sup>20</sup> In 1904, after letting the *Echo* cease publication, the Pethick-Lawrences went to Egypt followed by a visit to South Africa in 1905. There, they spent time with Olive Schreiner whose writings had impressed them and she remained a strong influence.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> P-L 6/26 Letter from F. Pethick-Lawrence to E. Pethick-Lawrence, 1 April 1902.

<sup>20</sup> Fred Pethick-Lawrence continued to edit this publication under the new title of *The Reformers' Year Book* until 1908. See F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.63.

Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested in Manchester whilst the Pethick-Lawrences were still in South Africa but the newspaper reports they received aroused their interest sufficiently to make Emmeline in particular, want to meet them.

In his autobiography, *Fate Has Been Kind*, (1943) Fred admits that at the time of reading about the arrests, he could not see what middle class women had to complain about, or that they had a specific contribution to make in the world of politics. He does, however, concede that he had 'no masculine prejudice against women taking an active part in the life of the world'.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, his wife's subsequent involvement with the WSPU and Christabel's political prowess altered his view to such an extent that it was to change his life dramatically for several years and remained a strong influence in his subsequent political work. As Fred himself described it: 'The Suffragettes surged into my life...they invaded my flat, and almost took possession of it and everything in it...they knocked the bottom out of the silly caricatures of them as lanky, bespectacled, arid women'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) was a feminist, pacifist, socialist and writer who lived for most of her life in South Africa. She was interned during the Boer war which she was opposed to and worked with the suffrage movement in Britain and South Africa. See Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader* for a detailed discussion of the influence of Olive Schreiner on Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and her peers.

<sup>22</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, (Hutchinson and Co., London, 1943), p.69.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p.70.



Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1867-1954)



Fred Pethick-Lawrence, c. 1909.

#### 4.1 '...THE PURPOSE TO WHICH WE WERE BORN AND FOR WHICH WE WERE MATED'.

The Pethick-Lawrences were involved with the WSPU for six and a half years and their combined contribution during this time cannot be underestimated. However, although they achieved a high profile in the public sphere, despite or even because of the challenges they now faced, this period also seems to have fulfilled their desire to be brought closer together through shared experiences. As Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence later observed, 'It is one of the intriguing facts about the W.S.P.U. that minds and temperaments so fundamentally dissimilar could have remained for so many years in practical working harmony under the inspiration of a great ideal.'<sup>24</sup>

In her autobiography, Emmeline makes it clear that the 'franchise question' was not uppermost in either her mind or Fred's at the beginning of 1906 and that 'political interests were subordinate to our fervent desire to bring about an amelioration of the social conditions of the workers'.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the increasing emphasis they gave to feminist rather than labour agendas is evident. Whilst Fred Pethick-Lawrence saw Socialism encompassing rebellions against the domination of class, sex and colour, it was the rebellion against the domination of sex that they chose to focus upon. It was Annie Kenney who persuaded Emmeline to meet the others involved in what she [Emmeline] later

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<sup>24</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.152.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p.146.

described as the WSPU's 'pathetic little committee'.<sup>26</sup> The result of the meeting was that in February 1906, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Mary Neal joined the Central London Committee of the WSPU with Emmeline as honorary treasurer.

Why did the Pethick-Lawrences become involved with an organization that excluded men, thus creating an ambivalent position for Fred? To what extent did they consciously develop a role for him? Their early involvement suggests that they had not deliberately set out to create a specific role for Fred other than that of a supportive nature. Yet from 1907, as he pointed out:

the daily executive control of the agitation passed for a time unobtrusively and almost unconsciously into the hands of an unofficial committee of three persons - Christabel, my wife and myself.<sup>27</sup>

The main reason for this was that Mrs Pankhurst trusted Christabel's judgment and preferred to spend her time touring the country. Christabel in turn, clearly welcomed the combined expertise of the Pethick-Lawrences with the result that all three effectively ran the WSPU.

During the years of militancy, however, Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel's attitudes toward the Pethick-Lawrences shifted. Mrs Pankhurst was, according to Emmeline, 'distressed by the way in which Christabel consulted us about everything and was influenced by our opinion'.<sup>28</sup> Mrs Pankhurst appears to have

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.148.

<sup>27</sup> F. W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.75.

become increasingly concerned that the Pethick-Lawrences and Fred in particular, were being publicly perceived as the WSPU's true figureheads.

As treasurer, Emmeline recognized that by dealing with the organisation and finance of the WSPU, the others could effectively carry out what she described as 'the guerrilla method of political warfare'.<sup>29</sup> She had her husband's support and assistance and fully acknowledged that it was his business acumen and financial knowledge that helped the Union. However, Emmeline also possessed a high degree of business sense as well as a reputation as 'the most persuasive beggar in London',<sup>30</sup> and Roger Fulford's suggestion that 'although Mr Lawrence never obtruded himself, the organisation of the Union rested on his aptitude and foresight'<sup>31</sup> seems unfair. Rather, the Union's success resulted from their combined skills and team work. Indeed, if any further endorsement of Emmeline's involvement in matters of business and finance both within the Union and elsewhere were needed, then a letter she wrote to Fred from Holloway prison in 1909 reveals that she was not only consulted by him on their private financial dealings but also appeared to direct them - something usually classed as a male responsibility. In this letter Emmeline also discussed issues

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<sup>28</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.283.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p.152.

<sup>30</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.77.

<sup>31</sup> R. Fulford, *Votes for Women*, (Faber and Faber, London, 1958, first edition, 1957), p.167.

connected with her role as treasurer of the WSPU and requested the WSPU financial report and balance sheet which required her signature.<sup>32</sup>

By this stage, the literature sales of the WSPU had increased sufficiently to warrant a separate trading department which became known as the Woman's Press although as Fred Pethick-Lawrence pointed out this was a misnomer as they never did any printing themselves.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, through the pages of *Votes for Women*, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was able to disseminate not only demands for women's suffrage but also the 'formulation and establishment of many women's sense of a gender identity which was not dependent on the existence of men for its validation or expression'.<sup>34</sup> Many of the books reviewed in *Votes for Women* were biographies, histories and novels relating directly to suffrage or other issues pertaining to the condition of women. A considerable number of these were reviewed by Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence herself and when Cicely Hamilton's polemic discussion of *Marriage As A Trade* was published in 1909, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence described it as shedding, 'the pitiless light that reveals the squalid and ugly facts of women's

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<sup>32</sup> P-L 7/165 Letter from E. Pethick-Lawrence in Holloway prison to her husband, 4 March 1909.

<sup>33</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.73. For more discussion of the Woman's Press and the WSPU bookshop, see L. Stanley with A. Morley, *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison* (The Women's Press, London, 1988) pp.87-92 .

<sup>34</sup> Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, p.238.

servile and degraded position in the body politic'.<sup>35</sup> A position she clearly did not share at a personal level.

In her writing, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence demonstrated an awareness of the general features that were likely to make a publication popular with *Votes for Women* readers and also sought to make connections between the shared characteristics of the suffrage struggle and popular forms of writing. Nowhere is this clearer than in her review of Sylvia Pankhurst's book, *The History of the Women's Militant Suffrage Movement* (1911). In rhetorical style she posed the question:

What will this book mean to those who are outside the movement, and the mere spectator of the drama...What will it mean to those who will read it a few years hence, when the ban of political outlawry has been removed from the womanhood of the nation? A romance, a thrilling tale to be read with deep interest and forthwith forgotten, or a living inspiration to prompt the women of a future day to great ideals and further attainment? A romance it most certainly is. No novel ever penned can outvie it for rapidity of incident, for perilous adventure, for miracle of human achievement, for depths of human trial and endurance. What is more than all, this is no work of a vivid imagination, no made-up fairy tale. Even children will love this story, because it is a 'true one'.<sup>36</sup>

In terms of Fred's involvement with the WSPU, it would seem logical to assume that Emmeline would have utilized his services from the outset but there were key moments particularly during the first year, that help to explain his

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<sup>35</sup> *Votes for Women*, 3 September 1909, quoted in L. Whitelaw, *The Life & Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton*, (The Women's Press, London, 1990), p.94

<sup>36</sup> *Votes for Women*, 16 June 1911, p.610.

developing role within the campaign. On 23 October 1906, Emmeline was one of ten women arrested for taking part in a demonstration in the Central Lobby of the House of Commons and was sentenced to two months in prison after refusing to give an undertaking to keep the peace for six months. Suffering from exhaustion, she was discharged after Mrs Pankhurst had sent a message stating she should give the undertaking.<sup>37</sup> The Pethick-Lawrences travelled to Italy then he returned to take her place as treasurer whilst she recuperated.

According to Emmeline, her imprisonment, 'was the incident that brought him finally to devote all his manifold powers to a cause which needed the help that a trained mind like his could give'.<sup>38</sup> The personal impact of seeing his wife suffer for the cause motivated him into dedicating himself to that same cause, and the most effective way to do this was to use his legal and business knowledge, although it was not long before his contribution extended into other areas. With the increase in militancy, Fred assumed an essential role, ensuring that those who had been arrested were properly instructed upon how to deal with their defence. Additionally, he also took responsibility for arranging bail, dealing with worried relatives and liaising with the police as well as helping to keep the Union running. It was whilst representing three suffragettes in court in July 1906, that Fred felt he first made a real commitment to militancy. He saw

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<sup>37</sup> In his autobiography, *Fate Has Been Kind*, Fred Pethick-Lawrence wrote that initially Mrs Pankhurst did not want Emmeline to give the undertaking, making some scornful remark about the attitude of husbands, p.73.

<sup>38</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.169.



The Pethick-Lawrences going to the Law courts, 1908.

that the dock was dirty and wiped it with his handkerchief. Writing about this incident nearly forty years on, he stated:

Ridiculous as it may seem, this single act, which I performed out of courtesy to my wife's friends, made a greater demand on my courage and resolution than anything I did later in the campaign, not excluding my own prison sentence and forcible feeding. By it I testified that in this matter of the women's revolt I had taken sides with the dock against the bench; and I accepted the full implication of all that that entailed.<sup>39</sup>

His representation of the three suffragettes had, in effect, brought into question conflicting representations of masculinity. Whilst on the one hand, the act of wiping the dock could be interpreted as chivalrous, although it could also be seen as effeminate given that cleaning is perceived as women's work, in his position as a barrister defending these women, it could be viewed as a threat to the male establishment. This is clearly how Fred himself saw it; he had made a choice about which he wrote, 'C'est le premier pas qui coute'.<sup>40</sup> The consequences of this action manifested themselves in a number of ways including an unsuccessful attempt to disbar him in 1908, whilst representing the suffragette, Jennie Baines.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.69.

<sup>40</sup> Translated, this means 'it is the first step which costs'.

<sup>41</sup> Fred Pethick-Lawrence attempted unsuccessfully to serve subpoenas on the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith and the Home secretary, Herbert Gladstone and there were calls for his disbarment over this.

It is worth giving some consideration to the suffragettes that Fred represented, not least because they were all working class. His own description of them is also revealing:

The three prisoners presented a sorry spectacle to the casual observer. All were working women and poorly dressed. Apart from her flaming eyes, Annie Kenney looked an ordinary north-country mill girl. Mrs Sbarboro was the wife of an Italian workman resident in East London. Mrs Knight was lame and insignificant.<sup>42</sup>

All three were sent to prison for six weeks after refusing 'in a most explicit manner' to give an undertaking not to return to Cavendish Square 'for the purposes of molestation or annoyance of Mr Asquith'.<sup>43</sup>

Press coverage initially focused on the support that married suffragettes received from their husbands, although this was soon replaced by stories with headlines such as 'Suffragettes Neglected Children' challenging the 'manliness' of these husbands through implications of weakness and forced domesticity.<sup>44</sup> Mrs Knight, in particular became a press target and the *Daily Mirror* relished in reporting her story under the headline 'Fascinations of Holloway Gaol Make

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<sup>42</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.69.

<sup>43</sup> Public Record Office, (PRO), MEPO 2/1016 XC2783 p.27-8 These records do not mention a Mrs Sbarboro but instead have a Mrs Scarborough as the person charged with Annie Kenny and Mrs Knight. It is possible that Fred Pethick-Lawrence mis-spelt the name in his autobiography (despite it being proof-read by Evelyn Sharp) but equally possible is the fact that the writer of the police report assumed the name was incorrect because of the unusual spelling.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, *Daily Mirror*, 5-10 July 1906.

Matters Very Awkward for Mrs Knight's Household'.<sup>45</sup> Describing her as a 'suffragette stalwart' they reported that,

Mrs Knight prefers his Majesty's prison at Holloway to her own home...where her two children - Harold aged 18 months and Donald aged 10 years are wondering at their mother's absence. When seen by the *Daily Mirror* yesterday, the younger boy, Harold was sobbing and asking time after time for his "mamma"... Mr Knight spends his evenings doing his best to pacify the troubles of the two children.<sup>46</sup>

Mr Knight felt compelled to respond to the attempt by the press to discredit his wife's actions and told the *Daily Mirror*, 'the children are happy'. More importantly, he denounced the press as liars at a lunchtime meeting in support of the women's franchise movement held in front of the Woolwich Arsenal on 9 July. The meeting was attended by over 1500 men and Mr Knight spoke for 15 minutes on the injustice of imprisoning his wife for a 'mere technical offence'.<sup>47</sup>

The women's imprisonment was the first in London and the fact that they were all working-class would have served to demonstrate that the movement was not as exclusively middle-class as some would have suggested. However, it could, potentially have been interpreted as middle-class women refusing to get their hands dirty. It is also interesting that as early as 1906, large numbers of mainly working-class men were offering support.

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<sup>45</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 7 July 1906, p.5.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 10 July 1906, p.4.

The Pethick-Lawrences were represented in rather a different way and the press had yet to find the language to express Fred's role in the campaign. He was not a father and had, of course, represented the suffragettes. Emphasis was given to Fred's wealth - he had pledged £10 for every day of Emmeline's imprisonment and when she was released after four days, one report stated that 'Mr Lawrence, if he chooses, can save quite a considerable sum of money'.<sup>48</sup>

The *Daily Mirror* reported on a statement made by Sir Patteson Nickalls, Chairman of the New Reform Club Committee, which stressed that the 'New Reform Club has nothing to do with the Women's Social and Political Union, Mr Pethick-Lawrence is not a member of the NRC Committee'.<sup>49</sup> Already, Fred's involvement in women's suffrage was creating waves within other sites of masculine culture, for which he would eventually be punished.

Other members of Emmeline's family also played key parts in the campaigns, in particular her sisters, Marie and Dorothy. In 1909, after the introduction of forcible feeding, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's sister, Dorothy Pethick was arrested alongside Constance Lytton and Jane Brailsford, the wife of Henry Brailsford. The following year she was arrested again alongside seventeen other women, but on this occasion was the only one who the police felt able to prosecute. The official report makes fascinating reading:

...She had, in addition to attempting to kick several of the constables, smacked Inspector Jenkins in the face with one blow and knocked off

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<sup>48</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 29 October 1906, p.3.

<sup>49</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 26 October 1906, p.3.

his cap with another. She denied the attempting to kick or the smacking in the face, but admitted knocking the Inspector's cap off, alleging as her justification that she saw that officer be unwarrantably violent towards some unoffending woman. This allegation the officer absolutely denied. The lady went into the witness box herself, but she was an impossible individual.<sup>50</sup>

As part of her defence, Dorothy Pethick called Emmeline Pankhurst as one of her witnesses but the report concluded that 'they lamentably failed to give any part of evidence relevant to this particular case'. Dorothy Pethick was fined 40/- or in default 14 days.<sup>51</sup>

The MLWS was formed in the spring of 1907 and for the first year Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's brother-in-law, Thomas Mortimer Budgett, was the organisation's secretary. He also had the distinction of being the only man arrested along with many women following a post-Caxton hall meeting deputation in 1909.<sup>52</sup>

Fred's lack of an official role within the WSPU is deceptive, for he corresponded on WSPU letter-headed notepaper and was the only man to have done this.<sup>53</sup> What is also significant is Emmeline's comment that 'he was the

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<sup>50</sup> PRO, MEPO 2/1410 XC2783/8-9 25 November 1910.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Mortimer Budgett was married to Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's younger sister, Annie (Nance). He resigned as secretary in April 1908 but continued to be involved with the MLWS and was on the committee in 1910 and 1911. See E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.54; Liz Stanley with Ann Morley, *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison*, p.202; *Votes for Women*, 20 February, 1909, p.383.

person with whom the police were glad to deal<sup>54</sup> for in addition to it being a relief to have him organize these 'troublesome' women, the police clearly found security in dealing with a man, a gentleman in fact. It is as though they were temporarily prepared to ignore conflicting masculine relations and focus on conventional ones.

The Pethick-Lawrences had been involved with the WSPU for just over a year when their combined threat to the establishment was brought to the notice of the public prosecutor in the form of a letter from a Miss Meechan:

Dear Sir,

May I respectfully ask if it is not possible to break up the Suffragette movement by taking action against Mr and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence for conspiring and inciting to serious breaches of the peace. It can very easily be proved that Mr Pethick-Lawrence went to East Ham on one occasion and hired a number of women at 2/- per day + expenses and women who carried babies in their arms at 2/6 per day + their expenses. These women were drilled into their work by Mr Lawrence and his assistants and as you will remember took part in very disorderly scenes... These women (& many of the women agitators who are paid £2 - 5 per week) know nothing of politics or Votes for Women questions and are paid for creating disturbance at command of the leaders...[I] like many thousands of women feel it is a dreadful thing to let these cranks bring such discredit on women...<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See, for example, PRO, MEPO 2/1222 XC2585, letter from F. Pethick-Lawrence to the Police, 13 October 1908, requesting an improvement in conditions at Bow Street cells etc.

<sup>54</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.169.

<sup>55</sup> PRO, MEPO 2/1016 XC2783 p.52-3. Letter from Miss A. Meechan to the Public Prosecutor, 23 March 1907.

Although the writer suggests taking action against the Pethick-Lawrences as a couple, it is Fred who is held responsible for mobilising the forces. Female opponents of the suffragettes would presumably have viewed Fred's involvement as betraying his own sex. The letter was taken seriously and a CID officer was sent to investigate, subsequently reporting that the writer had retracted much of what had been stated. However, the police were sufficiently interested in the Pethick-Lawrences to keep Clements Inn under 'casual and discreet observation' but found there was no evidence to justify, 'that women of the lower order, with or without children, are drilled or receive instruction in connection with any organised procession of the suffragettes'.<sup>56</sup>

Fred's contribution to the WSPU extended far beyond a legalistic position. He wrote a number of articles and pamphlets including one entitled, *The Opposition of the Liberal Government to Woman Suffrage* (1908) where he stressed that,

It is essential to success in a political fight to discern who are the actual enemies to be fought. In the battle for Woman Suffrage both the teaching of history and of political common sense point to the same conclusion - there is only one enemy, and that is the Government of the day.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> PRO, MEPO 2/1016 XC2783 p.63. Report from Criminal Investigation Department, New Scotland Yard, 11 April 1907.

<sup>57</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *The Opposition of the Liberal Government to Woman Suffrage*. (1908).

It was Christabel Pankhurst who had convinced Fred that this was the way forward and having adopted this position, he explained that:

Some people suppose that the enemy of Woman Suffrage is the men of the country. That is entirely a mistake; Woman Suffrage is not in any sense an anti-man movement, and as such it should not, and does not, rouse the hostility of the men of the country. On the contrary, in the old days, when petitions were being got up in favour of this reform, large numbers of men signed in favour of it. The Women's Social and Political Union find that at great meetings all over the country, and in particular at the bye-elections, the majority of men give a hearty support to the cause whenever it is properly explained, and carry this to the extent of their vote at the polls.<sup>58</sup>

Fred's profile within the women's suffrage movement and his support of WSPU militant tactics, saw him attempt to defuse the 'sex war' issue by firmly implicating government. The concluding words of the pamphlet are unequivocal about the militant policy adopted:

...women will know that it is the Government of the day who stand between them and their enfranchisement, and they will accordingly waste no powder upon any other section of the community who may appear to be unfriendly, but will strike directly at the Government of the day, conscious that in so doing they are fighting the battle against their real enemy.<sup>59</sup>

Now that the 'enemy' had been located, the opportunity existed to turn the dramatic words Fred wrote to Emmeline in 1902 into deeds.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

Another leaflet written by Fred Pethick-Lawrence, entitled *The Bye-Election Policy of the Women's Social and Political Union*, listed the results of the key by-elections of 1908 alongside a range of evidence to show the influence which had been exerted by women. Roger Fulford, in a discussion of the WSPU's success in this vein stated that: 'perhaps the historian could argue that they were the pioneers of spectacular intervention at by-elections, but even the most resolute statistician would find it difficult to argue that - except in the case of mid-Devon - they had any substantial effect on the result'.<sup>60</sup> In fact, the statistics speak for themselves as a brief perusal of Fred's leaflet reveals. However, the point that Fulford really seems to be making is that in the final analysis you cannot attribute a Liberal defeat to the influence of the WSPU although the evidence that exists is hard to contradict.<sup>61</sup> For example, in the Peckham by-election, which saw a Liberal majority of 2,339 converted to a Conservative majority of 2,494, Fulford attributes the victory of the Conservatives to the brewers' anger at the Liberal Licensing Bill of 1908.<sup>62</sup> Whilst the fact that the election was won by a total abstainer is an aside, the winning candidate, Mr A.C. Gooch, emphasised that 'a great feature of this election has been the activity of the supporters of Women's Suffrage'.<sup>63</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>60</sup> Fulford, *Votes for Women*, p.163.

<sup>61</sup> See F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *The Bye-Election Policy of the Women's Social and Political Union*, (1909).

<sup>62</sup> Fulford, *Votes For Women*, p.162.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *The Bye-Election Policy*, p.8.

newspaper extracts and letters from a variety of sources illustrate the importance of the part women played in Peckham and other by-elections.<sup>64</sup>

On 30 May 1907, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence gave a speech at Exeter Hall entitled *The New Crusade* which was subsequently published by the WSPU. The speech illustrates her effectiveness as a speaker but also gives some insight into the witty and warm-spirited woman she was. The following extract from her speech highlights her ability to turn gender roles around, appeal to a large and mixed audience and place militancy firmly onto the agenda.

Have you heard the latest definition of the difference between the suffragists and the suffragettes?...Two people were standing by the bookstall looking at the day's newspaper posters. "Jim," said the young woman, "what's all this about the suffragists and the suffragettes? What are they? And what is it they want, and what is the difference between them? Do you know?" "Why yes," said the man in a lordly manner, "of course I do." "Well tell me Jim; I want to know." "Well, yer see, its like this here. The suffra-*jists*, why, are suffra-*jists*, yer know; they *jist* wants the vote, yer see; and the suffra-*get*, well, a suffra-*get*, yer see, is going to *get* it." <sup>65</sup>

However, having committed herself to militancy, Emmeline sought to define it in her own broader terms and in a letter entitled *The Sheep that Defied the Dog*, addressed to 'the average elector', she tackled the issue of militancy head on. Starting from the premise that most men were in fact sympathetic to the cause of Votes for Women but could not reconcile themselves to the methods of violence

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *The New Crusade*, speech, (1907).

and destruction now being deployed (despite these methods having been used so often by men) she offered a picture of how she viewed militancy:

Last spring I was walking in Scotland over a country road dusty with the trampling of a flock of highland sheep. Amongst them were many ewes with their young. One lamb was lame and lagged behind the rest, its mother standing by. Suddenly a fussy sheep dog spotted the laggards and made in their direction with much ado. But instead of the panic-stricken submission and obedience that one is accustomed to see given by the timid sheep to the bark of the shepherd's dog, the ewe turned and faced the dog with steady and fierce determination. In an instant the dog stopped dead, completely nonplussed, then turned and went off with his tail between his legs.<sup>66</sup>

The notion of a militant sheep was scarcely believable to Emmeline but prompted her to question 'what had happened to change a creature of traditional timidity and gentleness into this fearlessly defensive rebel?' The answer to this question was the instinct of motherhood which had overwhelmed all other impulses and manifested itself in what she termed 'the rising of race consciousness'. The sheep story was used as an analogy alongside the women's movement within which women were awakening to 'the new consciousness of race motherhood'.<sup>67</sup> It is important to establish in what context the term 'race' is meant for contemporary definitions could confuse the issue.<sup>68</sup> 'Race', to Emmeline, meant gender or species and she embraced the term motherhood in its broadest context for she was not a mother in

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<sup>66</sup> P-L Papers, 7/19 E. Pethick-Lawrence, open letter, *The Sheep That Defied the Dog*. (c.1912).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> see J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, pp.236-7 for a discussion of the language of race during this period and its use within the women's movement.

the conventional sense of the word. The impact of the letter was far reaching and Fred used extracts from it in his piece, *The Men's Share* (1960), (originally written as *The Man's Share* in 1912).

Emmeline and Fred were co-editors of *Votes for Women*, first published in 1907 and in line with the other aspects of their lives, they both contributed. Fulford described the paper as 'occasionally rabid' but conceded that it was 'conducted with force and judgment by Mr Pethick-Lawrence'.<sup>69</sup> This is just one example of how Fulford wanted to portray Fred Pethick-Lawrence's role in the Women's Suffrage Campaign; there was a niche for Fred amongst all this unsavoury militancy and that was to promote his gentlemanly qualities. This way it was easy for him to be perceived as the 'Prince Consort of militancy' and not just Mrs Pethick-Lawrence's husband.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps, Lord Pethick-Lawrence was happy by this stage to be written about in this way for, when Fulford's book was published in 1957, it was Christabel and Sylvia Pankhurst who were furious about their misrepresentation. Interestingly though, it was to Fred they individually wrote about their concerns and it was Fred who attempted to 'smooth' things over.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Fulford, *Votes for Women*, p.167.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.139.

<sup>71</sup> P-L 9/71, 9/72, 9/73, 9/75, 9/76 Letters from Sylvia Pankhurst to F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, 24 and 25 June, 8 July 1957, Late February 1958; P-L 9/40, 9/41, 9/43, 9/44, 9/45, Letters from Christabel Pankhurst to F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, 10 March, 4, 6 and 22 April and 25 May 1957.

## **4.2 'A STAIN ON THE COUNTRY'S HONOUR WHICH WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN'.**

On 5 March 1912, the Pethick-Lawrences, Christabel, Mrs Pankhurst and Mrs Tuke were charged with 'conspiracy to damage the property of liege subjects of the King'.<sup>72</sup> Christabel had recently escaped to France whilst Mrs Pankhurst and Mrs Tuke were already in prison. Emmeline and Fred were refused bail and so, for the first time, Fred experienced prison. The press followed their fortunes and chose to focus on how Fred, in particular, was coping. In court on the day after their arrest the *Daily Mail* reported:

Mr Pethick-Lawrence leant over the dock-rail with a paper of notes in his hand. The paper quivered to and fro from the nervous shaking of the hand that held it. his clean-shaven face has ordinarily a good-humoured, almost whimsical expression, but yesterday there was a look of anxiety upon it.<sup>73</sup>

On this occasion, there was no choice to make and the consequences were out of Fred's control. On 28 March they were released on bail and the trial was held at the Old Bailey in May. Fred conducted his own defence which, as Brittain has pointed out, finally introduced a statement on his own position. He said:

I am a man and I cannot take part in this women's agitation, but I intend to stand by the women who are fighting... I think it is a battle waged for the good of the people of this country, waged by one half of the

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<sup>72</sup> Quoted in V. Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence*, p.61.

<sup>73</sup> *Daily Mail*, 7 March, 1912 p.7.

community whose deeds are valuable to the other part of the country and should not be excluded.<sup>74</sup>

Here it is admirably stated that women need to fight their own battles and that, whilst as a man he could offer support, he could not join them. Clearly, this contradicted his practice but perhaps Fred was choosing to focus on his position as one half of a partnership rather than as a man. By removing gender from the equation, he could participate. And yet, it was precisely because of his gender that he was able to contribute in many areas. Moreover, there were men who were actively engaged in acts of militancy and who paid for it by suffering physical violence. Was it a calculated decision that Fred would be better served to distance himself from direct action and use his legal expertise, or was it perhaps the case that there remained in him a natural aversion to behaving in an 'ungentlemanly fashion', which brings concepts of class as well as masculinity into play? Even the charge of conspiracy was a step removed from actually damaging something though that is not to alleviate its seriousness (particularly for a lawyer). Henry Nevinson believed that given Fred Pethick-Lawrence's legal training, militancy was more distasteful to him - particularly when it altered from passive resistance to attacking property.<sup>75</sup>

The defendants were found guilty and sentenced to nine months imprisonment as well as having to pay the full cost of the trial which was met

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<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence, A Portrait*, p.62.

<sup>75</sup> H.W. Nevinson, *More Changes, More Chances*, (Nisbet & Co. Ltd, London, 1925) p.319.

with public indignation. An interesting outcome was that the daughters of Judge Coleridge who presided over the trial, immediately applied for membership of the WSPU, a good example of how women's suffrage impacted on family politics.<sup>76</sup> However, for the Pethick-Lawrences, prison meant something rather different. Fred described the elation of not being 'shut off in General Headquarters, but right up in the front line, sharing its dangers and excitements with the rank and file of my women comrades'<sup>77</sup> highlighting the military element and revealing through those last few words that he was actually an integral part of the movement despite his claims in court. In a letter to Fred sent from Holloway prison on 18 June 1912, Emmeline wrote, '...the purpose to which we were born and for which we were mated is accomplished....It is enough... I think we two are the happiest and luckiest people in all the world.'<sup>78</sup> This suggests that the Pethick-Lawrences had achieved a private, as well as a public position in terms of their partnership.

Whilst in prison, Emmeline, Fred and Mrs Pankhurst went on hunger strike; Emmeline was force-fed once and then released<sup>79</sup> but Fred was subjected to forcible-feeding (which he described as an unpleasant and painful process)

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<sup>76</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.93.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p.89.

<sup>78</sup> P-L 7/168 Letter from E. Pethick-Lawrence to F.Pethick-Lawrence, sent from Holloway prison, 18 June 1912.

<sup>79</sup> The prison doctor recorded that Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was 'very much excited, violent and resistive' and her personal doctors stressed that her health was in danger. PRO/HO 45/24630, W.C. Sullivan to the Governor, Holloway Prison, 24 June 1912.

over a period of several days before his release on 27 June 1912. He also commented on the visible distress of the head doctor, 'a most sensitive man', concluding that prison reminded him of 'prep' school.<sup>80</sup> Two days prior to his release, Emmeline wrote to him explaining,

... I was privileged to share what our brave comrades had experienced. I never had a moments fear or a moment's hunger. I should have felt it bitterly had I been released without going through all.<sup>81</sup>

Although the Pethick-Lawrences both experienced prison and forcible feeding, their individual interpretations of these events demonstrate that for Fred it was bound up in militarism and the total institutional factor, whilst Emmeline emphasized the heroic element.

Fred was visited in prison by his uncle Edwin with whom he had few dealings since their disagreement over the Boer war. Edwin Durning-Lawrence was totally opposed to women's suffrage but felt, nevertheless, that it was time to end their rift on the grounds that in promoting militancy, Fred was 'providentially inspired; for he [Edwin] was convinced that it would prevent the enactment of women's suffrage'.<sup>82</sup> When Fred was released he had lost one

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<sup>80</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.89.

<sup>81</sup> P-L 7/169 Letter from E. Pethick-Lawrence to F. Pethick-Lawrence still in prison, 25 June 1912.

<sup>82</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.90.

and a half stones in weight and looked considerably older than his forty years. Described by Henry Nevinson as being 'worn, unhealthy-looking: but calm and making no complaint' he was undoubtedly fortunate to have been collected from prison by his sister-in-law, Marie Pethick, who was a doctor.<sup>83</sup>

A comparison of the treatment that Emmeline and Fred Pethick-Lawrence received whilst in prison reveals some fundamental differences. On 18 June 1912, Emmeline's doctor Katherine Chapman had requested a visit. On 19 June 1912, Emmeline's housekeeper had requested to see her urgently. On 20 June 1912, Mary Neal wrote to the Prison Commission on Esperance Club notepaper, requesting a permit to see Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence 'very necessarily' and her sister, Marie Pethick also wrote. Again, on the same date, Emmeline's cousin, J.M.Lawes wrote requesting to see her, describing her as 'fearlessly great (with an absolute forgetfulness of self)...You can never conquer her spirit and the power of its strength and beauty will *in the end* prevail against all evil obstacles'. All visits were refused and in a referred letter from the Home Office, the point was made that, 'People with 3 establishments and a lot of personal business ought to keep out of prison'. And yet, on the same day, a weekly permit was granted for Fred to be visited to discuss business/private matters. Olive Smith, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's private

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<sup>83</sup> Nevinson diaries, Bodleian Library, MS ENG. Misc.e/ 6 March, 1912; PRO/HO 45/24630, Report on F.W. Pethick-Lawrence by Dr Maurice Craig, 27 June 1912.

secretary wrote immediately to ask why Emmeline was not allowed the same treatment.<sup>84</sup>

When the Pethick-Lawrences were arrested, they had been concerned about continuing to get *Votes for Women* published as it required a degree of technical expertise as well as political judgement. Fortunately, just as the police arrived at Clements Inn to arrest them, Evelyn Sharp had arrived and duly took over the editorship of the paper.<sup>85</sup> She was also able to warn Christabel that her arrest was imminent, thus enabling the escape to Paris.

Discussing the meeting that she and Fred had with the Pankhursts in Boulogne shortly after their release, Emmeline's autobiography emphasises that the Pankhursts' announcement of a new campaign involving widespread attacks upon public and private property came as a shock, 'as our minds had been moving in quite another direction'.<sup>86</sup> Essentially, what the Pethick-Lawrences were advocating was to maximise the public awareness created by the trial by organising popular demonstrations on a scale hitherto unseen.

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<sup>84</sup> PRO/PCOM. 8/176.44106/27 and PCOM. 8/176.44106/6 see also, Home Office referred letter 28 May 1912.

<sup>85</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, pp.88-89. Evelyn Sharp (1869-1955) was a well-known writer, pacifist and socialist. She joined the WSPU in 1906 and continued to edit *Votes for Women* with the Pethick-Lawrences until 1914. She became the second wife of Henry Nevinson in 1933 after the death of Margaret Wynne Nevinson and in the same year her autobiography, *Unfinished Adventure: selected reminiscences from an Englishwoman's Life* was published.

<sup>86</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My part*, p.277.

After the Boulogne meeting, Emmeline received a letter from Mrs Pankhurst. In describing the position of the authorities, she wrote:

So long as Mr Lawrence can be connected with militant acts involving damage to property, they will make him pay. Nothing but the cessation of militancy, (which of course is unthinkable before the vote is assured) or his complete ruin will stop this action on their part. They see in Mr Lawrence a potent weapon against the militant movement and they mean to use it...<sup>87</sup>

The WSPU leadership now saw Fred as a liability and were not prepared to acknowledge his commitment to women's suffrage.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's response could be construed as contradicting her earlier sentiments. However, it is important to recognize how the Pethick-Lawrences broadly defined militancy. In her reply to Mrs Pankhurst, Emmeline wrote:

Our answer today is the same as it has been since we entered the struggle. You will realise directly we state it that there is only one answer possible. It is the answer which you yourself would give if asked to choose between the Movement (which you and we have in so large a measure jointly built up) and any other possession in life however dear and precious. You would not hesitate for a moment. Neither do we. Our answer is that we shall continue to be jointly responsible with you in the future as we have been in the past, and that the more we are menaced the harder we will fight until victory is won...With regard to Militancy - we have never for a single instant allowed our individual interests to stand in the way of any necessary action or policy to be pursued by the Union, and we never shall.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> P-L 9/31 p.2, Letter from Mrs Pankhurst to E.Pethick-Lawrence, 8 September 1912.

<sup>88</sup> P-L 9/32 p.3-4, Letter from E. Pethick-Lawrence to Mrs Pankhurst, 22 September 1912.

This suggests that she was prepared to condone militancy at any level no matter what the personal cost. It may well have been the case that after a break from WSPU activities, and time to consider their future, the Pethick-Lawrences had decided they were prepared to accept Mrs Pankhurst's autocratic leadership for the sake of the cause. Certainly, the solidarity of the Pethick-Lawrence's partnership is undisputed in the letter. Nevertheless, upon their return to England, Mrs Pankhurst informed Emmeline that she was severing her connection with her. Neither Emmeline nor Fred were prepared to accept this and felt sure that Christabel would not have been a party to this decision but at a further WSPU meeting on 14 October at which Christabel was present, they were left in no doubt as to their situation.

We need to consider Fred's position in this. Although never a member of the WSPU, his gender automatically excluding him, his contribution was outstanding. Yet Mrs Pankhurst never addressed him personally in this matter until forced to during the second meeting. The writer, ex-actress and WSPU executive member, Elizabeth Robins, who was also present at the second meeting, recorded in her diary how Mrs Pankhurst was opposed to Fred reading a statement after she had made hers and noted that, 'we all feel he should be allowed. He does. Mrs P. interrupts. He calls for a quiet hearing. "We listened to you".'<sup>89</sup> The result of the meeting was that a statement was

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<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Robins diary extract. October 1912. Fales Library, New York University. All Elizabeth Robins references kindly supplied by A.V. John.

signed by all parties (the Pethick-Lawrences, Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel) and printed in the next issue of *Votes for Women*, which remained in the hands of the Pethick-Lawrences. It read:

**Grave Statement By The Leaders**

At the first re-union of the leaders after the enforced holiday, Mrs Pankhurst and Miss Christabel Pankhurst outlined a new militant policy which Mr and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence found themselves altogether unable to approve.

Mrs Pankhurst and Miss Christabel Pankhurst indicated that they were not prepared to modify their intentions, and recommended that Mr and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence should resume control of the paper, *Votes for Women*, and should leave the Women's Social and Political Union.

Rather than make schism in the ranks of the Union, Mr and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence consented to take this course.

In these circumstances, Mr and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence will not be present at the Meeting at the Royal Albert Hall on October 18th.<sup>90</sup>



Christabel Pankhurst and Mr and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence outside Bow Street Police Court, 14 October 1908.

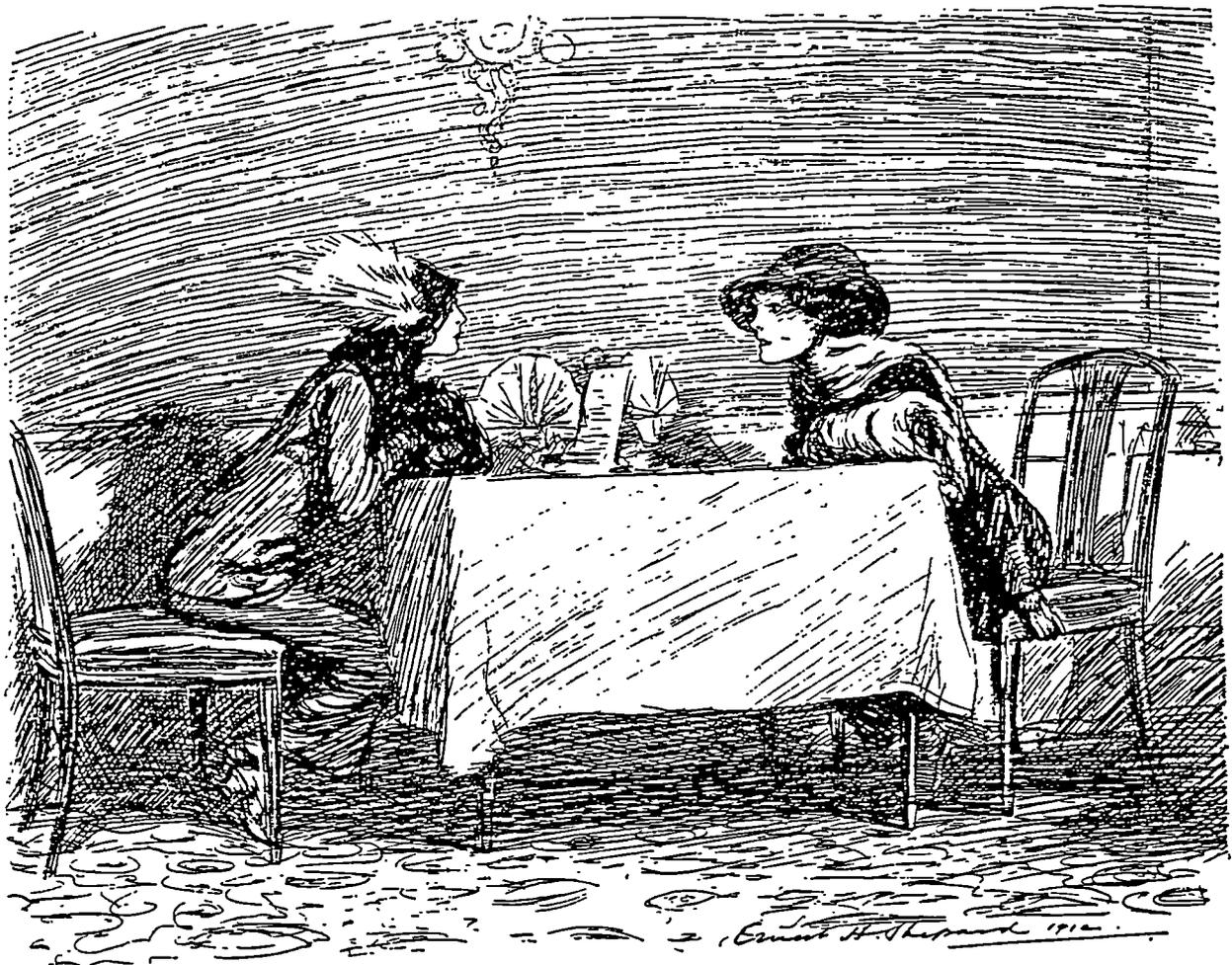
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<sup>90</sup> *Votes for Women*, 18 October, 1912.

Again, this statement contradicts the response of Emmeline to Mrs Pankhurst's letter but it must be remembered that its purpose was to minimise damage to the cause.

It would seem to be the case that neither Emmeline nor Fred really advocated an increase in militancy. Rather they were prepared to agree to it on the basis that they could convince the Pankhursts of a better alternative and perhaps, more importantly, they could remain in the 'family circle' that had been their life for over six years.

A *Punch* cartoon soon after the split asked, "are you a Peth or a Pank?" but this was to reduce the issue to its most basic for, as the next few years were to prove, the Pethick-Lawrences and the Pankhursts were to become divided on issues that extended far beyond militancy within the WSPU. In this sense, 1912 has to be considered in terms of the development of the Pethick-Lawrence's partnership and its changing focus. During their time with the WSPU, the Pethick-Lawrences broke new ground in the public sphere. As a couple, they managed to avoid a complete inversion of roles, for although officially outside the WSPU, Fred's individual contribution was of a sufficiently high profile for



THE SPLIT.

Budding Suffragette. "I SAY, PRISST" (*with intensity*), "ARE YOU A PETH OR A PANK?"

him to be recognized by many as an equal half of a partnership rather than just a supporter. This view was not, however, shared by the Pankhursts who never gave him the recognition he deserved. The status Emmeline had achieved publicly through her position as treasurer can be seen as an extension of her status within the marriage although their individual and joint public status was to alter as they pursued new interests.

Despite no longer being connected with the WSPU, the full consequences of the Pethick-Lawrence's suffrage involvement were still to come. In June 1913, the Government forced the sale of their personal possessions to meet the costs of the 1912 court case (many of the items were bought by friends and returned to them) and civil actions were brought against them by shops that had suffered broken windows. These actions were contested and both Emmeline and Fred conducted their own defence. Although they were not acquitted, the judge was sympathetic and was particularly impressed by Emmeline's address to the jury, describing it as 'a most eloquent speech.'<sup>91</sup> She used it as an opportunity to highlight the problem of infant mortality, citing New Zealand and Australia where women already had the vote as examples of how death rates had been more than halved since the women of these countries had become enfranchised. In an uncompromising tone she asserted:

...We are told by the doctors...that this tremendously heavy death rate of 100,000 little babies is due to preventable causes. I venture to put it to you that if there were a death rate of 100 pigs out of every thousand, there would immediately be a Commission - the thing would be discussed in

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<sup>91</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.288.

Parliament, drastic remedies would be taken and put in force. Why is that? Because pigs belong to men's sphere; men are concerned with the care and nurture of pigs, but children - babies - belong to women's sphere.<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, they were held liable for the full costs and payment was taken from Fred's estate. In her autobiography, Emmeline wrote of Fred, 'thus he underwent every variation of the sacrifice demanded for the freedom of women - imprisonment - hunger strike - forcible feeding - bankruptcy - loss of financial substance - expulsion from his club'.<sup>93</sup> She went on to make the point that 'deep as is the love between us he never took up the women's cause for my sake but as a result of our common outlook'.<sup>94</sup> Even if this were the case, it was Emmeline's involvement that drew him in and Fred himself claimed her first prison experience as a key turning point for him.

Their disassociation from the WSPU did not prevent the Pethick-Lawrences from continuing to be influential. From the *Votes for Women* paper which they continued to edit, the Votes for Women Fellowship was formed in early 1913. Emmeline explained in a letter to Elizabeth Robins that it was not intended to compete, writing that, 'at the present juncture it is more than ever important to interpret militancy to the average woman and man and this we feel is our little bit of service and is the *raison d'etre*'.<sup>95</sup> However, by May 1913 it

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<sup>92</sup> P-L 7/170 p.8, E. Pethick-Lawrence, speech to the Jury, June 1913.

<sup>93</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.290.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>95</sup> Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRHRC), University of Texas at Austin. Letter from E. Pethick-Lawrence to E. Robins, 14 April 1913.

was receiving around fifty applications for membership daily at a time when some WSPU members were finding it difficult to live with the autocratic leadership of the WSPU.<sup>96</sup>

At a Fellowship meeting in 1913, a special message from Olive Schreiner was delivered, illustrating the broad and universal character of the Votes for Women Fellowship:

This Fellowship unites men and women, and brings together all sections of the Movement, and its organ "Votes for Women" records the advance of this new conception of liberty for half the human race that is being made, not only here at home, but in every quarter of the world.<sup>97</sup>

The meeting was organised with three main objectives. First as a public declaration that:

the position of millions of women - especially that of women who are toilers and mothers of the working class - is so utterly desperate and deplorable as to be simply intolerable any longer. For this reason if there were no other, it is essential for women to win the vote whereby they may compel public attention to their bitter grievances and exact redress for their insupportable wrongs. Second because it is literally a matter of life and death to these millions of women and their children...[we] demand a Government Measure for Woman Suffrage this Session and to pledge ourselves, regardless of all considerations of Party, to oppose and obstruct and weaken by any and every means open to us, the Government power until it yields to this first and most urgent demand. Third to censure the present Ministers of the Cabinet individually and collectively for instigating and maintaining against women who are fighting for their enfranchisement - methods of coercion that have never yet been practised by any civilized or uncivilized country and which

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<sup>96</sup> HRHRC, Letter from E. Pethick-Lawrence to E. Robins, 5 May 1913.

<sup>97</sup> P-L 7/20 p.1 Special message from Olive Schreiner, 1913.

form an altogether new precedent of abominable human torture and cruelty.<sup>98</sup>

It was agreed that the three issues would be gathered up into two resolutions, the second of which would be moved by Mr Lansbury and supported by Mr Lawrence. In many respects the embryonic Votes for Women Fellowship formally acknowledged the right of men and women to hold membership of a number of organisations and perceived itself to be an umbrella organisation in the broadest sense. What is also significant is that there was a clear endorsement of militancy but it would appear that it was left for individuals to choose their own interpretation of the form it took. The day after Emily Wilding Davison had run out in front of the King's horse at the Epsom derby, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence personally voiced her feelings explaining, 'It shows the immense pitch of desperation to which women have been driven by the trickery and chicanery with which their question has been dealt with in the House of Commons'.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.3 THE POLITICS OF WAR.

In 1914, the Pethick-Lawrences became founder members of the United Suffragists, a mixed-sex organization committed to the suffrage cause.<sup>100</sup> With

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p.2.

<sup>99</sup> Interview reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, 5 June 1913.

<sup>100</sup> An organisation that has, until recently, been neglected by historians. See K. Cowman, 'A Party between Revolution and Peaceful Persuasion': a Fresh Look at the United Suffragists,' in M. Joannou and J. Purvis, (eds.), *The*

the outbreak of the First World War, however, their energies became focused in different directions. Emmeline was a founder member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and was one of only three British women to attend the Hague conference in 1915. True to form, Fred wasn't far behind and although there was an element of irony as Fred described looking down from the gallery and hearing the speeches, he felt compelled to express,

How like one another these women of different races are in all essentials; how much they have in common; how inconceivable it is that their menfolk should be engaged in mortal combat, and that they themselves should be expected to hate one another!<sup>101</sup>

Emmeline had long-held strong pacifist beliefs and spent the duration of the war campaigning for peace although she never lost sight of the franchise issue. As Stanley and Morley have argued, the survival of militant suffragism in another guise - that of active pacifism - although seemingly paradoxical was, in practice, largely synonymous.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, although the Pethick-Lawrences were no longer part of the WSPU at a national level, this did not preclude them from continuing to be involved at a local level. Nor did it prevent them from being

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*Women's Suffrage Movement New Feminist Perspectives*, (MUP, Manchester, 1998), pp.77-88; A.V. John, 'Controlling the Cause. Men and Women's Suffrage 1907-18', Conference Paper, Washington University, St Louis, Missouri, 1998.

<sup>101</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.113.

<sup>102</sup> L. Stanley with A. Morley, *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison*, p.95.

involved (along with many others) in a number of organisations simultaneously. Indeed, in 1915 Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was attending meetings of the Emily Davison Lodge, thus firmly locating herself 'in the heart of the militant camp, among the most radical of the WSPU women, who turn out to have a deep and long-standing commitment to socialism and pacifism as central elements of their feminism'.<sup>103</sup> The war had clearly added another dimension to the women's campaigns and by 1916, there is clear evidence that the radical wing of the WSPU, the WFL and a number of other organisations were not only interconnected but sharing premises.<sup>104</sup>

Brittain has asserted that the war did nothing to advance Fred's political rehabilitation.<sup>105</sup> He became treasurer of the Union of Democratic Control, an organization formed in response, primarily, to the Government's foreign policy, whose members included Ramsay MacDonald and H.N. Brailsford, the left-wing suffrage supporter and writer. In 1917, Fred stood as a 'peace by negotiation' candidate in the South Aberdeen by-election but polled only 333 votes. In 1918, when the age for conscription was raised to fifty, he became a conscientious objector.

The Pankhursts and the Pethick-Lawrences now displayed differing attitudes towards the war but the paradoxical issue of militancy, which was so integral to their relationship is also worth noting. The latter's militancy during

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p.182.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. p.182-3.

<sup>105</sup> Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence*, p.76.

this period helps to explain how fundamentally, their understandings of it were so different. For the Pankhursts it was tactical action confined to a specific cause, whilst for the Pethick-Lawrences, it was a type of protest that could be used in varying forms and could affect a whole range of issues. During the war, Fred joined the Society of Authors and both he and Emmeline corresponded with a range of writers including Laurence Housman and Miles Malleson. Vera Brittain has suggested that Fred was looking for 'reinforcement by a respectable professional organisation'<sup>106</sup> after his expulsion by the Reform Club and whilst there may be some truth in this, as his subsequent membership of P.E.N. (Poets, Essayists and Novelists) testifies, this also has to be considered in terms of the balance between work, home and association and how this impacted on socially defining Fred's masculinity. John Tosh has written of the uncertainty of these bases of masculine identification, concluding that men with limited social and economic power were as likely to lose masculine self-respect as they were income.<sup>107</sup> For Fred, however, these three arenas had been solid; he was wealthy, had several homes and membership of a 'decent' club. Being made bankrupt affected all these areas but it was his expulsion from the Reform Club that had the greatest effect on his masculinity. Society and very likely Fred Pethick-Lawrence himself would have viewed exclusion from such a site of masculine culture as shameful and belittling.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> J. Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?', *History Workshop Journal*, no.38, 1994, pp. 192-3.

The first general election in which women were allowed to vote took place just four weeks after the end of the war on 14 December 1918. In November 1918, a Bill to allow women to stand as Members of Parliament was rushed through and seventeen women stood in the General Election, including Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Christabel Pankhurst. Fred had been adopted as the prospective Labour candidate for Hastings in April 1918, but his decision to become a conscientious objector provoked sufficient disaffection from his supporters that in November 1918, he withdrew and was unsuccessful in securing another candidature. In his autobiography he wrote, 'in these circumstances, my wife felt herself free to accept the invitation of the local Labour Party in the Rusholme division of Manchester to contest that seat in the Labour interest'.<sup>108</sup> Fred appears to have seen himself as the one who should pursue a political career and to have perceived Emmeline's candidature as a secondary consideration. Indeed he pointed out, 'there was little prospect of success'.<sup>109</sup> In her autobiography, Emmeline gave her sole reason for standing as being 'that an opportunity was offered to explain publicly the reasons why I believed that the only chance of permanent peace in Europe lay in a just settlement after the war'.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, she only gave the election campaign one page of coverage in her autobiography but enough to make the point that:

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<sup>108</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.119.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.322.

It was a strange experience for one who had given eight years of life as I had, in the endeavour to win votes for women, to watch working-class mothers, with their babies and small children, eagerly going to the poll to record their votes against me. But not more strange after all than that soldiers should vote for a pacifist.<sup>111</sup>

Paradoxically, it was the soldiers' vote that saved her deposit, helping her to poll 2,985 votes and placing her above the Liberal candidate but her claim that 'working-class mothers' voted against her is perhaps exaggerated given the terms on which the franchise was extended to women in 1918 - there were still a substantial number of women without the vote.

Whether Emmeline would have been really interested in pursuing a Parliamentary political career is difficult to say, for although it would have been an excellent opportunity to act as a voice for women's rights, her disillusionment was strong enough to cause her to write to Elizabeth Robins in 1919, ' I have come to the end of Politics and all they stand for. I see that the only possibility of real reconstruction lies in finding some new principle of life and way of living.'<sup>112</sup> This view, did not, however, stop her from supporting Fred in his continuing attempt to get elected as a Labour MP and throughout the 1920's and 1930's she campaigned for many women's issues and actively supported women in the Labour movement in areas such as the provision of

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p.323.

<sup>112</sup> HRHRC. Letter from E. Pethick-Lawrence to E. Robins, 14 November 1919.

birth control information to working class women. She was also president of the WFL for several years.<sup>113</sup>

After unsuccessfully contesting the South Islington seat in 1922, Fred suffered a bout of depression. Perhaps unusually for a man, he admitted this in his autobiography explaining that in the three preceding years he had time for 'a great deal of leisure'. Additionally, he had reached the age of fifty and was feeling far from satisfied, desiring 'intensely to have something to do which I could regard as really worthwhile - some public work which would utilize to the full my powers and absorb all my energies'.<sup>114</sup> More importantly, he acknowledged that 'lack of earnings is only one part of the bitterness of the lot of the unemployed. terribly galling is the sense of being unwanted, and of becoming a mere onlooker in the great struggle of life'.<sup>115</sup> This sentiment being articulated at a time when unemployment was a reality for many.

However, in 1923, Fred prepared to rise to a new challenge when he stood as the prospective Labour candidate for Leicester West against the Liberal, Winston Churchill. Once, when Churchill described the WSPU as 'that copious fountain of mendacity', Fred Pethick-Lawrence had him portrayed in

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<sup>113</sup> For a detailed history of the WFL, see C. Eustance, 'Daring to be Free: the Evolution of Women's Political Identity in the Women's Freedom League, 1906-1930.' D. Phil, University of York, 1993.

<sup>114</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.124.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p.124-5.

*Votes for Women* as the 'dirty boy' in the well-known Pears soap picture.<sup>116</sup>

Commenting on this match twenty years later, Fred wrote:

If Churchill troubled to think at all about my personality, he no doubt was of opinion that a prominent Liberal like himself was more likely to appeal to the robust radicalism of Leicester than a man who had been sent to prison in the suffrage agitation, had been a conscientious objector in the war, and was advocating a levy on capital.<sup>117</sup>

With Emmeline's support which Fred openly acknowledged, they set about creating a suitable image for him that would appeal to the electorate. One of the most successful pieces of propaganda was a song (which according to Fred was written by Emmeline, although she attributes it to Harry Peach) entitled 'Vote, Vote, Vote for Pethick-Lawrence'.<sup>118</sup> Part of the lyrics read:

Once again the party cry, do not let it pass you by!  
Labour's out to win no matter what they say.  
We are sick of promise vain, must we have it all again?  
We want deeds not words to bring the better day.

#### *Chorus*

Vote, vote, vote for Pethick-Lawrence!  
Work, work, work and do your best!  
If all workers we enrol, he is sure to head the poll,  
And we'll have a Labour man for Leicester West.  
So we work to bring the day that will give to all fair play;  
We can do it here in Leicester if we will.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p.83.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p.128.

<sup>118</sup> See F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.128 and E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.336.

And you Leicester Women too, Pethick-Lawrence worked for you;  
Work for *him* and not for Instone or Churchill.<sup>119</sup>

This was sung at all meetings and undoubtedly helped to instill the name of Pethick-Lawrence in the minds of the voters. The lyrics are especially interesting, for they embodied both Fred and Emmeline's political beliefs, as well as serving as a reminder to the electorate, particularly the women, of Fred's involvement in the women's suffrage campaign. 'Deeds not Words', was the phrase originally coined by Christabel Pankhurst when militancy was at its height.

The result of the Leicester West election was that Fred, for the first time, became a Member of Parliament, beating Winston Churchill comfortably into second place. The only common ground they had shared was a mutual belief in Free Trade and after the results had been confirmed, Churchill congratulated Fred stating, 'Well, anyhow it is a victory for Free Trade'.<sup>120</sup>

Whilst supportive of her husband, Emmeline continued to work for the causes in which they both believed and in that sense, retained her own identity. Harrison has written of Emmeline that 'though childless, she had no career, and left Fred to manage the finances...she contented herself with running the household', and that she 'rarely commented on politics between the wars'.<sup>121</sup> In fact, she spoke all over the world on a vast range of political issues including

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<sup>119</sup> P-L 7/6 *West Leicester Elector*, 30 November 1923.

<sup>120</sup> F. W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.129.

<sup>121</sup> Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, p.253-4.

the inevitability of another war which she (along with many others) had predicted after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Moreover, the WFL annual conference reports show that in her nine years as president, she continued to be heavily involved in feminist campaigns, including the extension of the franchise to all women.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was also involved with the Six Point Group whose policy was to honour both men and women who had made a significant contribution to women's causes by making them vice-presidents. By 1940, Emmeline was their national president and when she resigned twelve years later, in 1952, she was bestowed with the title 'President of Honour' as a tribute to her support and service. In the same year, Henry Brailsford, 'known to everyone but especially endeared to us as one who stood with Lord Pethick-Lawrence in the early days of the militant suffrage campaign, one of the few pro-militant men to espouse the cause' was made a vice-president.<sup>122</sup>

Fred's public status altered as his political career developed and although his involvement in the militant campaign for women's suffrage was not totally forgotten, his immersion in parliamentary concerns soon took over. Writing to Evelyn Sharp in June 1929, Fred denied that he had sacrificed anything for the suffrage cause explaining, 'I had the most delightful and fascinating time in the suffrage movement, then I had the privilege of a friendship with some of the the most glorious women that have ever lived, and

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<sup>122</sup> B. Caine, *English Feminism 1780-1980*, (Oxford University Press, 1997), p.238-9.

it is given to few men...' Moreover, he believed that his involvement in the suffrage campaigns had not hindered his career at all pointing out, 'I think it was it and made it. Am pleased as Punch to have got post in Government.'<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, his commitment to feminist issues remained because it was, in essence, the basis of their marriage and his *maiden* speech was concerned with the question of widow's pensions.

Emmeline, on the other hand, once so prominent in the public sphere because of her suffrage activism, could never hope to sustain this role, whereas Fred could take advantage of conventional political openings. Now women had the vote the press were keen for other 'news'. Moreover, the Government's interest in those issues of concern to Emmeline was negligible.

Nevertheless, throughout their political partnership, they succeeded in pursuing their common goals and appear to have adapted well to the shift in their individual political activity, viewing the changing nature of their respective positions both in the public and private sphere as part of some greater plan. Nowhere is this made clearer than in the preface to Emmeline's autobiography in which she wrote, 'Life is one. Separation is a delusion'.<sup>124</sup>

Towards the end of his life, Fred wrote 'The Men's Share', a re-working of a pamphlet he had first written in 1912. In it he stated:

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<sup>123</sup> Evelyn Sharp Nevinson papers, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Lett. 170, Fred Pethick-Lawrence to Evelyn Sharp, 13 June 1929.

<sup>124</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, preface.

All down history women have supported men in their fight for liberty. They have toiled with them, suffered with them, died with them. There is nothing surprising therefore in the fact that in the militant struggle of British women for their own emancipation some men stood with them in the fight.<sup>125</sup>

The years between 1906 and 1912 seem to have been a time when the Pethick-Lawrences were closer than at any other time in their life. Moreover, the results of their efforts continued to manifest themselves in a variety of ways. As a political partnership, they saw their participation in the suffrage cause epitomizing everything they stood for at a public and a personal level. In effect, it was the culmination of their combined desire to break down the barriers that separated the public and private spheres.

Their prime strength lay in the way in which they complemented each other and in their ability to resolve areas of potential conflict without it appearing to affect their personal relationship or their public image. Additionally, they gave each other the freedom and space necessary for their partnership to be successful. Of course, reading about their lives as written by them, it is difficult to assess to what extent this an accurate reflection of their private relationship as they sought to *give the impression that there was little difference between the way they portrayed themselves publicly and the way in which they functioned as a couple privately.*

What is interesting, is the way in which Fred, after having been involved and thus connected with the women's suffrage movement was able to

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<sup>125</sup> P-L 5/133 p.1. F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *The Men's Share*, (c.1960).



Emmeline and Fred Pethick-Lawrence at the gate of their home, Fourways, in December 1949.

subsequently enter into a traditionally male domain, that of parliamentary politics. Nevertheless as a politician, Fred continued his commitment to feminism throughout his parliamentary career. In 1945, he was rewarded for his political work and given a peerage, as well as being appointed Secretary of State for India and Burma. This appointment indicated the serious intention of the Attlee government to grant independence to India - a cause to which Fred Pethick-Lawrence was deeply committed.<sup>126</sup>

Sadly, Emmeline's political career after the women's suffrage campaign has gone largely unrecognised other than in the context of being Fred Pethick-Lawrence, the MP's wife, or as part of a group of older generation feminists who were seeking official recognition of the historical role of feminism. Her involvement with the Suffragette Fellowship which was established to 'perpetuate the memory of the pioneers...connected with the women's emancipation and especially with the militant suffrage campaign',<sup>127</sup> rather belies her other activities at this time. Yet it could be argued that in the inter-war period her role was of equal importance though because she was not involved in 'parliamentary politics', she effectively became redundant. As Hilda Kean has fundamentally observed, the WFL feminists of the inter-war period were attempting to validate their current political activity as much as anything

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<sup>126</sup> Fred Pethick-Lawrence had travelled to India at the end of the nineteenth century and had also met Gandhi. When independence was granted in 1948, he served as Chairman of the East and West Friendship Council.

<sup>127</sup> H. Kean, 'Searching for the Past in Present Defeat: the Construction of Historical and Political Identity in British Feminism in the 1920s and 1930s', *Women's History Review*, Volume 3, Number 1, 1994 p.61.

else and in 1935, a campaign to hang portraits of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Charlotte Despard alongside Emmeline Pankhurst's in the National Portrait Gallery was launched.<sup>128</sup> Their respective careers of the Pethick-Lawrences are represented in the highly gendered autobiographies they wrote; in Fred's, suffrage is portrayed as a short period in his life, covering four slim chapters, whilst in Emmeline's it is presented as the main focus of her life.

The Pethick-Lawrences have to be seen as unique in terms of their contribution to women's suffrage and especially during their involvement with the WSPU. Without them, it is difficult to imagine how the organisation would have grown in the way it did, such was the importance of their input at so many levels. Nevertheless, they must also be viewed in terms of their broader commitments. Addressing the annual conference of the WFL on 13 April 1929, the president, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, said:

Today we rejoice in the fact that a complete Women's Enfranchisement Act has been placed on the Statute Book, and we meet on the eve of the General Election, when, for the first time, young women will be free to exercise their vote.<sup>129</sup>

Whilst women getting the vote was, in part, a realisation of all that the Pethick-Lawrences had fought for, it was for Emmeline, only a beginning. There were still many other issues pertinent to women to be addressed and her belief 'that

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p.58.

<sup>129</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, Address to the Women's Freedom League, Report of the twenty-second Annual Conference, 13 April 1929.

one in the House and one out of it make the best team'<sup>130</sup> whilst certainly true in their case, remains flawed by the gendered location of those roles and the distance of the house from the House.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence died on 11 March 1954. Her funeral was attended by representatives from many of the organisations she had been involved with and as Fred explained to them,

All of you have come here because you knew and admired what she **did** in her public life. But many of you have come also because you were privileged to love her for what she was and to be loved by her in return...I shall not attempt to separate the two because in everything she did and was she was essentially human.<sup>131</sup>

Three years after Emmeline's death, Fred Pethick-Lawrence married Helen Craggs, the widow of Duncan McCombie. She had known the Pethick-Lawrences during the years of militancy and continued to work for the WSPU carrying out arson attacks after the Pethick-Lawrences were expelled. Like Emmeline, she had been imprisoned and it is interesting that Fred chose to marry someone who had been an integral part of the suffrage movement. Moreover, the marriage was endorsed by other survivors of that epoch, not least Sylvia and Christabel Pankhurst. Fred Pethick-Lawrence died on 10 September 1961 and although this second marriage was a brief one, it serves in an ironic way to demonstrate the commitment of the Pethick-Lawrences to suffrage in both life and death and one can't help feeling that Emmeline Pethick-

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<sup>130</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, *My Part*, p.337.

<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence-A Portrait*, p.197.

Lawrence would have approved. Whether they would have approved of Sam Robinson, who with his wife, Annot Robinson, form the basis of the next chapter is another matter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### AN 'UNSENTIMENTAL JOURNEY': THE POLITICAL TRAVELS OF ANNOT AND SAM ROBINSON.

In November 1955, Helen Wilson, the youngest daughter of Annot and Sam Robinson was in correspondence with Hannah Mitchell, a former suffragette and working-class socialist who had known the Robinsons.<sup>1</sup> At this time, Helen Wilson was attempting to find out more about her mother who had died when she was only fourteen and subsequently became one of the interviewees for Jill Liddington's biography of Selina Cooper (1984).

Helen Wilson's enquiries were, in effect, the first step towards Annot Robinson's inclusion in the history of the suffrage movement and the discovery of her papers has led to her mention in a number of accounts of suffrage and other political organisations.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, she has been the subject of an unpublished MA thesis which provides a useful insight into her life.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, Sam Robinson, Annot's husband, has figured very little in accounts of the labour movement and is now the more obscure character of the partnership.

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<sup>1</sup> Annot Robinson papers, Manchester Central Library, (hereafter known as AR papers, followed by the reference), Misc/718/39 & 40. Letters from Hannah Mitchell to Helen Wilson arranging to meet her. 15 November 1955 and n.d.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, C. Collette, *For Labour and For Women; The Women's Labour League, 1906-1918*, (Manchester University Press, 1989) p.84; Graves, *Labour Women; Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918-1939*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*; K.A.Rigby, 'Annot Robinson: A Forgotten Manchester Suffragette' in *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol.1. No.1 1987.

<sup>3</sup> K.A.Rigby, 'Annot Robinson: Socialist, Suffragist, Peaceworker, A Biographical Study'. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, May 1986.

Nevertheless, the focus of this chapter is the political partnership of Annot and Sam Robinson which was based on a mutual socialist ideology. An exploration of the way in which the partnership functioned and developed will demonstrate the ways in which women's suffrage affected the gendered nature of politics in the early twentieth century as well as highlighting the problems of combining a political career with a family. In this respect, Sam and Annot Robinson can be identified as more conventional than other political partnerships - it was only Annot who went to prison for her militancy unlike the Pethick-Lawrences and Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval. Moreover, consideration needs to be given to the extent of Sam Robinson's support for women's suffrage. Whilst it is evident that he supported suffrage in principle, how this was squared with the couple's own family dynamics requires discussion. The dichotomy between the 'personal and the political' was to prove problematic and is demonstrated in the writings of Annot Robinson. Interestingly, their two children, Cathie and Helen, came down firmly in favour of a different parent, each having very different perceptions of their parent's relationship. Examining the partnership of the Robinsons will allow for an analysis of regional and local politics and how this worked in conjunction with an ever-growing national movement as well as demonstrating how one woman could journey through the spectrum of suffrage societies.

Whilst it is clear that women's suffrage was an integral part of the Robinsons' political ideology, it was only ever part of the much broader political agenda they endorsed. Many other issues including those relating to employment and welfare were at the root of their convictions and Annot Robinson, in particular,

chose to emphasise the role of women in these areas. The political partnership of Annot and Sam Robinson was short-lived, spanning only six years if dated from their first meeting in 1906 and even less taking their marriage in 1908 as a starting point. The reasons for the breakdown of their political partnership are, inevitably, bound up in the failure of their personal relationship and within this chapter I shall be considering the impact of one upon the other as situations and circumstances altered. However, this is not an attempt to find who was at fault. Rather, the focus of this chapter is to consider those areas that affected the development of a political partnership in Manchester at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Both Annot and Sam Robinson remained loyal to the ILP although Annot also affiliated herself with a number of other organisations. The reasons for this are complex, being bound up in an evolving political identity as well as financial necessity.

Annot Erskine Wilkie (1874-1925) was born in Montrose, Scotland. Her father John Wilkie, was a laird's son who invested and subsequently lost the family fortune and her mother was a teacher. Annot's early influences were dominated by the women in her family who all had careers as teachers whilst her father appears to have been 'a dreamer' who, according to Helen Wilson, stayed at home reading books. In fact the name Annot is reputed to have come from *The Pirate*, a lesser known work of Walter Scott's.<sup>4</sup> After leaving the Montrose Academy at sixteen, Annot Wilkie qualified as a teacher and in 1901, she graduated from St Andrews University where she had studied as an external student. Like a growing number of

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<sup>4</sup> Rigby, 'Annot Robinson', p.3.

women, Annot Wilkie had received an excellent education. During this period she had also been teaching, first in Lochgelly and then in Dundee where she lived with her sister Peggy who also taught. It was whilst teaching and seeing the conditions in which other people lived that she underwent her politicisation, heavily influenced by Agnes Husband, the Scottish socialist and suffragist.<sup>5</sup>

By 1905, Annot Wilkie was an organiser for the WSPU and a member of the ILP. She continued teaching and spent the holidays campaigning. In the summer of 1906, she met Sam Robinson (1869-1937) who, according to Helen Wilson, Annot must have found 'unbelievable'.<sup>6</sup> It was all too often the experience of women involved in labour politics (and indeed politics generally) that men only paid lip service to those issues of particular concern to women and when it came to a vote, many women found they had few allies from their male comrades. Sam Robinson, however, was a definite exception. He had tirelessly campaigned on behalf of women and worked closely with the Pankhursts. It is therefore understandable that Annot Wilkie would have been impressed by his commitment to something she herself felt passionately about. What does need to be considered is why it was that Sam Robinson chose to support women's suffrage in the way he did. After all, there were plenty of other issues to keep the Manchester Central ILP propaganda secretary busy. Perhaps the answer lies in part in an exploration of his own

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<sup>5</sup> Agnes Husband was originally a member of the NUWSS but in 1906 she joined the WSPU and from 1909 she was president of the Dundee branch of the WFL. See Leneman, *A Guid Cause*, p.261. Dundee also had a vibrant tradition of activism amongst its female jute workers.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Helen Wilson, 8 February 1986, quoted in Rigby, 'Annot Robinson' p.5.

upbringing. Sam Robinson's father had been a Salford mill worker and he lived with his step mother and 'Aunt Ethel' who was actually his (real) sister.<sup>7</sup>

Sam Robinson was persecuted by a terrible stammer which impacted on his life at both a political and personal level. He attributed his stammer to the terrible childhood experiences he had been subjected to; lying in bed waiting for his drunken father to arrive home and beat his mother. It is not known whether this was his real mother or his step mother. Helen Wilson ascribes his commitment to women's causes to this experience adding that there was no other reason why a 'purely working class man' would 'expose' himself in that way.<sup>8</sup> Hannah Mitchell considered his support for women's suffrage easier for him than it might have been for others as 'he never valued public opinion, nor did he particularly care what his Socialist colleagues thought about him'.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps this apparent aloofness was his way of dealing with his inadequacies as a speaker in an organisation where rhetoric was all. It is worth noting that although there was support for women's suffrage at grass roots level within the ILP at this time, the situation was very different nationally - the Labour Party did not formally endorse women's suffrage until 1912.

Kate Rigby's rather optimistic assertion that 'the ILP was of course renowned for its equal treatment of men and women' nevertheless acknowledges

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<sup>7</sup> Sam Robinson's sister had given birth to an illegitimate child, who according to Helen Wilson, was 'mentally defective'. Quoted in *ibid*, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah Mitchell papers, Manchester Central Library, (hereafter referred to as HM papers, followed by the reference), M220/4/18 Obituary of Sam Robinson by Hannah Mitchell, February 1937.

that Sam Robinson was remarkable even if operating within that framework.<sup>10</sup> Certainly, Annot Wilkie thought him sufficiently remarkable to leave Scotland and marry him.

Although lacking a formal education and suffering from a speech problem, this did not prevent Sam Robinson from taking an active role in local politics. He had been a member of the ILP since its inception, first of the Accrington branch, and from 1902, Manchester Central.<sup>11</sup> In fact he was present at an ILP meeting on 19 August 1902 when the Manchester Central branch of the ILP was formed and was an active member regularly attending meetings and acting as their propaganda secretary.<sup>12</sup> Sam Robinson was highly thought of by the ILP and had received thanks from the National Administrative Council (NAC) 'for services rendered to the party under difficulties'.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, he was a member of the Labour Church and had been involved with the Manchester Transvaal Committee, an organisation which opposed the Boer War.

Sam Robinson's main duties involved organising lectures and meetings at Tib Street, Manchester and he subsequently reported that they had been instrumental in attracting attention to the socialist position whilst appealing for more

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<sup>10</sup> Rigby, 'Annot Robinson' p.6. For an alternative discussion of the ILP and its treatment of men and women, see Ugolini, 'Independent Labour Party Men and Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1893-1914'.

<sup>11</sup> BLPES. Francis Johnson collection, ILP application form for Propagandist position, 8 March 1907.

<sup>12</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 19 Aug, 2 September, 7 October 1902.

<sup>13</sup> BLPES, Francis Johnson collection, ILP application form.

support from branch members.<sup>14</sup> Hannah Mitchell recalled fond memories of the Tib Street meetings, writing of Sam Robinson's 'help and valiant support' in their new crusade.<sup>15</sup> Part of the attraction of these meetings was the way in which women were received. Elsie Plant, an ILP member, remembered, 'a man called Sam Robinson used to be in charge of them and of course he was always anxious to get hold of a woman speaker because you always got a crowd pretty quick'.<sup>16</sup>

When Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst were arrested in October 1905, the Manchester Central ILP passed a resolution of support for them.<sup>17</sup> Teresa Billington was instrumental in organising a campaign to attract publicity and when Christabel was released from Strangeways a week later, she was met by a crowd of about two hundred including Keir Hardie, Sam Robinson, Hannah Mitchell, and a large contingent of the Manchester ILP.<sup>18</sup>

It was through his involvement with the ILP that Sam Robinson came into contact with the Pankhursts and Mrs Pankhurst in particular viewed him as a useful ally. To what extent the Pankhursts were a direct influence on Sam Robinson is open to question. However, his unfailing support of women's suffrage earned him a

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<sup>14</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 29 November 1904.

<sup>15</sup> G. Mitchell (ed.), *The Hard Way Up, The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell*, (Virago, London, 1968), p. 128.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Elsie Plant, June 1976, quoted in Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, p.128.

<sup>17</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 18 October 1905. See also *Labour Leader*, 20 October, 1905.

<sup>18</sup> Liddington and Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us*, p.190; Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, p.131.

certain regard. With the Pankhursts attending meetings at the Manchester Central branch, women's suffrage was introduced onto the agenda whenever possible. At a meeting on 29 December 1903, it was recorded in the minutes that:

Dissatisfaction with the fiscal policy of the ILP...was expressed by the Secretary. He accordingly moved the following as an amendment:...a Government grant be awarded to many acturers [sic] and other employers of labour in aid of wages paid to their workmen, such grant to be made conditionally on the payment by the said employer of labour of a minimum wage...

Mrs Pankhurst's response was swift - she moved a resolution:

Believing that taxation without representation is tyranny, and recognizing that working women are the greatest sufferers from unjust taxation, we demand that before any change is made in our Fiscal Policy, the Representation of the People Act shall be amended so that the words importing the masculine gender shall include women.<sup>19</sup>

The motion was carried no doubt with the full support of Sam Robinson. In 1905 when discussions were taking place about resolutions to be included in the agenda for the Easter conference, Teresa Billington moved,

That this conference endorses the Women's Enfranchisement Bill as an indispensable preliminary to adult suffrage and further declares that no measure of electoral reform will be satisfactory which does not apply to women equally with men.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 29 December 1903.

<sup>20</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 24 January 1905.

Sam Robinson seconded the motion and is recorded in ILP branch minutes as supporting many measures connected with women's suffrage. He fully endorsed Mrs Pankhurst's suggestion that a women's page dealing with the women's movement would help in improving the circulation of the *Labour Leader*<sup>21</sup> as well as supporting her motion that Teresa Billington, as a local ILP organiser, should co-operate with the WSPU in municipal elections.<sup>22</sup> The support for women's suffrage offered by the Manchester Central branch at this time reflects the difference in attitudes between local branches of the ILP and the national party.

Sam Robinson articulated his position on the suffrage question through the letters page of the *Labour Leader* suggesting to branch secretaries and speakers 'that special reference to the case for the immediate enfranchisement of women be now made at all public meetings convened by the branches'. He further pointed out that

I am convinced that 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...I do urge all concerned to give the same amount of work for women as was given for the Unemployment Bill. We cannot progress as quickly as we ought to progress so long as the women are disenfranchised.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The 'Women's Outlook' column, written by 'Iona', (Katharine Bruce Glasier) first appeared in February 1906.

<sup>22</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 3 October 1905.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 11 August 1905.

Once the Pankhursts had relocated themselves in London, Sam Robinson's support for women's suffrage took on a new significance. With the Pankhursts gone, Hannah Mitchell and Alice Milne took charge in Manchester. Hannah Mitchell recalled that '...Sam Robinson, who as secretary of the Manchester ILP had many contacts, would often come with us, and find some sympathetic male to swell the platform and help to keep order.'<sup>24</sup> During 1907, Sam Robinson and Mrs Pankhurst corresponded, revealing the close nature of the socialist and suffrage movement at this time but also the growing divergence in certain quarters. At a specially summoned meeting of the Manchester Central branch of the ILP on 26 February 1907 to discuss the conference agenda Sam Robinson moved:

that it not having being proved that the members of the WS & PU, [sic] who are members of the ILP, and who took part in the recent bye-elections have broken any rule or regulation previously laid down by the party for the guidance fits members, and since it has not been shown that the neutral policy of these members has injured the chances of any ILP candidate, this conference is of opinion that the members concerned have done nothing derogatory to the best interests of the movement but have on the other hand considerably hastened the time when the two sexes will be placed on an absolutely equal political plane.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*, p.152. See also HM papers, M220/1/2/2, letter from E. Pankhurst to Sam Robinson informing him that Miss Milne would tell him about Manchester arrangements, 28 February 1907.

<sup>25</sup> Manchester Central Manchester Central ILP Minutes 26 February 1907.

It was a close result with the motion only being passed by five votes to four, thus revealing the depth of controversy over women's suffrage in the ILP at this time and also suggesting the extent of Sam's support.

This was the climax of an on-going debate which had first emerged in a letter from the Manchester and Salford ILP to the Manchester Central branch in the summer of 1906. It had been noted that Miss Billington and Miss Pankhurst 'acted in a manner hostile to the cause of Independent Labour' and further that 'the two members in question cannot consistently with the interests of socialism remain members of the ILP and requests the branches of the Party of which they are members to demand their immediate resignation'.<sup>26</sup> At the same meeting, the *Labour Leader* also came under fire with a resolution unanimously accepted that the official organ of the ILP needed to be improved and made more worthy of the party.<sup>27</sup> No doubt the Manchester and Salford branch were unimpressed by a resolution passed by Manchester Central stating 'that the secretary write to the NAC asking they suggest to branches to organise or help others to organise demonstrations on behalf of women's suffrage'.<sup>28</sup> It is worth giving further consideration to the independence of local branches at this time for whilst there was optimism at the growth of a national movement, at grass roots level branches were not prepared to compromise their collective principles in pursuit of this aim. This is evident in the dissension caused by a variety of issues and is reflected in Naomi Reid's comment that the

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<sup>26</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes 28 Aug 1906.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 12 June 1906.

'cohesive social life of the local party was not always the external symbol of ideological unity'.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the strength of the ILP in Manchester was sufficient for it to survive these turbulent years and this was, at least in part, due to the role it played as a social organisation; there were regular outings and gifts presented to members on occasions such as marriage.

Sam Robinson was also corresponding with the press at this time, writing to the *Manchester Evening News* about women voters. As propaganda secretary it was imperative that the ILP should be seen in the best light possible and he was caustic in replying to the suggestion made by F.H. Rose that it was usual for ILP municipal election helpers to 'cross off the whole of the women voters and regard them as surely hostile'.<sup>30</sup> Referring to the work undertaken by Teresa Billington and Mrs Pankhurst in the 1905 Manchester and Salford municipal elections, he pointed out that there had been a high percentage of women voters recorded and this was due to the fact that issues particularly germane to women were discussed, concluding that when progressive candidates took the time to explain to women what they were prepared to do for them and their children, 'we will hear less of the silly old fable that women only vote Tory and reactionary [sic]'.<sup>31</sup>

Writing to Sam Robinson in February 1907, Emmeline Pankhurst discussed the situation regarding women's suffrage and the ILP, requesting that she be sent as

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<sup>29</sup> N. Reid, 'Manchester & Salford ILP: A More Controversial Aspect' quoted in K.A.Rigby, 'Annot Robinson', p.56.

<sup>30</sup> HM papers, M220/4/3 Letter to the *Manchester Evening News* from Sam Robinson, 8 March 1907.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

a delegate from Manchester Central to the annual conference in order to make the defence of the women. She told him, 'if after we are heard the Party decide that we must go out then we can part good friends until we have got the vote'.<sup>32</sup> Such was Sam Robinson's commitment to the women's cause that he was advocating sending two women delegates to the conference. Mrs Pankhurst thought this unwise, stating 'in any case neither C nor T.B. would I believe go to the conference. I will if sent speak for all'. It is also interesting to note that she thought herself 'more disposed to make allowances than the younger women', adding 'The going back on Hardie as to resolutions at 10 March meeting is very bad. Alas for their lack of political wisdom! What an opportunity they are throwing away'. Sam Robinson, in his position as propaganda secretary, was asked to get as many personal letters written to MPs by voters as possible with Mrs Pankhurst exhorting, 'I know you can do this'.<sup>33</sup> In the event, it was Sam Robinson and Mrs Pankhurst who attended the ILP Annual Conference at Derby in 1907 with the franchise question high on the agenda. Manchester Central ILP minutes record that they were elected as delegates to the conference with a resolution to be included on the conference agenda that, 'the election policy of certain members of the Party in the contest at Cockermouth and Huddersfield is detrimental to the Party and that loyalty to the constitution and policy of the Party is an essential condition of membership'.<sup>34</sup> The resolution was

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<sup>32</sup> HM papers, M220/1/2/2 Letter from E. Pankhurst to Sam Robinson, 28 February 1907.

<sup>33</sup> HM papers, M220/1/2/3 Letter from E. Pankhurst to Sam Robinson, 2 March 1907.

<sup>34</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 12 March, 1907.

carried by thirteen votes to seven, effectively splitting the membership in half and precipitating fundamental changes in local ILP politics which came to a head at the 1907 Annual Conference.

By this time, Sam Robinson and Annot Wilkie were enjoying a courtship of sorts and it was perhaps with this in mind that Sam Robinson applied for a propagandist position stating that he was prepared to accept a job in any part of the country. More likely though it was disillusionment with the situation in Manchester. In March 1907, several members of the Manchester Central ILP broke away to form a new branch declaring their support for adult rather than women's suffrage. This problem was compounded by the fact that the breakaway faction chose to have its meetings at the same time and place as the others causing H.C. Anderson to write to the NAC and air the grievances of the original branch.<sup>35</sup> Although Sam Robinson was re-elected as propaganda secretary, he clearly felt it was time to move on.

Sam Robinson's application for a propagandist position is significant in other ways. It gives an insight into his frankness regarding his stammer. When asked to state his experience in speaking he wrote, 'Can't speak at public meetings - otherwise: well - I can'.<sup>36</sup> It also reveals his occupation and salary at this time. He was working in the Treasury department of Manchester corporation as a clerk earning a weekly salary of thirty shillings and was prepared at the end of six months to get labouring work if he couldn't resume his old position.

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<sup>35</sup> M42/1/4 Memo from the Central Branch to the NAC of the ILP, 22 June 1907.

<sup>36</sup> BLPES Francis Johnson correspondence, ILP application form, 8 March 1907.

The increasing divide between the WSPU and the ILP was expressed in another letter written from Jarrow where Pete Curran was the prospective candidate. Emmeline Pankhurst was dismayed that the Women's Suffrage Society had given its support to Pete Curran 'who from being an 'Adultist' as you know has become an equality man to get their support. He does not however pledge his Party!'. She unequivocally stated, 'Well that sort of thing will not last. They will all ere long come to our position and then the parties will have to treat us as serious politicians. They want us and must learn our price is a vote and nothing less will buy us'.<sup>37</sup> Confident that Sam Robinson was on her side, she asked him to give her a letter he had already shown her in Manchester so she could use it 'discreetly'. She was unwilling to reveal the details but wanted to alert the committee to *disloyalty in the ranks*. Her final comment 'I am very tired with fighting the enemy. That makes it harder to face foes in one's own household'<sup>38</sup> is revealing and was made less than two months before the resignation of the Pankhursts from the ILP. Sam's loyalty was unwavering and he duly sent her the letter which she explained she had to use, adding that it had been a sad business which had caused her considerable pain.<sup>39</sup>

The work of the Pankhursts and other members of the WSPU was acknowledged by ILP women who presented a manifesto to the WSPU containing the following statement:

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<sup>37</sup> HM papers, M220/1/2/4 Letter from E. Pankhurst to Sam Robinson, 22 June 1907.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> HM papers, M220/1/2/5 Letter from E. Pankhurst to Sam Robinson, 15 August 1907.

We, the Undersigned Women of the Independent Labour Party, desire to place on record our warm appreciation and high admiration of the work done for woman suffrage by the women of the Social and Political Union. In particular do we admire and congratulate the brave women who have had the courage to suffer in prison for their convictions, and we assert, with them, our profound belief that *no real and lasting progress will ever be made apart from the complete enfranchisement of women.*<sup>40</sup>

The manifesto was signed by over 500 women from branches all over England including Julia Scurr, Selina Cooper and Women's Labour League members, demonstrating the level of support that existed for the Pankhursts at this time as well as serving as a reminder to ILP men that women's suffrage was an integral part of ILP politics. As Teresa Billington-Greig noted, ILP members, especially in Manchester, continued to perceive the WSPU as a branch of the Labour movement.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, Sam Robinson's contribution to women's suffrage did not go unacknowledged by the WSPU with Manchester Central being singled out for services rendered to the women's cause.<sup>42</sup>

Sam Robinson was sufficiently close to Mrs Pankhurst to write and tell her about his forthcoming marriage. Her response was interesting as she replied 'somehow or other we had come to regard you as not a marrying man'.<sup>43</sup> Whether

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<sup>40</sup> ILP Manifesto to the Women's Social and Political Union, n.d. circa 1907.

<sup>41</sup> C. McPhee and A. Fitzgerald (eds.), *The Non-Violent Militant, Selected Writings of Teresa Billington-Greig*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1987).

<sup>42</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 14 September 1907. See also *Labour Leader* 24 August 1906.

this was because of his commitment to socialism and women's suffrage, his age or because they thought him not 'suitable' as a husband is open to debate but it does indicate an attitude that existed towards male supporters. What criteria did a man have to meet in order to be considered an acceptable supporter of women's suffrage? Fortunately, Mrs Pankhurst did approve of his choice of wife, writing of Annot Wilkie:

There is no woman I know for whose character and sterling qualities I have a higher regard. There is no doubt that Miss Wilkie will do her part to make your venture one of the few happy marriages. If you on your part contribute the same steadfastness and enthusiasm that you have given to women collectively ever since the WSPU was born there can be no possibility of failure.<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately, this optimistic statement was to prove that even people sharing the same political ideals could not always avoid personal conflicts. Although other partnerships such as the Pethick Lawrences presented a picture of political and personal harmony, this was not to be the case for Annot and Sam Robinson.

Mrs Pankhurst approved of the simple ceremony that Sam Robinson and Annot Wilkie were planning on and was hoping to attend, adding that she was also very interested in Miss Wilkie's recent exploits.<sup>45</sup> Annot was heavily involved in campaigning for the WSPU in Scotland prior to her marriage and would have come

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<sup>43</sup> HM papers, M220/1/2/5 Letter from E. Pankhurst to S. Robinson, 15 August 1907.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, M220/1/2/6 Letter from E. Pankhurst to Sam Robinson, 5 December 1908.

into contact with Teresa Billington-Greig who had campaigned for the WSPU in East Fife.

### 5.1 THE HONEYMOON PERIOD.

Annot Wilkie first appears among the records of the Manchester Central ILP in June 1907, although it was not until the winter of that year that she finally moved to Manchester permanently.<sup>46</sup> The minutes record that it was a 'difficult week' and one of the main items on the agenda was the drafting of a circular to those whose names were listed as branch members in order to establish whether they would be continuing.<sup>47</sup> This situation had clearly arisen as a result of the 'split' in March of that year. In August it was reported in the *Labour Leader* that 'At Tib Street...Miss Annot E. Wilkie L.L.A. (Dundee), very ably voiced the claims of her sex....[she] deputised for James Howard, of the NAC, at Radcliffe, and gave the first Votes for Women lecture in that town before a large audience'.<sup>48</sup>

On 19 December, there was a presentation to Comrade Sam Robinson on the occasion of his forthcoming marriage. Annot Wilkie was not present because of ill-health and Comrade Benson in his speech acknowledged the work Sam Robinson had done at the expense of his health. As a token of their esteem, the branch gave Sam a purse, expressing the wish 'that the union now about to be made would be

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<sup>46</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, Manchester Central Branch, 18 June 1907.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> *Labour Leader* 9 August 1907.

attended with the happiest results<sup>49</sup> thus demonstrating how personal lives intertwined with political activities. Additionally, and perhaps more significantly, Sam Robinson was also presented with a copy of E. F. Fay's *Unsentimental Journeys*, 'to be conveyed to Miss Wilkie from the branch'.<sup>50</sup> Certainly, the political and personal journeys of both Sam and Annot Robinson during the next few years were to prove problematic. Nevertheless, after their wedding in January 1908, the Robinsons were finally welcomed at the ILP branch meeting as husband and wife on 4 February.

At this point, it is worth considering what their individual and mutual expectations were. Neither of them could be classed as particularly successful in political terms; Sam Robinson had only ever been politically active at branch level and his stammer would always prohibit him from entering the realms of mainstream politics. Annot Wilkie, although a powerful and articulate speaker, had conducted nearly all her political work in Scotland and had not yet the experience to make the transition to the English national arena. Instead, she had to familiarise herself with the characteristics of Manchester politics. However, marriage carries its own dynamics which provided them, as a couple, with their own dynamics and it is through their marriage that an insight can be provided into what they anticipated and expected from relationships.

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<sup>49</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 19 December 1907.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

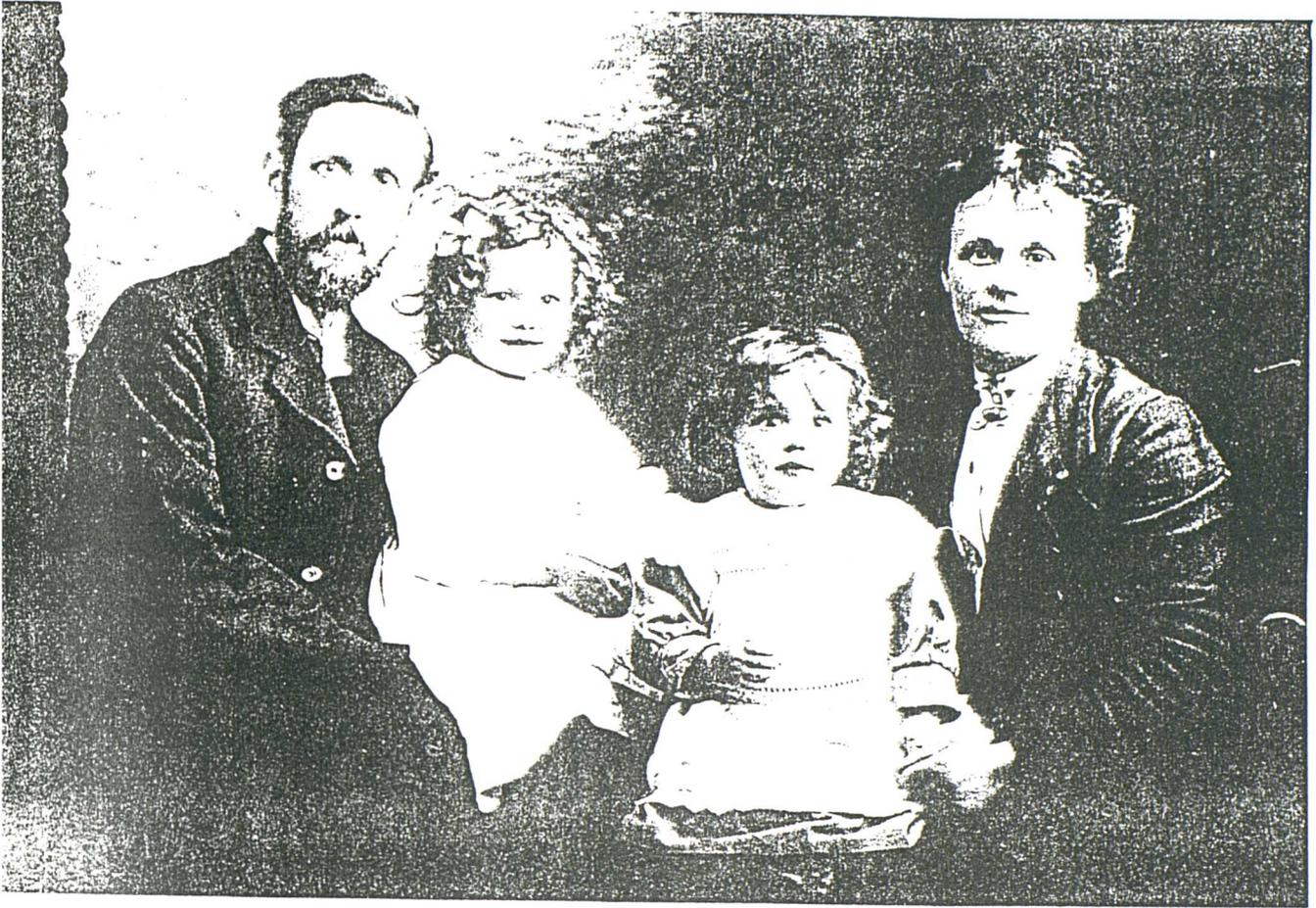


LEAP-YEAR;  
OR, THE IRREPRESSIBLE SKI.



### THE MILITANT SEX.

MR. HALDANE (*thinking Territorially*). "AH! IF ONLY I COULD GET THE MEN TO COME FORWARD LIKE THAT!"



Sam and Annot Robinson with their children, Cathie and Helen.

Annot Robinson's arrival in Manchester was clearly welcomed, in particular by the Pankhursts. Adela sent a letter stating, 'it will be splendid to have you in Manchester and I am sure, now you are come, the work will never look back there'. She also offered congratulations on their marriage, revealing 'I knew long ago of cause [sic] of your intended marriage and I sent you and Mr Robinson my good wishes mentally then'.<sup>51</sup>

Annot and Sam Robinson moved into council accommodation, living in the Ancoats district of Manchester. However, it was less than a week after attending the branch meeting for the first time as husband and wife, that they were separated. Annot Robinson was one of the key organisers of a planned 'raid' and it was to be almost two months before Sam saw her again.

On the evening of 10 February, Annot wrote to Sam telling him she was staying with Mrs Drummond and that the following day she was going to be in charge of twenty women in a furniture van at the Stranger's Entrance of the Houses of Parliament. Although she thought she was 'betraying the plans' she explained that 'we are to rush in and I am to speak right on until I am arrested'. However, she conceded 'I have ma doots as to the carrying of it out'.<sup>52</sup> It is clear from the letter that she fully expected to be arrested and to receive a prison sentence; she and Mrs Rigby had already discussed the possibility of arranging to be in adjacent cells so they could talk and she told Sam, 'Dear, I shall think of you often-just as I am doing

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<sup>51</sup> AR papers. Misc/718 2 Letter to Annot Robinson from Adela Pankhurst, 12 January 1908.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, Misc/718 5 Letter to Sam Robinson from Annot, 10 February 1908.

now. I shall know if you are neglecting your food' concluding, 'Don't worry. No danger'.<sup>53</sup>

The following day Annot was charged with 'using insulting behaviour and resisting Police at Old Palace Yard'.<sup>54</sup> Reports of the 'raid' in the press focused on the exciting 'battle' between the women and the police:

"Some of us got chipped a bit," said one of the men showing some scratches on his hands. "We treated them as gently as we could," said another tall strapping policeman. "But possibly some of them got a little bruised. Women are such tender, fragile beings that you can hardly touch them without bruising them."<sup>55</sup>

Annot Robinson was described as 'the well-known Dundee suffragette'<sup>56</sup> by the press and lost no time in getting her view published, writing a letter from the Billiard room of Cannon Street police station a few hours after her arrest. In it she explained:

It was a curious position for a reasoning human being to find herself in. I thought, and think still, that women ought to be enfranchised, and because I and these other women tried to enter the House of Commons to lay our grievance before the only body in the country which had the power to remove it, I was marched like a criminal through the streets of London.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, Misc/718 7. 11 February 1908. Notice of bail with surety of £2 to appear at Rochester Row the following day.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, Misc/718 8. *Dundee Evening Press*, 12 February 1908.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Although married, she signed the letter Annot E. Wilkie, perhaps on the basis that she was better known by that name. Despite newspaper reports commenting on the physical nature of the event, Annot Robinson chose to mention that many of the police were sympathetic although, aware of conflicting duty, she wrote: 'Our duty was to enter the House and theirs was to keep me out'. Nevertheless, she described the police as 'the most chivalrous class in an unchivalrous age'.<sup>58</sup> In March 1906, the attitude of the police towards those women campaigning for the vote had been considered cordial<sup>59</sup> but by the summer of 1908, as more women were being imprisoned, the Home Office was inundated with complaints about police conduct and prison conditions. Constance Lytton wrote to the Home Office after a discussion with Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence in which she described awful conditions. 'One lady was given on arrival a pile of dirty men's socks to darn from which the smell was so overpowering that she was sick all night'.<sup>60</sup> John Logan, the father of Isobel Logan, who was imprisoned in July 1908, complained of her treatment in prison to the *Daily News*.

Does the Home Secretary realise that his unsympathetic, hard-hearted replies to Mr Healy M.P. and others in reference to those sentences have sent a cold shiver down the back of many a man in England and caused

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, Misc/718 9. Undated newspaper cutting of a letter from Annot E. Wilkie, 11 February 1908.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> See I.O. Ford's account in the *Labour Leader*, 2 March 1906.

<sup>60</sup> PRO, HO 45/167074/108 24 August 1908.

many a vow to be registered that those answers shall be remembered when the day of reckoning comes at the General Election?<sup>61</sup>

Annot Robinson's letter also reveals the diversity of women involved, 'artists, teachers, factory workers, middle class women, tailoresses, nurses, fresh-faced young women and old ladies with white hair'.<sup>62</sup> Sam Robinson received a telegram from Annot informing him, 'Arrested not hurt fifty prisoners at present love Annot'<sup>63</sup> followed by another telegram the next day stating 'Six weeks said nothing love Annot'.<sup>64</sup> Sam Robinson was kept informed of Annot's well being whilst she was serving her sentence in Holloway and the MP, J.R.Clynes, wrote to him after seeing Annot stating, 'I conveyed your message and I am pleased to say she appears to be getting through the time very well and all things considered is cheerily bearing her term'.<sup>65</sup>

The WSPU were quick to respond to the arrests, writing to the families of prisoners. Sam Robinson received a circular letter from Annie Kenney which emphasised the stamina and pluck of those who had travelled to London to participate: 'Of all the women who were taken from the north, not one failed when the test came for imprisonment or political slavery'. Realising that many of those in

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, HO 1444 882/167074, 13 July 1908.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> AR papers, Misc/718 6 Telegram to Sam Robinson, 11 February 1908.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, Misc/718 10 Telegram to Sam Robinson, 12 February 1908.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, Misc/718 14 Letter from J.R.Clynes to Sam Robinson, 11 March 1908.

receipt of the letter would be husbands anxious for news of their wives, Kenney accentuated the fact that the severity of the situation 'will rouse the men of the country to shame that a so-called Liberal Government should put women in prison for demanding the right to vote' and asked for letters to be written to the press in protest.<sup>66</sup>

The details of Annot Robinson's imprisonment and the subsequent correspondence it provoked, are useful in considering the different experiences of Sam and Annot Robinson in the suffrage campaign. Sam had been a stalwart supporter of women's suffrage for several years but he was never involved in activity that could have resulted in imprisonment. Annot, on the other hand, had readily given up her freedom and was to endure a further prison sentence. Given that they had only been married for a few weeks when Annot first went to prison, did Sam resent this intrusion upon their lives at a time when they should have been together or was he prepared to accept whatever was necessary to keep women's suffrage in the public eye, even if he were the loser? Certainly, it would appear from Sam's later activities that he was able to support suffrage as part of a political ideal but ultimately, he could not reconcile the dynamics of the situation at a personal level whereas for Annot there was no distinction to be made; the political was personal and vice versa. It may also have been the case that this was compounded by feelings of inadequacy and the lack of a cohesive role within the partnership. The birth of their two children in 1909 and 1911, seems to have been a watershed in

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, Misc/718 11 Circular letter from Annie Kenney to the families of imprisoned women. 13 February 1908.

their marriage and Annot Robinson's support for campaigns such as the right of married women to work can be directly related to her own experience of being in a marriage dominated by financial worries. Sam Robinson's inability to provide sufficiently for his family may have added to Annot's list of his inadequacies although perhaps her own inability to earn at this time needs consideration.

Sam Robinson was also in correspondence with Christabel Pankhurst who clearly rated him as influential in Labour circles. Shortly after Annot Robinson's imprisonment, she wrote to him regarding the Labour party's support for Stanger's Bill due for its second reading on 28 February confident that he would do what he could 'to bring the Labour party up to the mark' whilst pointing out 'the general opinion among Libs and Tories in the House of Commons is that the Labour party are not friends of W.S'. Perhaps she over-rated Sam Robinson's influence when she posed the question, 'What is the Labour Leader going to do?'<sup>67</sup>

Sam and Annot Robinson corresponded whilst she was in Holloway and a letter written by Annot a few days before her release gives some clues as to the nature of their personal relationship as well as their political one. Although Annot expressed concern about Sam's health she was glad he had not wired her to come home, preferring instead to serve the full term. Even upon her release, she was not intending to go straight to Manchester. She was going to stay in London, probably to attend a meeting of women at Peckham Public Hall on 18 March to demand votes for women, for which she was billed as a speaker.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, she may

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/12 Letter from Christabel Pankhurst to Sam Robinson, 16 February 1908.

have been anxious to sort out a situation which was vexing her. Annot had been an organiser for the WSPU in Dundee and had promised them she would return for their first big demonstration. It is clear that Sam had written to her about this and her response was direct:

I cannot understand how it became necessary to mention the matter to Miss Collier until I returned or to the committee. Instead to consult Miss Pankhurst. Have I been appointed organiser in my absence. What expenses is Mrs Lawrence to defray. I am more astonished and vexed over this Dundee affair than I can say here.<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, Annot Robinson did not go to Dundee. A letter from one of her fellow prisoners, Mary Phillips, expressed sadness that Annot would not be coming although the reasons are unclear. Certainly, Annot had been ill after leaving prison and writing from Scotland, Mary Phillips felt that Annot had fared [sic] the conditions in Holloway more than she cared to admit.<sup>70</sup> To what extent the Pankhursts were involved in Annot Robinson's absence from Dundee is unclear however, there is little doubt that they were by this time attempting to organise countrywide operations from London. It may well have been the case that they felt Annot would be better utilised in Manchester although she had been commended

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, Misc/718/58 and 59 NWSPU Handbill, 1908. Annot Robinson was also mentioned on another handbill advertising a meeting at the Royal Albert Hall the following day.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, Misc/718/15 Letter to Sam Robinson from Annot in Holloway, 12 March 1908.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, Misc/718/17 Letter from Mary Phillips to Annot Robinson. 8 April 1908.

for her work in Scotland before moving to Manchester.<sup>71</sup> The letter also provides a useful insight into the divisions that existed between the regional and national elements of the WSPU at this time as well as highlighting the close bond that existed between women who had been imprisoned. Mary Phillips was rather put out by the attitude of one of the Scottish organisers, Mrs Hunter, writing that at a meeting attended by Mrs Pankhurst and Mrs Pethick Lawrence,

she came and ordered me not to mention prison, and not to talk more than 5 minutes! As if I had no more sense than to stand between the audience and those two splendid speakers, and as if I couldn't suit my remarks to the audience and to the occasion! And as if the Scottish lot had any right to control me in any way, when I am a National worker!<sup>72</sup>

There was clearly some conflict causing Mary Phillips to continue, '...they think I'm good for nothing but smashing and being militant - so I talked sort of half-poetic and sentimental stuff, and everybody seemed pleased'.<sup>73</sup> Being from Scotland, Annot may have felt some allegiance with the 'Scottish lot' although it is likely that they were acting on the instructions of the national leadership. Nevertheless, after her second imprisonment, Annot Robinson followed the example of her friend, Agnes Husband, and became involved with the WFL.

Despite being very recently married, it would seem that the Robinsons' commitment to the causes they believed in took precedence over their personal

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<sup>71</sup> HM papers, M220/1/1/3 Letter to Annot Wilkie from Christabel Pankhurst, 9 November 1906.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

needs. However, was this a mutual position or was it the case that it was Annot who dictated the way in which they would conduct their marriage? Certainly for Annot, her involvement in socialism and women's suffrage was also an opportunity for her to earn a living doing something in which she truly believed. Money worries were to be a dominant feature of the Robinsons' marriage and Annot's comment to Sam that she had been writing on her slate but had to rub it out which was a shame as she could have made some money, endorses this.<sup>74</sup> Annot Robinson was also opinionated about those involved in the Manchester ILP, opposing decisions made in her absence from her prison cell<sup>75</sup> although perhaps the most significant comment she made related to *Bleak House* which she had been reading. Along with Mrs Jellaby, she wondered about the marriage service as 'an injustice inflicted by tyrant man'.<sup>76</sup> Given that she had so recently embarked on marriage herself, this did not bode well for their future happiness.

Upon her return to Manchester, Annot Robinson quickly resumed local ILP branch work at a time of controversy. In May 1908 an emergency meeting was held at 73 Caroline Street, the home of Annot and Sam Robinson, to discuss John Bruce Glasier and the *Labour Leader*. At this time, Bruce Glasier was editor of the official organ of the ILP and it was felt that the views at branch level were not being accurately reflected in its pages. This had led to rancorous correspondence between

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<sup>74</sup> AR papers, Misc/718/15 Letter from Annot Robinson in Holloway to Sam Robinson, 12 March 1908.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

the Manchester Central branch and the editor with Bruce Glasier interpreting this as a personal campaign against him. Annot Robinson seconded a resolution explaining that it had been the policy, not the probity of the *Labour Leader* that had been criticised, resulting in the formation of a committee to prepare a report of the Central Branch versus the *Labour Leader*, which would meet at 73 Caroline Street.<sup>77</sup>

By the summer of 1908, the acrimony had ceased and Manchester Central branch, with Annot Robinson taking a leading role, was busy discussing the desirability of holding a series of afternoon meetings in the Coal Exchange.<sup>78</sup> However, by September, internal bickering had resumed with the expiry of the lease at 116 Portland Street where meetings were held. Although the Pankhursts were no longer members of the ILP, it was in respect to their wishes that books and a bookcase were to be moved as early as possible. The ownership of these was also under discussion with Sam Robinson claiming they had been given to him personally rather than to the ILP.<sup>79</sup>

When Annot Robinson was arrested again in June 1908 and given a three week sentence, an outraged Beatrice Stott wrote to her pointing out that in court 'everything was so indistinct, so almost inaudible...that nobody heard that part, else I, for one, should certainly have made a protest'.<sup>80</sup> During her second prison

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<sup>77</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 17 May and 30 May 1908.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 19 August 1908.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 2 September 1908.

sentence, Sam was not short of support. Jennie Baines wrote to him from Clements Inn,

'to remind you how much I for one appreciate what you have done for our Union in the past and what you are sacrificing at the present. You cannot tell how upset I was when I heard of Your Dear Wifes[sic] arrest. I think it is a D - shame because the time is so short when she underwent six weeks....Dear Sam the time will soon slip by when she will be home again. I am sure you feel quite proud of her.'<sup>81</sup>

Even when she did return home, her commitment to the cause was unrelenting and Annot Robinson spent most of the summer speaking at public meetings including the Great Demonstration in Heaton Park on 19 July 1908, of which Jennie Baines told Sam Robinson, 'It was a good report about your wife's meeting', asking him to tell Annot to attend the procession at Stockport wearing her gown as, 'I think it makes a good impression and they have never had anything like it in Stockport'.<sup>82</sup>

## 5.2 MOTHERHOOD AND MILITANCY.

Although there are no records suggesting further imprisonment, the following year Annot Robinson was issued with a summons by Manchester police for 'holding a meeting and causing a crowd of profile to assemble thereon'.<sup>83</sup> Her

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<sup>80</sup> AR papers, Misc/718 20 Letter from Beatrice Stott to Annot Robinson, 2 July 1908.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, Misc/718 19 Letter from Jennie Baines to Sam Robinson, 3 June 1908.

<sup>82</sup> HM papers, M220/1/3 Letter to Sam Robinson from Jennie Baines, 8 July 1908.

first child, Cathie, was only a few weeks old revealing the extent of Annot Robinson's commitment to the causes she believed in and refuting artis' claims that suffrage activists were not family women. How Sam felt about her continuing activity at this time is not known but it is likely that he would not have supported any action that might have resulted in Annot's further imprisonment now she was a mother.

During the early years in Manchester, the Robinsons worked closely together and were both elected as delegates to the ILP Annual Conference for several years. However, Annot Robinson in particular was drawn to campaigning for a wider agenda of issues pertaining to women and writing to the press in December 1908, she pointed out that 'the terrible destitution of many of our workless women must not be forgotten'. She was aggrieved because money from public funds had been provided to enable unemployed men to work on road building schemes whereas women without work were dependent on gifts from the charitable stating that:

the two sexes should have equality of treatment in their destitution, and one sex should not be made dependent on the caprice of the charitable while the other has had its claims on the community more fully recognised, and the work, therefore, more definitely established.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> AR papers, Misc/718 25 Summons issued on 7 Sept 1909 relating to Annot Robinson's activity on 27 August 1909.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/22 Letter from Annot Robinson to the *Manchester Guardian*, 14 December 1908.

Annot Robinson did not attend the 1909 ILP Annual Conference in Edinburgh (Sam Robinson was one of the branch delegates) but was instrumental in ensuring that the rights of unemployed women were included on the Conference agenda, moving that 'this conference will not be content to accept any legislation dealing with unemployment which does not contain special provision for unemployed women'.<sup>85</sup> It was Charlotte Despard, by now president of the WFL, who articulated this view at the Conference, emphasising the relationship between women's employment and enfranchisement. It is worth noting that Despard's resolution demanding women's political emancipation as a means of achieving equality of employment was carried unanimously whereas other resolutions concerned directly with the specific question of votes for women divided delegates into socialist and suffrage camps.<sup>86</sup> Annot Robinson was herself a life-long proponent of separate representation for women within the Labour Party and played a key part in the continuing debate over women's position in the Labour Party after the First World War. At the 1921 National Conference of Labour Women it was Annot who proposed making two amendments to the 1918 constitution which would give women better representation and more power.<sup>87</sup> Despite strong opposition from 'integrationists', Annot's resolution was passed and she promised to

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<sup>85</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 10 February 1909

<sup>86</sup> ILP Conference Report 1909.

<sup>87</sup> The first was the direct election of four women onto the NEC by women's sections and local divisions and the second was to confine the women's conference to delegates from women's sections and local branches making it a statutory conference of the Labour Party with the power to submit resolutions and a vote directly to the annual party conference.

get it placed on the agenda of the national party conference to be held the following month.<sup>88</sup>

Annot gave birth to her first child Cathie in 1909 and it is likely she earned money by writing until becoming a paid part-time organiser for the WLL in 1910 at the invitation of Margaret and Ramsay MacDonald.<sup>89</sup> She was a regular contributor to the 'Women's Page' of the *Labour Leader*<sup>90</sup> writing predominantly on women's suffrage although some of the situations she depicted were to affect her at a very personal level. One of her early pieces written in November 1909, describes her experience of addressing working-class women:

"Home is a woman's sphere," interrupted a beer-sodden individual as I stood speaking from the giddy eminence of a very unsteady chair to a group of women clad in shawls and clogs. When the women heard the words, that guilty look of neglected duty which comes so readily to the faces of respectable working women appeared.<sup>91</sup>

She claimed it was in an effort to be rid of the thoughts those words had provoked that she was writing the piece although a few years later she may have been overwhelmed with a sense of *deja vu*.

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<sup>88</sup> National Conference of Labour Women, May 1921, reported in *Labour Woman*, June 1921, p.91 and quoted in Graves, *Labour Women*, p.30-32.

<sup>89</sup> AR papers, Misc/718/28 & 29 Letters from J.R. MacDonald to Annot Robinson, 1 and 8 January 1910.

<sup>90</sup> After Katharine Bruce Glasier's resignation from the 'Iona' column, the 'Women's Page' had a number of contributors.

<sup>91</sup> *Labour Leader*, 19 November 1909.

However, the main thrust of the article was concerned with the problems of women voters in municipal elections. Taking a rather different approach to that of Sam Robinson and writing in a highly personalised style, she blamed the burden of keeping a tidy home for many women voters not being aware of the importance of local elections. Whilst conceding that she didn't like dirt, she felt that these women who had borne ten children and buried five had been duped by newspapers like *The Times* into believing that 'no really nice woman mixes herself up with municipal politics'. Her powerful description of women whose brains and souls had been killed for a poky, inconvenient, little house in which they spent their lives doing work which could be halved if their houses were properly planned, demonstrates the depth of her commitment to working-class women but also her frustration as she pointed out that all women like this heard from the women's columns of newspapers, penny magazines 'and the convention of the street, which is her club, her public opinion, and her romance', was that this was her sphere.<sup>92</sup> Her final word of warning was, 'that if the Socialist Party wants the women's vote, it has to work for it', adding 'what does the Labour and Socialist candidate offer?' This was typical of the forthright manner which she adopted in both speaking and writing.

Annot was one of two part-time organisers appointed to work for the WLL (the other was Bertha Ayles who was responsible for the South-West and replaced Dorothy Lenn). Dorothy had previously stayed with Annot in Manchester and at this point Annot had agreed to join the League but with the proviso she would not

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

'work for a man of whom she did not approve'. Dorothy Lenn also revealingly described her as 'rather "anti-man"'.<sup>93</sup>

Annot Robinson used her new position as an opportunity to introduce discussion of those areas of particular importance to her. Significantly, at the Lancashire and Cheshire district conference in May 1910, she chose to speak about the need for equal divorce laws and the opportunity to obtain a divorce at a reduced cost 'if drunkenness[sic], insanity or criminality could be proved'.<sup>94</sup> Although probably largely prompted by the Royal Commission on Divorce, to what extent this view was influenced by her personal circumstances is difficult to ascertain. However, Sam did develop a drink problem which Annot discussed with her sister and he was violent on occasions.<sup>95</sup>

At the 1910 ILP annual conference, which both Annot and Sam Robinson attended, the ILP's position on the question of women's suffrage was high on the agenda. Annot submitted a resolution condemning the leadership for failing to support adequately women's enfranchisement or the WLL, accusing the NAC of taking no action despite voting support each year. She also pointed out the ILP's indifference to forcible feeding as well as the loss of women members.<sup>96</sup> Charlotte Despard, for the second year running, worked alongside Annot, supporting her

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<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Collette, *For Labour and For Women*, p.84.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p.85.

<sup>95</sup> AR papers, Misc 718/98 c. December 1918.

<sup>96</sup> See ILP Conference Report, 1910; Collette, *For Labour and For Women*, p.63; Liddington, *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel, Selina Cooper 1864-1946*, Virago, 1984 p.222.

against some scornful opposition with the result that the conference finally resolved to press for the limited measure.

Annot Robinson had attended the conference as the delegate for Lochgelly rather than Manchester Central. Nevertheless, it was she who reported back, in the absence of Sam Robinson.<sup>97</sup> However, by the summer when it was clear that the NAC had chosen to ignore women's suffrage yet again, her initial satisfaction must have waned considerably. In an article entitled 'Votes For Women', written by Annot in June 1910, she expressed confidence that women would soon be enfranchised. Stating that 'the battle cry of the militant women is soon to be the shout of victory', she acknowledged that the proposed Bill was a compromise but felt it was,

An honourable compromise - which those of us who have been militant in action, and are still war-like in spirit, can accept without feeling humiliated, as a first instalment of the justice we have fought and suffered for. The measure is not what I dreamed of in Holloway and Strangeways when, through long weary flat days and nights, each made up of twenty-four heavy footed hours, I expiated the crime of demanding political rights for my sex. Compared with the anticipation of those times the realisation will be shabby and mean.<sup>98</sup>

Whatever her affiliations at this point, it is clear that Annot Robinson still located herself within the militant camp even if she was no longer prepared to practice militancy herself. Having served two prison terms and now a mother she felt able to reconcile herself to a position of 'spiritual militancy'.

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<sup>97</sup> Manchester Central ILP Minutes, 6 April 1910.

<sup>98</sup> *Labour Leader*, 10 June 1910.

Writing of her attitude towards militancy for a later speech, Annot Robinson admitted that when militant methods were first used she was 'abominably shocked' although she subsequently realised that more accurately she had allowed her opinions to be formulated by 'that most unreliable of all guides, the daily press' adding that they 'fatten on shocks'. Having confided her feelings to certain members of her family, she soon altered her position becoming and remaining an enthusiast whilst acknowledging that the greatest difficulty of the movement was its essential rightness.<sup>99</sup>

It is worth examining this somewhat lengthy tract in some detail as Annot Robinson adopted a powerful rhetoric in order to argue why women justified the right to vote:

Women want the vote for just the same reason that men want it - to enable them to take up their true position as comrades in the state.... It is an obvious truism that nothing is so well done by proxy as directly....It is obvious that men do not manage men's affairs and the state in anything like a perfect manner. Women should come to the men's rescue and relieve them of part of their heavy burden. Women then desire to help men by looking after the affairs of women and children in the state so that men may have the time to look after the immensely more important concerns of men.<sup>100</sup>

This polemic leaves little room for manoeuvre in terms of Annot's views on men generally and once again demonstrates the relationship between the political and the personal in her experience. Her assertion that men were not competent to manage what she termed 'men's affairs' let alone issues pertinent to women and children,

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<sup>99</sup> AR papers, Misc/718/92 Draft speech on Votes for Women, n.d.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

demonstrates the increasing animosity Annot Robinson felt towards those ILP men who were ambivalent toward women's demands. Her deteriorating personal relationship with her husband, Sam, reveals that even men who publicly supported women's suffrage did not necessarily practice equality within marriage, especially when there were children.

Resorting to what she described as 'petty details', Annot Robinson counted herself as one of a group of old-fashioned people who still adhered to the notion that taxation without representation was unjust. Although this draft speech was entitled 'Votes for Women' it is evident in its content that votes for women was just a part of Annot Robinson's campaign. *Discussing the inequality of laws, she pointed out that as the laws of the country had been made solely by men and therefore from a male standpoint, they could not reflect any other point of view 'unless so far as they have been modified by the subterranean influence of certain women of the type deified by Mrs Humphrey Ward'. She sarcastically described Mrs Humphrey Ward as 'my favourite heroine and author'<sup>101</sup> and using all the arguments put forward by antis, Annot Robinson attempted to rotate them arguing that women must be able to join the political spectrum in order to allow men to be relieved of the consequences of their unwise devotion and chivalry to the cause of women: 'When women fight for their own hand then men will be relieved of the insufferable burden of chivalry and will be masked to fight in the light of day for their own hand'.<sup>102</sup> This*

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

comment in particular, reveals just how far Annot Robinson had travelled since her first term of imprisonment.

Within this speech, Annot also vocalised her views on the evils of drink - something that was a problem in her own family. Describing the situation in America, she referred to 'wicked, ignorant women to think that a powerful drug should not be sold indiscriminately' adding caustically, 'men of course do not need any assistance to fight the temptation of strong drink'.<sup>103</sup> She also spoke of the success of women's suffrage in America with more states granting it regularly. This she argued, was in stark contrast to Mrs Ward's assertion that the cause of women's suffrage there was dead, concluding 'in the words of the ring' that it was 'a terrible knock out for Mrs Humphrey Ward and her fellow prophets'.

Part of this speech was taken up with a global history of votes for women with emphasis given to those countries which had done 'the foul deed'. She also discussed women's employment and the effect of 'the economic squeeze of modern industrialism'. Clearly at odds with John Burns who was in favour of closing many of the fields of employment open to women, Annot pointed out that married women worked because of the low wages paid to their husbands and that this would mean they would be worse off. Dismissing the objections to votes for women as without weight and as 'not of much interest' she added 'are our wives, mothers, sisters such helpless idiots after all...that women will be unsexed none of us believe. At present the tax collector does not think to when he tackles the widow'.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

A further point on which she felt compelled to discourse on related to adult suffrage, explaining that the adult suffragists' argument that 'we men all owe our votes to injustice' was not allowing women's votes to be similarly tainted.<sup>105</sup> The power of this speech is undisputed and illustrates Annot Robinson's ability as a speaker as well as her drive and enthusiasm for a cause in which she passionately believed.

Undaunted, she attended the January 1911 WLL conference where Mrs Harrison Bell moved a resolution in favour of the full enfranchisement of men and women. Annot Robinson argued that to pursue full adult suffrage was not practical and moved for a women only amendment which was lost by thirty-two votes to four,<sup>106</sup> thus resolving the dispute that had plagued the WLL for several years but giving Annot little comfort.

Annot's work for the WLL seems to have come to an end around this time as by now she was working for the NUWSS as one of ten trained organisers. Membership of the NUWSS rose considerably in 1911 and 1912 as women grew more impatient at the Government's delaying tactics and the National Union Executive responded by creating federations to link isolated groups which were overseen by paid organisers. Annot's reasons for joining the NUWSS were complex and her daughter's belief that it was dismay at 'Mrs Pankhurst's imperious dictatorship'<sup>107</sup> is over-simplifying a journey of several years that led to Annot's

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Collette, *For Labour and for Women*, p.77.

arrival at Mrs Fawcett's door. Her WSPU militancy had ceased in 1908 and even after joining the NUWSS, Annot continued to speak favourably of Mrs Pankhurst, describing her as 'that wonderful woman'.<sup>108</sup> Rather, Annot's involvement with the NUWSS needs to be located as part of a political journey that was to encompass membership of several organisations, all of which at a particular point in time held some attraction for her in the same way that the causes she believed in could not be embodied in the ideology of a single society.

Nevertheless, her arrival was at a time of personal difficulty. By the summer of 1911, she had two young children and a husband who was allegedly heckling her at meetings. According to Helen Wilson, a friend of Annot's recalled that the first time she had met the Robinsons was at a meeting: Annot was speaking when a man stood up several times asking her "Why aren't you at home looking after your husband. Why aren't you looking after your children?"<sup>109</sup> The man in question was Sam Robinson, apparently rather the worse for drink. Certainly, Annot Robinson took her eldest daughter Cathie with her to meetings; there is a photograph of her sitting in the centre of a table whilst her mother is addressing a group of women. And, in a written account of her time spent campaigning in Scotland, she recounted

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<sup>107</sup> Quoted in Liddington, *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel*, p.208-9. In fact this was the phrase used by Ellen Wilkinson in her obituary of Annot Robinson in *The Woman's Leader*, 6 November 1925.

<sup>108</sup> AR papers, Misc 718/92 Draft speech on Votes for Women, n.d.

<sup>109</sup> Liddington, *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel*, p.209.

how 'we - baby and I - were going to angle not for troots but for votes in the burghs scattered by the shore of the North Sea...'<sup>110</sup>

In December 1911, Keir Hardie arrived in Manchester to perform the socialist christening of Helen, the second daughter of Annot and Sam Robinson. As part of the proceedings, he pinned badges of both the ILP and the Women's Labour League onto the child's coat.<sup>111</sup> On the surface at least, the Robinsons presented themselves as the ideal socialist family but this was already proving a strain.

There can be little doubt that the personal problems of Sam and Annot Robinson were linked to her work for women's suffrage: Annot's support for the cause was as practical as Sam's was ideological although this situation was not uncommon; both Hannah Mitchell and Ada Nield Chew had husbands with similar dispositions.<sup>112</sup> Being paid for her support must have legitimised her work in Annot's opinion, whereas it only served to reinforce to her husband his own limitations. Additionally, it is possible that Sam was jealous of the fact that Annot was clearly more in demand than he was. The cause that had brought them together was now splitting them apart.

Whatever personal difficulties Sam and Annot Robinson were experiencing, they presented a united political front at Merthyr Tydfil which hosted the ILP conference of 1912. Sam Robinson demanded that Labour MPs should vote against

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<sup>110</sup> 'A Women on the Warpath', *Labour Leader*, 25 February 1910 p.125.

<sup>111</sup> AR papers, Misc/718/31, 32 & 33, 16 December 1911.

<sup>112</sup> See Mitchell, *The Hard Way Up*; D. Nield Chew, *A. Nield Chew, The Life and Writings of a Working Woman*, (Virago, London, 1982).



Annot Robinson at a suffrage meeting with her daughter sitting on the table.

the third reading of the Conciliation Bill unless women were included and with Keir Hardie's support, this uncompromising resolution was passed with a strong majority with the result that the Labour Party finally adopted women's suffrage as part of its manifesto. Annot Robinson held open-air meetings on behalf of the National Union which was now in alliance with Labour and became an Election Fighting Fund organiser working with Selina Cooper, Margaret Ashton, the sister-in-law of James Bryce, and Ada Nield Chew.

It must have been difficult combining motherhood with the demanding work she was undertaking, although Annot Robinson did have some support from her sister Nellie and eventually a housekeeper, Mrs Edwards. Sam Robinson appears to have played a minimal role in the upbringing of his children and it was probably with a sense of relief that Annot said goodbye to him in June 1913 when he set off for Canada.<sup>113</sup> The rationale behind this journey was that Sam Robinson was going to establish himself in Canada and then send for Annot and the children. Whose idea this was has not been established but the fact that he was back in England by early August, never actually setting foot in Canada<sup>114</sup> suggests a certain reluctance on his part. His return sealed their fate and Annot Robinson, writing to her sister Nellie in 1916, was unyielding in blaming Sam's return from Canada for her deteriorating state of health.<sup>115</sup> It is obvious that Annot had thought Sam's 'emigration' to Canada

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<sup>113</sup> The Manchester Central ILP Minutes for 6 May 1913 recorded that Sam Robinson would be leaving the country on 10 June and was therefore resigning as Lecture and Propaganda Secretary.

<sup>114</sup> According to Helen Wilson he got fed up on the boat and became *frightened*.

as the end of their marriage although their political partnership had ended earlier. At a time when separation or divorce still carried considerable stigma, as well as being expensive, this was probably the most satisfactory solution and his return must have been a great disappointment to Annot, reinforcing the injustice of her situation.

Seeing contemporaries such as Katharine Bruce Glasier apparently enjoying successful personal and political partnerships must have made Annot question her own situation. Even if Helen Wilson's declaration that Katharine Bruce Glasier was as 'mad as a hatter' is given some credence,<sup>116</sup> the Bruce Glasiers nevertheless, presented an almost idyllic picture of how life could be. Pregnant with her second child, Katharine Bruce Glasier confided to Annot, 'am perfectly well but abnormally stout' concluding that this was a good sign of the baby's well being.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, another letter to Annot reveals that there had been a misunderstanding between them concerning Burgess and the Montrose Burghs with Katharine Bruce Glasier staunchly defending her husband - something that Annot may have found difficult.<sup>118</sup>

In 1913, Sam Robinson was the chief steward at the ILP party conference. His involvement with women's suffrage made him a useful weapon in terms of

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<sup>115</sup> AR papers, Misc/718/94 Letter to Nellie from Annot Robinson, 11 September 1916.

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in K.A. Rigby, M.A. p.26

<sup>117</sup> AR papers, Misc/718/26 Letter from Katharine Bruce Glasier to Annot Robinson, 16 Dec 1909.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, Misc/718/27 Letter from Katharine Bruce Glasier to Annot Robinson, 28 December 1909.

*identifying militants who would potentially disrupt the conference proceedings. As John Bruce Glasier articulated, 'he knows suffragettes by sight and smell so to say...'*<sup>119</sup> To this end, Sam Robinson was given 'plenary powers' and the only people allowed entry to the conference were those who could be vouched for by delegates.

### **5.3 SEPARATE SPHERES.**

The outbreak of the First World War, provided the Robinsons with another opportunity for separation. Annot aligned herself with the pacifist camp whilst Sam had no hesitation in signing up. Whether this was in a bid to 'prove' himself is open to question; it may have been the attraction of a regular wage that enticed him. In the event he managed to secure a post as a soldiers' librarian in India and spent the duration of the war there.

From 1912 until 1915, Annot Robinson was a paid organiser for the Election Fighting Fund of the NUWSS although after the outbreak of war, she became involved in relief work working closely with Margaret Ashton and Ellen Wilkinson. As a pacifist, Annot found her views at odds with the majority of NUWSS members and in 1915, she was part of a group that broke away and formed the Women's International League (WIL). Throughout the war, Annot was in paid employment but experienced financial difficulties. In correspondence with her sister, Nellie, she complained of having to pay for a school uniform for her

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<sup>119</sup> J. Bruce Glasier Diary, 24 March 1913.

daughter, Cathie, a custom she detested, pointing out, 'it is all part of the engrained class distinction of the snobbish English people'. She also explained that her position was uncertain although she was adamant that '...if my husband comes back to me I do not intend to set up house with him again'.<sup>120</sup> However, by 1918, her husband was trying to return to England and Annot Robinson confided to her sister that 'I feel afflicted when I reflect'.<sup>121</sup> Clearly the thought of her husband's imminent return was causing Annot personal grief although she was enjoying her work with the WIL and was preparing to travel to London with Margaret Ashton 'to help once more to tell the Government what to do'.<sup>122</sup>

It is worth comparing the wartime experiences of Annot and Sam Robinson in order to establish their respective positions when Sam Robinson returned to England in 1918. For Annot, the war had provided the opportunity for her to live an independent life and she had established herself as an able and competent speaker to such an extent that she was contemplating standing for parliament. Sam, on the other hand, had been removed from political activity and was only able to gain employment as a foreman. Any prestige he had enjoyed within the ILP was now overshadowed by his wife's political success. This did not bode well for a successful reunion and the correspondence of Annot Robinson with her sister Nellie after Sam's return reveals clearly the difficulties they had.

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<sup>120</sup> AR papers, Misc/718/96 Letter from A. Robinson to Nellie, 19 August 1917.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/97 4 April 1918.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

Despite Annot's insistence that she would not live with her husband again, Sam Robinson returned to their Manchester home. According to Annot, he had no self control and had struck one of the children, making her afraid that, 'he will do some mischief if he is alone with the children and Mrs Edwards [the housekeeper].'<sup>123</sup> It is evident that the situation was intolerable for Annot as she was considering consulting 'one of the magistrates privately as to the getting of a separation order' although her pride prevented her at this time.<sup>124</sup> There was clearly a power struggle going on and Annot was convinced he was 'burned up with jealousy of my success and the fact that the children love me...' whilst Sam felt he was being ill-used.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, Annot believed that she had the upper-hand telling her sister, 'he [Sam] is afraid of me. I have established a sort of mastery...'<sup>126</sup> Christmas 1918 would not have been a happy one in the Robinson household and Annot was planning to take the children out for the day if Sam were around. Her belief that 'an income of your own and a complete indifference are good weapons' together with her comment, 'if it were not for the worry of my husband's conduct I should be having much satisfaction out of my life', clearly sums up how Annot Robinson perceived her situation.

For the next four years Annot and Sam Robinson continued to live under the same roof although they did not share a bedroom. Annot's work meant that she

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, Misc 718/98 c. December 1918.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*.

*had to travel and she was concerned that Sam 'should get a footing in the house'*.<sup>127</sup> Equally, she was worried about the welfare of her children and Mrs Edwards in her absence but felt, 'I must go on with my post and I cannot refuse to go away sometimes'.<sup>128</sup> The problems of combining work and motherhood meant that Annot Robinson saw little of her children during these years but it is apparent that she was attempting to save money in order to leave Manchester and in effect, her husband.<sup>129</sup>

Annot Robinson stood twice in Manchester municipal elections but was unsuccessful on both occasions. Her employment with the WIL was based on short term contracts and meant that in order to survive financially, Annot had to undertake work abroad on a number of occasions. In 1922, she spent three months in America and some time in Amsterdam working for the WIL.

Annot Robinson confided in close friends but strove to keep her marital problems private despite being aware that 'all the neighbours are aware of his conduct'.<sup>130</sup> However, in October 1922, Sam Robinson made a very public statement regarding the state of their relationship. In July 1922, Annot had been 'working out a plan' to gain access to Sam's war pension. How successful she was is unclear but in October, Sam Robinson refused to serve on an ILP committee publicly explaining that he might be in prison. He then proceeded to read from a

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/131 24 March 1922.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/99 6 May 1919.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/131;133;136.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/98 c. December 1918.

document from the pensions office and told his audience that it was his wife, Annot who was sending him to prison.<sup>131</sup>

This seems to have been the final straw for Annot Robinson and shortly after she left Sam and returned to Scotland and teaching. Her prediction to her sister, that 'some day you may find us dumped on you as a final escape from my husband's attentions'<sup>132</sup> was accurate. Her daughters lived with their Aunt in Glasgow until Annot was able to secure a post with accommodation. It was not until June 1925, that Annot and her children were reunited. Sadly, Annot became ill shortly after and on 30 September 1925, she died of heart failure. The female solidarity she had enjoyed with people like Margaret Ashton, Ellen Wilkinson and Julia Tomlinson was not forgotten and a memorial fund was established to provide money for her children's education. However, even after Annot's death, Sam Robinson was attempting to defend his position and Julie Tomlinson, the Honorary Secretary of the fund, was forced to distribute a circular pointing out that the original appeal 'contains certain phrases which are capable of a construction which might lead to misapprehension of fact and cause pain to the bereaved widower'.<sup>133</sup> Privately, though, Julie Tomlinson wrote to Cathie explaining 'I too had a father who behaved badly after my mother's death and made life very hard for me'.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/141 11 October 1922.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/124 14 June 1921.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/154 Circular letter, February 1926.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/152 15 October 1925; Misc 718/155 11 January 1926.

Sam Robinson continued to be involved in labour politics at a local level until his death in January 1937. Those who had known him from the early Manchester days, like Hannah Mitchell, continued to support him. This suggests that whatever his inadequacies, he still had the respect of those who would have otherwise turned against him (pointing to a situation perhaps rather more complex than it appears). Certainly, Hannah Mitchell's assertion that 'it was a tragic sort of situation, but not a sordid vulgar triangle' is intriguing.<sup>135</sup>

The political and personal partnership of Annot and Sam Robinson led them on a journey fraught with difficulties. Christine Collette's observation that 'a partnership of two dedicated people presents innumerable problems of sharing burdens, domestic and at work' whilst undoubtedly true is rather marred by her assertion that Annot Robinson failed.<sup>136</sup> Rather, both Annot and Sam Robinson were unable to reconcile their personal problems and this was reflected in their political work. Nevertheless, had Annot lived longer, then it is possible she would have achieved '...big things...and to take up public life again'.<sup>137</sup> It is unlikely that Sam Robinson would have sought to gain a higher political profile, not least because of his inability to speak publicly. It was perhaps this, combined with Annot's increasing political status during the first few years of the twentieth century and her refusal to conform to the stereotypical image of motherhood, that caused the breakdown of the marriage. Sam Robinson's actions were hypocritical (although

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, Misc 718/163 9 August 1956.

<sup>136</sup> Collette, *For Labour and For Women*, p.191.

<sup>137</sup> AR papers, Misc 718/152 15 October 1925.

representative of a whole group of men} and demonstrate the dichotomy between offering support publicly and practicing it privately. Yet, perhaps his comment to Hannah Mitchell, shortly before his death, that 'I think...they all understand and appreciate what I meant to do, and forgive the things I have done, or failed to do'<sup>138</sup> applies to both Annot and Sam Robinson. Whatever their apparent failings, the commitment they displayed for the causes they espoused deserves recognition and the problems of their political and personal partnership provides a salutary reminder that the personal remains political. The final chapter, which considers the partnership of Elsie Duval and Hugh Franklin, demonstrates this also but in rather a different way.

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<sup>138</sup> HM papers, M220/4/18 Sam Robinson's obituary.

## CHAPTER SIX

### MORE THAN JUST 'A SPORTING COUPLE': THE MILITANCY OF ELSIE DUVAL AND HUGH FRANKLIN.

This chapter will consider the political partnership of Elsie Duval and Hugh Franklin who were both involved in the suffrage campaigns of the early twentieth century and yet the level and extent of their commitment has not been acknowledged in subsequent histories and accounts of suffrage.<sup>1</sup> I will first examine their individual activities and motivation for becoming involved in the suffrage campaign and the ways in which this both created and reinforced their continuing separate identities. I shall also consider the extremities of their actions, the ways in which they were represented and how this subsequently affected both their personal and political activities. By taking this approach, a good insight is provided into the changing nature of the relationship between the WSPU and the MPU as militancy escalated as well as enabling a discussion of suffrage and judaism to be included. Finally, I shall explore the impact of suffrage on Hugh Franklin's political and personal life after Elsie Duval's premature death.

Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval were born in 1889 and 1892 respectively, making them among the younger supporters of votes for women. They were both arrested several times between 1910 and 1913 and Hugh Franklin was imprisoned on three occasions whilst Elsie Duval experienced Holloway prison twice. Their

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<sup>1</sup> Even accounts written by male supporters of women's suffrage have excluded key participants such as Hugh Franklin and Victor Duval. Notably, H.W. Nevinson's, *More Changes, More Chances*, (1925) does not contain a single reference to these two men who featured so prominently in his diaries during the period of heightened suffrage militancy.

militant activities were extreme and included alleged arson attacks on a house, a railway station and a train.<sup>2</sup> They met through Victor Duval, Elsie's brother, and although they did not marry until 1915, their romantic involvement had begun several years earlier.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, throughout the period of suffrage militancy they continued to conduct their militant activities separately, creating very distinct identities and effectively put the personal side of their relationship 'on hold' choosing instead to focus on their individual political endeavours. In this sense, their commitment to the cause cannot be questioned but why they chose to function in this way warrants further discussion.

There are a number of factors that determined their political activity which also reveal the complexities of being involved in the suffrage movement at this time. Membership of the MPU and the WSPU was segregated by gender and, as will be seen, the evolving nature of the relationship between these two organisations and their policies would not have enabled Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval to function as a political partnership in the same way as the Pethick-Lawrences. As relative 'late-comers' to the cause, not least because of their ages, their introduction to the suffrage campaigns was influenced, and to an extent dictated by, family alliances.

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<sup>2</sup> Fawcett Library, London Guildhall University, London, Franklin/Duval papers, (hereafter know as HF papers), Folder One, Biographical sketch of militant activity.

<sup>3</sup> According to biographical details, Elsie Duval had been a member of the WSPU prior to the split of 1907. This would have meant she was only fourteen or fifteen when she joined although she did not meet Hugh Franklin until c.1910.

Hugh Franklin was the son of Arthur Ellis Franklin, a prosperous businessman, publisher and Justice of the Peace. The Franklin family were also practising members of the Jewish faith which was to become divided on the question of women's suffrage. Hugh Franklin's mother, Beatrice, was a founding member of the Union of Jewish Women and numerous relatives including Lily Montagu were members of the Jewish League for Women's Suffrage (JLWS). Hugh Franklin formed part of the Franklin 'cousinhood' described by Linda Gordon Kuzmuck,<sup>4</sup> and his sister, Helen, married the Zionist leader, Norman Bentwich. Undoubtedly, being part of such a politically active family and a politically aware community influenced Hugh Franklin's own beliefs.

Hugh Franklin was educated at Clifton College and in 1908 he went to Caius College, Cambridge to study engineering. It was whilst at Cambridge, notably through a developing interest in sociology, that he began to formulate some of the ideas that caused his eventual rejection of the study of engineering and led him in the direction of supporting women's suffrage. His experimentation with a number of organisations including the Fabian Society and the ILP before joining first the MLWS and then the MPU chart the path he followed.<sup>5</sup> By 1910, Hugh Franklin had abandoned his religious beliefs and was concentrating on organising suffrage meetings and chalking pavements to the detriment of his studies. In May

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<sup>4</sup> L.Gordon Kuzmuck, *Woman's Cause, The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the US, 1881-1933*, (Ohio State University Press, 1990), p.165.

<sup>5</sup> By November 1911, Hugh Franklin had formally resigned from the MLWS, preferring the militant policy of the MPU. See HF papers, Folder 4, letter to Malcolm Mitchell from H.Franklin, 24 November 1911.

1910, he joined the Young Purple White and Green Club (YPWG) where he was viewed as a hero and by the end of June he had left Cambridge for good and returned to London to assist the MPU in organising a suffrage procession.

Despite his activities and behaviour at Cambridge, Hugh Franklin's connections were sufficiently influential for him to be offered the position of private secretary to Sir Matthew Nathan, Secretary to the Post Office. His uncle, Herbert Samuel, was Postmaster-General at this time and Hugh Franklin wrote to him expressing surprise at being made the offer but also explaining he had refused initially 'because of the political restraint under which I should be forced'.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, despite his refusal the offer had been renewed and Hugh Franklin wanted to be sure how this would juxtapose with his political beliefs. Whilst he understood the need for privacy and restraint in matters directly connected with the work he would be undertaking, since he would be part of the Civil Service, he could not reconcile himself to the fact that he 'should be forbidden to speak a word against the Government' in matters such as that of woman's suffrage. He firmly believed that 'one should always be given a free hand as far as absolutely possible in politics because silence is always regarded either as indifference or else as acquiescence.'<sup>7</sup>

Very little is known about Elsie Duval's upbringing and education but her involvement in women's suffrage was very much a family affair. Indeed, on 21 November 1911 when a tenth Women's Parliament was summoned to Caxton Hall,

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<sup>6</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Hugh Franklin to Herbert Samuel, 27 July 1910.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

five of the Duval family were arrested; Elsie, her two sisters, her brother Victor and her mother.<sup>8</sup> It is worth exploring the background and political activities of Elsie's mother, Emily Diederichs-Duval,<sup>9</sup> as it provides a useful insight into the rationale behind Elsie Duval's involvement in the suffrage campaigns. Emily Duval was born on 25 November 1861 in London, the daughter of Thomas Hayes. On 19 September 1881, she married Ernest Diederichs-Duval and they had six children (four of whom were imprisoned for the cause). Mrs Duval first joined the WSPU in 1906 and then joined the WFL in 1908 after the split of 1907. She was imprisoned twice in 1908, first for calling on Mr Asquith at 20 Cavendish Square, to ask a question concerning votes for women. For this, she was sentenced on 31 January 1908 to one month in Holloway. She was arrested again on 29 October 1908 in connection with the 'grille business' in the House of Commons and sent to Holloway again for one month. On 19 February 1909, she was crossing Parliament Square, between two friends, an hour or two after a deputation, and 'was evidently recognised as being a Suffragette, was arrested for doing nothing and sent to Holloway for six weeks.'<sup>10</sup>

Emily Duval was Secretary of the Battersea branch of the WFL for three years and also a member of the Executive Committee in 1910 but

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<sup>8</sup> E.S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p.359.

<sup>9</sup> Although recorded in A.J.R. (ed.), *The Suffrage Annual and Women's Who's Who*, (Stanley Paul and Co. London) 1913 as Emily Diederichs-Duval, she was more commonly known as Mrs Duval.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pp.225-6

resigned in 1911 'on account of its non-militant policy.'<sup>11</sup> Returning to the WSPU, on 21 November 1911, she went on a deputation and smashed windows of Local Government Board Offices claiming that while under arrest she smashed more. For this she received fourteen days. Emily Duval was arrested again in March 1912, once more for window smashing, and remanded in Holloway for fourteen days. On 26 March she appeared at Newington Sessions and was sentenced to six months. She was taken to Winson Green prison, Birmingham and put in the third division.<sup>12</sup> After four months she went on hunger strike and was force fed by stomach pump and nasal tube. She was released and taken to a nursing home at beginning of July.

Emily Duval's history is just one example of a growing body of work which recognises that even though principles and tactics adopted during the suffrage campaign resulted in switching allegiances at organisational level, this did not impinge upon friendships or preclude involvement with a number of groups simultaneously.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, after the outbreak of the First World War, Emily Duval is to be found on the committee of *The Suffragette News Sheet*, a monthly publication issued by 'a body of members of the old WSPU who differ

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> This was the first prison to use forcible feeding in the case of suffrage prisoners.

<sup>13</sup> See especially, L. Stanley with A. Morley, *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison*; J. Hannam, 'Suffragettes are splendid for any work': *The Blathwayt Diaries as a Source for Suffrage History* in C. Eustance, J. Ryan, L. Ugolini, (eds.), *Seeing Through Suffrage*, (Cassell, London, forthcoming, 1999).

from their former colleagues in thinking it right to continue suffrage propaganda during the war.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, they agreed to act together under the title of *The Suffragettes of the WSPU*. The news sheet was published from the offices of the WFL and 'The Suffragettes of the WSPU' used *The Vote*, the official organ of the WFL, to advertise events including a memorial meeting in 1917, to be held in Hyde Park on the anniversary of Emily Wilding Davison's death.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Emily Duval was working with Mary Richardson for the *Woman's Dreadnought*, published by the East London Federation of the Suffragettes (ELF) under the leadership of Sylvia Pankhurst.<sup>16</sup>

Elsie Duval's brother, Victor was also an activist and like his sister, met his future spouse, Una Dugdale, through his involvement with suffrage. Indeed, their marriage in January 1912 was hailed as a 'suffrage wedding' and was described as a 'joyful celebration in which all the members of the two unions [the WSPU and the MPU] seemed to participate'.<sup>17</sup> The wedding attracted media attention because of the couple's insistence on omitting the word 'obey' from their marriage vows - the legality of this omission being the subject of some considerable debate.

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<sup>14</sup> Stanley with Morley, *The Life and Death of Emily Wilding Davison*, p.181.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p.182.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p.183.

<sup>17</sup> *Votes for Women*, 19 January, 1912, p.255.

Perusing the *Suffragette Prisoners Roll of Honour*, reveals the extent of family commitment to suffrage. Five members of the Duval family, including two of Elsie's sisters appear, alongside two members of the Dugdale and Franklin families, two of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence's sisters and five of the Ball family.<sup>18</sup>

Elsie Duval was a member of the WSPU and later the Women's Party, and throughout her short life she appeared to remain loyal to the autocratic leadership of Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst. For three years she worked in the offices of the MPU which was founded by her brother, Victor Duval, thus ensuring regular contact with Hugh Franklin even though their romance was not public and had to take second place to their work for the cause. There is no record of Elsie Duval's father's involvement in the women's suffrage movement but it would appear he was, at the very least, passively supportive. Certainly, in 1928, his only surviving daughter, Norah, writing in response to an invitation to attend a meeting and dinner of ex-suffrage prisoners, told Edith How Martyn that if her father was in London, 'I'm sure he would be delighted to come'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Roll of Honour, Suffragette Prisoners 1905-14*, Fawcett Library.

<sup>19</sup> Suffragette Fellowship Collection, (SFC), Museum of London, Reel 1, Group C, Vol 111, p.4, Letter from Norah Bursted (nee Duval) to Edith How Martyn, 23 January 1928.

## 6.1 'YOUNG BLOODS THIRSTING FOR ROWS...'

Hugh Franklin was first arrested in November 1910 on what became known as Black Friday.<sup>20</sup> Like Laurence Housman and others, he was horrified at the violence the women had been subjected to by the police.<sup>21</sup> Although he was discharged, Franklin held Winston Churchill - then the Liberal Home Secretary - personally responsible for the treatment meted out to women and this prompted him to take direct action later the same month. It is worth considering his actions and subsequent trial in some detail as they raise a number of issues that reach far beyond the extension of the franchise to women including the question of male support and attitudes toward male militancy.

On 22 November 1910, Franklin was part of a group who interrupted Churchill's meeting at Highbury, for which he was ejected. Four days later, on 26 November 1910, Hugh Franklin was travelling on a train to London having been ejected from a meeting in Bradford at which Winston Churchill was speaking. Franklin was accompanied on the train by Laura Ainsworth who struck the window of the Prime Minister's compartment when the train stopped at Doncaster. According to Franklin, she was 'thrown away' by Sergeant Stevens and they had to run to make their connection.<sup>22</sup> Winston Churchill was on the train they boarded

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<sup>20</sup> On 18 November 1910, there was a protest outside the House of Commons resulting in many women being physically and sexually assaulted by the police.

<sup>21</sup> See Holton, 'Manliness and Militancy', in *The Men's Share?* pp.110-114.

<sup>22</sup> *Votes For Women*, 9 December 1910, pp.169/170.



**EXCELSIOR!**

SUFFRAGIST. "IT'S NO GOOD TALKING TO ME ABOUT SISYPHUS; HE WAS ONLY A MAN!"



A group of male supporters proceeding to one of the four platforms for men's groups, at a WSPU rally in support of the Conciliation Bill, 23 July 1910.

and when he passed through the carriage Hugh Franklin and Laura Ainsworth were sitting in, Franklin attempted to strike Churchill with a dogwhip shouting, 'take that you cur for the treatment of the suffragists'.<sup>23</sup> Franklin was then arrested and charged with assaulting the Home Secretary. On 28 November he appeared at a special court hearing and although his father had instructed a solicitor to defend him, Franklin chose to conduct his own defence. He was remanded in custody for one week but the judge conceded that his mother could visit him.<sup>24</sup>

On 5 December, Hugh Franklin appeared in court again for the main hearing - this time being defended by a solicitor appointed by his family. The trial attracted considerable media interest, not least because Winston Churchill was called to attend. Whilst he was in the witness box, Franklin's solicitor, Mr Henle, took the opportunity to cross-examine Churchill on the subject of interruptions at meetings. Forcing Churchill to admit that interruptions not concerned with the suffrage question rarely resulted in individuals being ejected, Henle then asked him what he thought about the manner in which supporters of the suffrage movement were removed from public meetings. Again, Churchill was forced to acknowledge that 'they are ejected with very great roughness often'.<sup>25</sup> Henle (despite meeting some resistance from the prosecution) then moved on to the subject of people

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<sup>23</sup> HF papers, Folder 2, See Hugh Franklin's statement, (n.d.). It is also worth noting that Franklin always maintained he had succeeded in striking Churchill.

<sup>24</sup> See accounts of the court appearance in the *Daily Mirror*, the *Morning Post*, and the *Morning Advertiser*, 29 November 1910.

<sup>25</sup> Reported in *The Times*, 6 December, 1910.

being paid for their activities. This arose from a statement made by Churchill at the Bradford meeting in which he said,

We are here to do the nation's business and not to pay attention to these *antics* [my emphasis] which though they may bring a little profit to the persons engaged to perform them, are only doing an injury to the important cause in support of which they are advanced.<sup>26</sup>

It was often alleged by those opposed to women's suffrage that organisers of suffrage meetings and demonstrations paid individuals to attend in a bid to swell numbers.<sup>27</sup>

Responses to Hugh Franklin's actions were, inevitably, mixed but prompted letters from as far away as Italy where one female correspondent wrote:

The Women's Militant Movement has had much homage & sympathy from men, but until lately men have not shown themselves as actual combatants, and feeling as I do that Winston Churchill is a particularly cynical & insidious enemy of our cause, I am heartily glad to know that a man has been found who has expressed our common contempt for him in a rigorous & unmistakable manner.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Reported in *The Times*, 6 December 1910 and quoted in Hugh Franklin's statement, n.d.

<sup>27</sup> See for example letter to police from Miss Meechan concerning the Pethick-Lawrences quoted in Chapter Four.

<sup>28</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, letter from Mrs Wolleisen to Hugh Franklin, 30 November 1910. See also Ada Wright to Hugh Franklin, 4 January 1911 and Rachel Ferguson, YPWG Club, to Hugh Franklin, 25 January 1911. Hugh Franklin's subsequent actions also produced a flurry of correspondence, much of it sympathetic.

Thus Hugh Franklin became a male icon for the militant women's suffrage movement at a time when the liaison between certain sections of the WSPU and male supporters was not so problematic.

It is worth considering the way in which men portrayed themselves in relation to the question of women's suffrage through membership of male organisations not least because it illustrates that men were as divided as women in terms of tactical approaches and also experienced altering allegiances. The MLWS advocated 'securing the Parliamentary Franchise for women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men' and the MPU made its members sign a specific pledge. An explanation as to the general conflict between men and women over the suffrage issue is shown in a pamphlet by Victor Duval written in 1910:

The reason of this indifferent attitude of men to woman's needs is undoubtedly the outcome of misunderstanding, for it would be difficult to conceive of Englishmen, renowned throughout the world's history for their love of fair play, deliberately setting their minds against the freedom of their sisters. We know very well that men have sacrificed their liberty and perilled their lives in pursuit of voting rights. In the last century this was the case again and again, and yet in spite of this fact, men are to be found at the present time doing their utmost to prevent one million women from exercising the right of citizenship. Is it small wonder women have become impatient of this treatment?<sup>29</sup>

It could be argued that this outlook was rather naive, serving only to highlight a range of issues that permeate male attitudes towards women's suffrage. However, symbols of masculine identity such as 'fair play' have to be contextualised, for it is

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<sup>29</sup> Victor Duval, *An Appeal to Men*, (1910) p.2.

easy to criticise, eighty years on, what remain, essentially, nationalistic as well as masculine traits. The issue of women's suffrage when discussed in relation to Empire, represented conflicting views of masculinity; from the 'fair play' perspective, it could be seen that women should have the vote but this was to assume that an Englishman's sense of fair play extended to women. Certainly, the reactions of men from other continents regarding attitudes to, and the treatment of, militant suffragists questioned the masculinity of all Englishmen. In a letter to the *Daily Herald*, a 'Citizen of New South Wales' wrote 'I had often been told that Englishmen at bottom are cowards, but I never believed it until last Sunday...'<sup>30</sup>

The following year, an American man felt compelled to write to McKenna, the Home Secretary, after witnessing the treatment women received in St James' Park. The letter provides a fascinating insight into a number of issues surrounding masculinity and identity.

Although an American citizen, and as such not concerned with British methods of administration, I feel it my duty to call public attention to a distressing feature of the recent riots in St. James' Park, and to ask, without any desire to present a brief for or against the Suffragettes, which is the greater offence, militancy, inspired by a principle right or wrong, or mere rowdyism?

I witnessed several cases in which the woman, finally arrested, was first hustled by these gangs of hooligans, and worked into a fury which caused her arrest, but in no case was there any attempt to restrain the violent and, in many cases, brutal hands of these men....A crowd of fellows with the cry "Let's hustle her along!" bumped and jostled her along the fence, arousing her wrath and collecting thereby a large and growing crowd....I walked over to a group of smiling policemen and asked why rowdies of that sort weren't as subject to arrest as a militant Suffragette. The only answer I received was that I would have to see an Inspector for that....As things grew worse and the crowd hustled and

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<sup>30</sup> 'A Citizen of New South Wales' to the Editor, *Daily Herald*, 10 April 1913, p.10 quoted in Holton, 'Manliness and Militancy' in *The Men's Share?*, p.114.

followed her along, a policeman from another quarter crawled into the fray - and led the woman away under arrest. I called the other policemen's attention to the result as I had predicted, and again demanded why the men who with violence began it all were not equally subject to arrest, and I received this answer: "O, we do things differently from you Yankees. In England every true Englishman is expected to assist us in putting down these women, and every true Englishman is glad to!" And one of the officers, stirred by some inner feeling, added "If we had these women in Wales we'd dump the whole lot over the cliffs!" It seemed to me the police were at no time as an organisation in any need of assistance, outnumbering the Suffragettes as they did 3 to 1, and each one individually twice as strong....Never in my life have I heard so much vileness and filth from the mouths of men in a public place in the presence of women here hurled at other women who I find designated merely as creature, certainly as disgusting and as besmirching as mere paint or even a fist hurled by a militant at a policeman, and as subject to the calm, soothing arm of the law. The whole thing seemed a bit absurd.<sup>31</sup>

As the 'mother country' (ironic given that mothers had no say in its running), strength was paramount and to give women the vote would only serve to weaken the country's position. As Fred Pethick-Lawrence explained:

Men, it was said, were governed by reason, women by emotion. If once the franchise were thrown open to women, they would speedily obtain a majority control and force an emotional policy on the country to the detriment of the public weal.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, even though these men's organisations were seemingly actively in their support for the women's campaign, Victor Duval's words suggest that the sex war he identifies, which was of a rather different nature to the 'sex war' espoused

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<sup>31</sup> PRO/HO 45/10720/249187 Letter received on 25 May 1914 from Harry Townsend to McKenna.

<sup>32</sup> F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, p.68.

by Christabel Pankhurst, could be overcome once the 'misunderstanding' had been cleared up. This view, whilst idealistic, was representative of many of the men from literary and artistic circles, who were drawn into supporting women's rights.

Hugh Franklin's father was very concerned about his son's actions and arranged for a solicitor to have a 'lay interview' with Victor Duval to see whether he could prevent Franklin from taking any further part in militant action. On 13 December 1910, the result of this meeting was laid out in a letter to Mr Franklin senior and, according to the solicitor, Victor Duval had himself decided not to take any further militant action and was intending to advise Hugh Franklin not to take any further active steps in the movement. Moreover, Duval was going to encourage Franklin to resume his position at the Post Office.<sup>33</sup> There had also been some discussion about a dinner being held for the female prisoners to which Hugh Franklin was going to be invited. Duval had, supposedly, promised 'that he will use his influence to prevent any such invitation being given'.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Hugh Franklin duly received an invitation and ticket from Mabel Tuke to attend a reception for released prisoners.<sup>35</sup>

It may well be the case that Hugh Franklin's father was prompted to take this action because of the embarrassment his son's actions had caused to a man in his position. E.S. Roberts, writing from Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge,

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<sup>33</sup> This was not, however, an option as Hugh Franklin was dismissed from his post.

<sup>34</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Letter to Mr Franklin Senior from Ernest Myer, 13 December, 1910.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter from Mabel Tuke to Hugh Franklin, 13 January 1911.

had sympathised with him and his family 'for the trouble in which our rash young friend has involved you' concluding that, 'it may be the bad beginning of a bitter end',<sup>36</sup> whilst the Office of the Chief Rabbi tried to reassure Franklin senior writing, 'Pray do not worry about your son. Hugh's act was foolish, but happily there was nothing dishonourable'.<sup>37</sup> However, other reactions were more vitriolic and one writer asked Hugh Franklin, 'Is your sister, sweetheart or some other relative a suffragette to make you do as you're bid?' The letter continued by advising him to return to college 'and learn common sense and how to behave to others', but then suggesting that 'a "cur" could not do what you attempted with your hooliganism go and drown yourself first chance you get you despicable fool'.<sup>38</sup> Other correspondence condemning his action suggested he be put in a lunatic asylum and that he had not behaved like a gentleman.<sup>39</sup>

The actions of Franklin provoked a gendered discussion of chivalry. On one hand his act could be interpreted as chivalrous in that it was committed in defence of women, but 'gentlemen', a term inextricably bound up with notions of chivalry, did not behave in this way. In this regard he was perceived as having 'betrayed' other 'gentlemen' earning himself the very title of 'cur' that he had applied to Winston Churchill. As Sandra Holton has pointed out, the assertion of a

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter from E.S. Roberts to Mr Franklin Senior, 6 December 1910.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Arthur Franklin from the Chief Rabbi's Office, 28 November, 1910.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Hugh Franklin from illeg. n.d.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letters to Hugh Franklin, 29 November 1910.

competing masculinity caused people like Charles Gray, an MPU organiser, to articulate the problem as 'a question of whether we are gentlemen or cads'.<sup>40</sup>

However, others were more optimistic and one New Year greeting addressed Hugh Franklin as 'future MP'.<sup>41</sup> He was idolised by members of the YPWG Club who lamented the fact that they 'were unfortunate enough to have been born a few years too late but our hearts are in the right place'.<sup>42</sup> Marion Cunningham, suffering ill health because of 'too much suffrage work and no holiday for years' wrote offering her 'womanly thanks and admiration' asking Hugh Franklin to act in a piece entitled 'Men's Methods' with the proceeds going to the MPU.<sup>43</sup> Others, like Bertha Brewster, recognised the work of the MPU believing that 'it will be far easier and pleasanter now that men are taking their proper place in the struggle'.<sup>44</sup> Correspondence to Hugh Franklin also raised issues of masculinity relating to class:

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<sup>40</sup> C. Gray, Letter to the Editor, *The Daily Herald*, 17 December 1912. Quoted in Holton, *The Men's Share?* p.114.

<sup>41</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Greeting from Streatham, 29 December 1910.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter from Janet McLeod, Business Manager of the YPWG Club to Hugh Franklin, 25 January 1911. The YPWG Club also presented Franklin with a signed table mat 'In grateful recognition of his services to the Woman's cause'.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter from Marion Cunningham to Hugh Franklin, 2 January 1911

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Bertha Brewster to Hugh Franklin, 24 December 1910. Bertha Brewster was imprisoned for her militancy and whilst in prison smashed 15 panes of glass. She was involved with the United Suffragists formed in 1914 and accompanied Henry Nevinson and Evelyn Sharp to the outer lobby of the House of Commons on 6 February 1918 to await the result of the passing of the Representation of the People Act by the Lords. See Suffragette Fellowship

I was much interested to hear from my son Roy that you are an O.C. [Old Cliftonian], and I feel I must write and congratulate you on the brave and noble stand that you have taken on behalf of women who are fighting for their political freedom....From the experience I have had with my five sons, I know how difficult it is for those who have been in public schools and the Varsity to take the unusual step that you have done and I am also sure that it will have a great effect in these spheres - altho' [sic] it may not be apparent just at once....With many thanks and sincere appreciation of your services to our cause.<sup>45</sup>

Subsequent correspondence between Victor Duval and Franklin senior suggests an element of bribery and corruption. In January 1911, Victor Duval wrote to Franklin senior regarding an offer of one hundred shares in the company, Valite Ltd and an additional one hundred pounds made by the latter. Duval was unequivocal in his rejection of this proposal, writing:

Not having been aware that I have ever rendered any service to you requiring payment I am at a loss to understand your reasons for wishing to reward me. If it is to be an inducement for me to make your son leave the Men's militant movement for Women's Enfranchisement I assure you in all sincerity that I have no influence whatsoever over him.

Whilst Duval acknowledged Franklin's disappointment and anxiety, he further pointed out that:

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Collection, (SFC), Reel 1, Group A, p.93 and H.W. Nevinson, *More Changes, More Chances*.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Hugh Franklin from Edith Kenwood, 16 January 1911.

From the knowledge I have of Hugh I know him to be a strong man and it is futile on my part to endeavour to shake him from his purpose. If I were so base as to take one penny piece from that young man's father I should not only deserve the eternal contempt of yourself but also of your son. I have a great regard for Hugh and respect his father, therefore I have a right to expect that you will not be so discourteous as to make such an offer again.<sup>46</sup>

Franklin senior responded to Duval's letter in a rather unconvincing manner explaining that it had been a 'misunderstanding' and that whilst he was aware Duval expected no reward, he believed from Myers that Duval would be able to help Hugh Franklin be reinstated in his position at the Post Office - it was for this reason he wanted to reward him.<sup>47</sup> This is just one example of how far relatives were prepared to go if they thought it would prevent further family involvement in acts of militancy which could be a potential source of embarrassment.

Hugh Franklin's circle of friends from Cambridge displayed mixed feelings toward his activities and whilst on remand, Hugh Franklin received a lengthy letter from a good friend, Scotton Huelin, who was unrelenting in his condemnation of Franklin's actions stating:

...I imagine that you did it or said you did it on more or less chivalrous grounds - yes my worthy Knight Errant or Knight of the Purple White and Green shield - but if imitate [sic] those Golden times in your motives you must follow them also in your actions - Judging your action from your own grounds I am afraid there is not very much chivalry in it - it partakes more

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter from Victor Duval to Mr Franklin senior, 13 January 1911.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Victor Duval from Mr Franklin senior, 15 January 1911.

of the nature of a violent assault of a person who through perpetual brooding has lost his mental balance.<sup>48</sup>

Comparing Franklin's actions to those of Peter Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist resident in England, he pointed out that had Kropotkin horsewhipped a Russian official instead of retiring from Russia and working steadily for freedom, he would not have done so much for the ideal he loved. The letter concluded, 'yours ever in anarchy - but not YOUR sort'.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of this Franklin was staying at his friend Huelin's house in January 1911, when both he and Huelin were in correspondence with Christabel Pankhurst.<sup>50</sup>

Hugh Franklin was not the only contender however, for the title of 'Knight-Errant'. *Punch* which had historically displayed a somewhat schizophrenic attitude towards suffrage, chose to bestow this appellation upon the police, who were apparently protecting the suffragettes from 'severe treatment at the hands of the public'.<sup>51</sup> The 'public' presumably meaning men if the correspondence mentioned previously is any indication. The following extract from a poem published in typical *Punch* style, in April 1913 depicts the 'true Knights-Errant':

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Hugh Franklin from E. Scotton Huelin, 1 December 1910.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, See letter to Hugh Franklin from C. Pankhurst, 26 January 1911.

<sup>51</sup> *Punch*, 9 April 1913, p.274.

## THE TRUE KNIGHTS-ERRANT.

Robert, O Robert, my brave knight-errant,  
Lending your aid to assaulted suffs,  
Your duty disdaining the strong deterrent  
That *they*'ve used *you* like the toughest "toughs;"  
Not less to chivalrous deeds you're bound  
Than the olden Knights of the Table Round!

Ever he answered in gentle fashion,  
Escorting her safe from the clutch of her foe;  
And you, whom the fist of the Suff. falls crash on,  
Have scorned to retaliate, well we know;  
Keeping your knightly vows in mind,  
You stand between her and enraged mankind.

Go it, then, gallant Sir Gareth Robert,  
Heir of the old chivalric days!  
Talon and tooth of the suffrage mob hurt  
Your skin, but your honour they fail to graze;  
England is proud of you; *Mr Punch*  
Would shake your hand and endure the crunch.<sup>52</sup>

Hugh Franklin was sentenced to six weeks in the second division at Pentonville prison on 5 December 1910. He immediately went on hunger strike and after two days was given special regulations until his release on 9 January 1911. It is interesting however, to note that whilst in prison, Hugh Franklin was being allowed three to four hours of exercise daily whilst women were only allowed one hour.<sup>53</sup>

The *Winning Post*, commenting on the case and Churchill's attitude towards Franklin, pointed out:

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *Votes For Women*, 13 January 1911, p.238.

In view of the sympathy Winston expresses for prisoner, it will, of course, be expected that he will allow Pankie and Co. to sit with him in his cell and darn his socks. He might also be allowed a musical box to play the incidental music from "The Whip." Winnie seemed to think that Mr Franklin was merely in the play of the Suffragettes, but if so they seem to have sold him a pup.<sup>54</sup>

Hugh Franklin was able to use the columns of *Votes For Women*, the official organ of the WSPU at this time, to explain his actions. In an article entitled 'Why I Struck At Mr Churchill', he stated, 'When a man is responsible for having women knocked about and physically injured by others-when, in addition, he insults them to their face and slanders them behind their back-he deserves a whipping'. Deeming himself the man who had to do this, Franklin also explained that Churchill had taken 'advantage of his position of immunity in the House of Commons publicly to slander a whole class of women'.<sup>55</sup> Clearly, Franklin equated his actions to those of a knight saving damsels in distress; a gentlemanly gesture towards 'ladies'. Another point Franklin took issue with was the fact that speakers could be interrupted with impunity when dealing with any topic except the question of votes for women, but suffragists, including himself, experienced 'gross personal violence'.<sup>56</sup> Citing the case of Alfred Hawkins, who interrupted Churchill's speech at Bradford, he described how Hawkins was 'hurled out of the hall, flung down the stairs, and suffered a fractured knee, and then once more flung down the stairs, breaking his

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<sup>54</sup> *Winning Post*, 10 December 1910. This would appear to be a satirical publication.

<sup>55</sup> *Votes For Women*, 9 December 1910, p.162.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

leg in a second place and dislocating his ankle'.<sup>57</sup> For this act, Franklin held Cabinet Ministers directly responsible.

## 6.2 'MEN IN PRISON ONLY EMBARRASS US'

The WSPU were supportive of Franklin's militancy at this time and a note from Frederick Pethick-Lawrence admired his splendid courage and the brave stand he was making.<sup>58</sup> Upon his release from prison after serving his second term, Franklin was to be the guest of the Pethick-Lawrences, accompanying them to Cornwall for Easter - they had consulted with Victor Duval on the matter and wrote to Franklin stating, 'we have taken your acceptance for granted'.<sup>59</sup> Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence used Hugh Franklin's actions to demonstrate that 'the sense of honour and of chivalry is not yet dead in the hearts of men', comparing his sentence of six weeks with a man who had been fined ten pounds for attempting to stab his wife, and another case where a man had been released after inflicting a three inch wound on his wife's throat with a pair of scissors.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> HF papers, Folder 3, Letter to Hugh Franklin from F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, 8 March 1911.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, Folder 3, Letter to Hugh Franklin from F.W. Pethick-Lawrence, 7 April 1911.

<sup>60</sup> E. Pethick-Lawrence, 'Deliverance to the Captives', in *Votes For Women*, 9 December 1910, p.166.

The MPU used the case of Hugh Franklin to keep the question of male support in the public eye. At a public meeting at Caxton Hall just before Christmas 1910, Fred Pethick-Lawrence explained the importance of increasing sales of *Votes For Women* in order that people outside the suffrage movement could learn the truth about it - especially since the 'ordinary' press suppressed what was really happening. F.R. Henderson, describing the experiences of the rooftop vigilante at the Paragon Theatre, Mile End, prior to Lloyd George's meeting there, paid homage to the 'heroic endurance' of Hugh Franklin who spent twenty hours on the roof on the coldest night of the year. He also made reference to Franklin's subsequent action involving Churchill concluding that 'if Mr Franklin had not done what he did, I would'.<sup>61</sup>

Individuals within the WSPU who had previously been imprisoned wrote to Hugh Franklin about what was now regarded as a shared experience. Laura Ainsworth thanking him for his 'noble self-sacrifice', wrote supposing, 'that we shall meet again in some escapade at some future time' whilst acknowledging that 'you must have had an awfully rough time'.<sup>62</sup>

Franklin's imprisonment prompted people involved with the movement to consider the role of men within it, causing one observer to comment:

I have often heard men say that 'men would never go through what our women have done for any cause'. You and Mr Abbey have given the lie to

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<sup>61</sup> 'Why Men Protest', *Votes For Women*, 23 December, 1910 p.200.

<sup>62</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Laura Ainsworth to Hugh Franklin, 8 January and 11 April 1911.

that and while all suffragists are grateful to you none can be more so than those who know what it means and the weariness of keeping it up.<sup>63</sup>

Jessey Kenney, describing the courage and determination Franklin had shown during his imprisonment, wrote, 'may these spur on other men to take their places in the fighting line!'<sup>64</sup> Franklin was also useful to the WSPU because of his connections and he sent copies of the correspondence between himself and his uncle to Christabel Pankhurst who was 'amused by Mr Samuel's assumption of women's inferiority of political understanding'.<sup>65</sup> Franklin's commitment to and impact on the cause is illustrated by the number of people who wrote to him about his involvement not least because of his gender. A letter from Christabel Pankhurst thanking him for his support noted, 'we are very fond of our men friends who are fighting so bravely for us',<sup>66</sup> although her position was to alter radically as militancy escalated. Franklin was one of a number of people that Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst utilised in terms of contacts, and at times their persistence was quite pressurising, making Elizabeth Robins '...anxious not to become simply a conduit for relaying information...'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Hugh Franklin from Ca. S? Marsh, 3 March and 11 April 1911. See also, Bertha Brewster to Hugh Franklin, 24 December 1910.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Hugh Franklin from Jessey Kenney, 11 April 1911.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter from C. Pankhurst to Hugh Franklin, 11 May 1911.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Hugh Franklin from C.Pankhurst, 7 April 1911.

<sup>67</sup> A.V. John, *Elizabeth Robins Staging a Life, 1862-1952*, (Routledge, London,1995) p.156.

The heroic status afforded to Hugh Franklin did not wane following his release from prison. Along with Alfred Hawkins, he received a rapturous welcome at a meeting of the MPU at Caxton Hall.<sup>68</sup> Messages from well-wishers were read out, including one referring to Hugh Franklin which stated, 'Never in the annals of history has hero [sic] made a braver fight for chivalry'.<sup>69</sup> In a speech entitled, 'Should Winston Churchill Go To Prison?' Franklin gave his experience of prison life and the disgraceful remand system in operation - something which he was to campaign against for many years.<sup>70</sup>

On 8 March 1911, Hugh Franklin was arrested again for 'throwing a missile to the common danger' after attempting to smash Churchill's windows. The reason for this attack was to protest that Alfred Abbey, a member of the MPU, was being treated as an ordinary criminal and forcibly fed. Franklin had written a letter to Churchill which he wrapped round a stone with a feeding tube and then threw against the fanlight. The letter was concerned with Abbey's plight and Franklin forcefully articulated, 'Seeing what your actions have been, you at least will have no right to blame me if I am once again sufficiently courteous to fight you with your own weapon of "Might is Right".'<sup>71</sup> He conducted his own defence, the

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<sup>68</sup> Nevinson diaries, E616/2 16 January 1911. According to Nevinson Hugh Franklin 'spoke well and modestly on his prison life'.

<sup>69</sup> Reported in 'Men In The Fighting Line', in *Votes For Women*, 20 January 1911, p.257, this was a telegram from the Hull branch of the WSPU, 16 January 1911. HF papers, Folder 4.

<sup>70</sup> See correspondence between Hugh Franklin and Herbert Samuel, 4 and 6 January 1910, 12 February 1912, 2 August 1932 and letter to V.Duval 8 March 1911. HF papers, Folder 4.

finale of which was the revealing of the placard of the current edition of *Votes For Women*, bearing the words, 'Man Prisoner Fed by Force'.<sup>72</sup> Hugh Franklin was sentenced to one month in Pentonville prison and was forcibly fed three times daily for the whole month. Upon his release, Franklin wrote an account of his month in prison, once again recognising that apart from the fight for women's suffrage, his prison experience had made him notice 'evils that pervade our whole punitive system'.<sup>73</sup> He also made reference to the experience of being forcibly fed likening it to combat:

The doctors and warders constantly urged me to give it up, saying I had had enough, and I was ruining my health. They seemed to forget that it was they who were feeding me in this disgusting way; moreover, I informed them and the Governor I could no more turn back - having undertaken the duty of protesting - than a soldier in battle can retire merely because the enemy offer some resistance.<sup>74</sup>

Franklin's action on this occasion prompted much discussion about ideas of chivalry, with *Votes For Women* offering a broadly defined interpretation that also enabled them to dispel accusations that the WSPU were contemptuous of the notion. Under the heading 'Mr Franklin's Chivalrous Action', it was asserted that the WSPU did indeed despise 'spurious and hypocritical chivalry' whilst having

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<sup>71</sup> *Votes For Women*, 17 March 1911, p.385.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> *Votes For Women*, 14 April 1911, p.455.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

'the most profound reverence' for genuine chivalry whether it be performed by women or men.<sup>75</sup> Using the example of Lady Constance Lytton, who adopted the disguise of Jane Wharton so that she could place herself on a footing of social equality with other women prisoners in a bid to expose the barbarity of forcible feeding, recognition was given to this act of 'true chivalry'. Similarly, Hugh Franklin's protest was hailed as another example of chivalry as 'he determined to take his stand alongside of him [Abbey] in the prison'.<sup>76</sup>

When the Duval family were arrested on 21 November 1911, Elsie was originally charged with obstructing the police but four days later she was discharged at Bow Street. Under the age of twenty-one at the time of her arrest, Elsie Duval proved the exception to Mrs Pankhurst's inflexible rule that no-one under that age should do anything that might land them in gaol.<sup>77</sup> It may well be the case that the rule was introduced in March 1907, when two Manchester weavers, Dora Thewlis aged sixteen and Evelyn Armstrong aged seventeen, were remanded in custody for several days after attempting to get into the Lobby of the House of Commons.<sup>78</sup> The other members of the Duval family were given short prison

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<sup>75</sup> *Votes For Women*, 17 March 1911 p.382.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> As recalled by Sybil Morrison in an interview with Mary Stott, 'Prudence At The Palace Gates', *The Guardian*, 3 May 1978, p.11.

<sup>78</sup> MEPO 2/1016. XC2783 Report dated 23 March 1907. Forty Lancashire mill girls led by Annie Kenney and hundreds of suffragettes took part in this demonstration resulting in sixty-five women being imprisoned for terms of between two and four weeks. The magistrate passed some very scathing observations in connection with the presence of girls of these years taking part in disturbances.



One of the Lancashire mill girls being 'escorted' by police. 20 March 1907.

sentences and at an MPU meeting at the Steinway Hall, Victor Duval was presented with a frame containing the five summonses issued for the family's action.

Henle, who had previously defended Hugh Franklin, was the Duvals' representative in court. Elsie Duval's two sisters were charged with trying to break through the line of police at Cannon Row and were both sentenced to five days imprisonment. Mrs Emily Duval, Elsie's mother, was charged with breaking two panes of glass and throwing more stones after her arrest. She told the court there was no point in calling a witness as, at her last court appearance she had been sentenced to six weeks because of the wilful perjury of a constable. Nonetheless, Captain Gonne, a member of the MPU and an ex-artillery man, spoke for her explaining that 'injustice had been administered to the prisoner in February 1909'.<sup>79</sup> Mrs Duval used the court arena as an opportunity to point out that, 'If Mr Lloyd George had not proposed Manhood Suffrage, leaving women out, these riots would not have taken place. Freedom they asked for, and freedom they should fight for'.<sup>80</sup>

On 20 December 1911, a dinner was given in honour of the Duval family by the MPU in recognition of their commitment to the cause. Fred Pethick-Lawrence was in the chair and the speakers included Mrs and Victor Duval, Henry Nevinson, Annie Kenney and Hugh Franklin. In his speech, Fred Pethick-Lawrence expressed the belief that 'the Duval family are those with whom personal

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<sup>79</sup> *Votes For Women*, 1 December 1911, p.147.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

considerations do not weigh compared with public considerations. That, after all, is why they are here tonight'.<sup>81</sup> This belief was also reflective of the Pethick-Lawrences' own position, where there was apparently no distinction between personal and public interests. In her response, Mrs Duval reiterated that her family put the cause first and that 'she was quite prepared to give the remainder of her life to fight in that great battle', concluding that 'it was the duty of all women to come out and fight in this battle'.<sup>82</sup> This statement could be construed as meaning that familial connections and loyalties overrode everything else including the opportunity to function as a partnership in both a political and personal sense. The language deployed by Mrs Duval undoubtedly influenced her daughter Elsie's desire to dedicate all her energy to the cause, even if it was at the expense of a conventional romance. Suffrage, for Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval, perhaps served in some way to legitimise their feelings; the daring and courage demonstrated by them both was romantic enough. Nevertheless, Henry Nevinson's diary entry indicates a less than perfect atmosphere at the dinner, with 'Mrs L [Lawrence] irritated and the others hostile'.<sup>83</sup> Whether this hostility was directed wholly at Nevinson is difficult to say. It would certainly appear to be the case that he frequently had differences of opinion with other MPU members, including Victor Duval and Hugh Franklin, over the leadership of the Union.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Votes For Women*, 29 December 1911, p.210.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Nevinson Diaries, E617/1 20 December 1911.

On 1 March 1912, Mrs Duval was arrested again along with her daughter Norah, this time for smashing windows in Regent Street. Mrs Duval's proclamation at the dinner in honour of her family a few months earlier took on even greater emphasis as she told the court, 'I am prepared to die for Votes for Women'.<sup>85</sup> In Aylesbury prison she experienced forcible feeding for the first time and her account of the experience illustrates the brutality inflicted upon the recipients of this method.<sup>86</sup> When she was released, a doctor pronounced her unfit to travel but such was her commitment, she went straight to the offices of the WSPU.

Her daughter, Norah Duval, was sentenced to four months imprisonment at the Newington Sessions on 13 March 1912, for window smashing. She told the court, 'I wish to say that what I did I did entirely on my own responsibility, and not, as the jury would infer, as the dupe of others. I did it because I want the same political rights as my brothers enjoy today.'<sup>87</sup> When asked by the judge whether she would be willing to give up breaking the law, Norah Duval replied, 'No, certainly not. It is the only thing we can do. We cannot get redress in any other way'.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 21 December, 1911; 15, 19 February, 14 July, 1912; E617/3 31 January 1913; E618/2 5 February 1914.

<sup>85</sup> *Votes For Women*, 9 March 1912, p.380.

<sup>86</sup> See her account in *Votes For Women*, 5 July 1912, p.648.

<sup>87</sup> *Votes For Women*, 16 March 1912.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

Whilst her mother and sister were in prison, Elsie Duval was arrested for smashing a window at Clapham Common Post Office. She had received a communication from Christabel Pankhurst in January 1912, stating, 'We have pleasure in accepting your name for the next militant protest, and it has accordingly been entered on our list'.<sup>89</sup> Press reports of her court appearance emphasised her delicate appearance and concentrated on descriptions of her clothing whilst acknowledging that her name was well-known within the suffragist movement. After questioning a witness's accuracy as to the distance from which she threw the stones, suggesting it was double that stated, the judge, Mr Francis, remanded her 'for the state of her mind to be enquired into'.<sup>90</sup>

Elsie Duval writing to her family whilst on remand commented, 'they have got it into their heads that I am sixteen years of age...I refused to give my age'.<sup>91</sup> She also asked them to 'give Mama my love and say I am sorry I could not see her before going to prison', adding that 'it is the men here who want the state of their mind inquired into'. Her final wry comment was that 'I have just had a missionary preaching to me and she told me she was sorry for me and I said I was equally sorry for her'.<sup>92</sup> On 29 June 1912, Elsie Duval was able to write a substantial letter to her father from Holloway which, whilst concerned with practicalities such as a

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<sup>89</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Letter from C. Pankhurst to E. Duval, 22 January 1912.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Press report, 28 June 1912 and Box 227, Prison diaries, 1911/1912.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, Box 227, Prison diaries, 1911/1912.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

missed dental appointment and the fact that all her belongings had been taken away from her, also reveals her concerns about her mother. Mrs Duval had by now been released from prison and was recuperating in a nursing home. As a remand prisoner, Elsie believed she was entitled to visits and asked her father to see her and also to try and get bail for her. She called the magistrate 'perfectly hateful' and then described the whole experience:

...I was kept in a filthy cell until nearly 5 o'clock, and was then taken a roundabout route to Holloway in the Black Maria, men one side and women the other, and the language mixed with smoke and smell of dirty clothes was terrible, and it does not say much for sanitary Inspectors, or they would have these unhealthy conveyances done away with...one woman was sick after changing at Brixton.<sup>93</sup>

On a more positive note, she was able to tell her father that shortly after her arrival she had heard 'our band' outside playing the 'Marching song'. She found this most encouraging although she had not seen any other suffragettes because she was in another part of the prison.<sup>94</sup>

Elsie Duval was sentenced a week later to one month in Holloway prison where she too experienced the horror of being forcibly fed.<sup>95</sup> She was bitten by an insect upon her arrival and refused to be examined, thus indicating to the

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, Box 227, Letter from E. Duval in Holloway prison to her father, 29 June 1912.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> According to biographical details in the HF papers, Elsie Duval was forcibly fed on nine occasions during her month in prison, each time by two doctors and nine warders.

authorities from the outset that she would not co-operate.<sup>96</sup> Despite having endured forcible feeding, she wrote a note to her father two days before her release on 3 August 1912, reassuring him that she was quite well.<sup>97</sup> Describing her experience in *Votes For Women*, Elsie Duval spoke of the pain caused by forcible feeding and the roughness of those carrying out the act. Nevertheless, she resisted to the utmost of her strength and on one occasion heard the remark made, "I did not know that little thing could put up such a fight!" The whole experience left her ill and with internal injuries and a week after her release she was still not well enough to travel.<sup>98</sup>

Hugh Franklin had been released from prison in April 1911, and it was to be nearly two years before he returned. Although young, he had suffered with ill-health prior to being forcibly fed. According to the biographical sketch he compiled of his early years, a Dr Bruce had certified that his heart and lungs had been strained through running whilst at Clifton College and he had been forbidden to take part in any long-distance running.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, he came back with a blaze, literally, in October 1912, when he set fire to the compartment of the train in which he was travelling. He was charged on 17 December but failed to attend the court hearing, preferring to send a note via Victor Duval which explained that he would

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<sup>96</sup> HF papers, Box 227, Prison diary 1911/1912.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, Box 227, note to Mr Duval from Elsie in Holloway prison. 1 August 1912.

<sup>98</sup> *Votes For Women*, 9 August 1912, p.736.

<sup>99</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Autobiographical sketch of Hugh Franklin 1907-1910.

only come if forced to and if a warrant were issued.<sup>100</sup> At this time, the activity of the suffragettes was causing problems for his uncle, Herbert Samuel. In his position as Postmaster General, he had to find a solution to the arson attacks on post boxes. The matter was raised in the House of Commons on 16 December where Herbert Samuel spoke of 'the recent malicious attempts upon pillar boxes'.<sup>101</sup>

Hugh Franklin's case was finally heard on 8 March 1913, at the Middlesex sessions where he was found guilty and sentenced to nine months imprisonment in the second division at Wormwood Scrubs. Press coverage of the trial emphasised his 'gentlemanly appearance' and described him as 'refined-looking and gentlemanly dressed'.<sup>102</sup>

Elsie Duval was also back in action shortly after Franklin's imprisonment. On 3 April 1913, she was arrested for 'loitering with intent' along with 'Phyllis Brady', the pseudonym that Olive Beamish adopted during her militant activity. They were both remanded in custody for one week and then sentenced to a month in Holloway gaol. Along with others who had been forcibly fed, including Lady Constance Lytton, Elsie Duval experienced further illness; a factor which contributed to her premature death. During her imprisonment in 1913, Elsie Duval kept a diary which vividly records her experiences of forcible feeding and prison life. Her descriptions of being forcibly fed also reveal the camaraderie between

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<sup>100</sup> See reports in the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail*, 18 December 1912.

<sup>101</sup> Reported in *Votes For Women*, 20 December 1912, p.185.

<sup>102</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, selection of press cuttings, c.10 March 1912.

suffragette prisoners. In one entry she wrote that she had been offered exercise but refused to take it unless the others did.<sup>103</sup> Two days later she recorded that ‘doctors exceedingly anxious that I should take exercise, won my point and so went out for an hour with Phyllis Brady’.<sup>104</sup> Although neither Hugh Franklin nor Elsie Duval had dependents, as June Purvis has pointed out, there were few suffragettes who had no-one to worry about or someone who was concerned about them.<sup>105</sup> In Elsie’s case she had a mother, sisters and brothers, and a fiance. She and Hugh Franklin had become engaged in March 1913, just before they were imprisoned, which must have put an even greater strain on her although, arguably, it would also have been a source of strength and comfort to her. It is worth considering the part that the engagement of Elsie Duval and Hugh Franklin played in their decision to, for the first time, create a situation where they were both in prison and being forcibly fed at the same time. Like the Pethick-Lawrence’s they may have perceived it as an experience that would bring them closer together; it was their ‘joint’ effort for the cause.

Elsie Duval’s subsequent diary entries reveal increasing brutality in the methods used to feed her but also her continued resistance and militancy:

Governor, Matron and Wardresses appeared...jabber about still refusing food and myself charged with smashing 16 panes of glass and crockery of cell and what had I to say to it. Was told that for refusing food my remission marks were taken away and privileges (which had never had) to

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, Box 227, Prison Diary, 1913.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> J. Purvis, ‘The Prison Experiences of the Suffragettes in Edwardian Britain’, in *Women’s History Review*, Volume 4, Number 1, 1995 p.115.

be taken away and as to other would be left to prison committee. Then allowed to exercise with Phyllis and Miss Slade.<sup>106</sup>

Three days later, after a weekend of particularly vicious forcible feeding resulting in heart pain, Elsie Duval was taken to the prison hospital. She had that morning smashed up her cell again cutting her fingers in the process.<sup>107</sup> On Friday 25 April 1913, the diary entry read:

Morning fed stomach tube and wardress left in cell until dinner time - exercised for 10 min with Miss Slade in Afternoon fed stomach tube used 2 gags did not succeed in getting mouth open wide enough and used nasal tube. Beastly wardress left in cell with me until quite late and when I was sick told me I wasn't to and said I did it for purpose and told me to keep still on my back but could not. Had pains at heart and in stomach also headache - Sick in 3 handkerchiefs and also after wardress left cell.<sup>108</sup>

On 28 April, Elsie Duval was the first prisoner to be released from Holloway under the 'Cat and Mouse' Act and the second prisoner to be released from any prison. The first person to be released under the Act was her future husband, Hugh Franklin who had been forcibly fed 114 times. The suffrage press had kept its readership fully informed of the suffering of those enduring forcible feeding, even though there was sometimes confusion as to the names and identities of individuals.<sup>109</sup> Hugh Franklin was described as being emaciated and suffering

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<sup>106</sup> HF papers, Prison Diaries, Leaf 3.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. Leaf 4

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. Leaf 6.

terribly - although still with an unbroken spirit, whilst 'Miss Brady and Miss Dean' who had both been forcibly fed whilst on remand looked 'ill and exhausted in court'. It was also reported that 'latterly Miss Dean's strength was very much reduced and she was not able to offer so much resistance'.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, as Elsie Duval later wrote, she was much cheered by receiving a note from Hugh whilst in court.<sup>111</sup> Other reports, whilst keen to highlight the suffering being meted out to women in prison, felt compelled to remind their audience of Hugh Franklin's fate, pointing out that 'he has fought daily...against the horrible process of tube-feeding by force, administered by a body of six men' and that he was 'scarcely recognisable'.<sup>112</sup>

Winifred Duval, one of Elsie's sisters, wrote to Hugh Franklin two days after he and Elsie had been released, enunciating, 'I wish someone could get hold of McKenna and forcibly feed him...how lovely your tearing the form in the Governor's face I expect he felt jolly wild about it'. Adding, 'Won't the Government be in a dilemma if all the Suffragettes refuse to comply with their requests. It will serve old stodgy McKenna right.' Commenting on Elsie's health,

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<sup>109</sup> Elsie Duval, for example, is not mentioned once during this period by the suffrage press. It is highly probable that she had at some stage also adopted a pseudonym along with Olive Beamish as there are several references to a 'Millicent Dean' who was sentenced with 'Phyllis Brady'. Moreover, 'Millicent Dean' is reported to have been released under the Cat and Mouse Act at the same time as Elsie Duval.

<sup>110</sup> *The Suffragette*, 18 April 1913, p.445

<sup>111</sup> HF papers, Box 227, E.Duval to H.Franklin, 29 April, 1913

<sup>112</sup> *Votes For Women*, 18 April, 1913.

she told Hugh Franklin that she was very thin but 'was delighted with roses'.<sup>113</sup> Elsie had herself written to Hugh Franklin the day after their release anxious to know how he was. She wanted to see him but explained it was impossible as she was bedridden. Although feeling helpless she wrote, 'if there is anything I can possibly do for you let me know', urging him to get strong and well.<sup>114</sup>

The release of the first batch of prisoners under the Cat and Mouse Act was rather overshadowed by the fact that Mrs Pankhurst's 'ticket of leave' from Holloway had expired on the same day and she had failed to return. Press reports the next day focused on relating the events of the weekly meeting of the WSPU at the Pavilion Music Hall, where Mrs Dacre Fox (who had presided) told the audience of Mrs Pankhurst's refusal to abide by the terms of her licence.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, a meeting of the MPU on the day after Franklin's release, originally planned to demand his freedom, gave its members an opportunity to publicly voice their protest at his treatment. Henry Nevinson read out a letter from Hugh Franklin which declared his pride at having been the first prisoner to be released under the new Act. Speeches were made by prominent figures in the movement including Henry Harben and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence, whilst Israel Zangwill scathingly

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<sup>113</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Letter from Winifred D. Duval to Hugh Franklin, 30 April, 1913.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, Box 227, E. Duval to H. Franklin, 29 April, 1913.

<sup>115</sup> See *Daily Chronicle*, *Morning Post*, *Morning Advertiser*, *Daily News*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Citizen* and *Daily Telegraph*, 29 April 1913.

demanded that the 'present mongrel and backboneless Cabinet aided by a gang of Irish Illiberals' should resign.<sup>116</sup>

Hugh Franklin had torn his licence up in the Governor's face immediately after receiving it and made his future intentions clear in the letter he had sent to the MPU meeting, in addition to offering his own eloquent description of prison life:

As I am the first who has had the honour of displaying in a practical manner contempt for the Cat and Mouse trap, I want to tell you what it feels like to be lying weak and safely shut up in bed with the cat serenely parading in a dark blue uniform, strutting to and fro with its back up, just beyond the bars of my cage.

Explaining the conditions attached to the licence, he further resolved:

I am supposed on Monday, May 12, to wend my way to Wormwood Scrubbs Prison, ring the bell, and like a naughty little boy, stammer forth, 'Please, sir, I've come back to be punished.' I may not lose myself in the intervening fortnight. I am told I shall be adequately looked after so long as I place my movements in the hands of that benevolent old gentleman, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

His final words made it absolutely clear that he would not be returning to Wormwood Scrubbs. '...I consider I have already suffered far more than nine months imprisonment....Therefore I shall consider that if any further imprisonment be inflicted on me there would be just one little item lacking - namely an offence.'<sup>117</sup> *The Suffragette* printed the letter in full entitling it 'A Hero's Letter'

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<sup>116</sup> Quoted in *The Standard*, 30 April, 1913.

but did not report on the women released under the Act until the following week.<sup>118</sup>

When the licences of the first four people to be released under the Act expired, none of them returned to prison and warrants were issued for their arrest. The press printed details of the circular sent out by Scotland Yard which contained a description of Hugh Franklin. Describing him as being of 'Jewish appearance' with a 'sallow complexion' as well as 'a wealthy supporter of the Militants', the *Daily Herald* begged the question, 'Where, Oh Where Can He Be?'.<sup>119</sup> The answer, according to a sympathiser with the militant movement, was that 'while the cat is about the mice are away and it will be some little time before they allow themselves to be caught'.<sup>120</sup>

Hugh Franklin's involvement with suffrage enables another dimension of the debate to be explored, that of the relationship between suffrage and judaism. Recent works have considered questions of ethnicity, race and empire in relation to women's history<sup>121</sup> and Linda Gordon Kusmuck has looked specifically at the

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<sup>117</sup> *Votes For Women*, and *The Suffragette*, 2 May 1913.

<sup>118</sup> See *The Suffragette*, 2 and 9 May 1913.

<sup>119</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Press Notices dated 14 and 15 May 1913.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, *Leeds Yorkshire Post*, 14 May 1913.

<sup>121</sup> See A. Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminism, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995); C. Midgley, 'Ethnicity, "race" and empire' in, J. Purvis, (ed.), *Women's History in Britain, 1850-1945*, (UCL Press, London, 1995)pp.247-76; C. Midgley, (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998).

Jewish Women's Movement in England and the United States.<sup>122</sup> The JLWS was founded on 3 November 1912, with the aim of demanding 'the Parliamentary Franchise for women on the same terms as it is, or may be, granted to men, and to unite Jewish Suffragists of all shades of opinion for religious and educational activities'. It also strived 'to further the improvement of the status of women in the Community and the State'.<sup>123</sup> As Kusmuck has noted, the League's executive council was comprised largely of upper-middle class Anglo-Jewish women from the Franklin extended family whilst male members included prominent Liberal and Orthodox rabbis, the author Israel Zangwill and Hugh Franklin. Many JLWS members were also active in other suffrage organisations; Henrietta "Netta" Franklin went on to become president of the NUWSS in 1916 whilst her sister Lily Montagu, founder of the West Central Jewish Girls Club, was on the League Council of the JLWS becoming a vice-president in 1913.<sup>124</sup>

The activism of Anglo-Jewish suffragists, especially when it involved militancy, was of grave concern to a large section of the Anglo-Jewish community and the debates were argued out for two years through the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>125</sup> One commonly held assumption was that suffragist aims espoused by Jewish women would provoke anti-semitic feelings towards the entire Jewish

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<sup>122</sup> L. Gordon Kusmuck, *The Jewish Women's Movement*.

<sup>123</sup> The Jewish League for Woman Suffrage, First Annual Report, 1913-14.

<sup>124</sup> L. Gordon Kusmack, *The Jewish Women's Movement*, pp.135-6.

<sup>125</sup> See in particular, *Jewish Chronicle*, 6, 13, 27 September, 1912; New Year Supplement, 1912, pp.xvi and xvii; 15,22,29 November 1912; 6, 13, 20, 27 December 1912; 9 May 1913; New Year Supplement, 1913.

community at a time when the upper-middle class Anglo-Jewry had begun to make a distinct mark on English political life. Conversely, for Jewish women, suffrage 'became a vital symbol of their social acceptance as English women as well as of their political, religious and communal emancipation'.<sup>126</sup>

Hugh Franklin's membership of the JLWS serves as a reminder that identities can be multiple, fluctuating and conflicting. His membership of the MPU was based on his qualification both as a man and a militant, whilst his religious and familial affiliations enabled him as a Jew, and as part of the 'cousinhood', to belong to the JLWS. It is interesting, however, that the emphasis he himself gave to his involvement with women's suffrage was based on gender rather than class or religious inequality. One further facet is his youth. These 'young bloods thirsting for rows' was how Nevinson described Franklin and his contemporaries.<sup>127</sup> Nevertheless, as part of the Jewish community, his actions continued to cause consternation and his uncle, Herbert Samuel, became a regular target of Jewish women activists. On the day of atonement in September 1912, suffragettes picketed the New West End Synagogue which Herbert Samuel normally attended, although it was reported that 'the long vigil...proved futile as Mr Samuel, being out of town, did not attend that place of worship'.<sup>128</sup> The following year, on Yom Kippur, three Anglo-Jewish women who were all members of the JLWS, were ejected from a synagogue for loudly proclaiming: 'May God forgive Herbert

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<sup>126</sup> L. Gordon Kusmack, *The Jewish Women's Movement*, p.142.

<sup>127</sup> Quoted in the introduction to *The Men's Share?* p.17.

<sup>128</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 September 1912, p.8.

Samuel and Rufas Issacs for denying freedom to women. May God forgive them for consenting to the torture of women.<sup>129</sup> The Anglo-Jewish press condemned their action castigating them as ‘blackguards in bonnets’ or ‘quasi-demented creatures’ who had committed ‘dastardly crimes’.<sup>130</sup> As the debate raged on so did the Anglo-Jewish suffragists determination to have votes for women granted both in and outside of the synogogue. By 1914, five synogogues had given women an unlimited franchise and two had granted partial votes for women.<sup>131</sup>

Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval as ‘mice’ now had membership of another more exclusive club. Banded together, ‘mice’ contributed joint donations<sup>132</sup> and were referred to collectively.<sup>133</sup> However, being a mouse also meant exclusion from big meetings<sup>134</sup> although this did not prevent ‘mice’ such as Rachel Barrett openly defying what appears to have been a rather selective WSPU policy. Speaking at the Memorial Hall on 17 July 1913, she told her audience ‘...from

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<sup>129</sup> Quoted in L. Gordon Kusmuck, *The Jewish Women’s Movement*, p.134.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p.134.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*. p.14.1

<sup>132</sup> HF pápers, Folder 4, Letter to Hugh Franklin addressed ‘Dear Friend’ c.November 1913.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, Folder 4, See letter to Hugh Franklin from Frank Rutter (n.d.) in which he writes, ‘...all mice are perfectly safe and that if C.P. returns now she will not be touched’.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, Folder 4, circular letter addressed ‘Dear Friend’ from Marie Roberts, Prisoners’ Secretary, November 1913.

some members of the audience I can see - that when I leave this hall tonight it will be to wind my way back to Holloway.<sup>135</sup>

Hugh Franklin found, however, that there was another price to pay for his action, namely his court costs as the MPU were refusing to assist him. Needless to say, Franklin felt extremely bitter and between September and November 1913, he was in regular correspondence with Henry Harben, the MPU treasurer. The committee of the MPU had, according to Harben, been under the impression that Franklin had been defended 'at the desire and at the expense of the WSPU',<sup>136</sup> thus attempting to retrospectively disassociate themselves from his militancy. Recent works draw attention to 'the deterioration of relations between male sympathizers and the leadership of the WSPU between 1910 and 1912, as tensions over the negotiations between male sympathizers and government members grew',<sup>137</sup> although Hugh Franklin's relationship with both Herbert Samuel and the WSPU adds a new dimension to this. Nevertheless, on the question of financial support, Franklin was full of 'fighting talk', remaining adamant that:

the object of a Union such as the MPU is to enable those, who are not in a position to do actual fighting, to support and help those who can, for very few soldiers can fight and provide their supplies as well - the very act of fighting precludes a means of income and hence a Union in support is formed.

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<sup>135</sup> HO 45/10701/236973. Report of meeting of the WSPU at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, 17 July 1913. Undercover Police shorthand writers were used to report on suffrage meetings but often had difficulty gaining admission as they became known to the organisers.

<sup>136</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, H.Harben to Mr Franklin, 3 September, 1913

<sup>137</sup> For example, Holton, 'Manliness and Militancy' in *The Men's Share?* p.119.

Although he acknowledged that he was in a better financial position than others, it was the principle that was now the issue, causing him to threaten:

If a soldier's supplies are suddenly cut off by the company to which he has hitherto belonged, he is forced to leave that company and fight elsewhere. This does not mean I am going to give up Suffrage on my return I shall owing to recent Government tactics, be more militant than ever - but it does mean that I shall be unable in future to fight as a member of the MPU.<sup>138</sup>

Thus he clearly he conceived of himself as a soldier doing battle, although the number of battles he was having to fight at this time were rather more than he had bargained for. Hugh Franklin's predicament does raise a number of questions about 'the uncertain standing of the Suffragette in trousers'. Sandra Holton has emphasised the growing ambivalence among the leadership of the WSPU towards male sympathisers<sup>139</sup> and yet, it would seem to be the case that the relationship *between* groups of male sympathisers was more problematic as they themselves became divided over tactics and the leadership of the MPU.

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<sup>138</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, H.Franklin to H.Harben, 9 November 1913.

<sup>139</sup> S. Holton, *The Men's Share?* p.111.

### 6.3 LOYAL LIEUTENANTS

Elsie Duval and Hugh Franklin took the drastic measure of leaving the country to ensure they were not recaptured, adopting the aliases of Eveline Dukes and Henry Forster, and not returning until after the outbreak of the First World War. Even at this stage they were separated. Hugh Franklin went to France whilst Elsie spent ten months in Germany, three months in Belgium and two months in Switzerland. This was through necessity rather than personal choice as attempts for them to flee together proved impossible. Winifred Mayo writing to Hugh's sister expressed her regret that the 'Danish plan' had fallen through, explaining that the contact had felt it would be 'too greater a responsibility to have Elsie and a young man too'. She further elaborated:

I rather feared this would be the result of the plan for the two being together, I hope they will be led to see that it creates quite serious complications, and is bound to do so. I do most frightfully keenly sympathise with their wish to be together, but I see at the same time the unwisdom of it but it can't be helped.<sup>140</sup>

Her letter provides an illuminating insight, hitherto unacknowledged, into the sheer courage and commitment of Elsie Duval and Hugh Franklin. As Elsie Duval explained to Mrs Pankhurst, 'the Cat and Mouse Act rendered our plans too unsettled to marry and consequently made it inadvisable to speak to anyone of our

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<sup>140</sup> HF papers, Folder 4, Letter to Miss Franklin from Winifred Mayo, c.1913.

engagement'.<sup>141</sup> Obviously desperate to be together, they once again had to delay their personal union; a particularly cruel twist of fate, given how little time they eventually had.

Not much is known of Hugh Franklin's time spent on the continent but for once, Elsie Duval's movements have been quite well documented. Sylvia Pankhurst provided a Belgian contact 'who is interested in our movement'<sup>142</sup> after Elsie had problems in Germany. During her time there she was in poor health and was forced to reside in a German hospital. She had been working as a governess and whilst in hospital she received a letter from her employer telling her not to return 'as it might be dangerous for the children'. Originally agreeing to pay her one month's salary and the hospital bill, Elsie's employer then reneged on the agreement, leaving her with a debt she could not afford.<sup>143</sup>

Elsie Duval had been in contact with the WSPU and was evidently contemplating returning to England, for in March 1914, she received a letter stating that Christabel Pankhurst 'thinks it would be better for you to stay where you are for the time being and until you get stronger'.<sup>144</sup> In the event, she did not stay abroad for much longer but a letter to her good friend Olive Beamish reveals much about her exile and her views on the imminent war. Writing from Brussels just two

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, Folder 5, E.Duval to Mrs Pankhurst, 16th June 1915.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Mrs Duval from E.S. Pankhurst, 19 May 1914.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letters between 'Eveline Dukes' and her employer, April and 2 May 1914.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter from WSPU to Miss Dukes, 7 March 1914.

weeks before war was declared, she advised her friend to get strong before visiting her in this 'somewhat a squalid hole' whilst conceding, 'I can only be thankful that I am not in Dresden, for there it is bad enough at ordinary times and goodness knows what it is like now'. Describing the atmosphere on the streets she wrote,

In the rush for papers, one almost gets swept off one's feet (Am sure Daily "Liar" Mail must be doing a tremendous trade) and talk about soldiers, they are here there and everywhere....Why on earth can't the stupid men see that now-a-days they do not go to war to defend their country, but merely to fill the pockets of financiers. When will these men get some common sense knocked into their heads and refuse to risk their lives for a few.

Commenting on the dehumanising process of becoming a soldier she asked her friend to:

Imagine yourself being so disciplined until at last you become absolutely a machine to anyone bidding, without intellect, without morals, in fact without anything that goes to make one's life; a piece of putty to be moulded and made use of by "Money" The army is absolutely on the same level as a brothel...the average soldier, who is a poor man, is forced to stay against his will and is at last so ground down...that like a girl who is stolen for slavery at last becomes a part of that hateful machinery.<sup>145</sup>

Despite these sentiments, Elsie Duval remained loyal to the patriotism of the WSPU and the policies it adopted after the outbreak of the First World War.

The self-imposed exile of Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval provides an opportunity to consider another dimension in terms of how individuals involvement

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid, Folder 4, Letter to Olive Beamish from E.Duval, 31 July 1914.

in suffrage has been represented in different forms. As has been demonstrated in other chapters, the writing and dissemination of varying forms of literature played a crucial part in informing the ideas of the movement and this contribution did not cease after 1918. Rather, in the same way that the inter-war period produced a volley of autobiographies by those involved in the suffrage campaigns, the ‘woman’s novel’ came into its own.

In her autobiography, *Life Errant*, Cicely Hamilton acknowledged that the suffrage movement had led, indirectly, to her literary achievements. She won the first Femina Vie Heureuse prize award for her novel, *William an Englishman*, published in 1919. Interestingly, at the time of its publication, it was, according to Hamilton, categorised as a war novel although as she explained, ‘it was only accidentally that it dealt with the catastrophe of 1914.’ She had written it as a suffrage novel and the outline had been worked through prior to any hint of war. Hamilton claimed it dated from ‘a gathering where I heard certain members of the militant section hold forth on the subject of their “war”’.<sup>146</sup>

Her relationship with the suffrage movement was, at times, ambivalent and Hamilton’s comparison of the exaggerated rhetoric of both politicians and suffragettes led her to wonder how the ‘warriors’ would feel if they encountered a real war - an idea that amused and attracted her. Her chosen subjects, ‘a young man and woman, enthusiastic, ignorant, who thought of their little political scuffles as war and who stumbled accidentally into the other kind

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<sup>146</sup> C. Hamilton, *Life Errant*, (J.M. Dent & Sons, London, 1935), p.84.

of war - of bullets and blood and high explosives'<sup>147</sup> provided the material for her story. On whom were this young man and woman based? Whilst it would be difficult to suggest they were based on two specific individuals they were clearly, given her association with suffrage, utilising the naïve ideologies, as she perceived them, of the young men and women like Hugh Franklin and Elsie Duval who had been drawn into the movement. The story centres around two characters, William Tully and Griselda Watkins who marry in 1914 and spend their honeymoon in Belgium. Both Emily Duval and Hugh Franklin were abroad at this time. Hamilton's dislike of extremism is, as Lis Whitelaw has noted, apparent through her description of Griselda:

A piece of blank-minded suburban young-womanhood caught into the militant suffrage movement and enjoying herself therein...Like William she had found peace of mind and perennial interest in the hearty denunciation of those who did not agree with her.<sup>148</sup>

Certainly, Cicely Hamilton would have been aware of the actions and existence of Franklin and Duval and this must have influenced her writing. Fortunately, the fate of the William and Griselda, who are both killed in the war, did not extend to Hugh and Elsie. Upon their return to England, they were finally able to make a public declaration of their personal feelings and they were married on 28 September 1915, just eleven days after Hugh's sister, Helen, married Norman Bentwich. Victor

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid. pp.84-5.

<sup>148</sup> C. Hamilton, *William an Englishman*, (Skeffington, London, 1919), p.21 quoted in L. Whitelaw, *The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton*, (The Women's Press, London, 1990), p.161.

Duval, Elsie's brother, wrote to Franklin heartily endorsing his sister's choice of a life companion concluding that they were 'a sporting couple'.<sup>149</sup> Even with the suspension of militant activity, Elsie Duval felt compelled when inviting Mrs Pankhurst to the wedding, to write 'as we have both lived in the Militant Movement for the past six years, we should ever value and appreciate the honour conferred upon us at our marriage by the presence of our Leader'.<sup>150</sup> In the event, Mrs Pankhurst was too ill to attend but hoped 'that you and your future husband may have all good fortune and spend together a long happy and useful life' whilst advocating 'mutual affection and the sharing of high ideal is the best security for happiness in marriage'.<sup>151</sup>

During the war, Hugh Franklin, along with his sister, Helen, worked at Woolwich Arsenal, Hugh having been disqualified from war service because of his poor eyesight. Elsie continued her involvement with the WSPU campaigning to achieve war work for women, although prior to their marriage, Elsie had applied to work in a French hospital.<sup>152</sup> They both continued to espouse the ideals of the WSPU, which meant that Hugh Franklin now refused to get involved with demands for women's suffrage on the grounds that it was not worthwhile attempting to effect internal reforms until the future of Britain was settled.<sup>153</sup> By 1916, some members of the MPU which had, like the WSPU, suspended activity at

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<sup>149</sup> HF papers, Folder 5, Letter from V. Duval to Hugh Franklin, 23 July 1915.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. Folder 5, E.Duval to Mrs Pankhurst, 16 June 1915.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. Folder 5, Mrs Pankhurst to Miss Duval, 14 July 1915.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Folder 5, See letter to Dr. Woodcock from E.Duval, 20 January 1915.

the beginning of the war were keen to restart campaigning. Hugh Franklin and Victor Duval were both approached and whilst Duval was prepared to call a meeting if sufficient numbers were interested, Hugh Franklin refused to



Women munitions workers at the Women's Right to Serve march in London, 17 July 1915.

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid, Folder 5, Letter from H. Franklin to H.G. Everett, 26 March 1916.



### THE WAR WORKERS.

"WHAT'S ALL THIS CACKLE ABOUT VOTES AND A NEW REGISTER?"

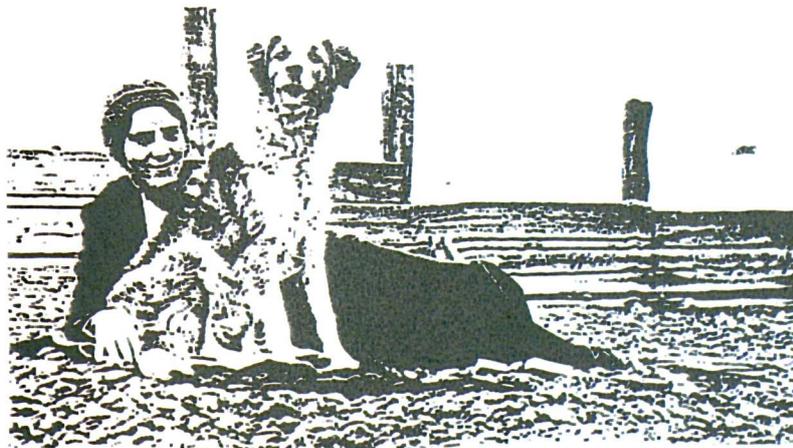
"DON'T KNOW—OR CARE. WE'RE ALL TOO BUSY JUST NOW."



HUGH A. FRANKLIN,  
MEMBER OF THE MEN'S POLITICAL UNION  
FOR WOMEN'S ENFRANCHISEMENT.



VICTOR D. DUVAL  
HON ORGANIZING SECRETARY  
MEN'S POLITICAL UNION for  
WOMEN'S ENFRANCHISEMENT.



Elsie Duval, August 1915.  
376

participate.<sup>154</sup> He was, however, prepared to use his influence at the Woolwich Arsenal to provide equipment, including a dummy cannon amongst other things, for a procession in the summer of 1916 which was to have a section devoted to munition work.<sup>155</sup>

Elsie Duval never recovered from the damage inflicted upon her by forcible feeding and Hugh Franklin also suffered ill-health. In the summer of 1918, Elsie was recuperating at the Franklins' country home in Chesham. Requesting Hugh to bring her throat spray at the weekend, she wrote, 'I find I don't like being here without you, the least bit. It is quite miserable'.<sup>156</sup> Elsie had been involved with the Women's Land Army but was now suggesting to Hugh that she get a regular job. Even during their married life they had spent considerable time apart because of the war and perhaps Elsie thought that by getting a regular job she could spend more time with Hugh. In London for a doctors appointment, she agreed to return to the country for two days only.<sup>157</sup>

Elsie Duval died on 1 January 1919 from septic pneumonia, aged twenty-six. In her last communication to Hugh Franklin she wrote, 'my heart is like a steam engine'.<sup>158</sup> One of her sisters had died a few months before and a few days

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, Folder 5, Letter to H.Franklin from H.G. Everett, 20 March 1916 and H. Franklin's reply, 26 March 1915.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, Folder 5, Cynthia Maguire to H.Franklin, 10 and 15 July 1916.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, Box 227, Letter to HF from Elsie, 11 July 1918.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, Box 227, Elsie to Hugh, 15 July 1918.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, Box 227, The last communication, 27 December 1918.

after Elsie's death another sister died,<sup>159</sup> Mrs Duval saw three of her daughters die before being allowed to exercise their right to vote, or record a version of their participation in the suffrage campaigns of the early twentieth century.

Hugh Franklin worked in the timber trade after the war and removed himself from political life until 1931, when he stood, unsuccessfully, as the Labour candidate for Hornsey. In 1935, he stood again in St Albans but a parliamentary political position was to elude him. His political career never progressed beyond positions in local government. This apparent failure to achieve high political office was not exclusive however, to Hugh Franklin. His brother-in-law, Victor Duval, spent the 1920's unsuccessfully attempting to get elected as a Liberal MP, and writing to Edith How Martyn in 1928, described his recent political activity as addressing 'a large number of meetings in all parts of the country in support of Liberal principles'.<sup>160</sup>

Why was it that someone like Fred Pethick-Lawrence was able to embark on a successful parliamentary career and Hugh Franklin and Victor Duval were not? One contributing factor could be a question of age. Fred Pethick-Lawrence already had an established profession and his involvement with suffrage was, ultimately, but a relatively small part of his life, as demonstrated in his autobiography. On the other hand, for Hugh Franklin and Victor Duval their dalliance with suffrage was, in effect, the beginning of their political careers and

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<sup>159</sup> The Spanish influenza epidemic of the winter of 1918, claimed millions of lives.

<sup>160</sup> SFC, Reel 1, Group C, (Vol III), p.2 Letter to Mrs How Martyn from V. Duval, 24 January, 1928.

arguably charted the course their subsequent activities took. To this end, I would contend that their involvement marred any future political prospects and even Hugh Franklin's conscious exile from political life for several years after the war, was not enough to return him from the political wilderness thus demonstrating that extremists of any denomination can share similar fates.<sup>161</sup>

Two years after Elsie Duval's death, Hugh Franklin remarried. His second wife was Elsie Constance Tuke who also had connections with the suffrage movement. Nevertheless, Elsie Duval's premature death cannot diminish the importance of the Franklin/Duval partnership. Equally, just because they did not enjoy the profile of more overt political couples it does not justify their exclusion from accounts of suffrage. Families like the Duvals and the Franklins provided a backbone for the suffrage movement which, with a shake of the kaleidoscope, has now been brought into the foreground.

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<sup>161</sup> It was the inter-war period that also saw Winston Churchill out of political office.

# Wife - Mother - Voter

HER VOTE



WHAT WILL SHE DO WITH IT

HODDER & STOUGHTON · PUBLISHERS · LONDON



### FREE AND INDEPENDENT.

THE THREE LEADERS (*together*). "WANT A PILOT, MADAM?"  
NEW VOTER. "NO, THANKS."

## CONCLUSION

### **The distance of the house from the House.**

Writing about the campaigns for women's enfranchisement within the climate of fin de siècle politics a century on, it is possible to reflect upon just how far women have come in terms of their involvement in political and public life. Indeed, the landslide victory of a Labour government in 1997 saw 116 women MPs returned to Parliament. It is, however, easy to be complacent about women's achievements. To assess women's evolving political identities purely in the context of legislation passed by men in 1918 and 1928, is to simplify a complex process that has been continuing throughout the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, the recent revival of suffrage studies has demonstrated clearly that the suffrage campaigns in Britain (and elsewhere) and the narratives that accompany them are still open to reappraisal and new interpretations.<sup>1</sup> In essence, this is the nub of this thesis. By focusing on political partnerships in the context of women's suffrage campaigns and the support afforded by men, this thesis has been able to contribute new interpretations to our understanding of the gendered nature of political activity. Additionally, it has offered reappraisals of some of the more unchallenged narratives that have become

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Seeing Through Suffrage' conference, held at the University of Greenwich in April 1996, is testimony to the new and exciting work being undertaken in this field.

synonymous with British suffrage history. Susan Grogan (1998) has discussed the significance of individuals to historical investigation, pointing out that it is 'precisely because individuals responded in different ways to the historical processes in which they were caught up' that, 'the narrative of individual lives helps in the interpretation of those processes'.<sup>2</sup> By focusing on six political partnerships, 'engaging with the political and cultural contests being enacted on and around them at particular moments in time' provides us with another dimension for exploring the past.<sup>3</sup>

As this thesis has demonstrated, research into the familial dimensions of women's suffrage indicates how widespread were partnerships between suffrage supporters. This is particularly important when assessing relations between men and women supporters and as the political partnerships examined have revealed, there was no 'common code' of conduct that applied either to men or women. Certainly, as Angela John has observed, 'the association of individual men with women's suffrage was no guarantee of their wider commitment to gender equality'.<sup>4</sup> By examining the private lives of the political partnerships studied, it has been observed that those partnerships with children reveal only too clearly how the political role of the female half of the partnership was compromised by motherhood. In the case of the Robinsons especially, we have seen how the support Sam Robinson offered publicly was

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<sup>2</sup> S. Grogan, *Flora Tristan, Life Stories*, (Routledge, London, 1998), p.11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> A.V. John, 'Controlling the Cause. Men and Women's Suffrage 1907-18', Conference Paper, Center for the History of Freedom, Washington University, St Louis, Missouri, 1998.

not replicated within a domestic environment whilst John Bruce Glasier played a peripheral part in raising his children. Richard Pankhurst, on the other hand, seems to have participated more actively in family life.<sup>5</sup>

Another observation crucial to our understanding of the gendered nature of politics is the extent to which winning the vote was viewed by men as the pinnacle of the suffrage campaign rather than as a measure which would offer a starting point for effecting change in understanding gender relations. In the case of Fred Pethick-Lawrence, his commitment to gender equality is evident and yet his involvement in the suffrage campaign seems to have been based on a desire to find a cause that he and his wife could jointly embrace. Indeed, contrary to Emmeline's opinion that his involvement with her would harm him politically, for Fred, the suffrage campaigns seem to have provided him with an opportunity to form life-long friendships and of all the men studied, he was the only one to succeed in getting elected to Parliament after 1918. Writing of *Life Peeresses in the Upper House* nearly fifty years after he wrote *The Man's Share?*, Fred Pethick-Lawrence could confidently state:

They are in our midst, making speeches in the Chamber, joining in our committees and taking part with us in all the intricacies and common-places of our daily life. All of them are women of wide knowledge and experience and everyone of them has made contributions of value and importance to our discussions. Needless to say they have not disturbed the decorum of the House or ruffled its susceptibilities. In a word, they have made good.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Certainly this is the impression given by his offspring in their highly subjective writings.

<sup>6</sup> F. W. Pethick-Lawrence, 'Life Peeresses in the Upper House', in *Calling All Women*, Journal of the National Council of Women, (July 1960).

For John Bruce Glasier, however, the granting of the vote to women was an irrelevance until the socialist ideal had been achieved, whilst for an ageing James Bryce, extending the franchise to women only served to reinforce his disillusionment with the post-war era.

By examining the collective involvement of six political partnerships over a fifty year period, this thesis has constructed a new set of narratives both in terms of evolving political identities and in considering how developments in the women's suffrage campaigns informed contemporary understandings of gender roles. Each partnership has contributed in some way to our understanding of the suffrage campaigns and the gendered nature of political activity during the period under discussion.

The partnership of Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst, discussed in chapter one, has provided a useful insight into the development of the Pankhurst family's subsequent politics by locating them not as the focal point of suffrage campaigns but (like many of their counterparts) as a political partnership functioning within the context of marriage and endeavouring to practice and achieve equality in every aspect of their life. Furthermore, by taking this approach, it has become possible to assess the Pankhursts *per se* without viewing them purely through their organisational affiliations and the divisions they inevitably engendered, thus allowing Emmeline Pankhurst to be seen as separate from the all-powerful figure of Christabel.

Chapter two has dealt with the complexities of familial relations in the context of the campaigns for women's suffrage, in addition to demonstrating how Victorian liberalism could provide women, as well as men, with a sense of

political identity that did not necessarily encompass a perceived need for women's enfranchisement. Another important element of this thesis has been to consider how regional, as well as national and international identities were composed and their significance as cultural constructs. In this sense, the Bryces reveal how constructions of national identity shaped British perceptions of citizenship whilst demonstrating that 'Britishness' was not a fixed category and co-existed alongside older national identities of 'Englishness', 'Scottishness' and 'Welshness'. Moreover, *as has been shown, those identities could be conflicting and subject to prejudices from other identities.* Also significant is the connection between women's campaigns and Irish nationalism.

Chapters three and five have considered the problematic relationship between suffrage and socialism as well as providing an insight into the campaigns at a regional level. The partnerships of Katharine and John Bruce Glasier, and Annot and Sam Robinson have shown how class overrode gender within fledgling labour politics and the tensions, especially for women, in negotiating a position that could incorporate both suffrage and socialist beliefs.

The political partnership of the Pethick-Lawrences, analysed in chapter four, offers a more positive appraisal of men and women working together. Nevertheless, despite their combined commitment to suffrage and the sacrifices they made, it must be remembered that they were in a position of privilege and wealth and, therefore, able to pursue their goals rather more easily than other partnerships.

In chapter six, the partnership of Emily Duval and Hugh Franklin has been examined. Exploring their activity during the years when militancy was at

its height has enabled a discussion of the meanings of masculinity and femininity and how these were understood in a climate where some women were beginning to reject the involvement of men in the suffrage campaigns. However, it is important that this point is not over-emphasised. Certainly, at a WSPU meeting on 7 April 1913, it was recorded that: 'The men militants have again this year shown a fine spirit of comradeship and a great courage....Protests by these brave men...are deeply appreciated by the women in whose cause they are made.'<sup>7</sup> It was also noted that there had been impressive protests made by men in the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons involving a pistol cork, flour and a cardboard mouse. Three days later, George Lansbury, who had stood unsuccessfully as a Women's Suffrage candidate in 1912, made the following speech:

I want to set on foot a league of militant men. This is just the moment when we can translate the Union's motto into our own lives and show that we are able, as the Women's Social and Political Union are able, that deeds are more important than words, that there is a band of men who are not going to sit down and allow their sisters to be coerced in this brutal and disgraceful manner....Therefore, I ask all here to stand shoulder to shoulder with the militant women, hold them up in the fight they are waging. Let them burn and destroy property and do anything they will.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, it was the case that the role men were according themselves at this time was still being articulated under the auspices of the WSPU. By the summer of

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<sup>7</sup> PRO/HO 45/10700/236973 Police report of WSPU meeting, 7 April 1913.

<sup>8</sup> PRO/HO 45/10701/236973 Police report of Albert Hall meeting, 10 April 1913.

1913, however, as militancy encroached into what some men perceived as their territory, Emmeline Pankhurst would state:

There are people who told me...that you men, who ought to know better, have blamed our women. No man who has got any intelligence would do that. There are men who profess that they love freedom, and can sympathise with Russia, even these people are saying to women that they are not going to sign the petition against the "Cat and Mouse" Act, because they so disapprove of Anarchy. The women are not creating anarchy. It is not we who created anarchy. There is anarchy in a country which professes to be under Constitutional Government, and denies the effects of the Constitution to more than half its people.<sup>9</sup>

In February 1914, the MPU disbanded and the outbreak of the First World War in August of that year, resulted in Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst ceasing to campaign for the vote. Nevertheless, the inherent complexities and tensions of male support were summed up by Henry Nevinson, a member of the MPU who wrote:

It has been hard for me to retain a belief in the honour of human kindness of average men, so shameless was the indecency, so atrocious the cruelty with which the suffragettes were treated. And that by Englishmen, who are not on average more lewd in their lasciviousness or more bestial in their cruelty than the average men of other races.<sup>10</sup>

As this thesis has shown, the outbreak of the First World War did not lead to a cessation of political activity by the partnerships studied here. On the contrary, most of them continued to campaign for a range of causes whilst

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<sup>9</sup> PRO/PCOM 8/176.44106/41 Emmeline Pankhurst speaking at a WSPU meeting at the London Pavilion on 14 July 1913.

<sup>10</sup> H. Nevinson, *More Changes, More Chances*, p.308.

never losing sight of the significance of the vote. Although Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter, Christabel, adopted a pro-war stance, the Bruce Glasiers and the Pethick-Lawrences remained staunchly pacifist. Annot and Sam Robinson took different positions and whilst at one level this can be viewed as symptomatic of their relationship, consideration needs to be given to their individual circumstances. For Annot, her paid work for the WIL enabled her to earn an independent living, whilst for Sam, serving in India as a librarian, meant he was able to earn a regular wage in an environment he enjoyed. Hugh Franklin was excused from active service on health grounds but worked at the Woolwich Arsenal and Elsie Duval was actively engaged in war work when her health permitted. Thus they remained loyal to the autocratic leadership of the WSPU.

If the success of the women's suffrage campaigns, and their wider implications in terms of influencing attitudes toward the part that men and women had to play in public life, is measured by counting how many achieved public office, then it could be argued that they failed miserably. In December 1918, seventeen women including Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Christabel Pankhurst stood for Parliament. None of the males discussed stood in this election, although James Bryce was by now a Lord. Only one woman, the Sinn Feiner, Constance Markievicz, was elected and she declined to take her seat as Sinn Fein refused to acknowledge the British Government. Annot Robinson stood in municipal elections but was unsuccessful.

By 1925, just seven years after the war had finished, all but one of the political partnerships discussed in this thesis had ended. Nevertheless, the

legacy of their work lives on. Those left, continued to work for the causes they had supported within a partnership but because they were not mainstream political figures, they have been largely excluded from the historical record. Whilst this could be interpreted as supporting the notion that suffrage did not succeed in challenging the gendered nature of political identities, I would argue that the interwar period was of seminal importance in building on the foundations laid down in the previous century. As Mary Stott commented whilst being interviewed by Dale Spender, 'There's always been a women's movement this century'.<sup>11</sup>

One other important conclusion concerns the nature of the support offered by the offspring of the partnerships studied. Katharine Bradley has observed that it tended to be daughters rather than sons who supported suffrage parents<sup>12</sup> although in the partnerships I have examined this is not necessarily the case. Harry Pankhurst joined his sisters in supporting suffrage, standing as a Woman's Suffrage candidate at a Manchester Grammar school mock election in 1906. In the event, he came fifth out of the seven candidates fielded (the two Liberal candidates came first and second, followed by the two Conservatives) but interestingly, polled more votes than the two Socialist candidates.<sup>13</sup> Both Hugh Franklin and Victor Duval are testimony to the

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<sup>11</sup> D. Spender, *There's always been a Women's Movement this Century*, (Pandora, London, 1983) *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> K. Bradley, '“Odd Men” The Role of Men in the Oxford Suffrage and Anti-Suffrage Societies 1870-1914'. Paper given at the 'Seeing Through Suffrage' Conference, University of Greenwich, April 1996. See also, K. Bradley, 'Faith, Perseverance and Patience: the History of the Oxford Suffrage and Anti-Suffrage Movements', Oxford Brookes University, Ph.D, 1997.

commitment of sons to women's suffrage whilst Violet Annon Bryce's son Roland, was actively involved in Oxford suffrage.

It is also instructive to consider how some offspring reacted to their parent's political activities. Jeannie Bruce Glasier, for example, rejected the socialism her parents had embraced, causing Katharine Bruce Glasier to lament in 1949 that her

only daughter Jeannie has become a well-off, well-nigh worshipper with...no time for politics, or, at any rate, her father's and mother's, and thinks Winston Churchill saved Britain and may yet restore her greatness from the momentary eclipse it is suffering under Labour's rule!<sup>14</sup>

Whilst Katharine Bruce Glasier found it difficult to reconcile herself to the fact that her daughter's politics were at odds with her own, what was more problematic was Jeannie's absolute rejection of Katharine's lifestyle. Moreover, Jeannie who had emigrated to Australia, 'regretted the re-printing of *The Glen Book*' and, according to Katharine, 'takes no interest in any "records" of her father's life'. The final straw, however, was Jeannie's request that the *Northern Voice*, a paper Katharine regularly contributed to, should not to be sent to her anymore on the grounds that it could harm her own children's careers.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, also in Australia, was Adela Pankhurst, the lesser known of the female Pankhurst offspring. She remained politically active and was the only one of the

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<sup>13</sup> SP papers, 7, Letter from J. Doughty to E.S. Pankhurst, 8 September 1910.

<sup>14</sup> GP I.1 1949/2 Letter to Francis Johnson from Katharine Bruce Glasier, 29 August 1949.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Pankhurst children to marry. In November 1917 she married a widower, Tom Walsh, and writing as Adela Walsh, she explained to her sister, Sylvia, her wish to produce a son or daughter, 'to carry on our father's work'.<sup>16</sup>

Returning to the offspring of Annot and Sam Robinson, who were divided over their parental affiliations, raises once again, the issue of representation - not just about the way in which the Robinsons and other political partnerships contributions to suffrage have been presented - but also how the historical narrative is necessarily in conflict with biographical and autobiographical forms of writing. This is best exemplified by the example of Carolyn Steedman whose work on Margaret McMillan raises important questions concerning the role of the biographer, whilst locating history, alongside biography and autobiography, 'as a narrative form that has its own - highly convincing - rhetoric of persuasion'.<sup>17</sup> Never has this been more so than now, in an epoch with the technology to selectively allow the eye to survey the 'Secret Lives' of the biographical subject.

The continued popular presence of the Pankhursts in public perception has been reinforced by re-runs of the drama documentary, *Shoulder to Shoulder*.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, there is a statue dedicated to Mrs Pankhurst, a portrait of her in the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) and her former home in

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<sup>16</sup> SP 14, A. Walsh to E.S. Pankhurst, November 1917. For a full account of Adela Pankhurst's life see V. Coleman, *Adela Pankhurst, The Wayward Suffragette 1885-1961*, (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain*, p.244.

<sup>18</sup> Based on M. MacKenzie's book, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, (Penguin, London, 1975).

Nelson Street, Manchester, is now the Pankhurst Centre. James Bryce and Fred Pethick-Lawrence also hang in the NPG but for the rest there is no such tribute.<sup>19</sup> However, this also bears out Steedman's point that any writer of historical narrative '...is the invisible servant of archive material..merely uncovering what already lies there waiting to be told'.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps, this is one way of viewing the autobiographies written by women suffrage activists in those years after 1918. Regardless of however one dimensional they may appear to the historian, as M. J. Corbett asserts, 'Autobiography is history for these autobiographers, yet they do not claim to provide authoritative master narratives...writing the life means telling it as a legacy for contemporaries and descendants'.<sup>21</sup>

This thesis has presented 'life stories' in order to understand and illuminate ideas, ideologies, class and gender relations, and the social practices of a particular period of British history.<sup>22</sup> Whatever it has, or may necessarily become, based on Steedman's point that the work of historians is 'constructed around the understanding that...the story isn't finished: that there is no end',<sup>23</sup> is open to debate.

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<sup>19</sup> Fittingly, Katharine Bruce Glasier's former home is now a youth hostel.

<sup>20</sup> Steedman, *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain*, p.245.

<sup>21</sup> M. J. Corbett, *Representing Femininity. Middle Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Women's Autobiographies*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992) p.179.

<sup>22</sup> Steedman, *Culture Class and Childhood*, p.245.

<sup>23</sup> C. Steedman, *Past Tenses, Essays on Writing Autobiography and History*, (Rivers Oram, London, 1992) p.48.



THE UNVEILING OF THE STATUE OF MRS EMMELINE PANKHURST in Victoria Square Gardens on 7th March, 1930

There are only two things we can be sure of. First, that a 'really good' history of the women's suffrage movement would have to include a much wider representation of the journeys our forebearers took and second, that another shake of the kaleidoscope could alter everything.

However, given our culture's emphasis on solitary creation, 'one is always constructed as Significant and the partner as Other',<sup>24</sup> it is worth remembering that the partnerships discussed in this thesis demonstrate how identities are a constantly evolving construct that can both challenge and reinforce gendered assumptions of political activity.

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<sup>24</sup> Chadwick and de Courtivron, *Significant Others*, p.10.

## APPENDIX ONE<sup>1</sup>

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIER	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1832	Great Reform Act. First petition in support of women's suffrage to Parliament.							1832
1835		RP born.						1835
1838			JB born					1838
1851								1851
1853			MB born					1853
1858		EP born						1858
1859				JBG born				1859
1864			JB appointed as an Assistant Commissioner for the Schools Inquiry Commission.					1864
1865	Committee for Women's Suffrage formed in London.							1865
1866	J.S. Mill presented women's suffrage to Parliament.							1866

<sup>1</sup>Key to abbreviations: RP: Richard Pankhurst; EP: Emmeline Pankhurst; JB: James Bryce; MB: Marion Bryce; JBG: John Bruce Glasier; KBG: Katharine Bruce Glasier; EP-L: Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence; FP-L: Fred Pethick-Lawrence; ED: Elsie Duval; HF: Hugh Franklin

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL-FRANKLIN	YEAR
1867	MNSWS founded. Report of Schools Inquiry Commission published Second Reform Act. Mill's amendment to include women in the Second Reform Bill defeated.	RP appointed a member of the Executive Committee of the MNSWS. RP called to the Bar. RP speaks at first public meeting for Women's Suffrage.	JB called to the Bar	KBG born	EP-L born			1867
1868	National Society for Women's Suffrage (NSWS) founded. Women's Suffrage Society founded in Birmingham, Bristol and Edinburgh.							1868
1869	Chorlton v. Lings case lost	RP counsel in the Chorlton v. Lings case				SR born		1869
1870	Richard Pankhurst's women's suffrage Bill passed second reading. <i>Women's Suffrage Journal</i> published.	RP drafts The Women's Disabilities Removal Bill						1870

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES FP-L born	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1871	London National Society for Women's Suffrage founded.							1871
1874		RP opposes amending The Enfranchisement Bill to exclude married women	JB stands unsuccessfully as a Liberal candidate			AR born		1874
1877	New Central Committee of National Society for Women's Suffrage formed.							1877
1879		Pankhursts married						1879
1880		Christabel Pankhurst born	JB elected as MP for Tower Hamlets					1880
1881	Women granted the vote in the Isle of Man.							1881
1882	Passing of Married Woman's Property Act	Sylvia Pankhurst born RP stands unsuccessfully as an Independent candidate in Manchester	JB gives up his Lawyer's practice					1882
1884	Third Reform Act.	Frank Pankhurst born						1884
1885		RP stands as a Liberal candidate in Rotherhithe Adeia Pankhurst born The Pankhurst family moves to London	JB elected as MP for South Aberdeen					1885

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1886				KBG attends Newnham College Cambridge				1886
1887								1887
1888	Central National Committee of Women's Suffrage formed. Central Committee of National Society for Women's Suffrage broke away.							1888
1889	WFERL formed. Mrs Humphrey Ward's <i>The Appeal</i> published	Harry Pankhurst born	Bryces married				HF born	1889
1891					EP-L goes to work at the West London Mission			1891
1892	Rollit introduces a new Women's Suffrage Bill Women's Emancipation League founded.						ED born	1892
1893	ILP is founded	The Pankhursts move to Cheshire		KBG elected to The NAC of The ILP Bruce Glasiers married		SR joins ILP		1893

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1893 continued		EP becomes a member of the Executive of the Lancashire & Cheshire Union of the WLA EP & RP join the ILP						1893 continued
1894		EP elected as ILP candidate to the Chorlton Board of Poor Law Guardians	JB appointed as Chairman of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education (The Bryce Commission)	KBG's Husband and Brother published				1894
1895		RP stands unsuccessfully as ILP candidate for Gorton		KBG and JBG's <i>The Religion of Socialism</i> published				1895
1896	Esperance Girls' Club founded Boggart Hole Clough dispute	EP takes the chair at Boggart Hole Clough for JBG. RP represents those involved in the dispute.						1896
1897	NUWSS founded			Jeanne Bruce Glasier born JBG elected to the NAC of the ILP KBG's <i>Aimee Furness</i> published	FP-L travels to India			1897
1898								1898
1899	Boer war breaks out	RP dies.		JBG elected chairman of the ILP				1899
1900								1900

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIER	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/FRANKLIN	YEAR
1901					Pethick-Lawrences married FP-L buys <i>The Echo</i>	AR graduates from St. Andrews University	FRANKLIN	1901
1902						SR joins the Manchester Central branch of the ILP		1902
1903	Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) founded in Manchester.	EP and Christabel Pankhurst founding members of the WSPU		Malcolm Bruce Glasier born	FP-L becomes Editor of <i>The Labour Annual</i> (later renamed <i>The Reformers' Year Book</i> )			1903
1904				JBG appointed editor of <i>The Labour Leader</i>	The P-Ls travel to Egypt			1904
1905	First militant incident at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney are arrested.		JB appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland		The P-Ls travel to South Africa	AR organiser for the WSPU		1905

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCE	ROBINSONS	DUVAL-FRANKLIN	YEAR
1906	<p>WLL formed</p> <p>Liberals sweep into power after a landslide election victory.</p> <p>Autumn: WSPU moves its Headquarters to London, taking two rooms at No. 4 Clements Inn, The Strand and decide to fight the Liberals at all by-elections until votes for women are granted.</p> <p>October: Ten well-known WSPU members are arrested at the House of Commons.</p>			<p>KBG writes as 'Iona' for <i>The Labour Leader</i></p> <p>KBG joins the WLL</p>	<p>The P-Ls join the WSPU</p> <p>EP-L arrested. FP-L takes a more active role in the WSPU during EP-L imprisonment.</p> <p>FP-L first represents suffragettes in court</p>			1906
1907	<p>MLWS founded</p> <p>February: First Women's Parliament meets at Caxton Hall, London. Sixty women are arrested at a demonstration at the House of Commons.</p> <p>September: A rift among leading members of the WSPU leads to the formation of the Women's Freedom League, a militant but also a democratic society.</p>		<p>JB appointed Ambassador for Washington</p>		<p>EP-Ls brother-in-law appointed secretary of the MLWS</p> <p>The P-Ls become co-editors of <i>Votes for Women</i></p> <p>EP-L becomes treasurer of the new WSPU committee following the split</p>	<p>SR applies for an ILP propagandist position</p> <p>AR joins the Manchester Central branch of the ILP</p>		1907

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1908	<p>Two suffragettes chain themselves to the railings at No. 10 Downing Street. Five women are arrested.</p> <p>11th February: The 'Trojan Horse' incident takes place when suffragettes try to get into the House of Commons hidden in a furniture van.</p> <p>April: Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman dies. Henry Asquith takes over. He is opposed to votes for women.</p> <p>21st June: WSPU holds Women's Sunday in Hyde Park. Huge crowds attend and seven hundred banners are displayed.</p> <p>30th June: Mary Leigh and Edith New become the first suffragette window-smashers. Acting independently, they attack the windows of No. 10 Downing Street, and are sentenced to two months in Holloway Gaol.</p>				<p>Attempt made to disbar FP-L</p> <p>FP-L primary organiser of the great Hyde Park meeting</p>	<p>Robinsons married</p> <p>AR arrested and imprisoned twice</p>	<p>HF attends Cains College Cambridge</p>	1908

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/FRANKLIN	YEAR
1908 continued	<p>This tactic is to become an element in WSPU's more militant campaign in the autumn of 1911.</p> <p>13th October: Following a 'rush' on the House of Commons planned by WSPU, their leaders and more than thirty other members are arrested. Politicians are heckled by suffragettes at meetings all over the country. Many more women are sent to prison.</p>							1908 continued
1909	<p>Spring: There are now seventy-five staff on WSPU payroll. Branches are opening nationwide.</p> <p>May: The Women's Exhibition is held at Princess' Skating Rink, Knightsbridge, London. The equivalent of over £100,000 profit (in modern terms) is made by this two-week event.</p>			JBG resigns as editor of <i>The Labour Leader</i>	EP-L arrested in February <i>The Woman's Press</i> founded	Cathie Robinson born AR becomes a regular contributor to <i>The Labour Leader</i>	HF joins the MLWS	1909

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1909 continued	<p>29th June: Government office windows are smashed by suffragettes because Asquith consistently refuses to see their deputations. The fourteen window-smashers each serve one month in Holloway Gaol.</p> <p>July: The sculptor, Marjorie Wallace Dunlop goes on the first hunger strike in protest at the treatment of suffragettes in prison.</p> <p>September: Force-feeding of suffragette prisoners begins. Cabinet ministers are 'pestered' by suffragettes all over the country.</p>							1909 continued
1910	<p>MPU founded</p> <p>Conciliation Committee is formed to draft a women's suffrage bill - the Conciliation Bill. (Between 1910 and 1912 three conciliation bills are drafted and debated; all fail).</p>		MB returns to England	Glen Bruce Glasier born		AR appointed as a part-time organiser for the WLL	<p>HF leaves Cambridge</p> <p>HF joins the YPWG Club</p>	1910

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1910 continued	<p>WSPU calls a truce and plans peaceful protests only. Hundreds of meetings are held all over the United Kingdom and a great deal of money is raised.</p> <p>July: Two huge demonstrations are held in Hyde Park.</p> <p>November: There is no progress on the Conciliation Bill.</p> <p>18th November: 'Black Friday'. A riot takes place outside the House of Commons. One hundred and twenty women are arrested; many are seriously assaulted by the police. Similar riots occur the following week in Parliament Square. WSPU renews its truce, optimistic about a second Conciliation Bill.</p>						<p>HF arrested and imprisoned for attempting to strike Home Secretary Winston Churchill with a dog whip</p> <p>HF and ED believe to have met for the first time</p>	1910 continued

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK- LAWRENCE	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1911	<p>Most forms of protest are peaceful this year.</p> <p>April: Many suffragettes refuse to fill in their Census forms.</p> <p>17th June: The Women's Coronation Procession, a huge demonstration, takes place in London. Other societies, such as the Actresses' Franchise League, the Women Writers' Suffrage League and the Gymnastic Teachers' Suffrage Society, are also represented. Over sixty thousand women march with a thousand banners.</p> <p>Autumn: There is still no progress on the Conciliation Bill.</p> <p>November: A new bill is announced by the Government, which gives more votes to men, not women.</p>					<p>Helen Robinson born</p> <p>AR appointed as an organiser for the NUWSS</p>	<p>HF arrested and imprisoned</p> <p>ED arrested and imprisoned along with four other members of her family</p>	1911
					EP-L leads deputations in November			

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/FRANKLIN	YEAR
1911 continued	21st November: Widespread window smashing occurs. Government and commercial properties are attacked. Over two hundred women are arrested and sentenced to up to two months in Holloway Gaol. Window-smashing is now official WSPU policy. Guerrilla warfare dominates the campaign from now on.							1911 continued
1912	JLWS founded  1st and 4th March: More windows smashed in the West End of London. The general public are shocked.  5th March: Police raid WSPU Headquarters. The Pethick-Lawrences are arrested; Christabel flees to Paris to a self-imposed exile. Conspiracy trial finds Emmeline Pankhurst guilty of conspiracy to incite violence.	EP arrested and charged with conspiracy  Christabel Pankhurst escapes to France			The P-Ls arrested and charged with conspiracy	AR becomes an Election Fighting Fund organiser	ED arrested and imprisoned	1912

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/FRANKLIN	YEAR
1912 continued	<p>FP-L, EP-L and EP are sentenced to nine months in prison. A nationwide hunger strike is called by suffragette prisoners.</p> <p>Evelyn Sharp takes over as editor of <i>Votes for Women</i></p> <p>October: The Pethick-Lawrences are expelled from WSPU. A new paper, the <i>Suffragette</i>, becomes the official organ of the WSPU</p>				<p>The P-Ls imprisoned</p> <p>The P-Ls are expelled from the WSPU</p>		FRANKLIN	1912 continued
1913	<p>Votes for Women Fellowship formed.</p> <p>During 1913, feelings against suffragettes run high. They are often roughly handled and beaten up by gangs of men and boys and medical students.</p> <p>February: Lloyd George's new country house is fire-bombed.</p> <p>Hunger strikes and force-feeding continue.</p>		JB returns to England	JBG appointed editor of <i>The Socialist Review</i>	<p>The P-Ls held liable for the full cost of the 1912 court case</p> <p>Votes for Women Fellowship formed by the P-Ls</p>	SR goes to Canada	<p>March: HF arrested and imprisoned - forcibly fed 114 time</p> <p>April: ED arrested and imprisoned</p>	1913

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL-FRANKLIN	YEAR
1913 continued	<p>April: The Prisoners' Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act (known as the Cat and Mouse Act) is rushed through the House of Commons. Hunger-striking suffragettes are thereby released only to be rearrested when they have recovered. The Act fails because many women commit more crimes while out of prison on special licence. Also many evade rearrest.</p> <p>30th April: Lincoln's Inn House Headquarters is raided by the police; senior staff are arrested and their papers confiscated.</p> <p>June: Emily Wilding Davison dies from injuries caused by her protest at the Epson Derby. WSPU organizes a spectacular funeral procession through London.</p>						<p>HF the first and ED the second suffrage prisoners to be released under the 'Cat and Mouse Act'</p> <p>May: HF &amp; ED flee the country separately</p>	1913 continued

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/FRANKLIN	YEAR
1913 continued	<p>Under pressure from the Government, proprietors of the Royal Albert Hall refuse to hire its facilities to WSPU.</p> <p>December: A bomb at Holloway Gaol fails to cause any real damage.</p> <p>United Suffragists founded.</p>							
1914	<p>The MPJ suspends activity</p> <p>Sylvia Pankhurst is expelled from WSPU</p> <p>WSPU accuses prison authorities of drugging suffragettes to reduce their resistance to force-feeding. WSPU attacks reach their climax.</p> <p>March: 'Slasher' Mary Richardson attacks the <i>Rokeby Venus</i> painting at the National Gallery; she is sentenced to eighteen months with hard labour.</p>		JB given a life peerage		P-Ls join the United Suffragists	SR joins the army and is sent to India	<p>ED &amp; HF return to Britain after war broke out in August</p> <p>HF starts work at Woolwich Arsenal</p> <p>ED is in the Women's Land Army.</p> <p>Both remain loyal to the WSPU.</p>	1914

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL-FRANKLIN	YEAR
1914 continued	21st May: Deputation to see King George V at Buckingham Palace fails. More than sixty women are arrested. There are wild scenes in court the next day. Many art galleries and museums are now closed to the public or open to men only. Homes of suffragette sympathizers are raided by the police. Firms who print the <i>Suffragette</i> are threatened by the authorities. WSPU is forced to move its Headquarters twice more.  4th August: Britain at war. The WSPU suspend militant activity.  The first WILPF conference is held at the Hague.							1914 continued
1915				JBG's <i>Militarism</i> published	E P-L attends The Hague Peace Conference	AR joins the WILPF	ED and HF marry	1915
1916				KBG takes over editorship of the <i>Labour Leader</i> when Fenner Brockway was imprisoned as a conscientious objector			HF refuses to re-establish the MPU	1916

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL-FRANKLIN	YEAR
1917					F P-L stands unsuccessfully as a 'peace by negotiation' candidate in the South Aberdeen by-election which James Bryce had previously represented as a Liberal MP			1917
1918	<p>The Representation of the People Act becomes law in February. It gives certain women over the age of thirty the vote. Women are entitled to become MPs.</p> <p>The Sex Disqualification Removal Act opens all the professions (except the Church) to women.</p> <p>Countess Markiewicz is the first woman to win a place in Parliament in her own right. She is the only woman to win a seat in the 1918 General Election, but as an active member of Sinn Fein she refuses to take the oath of allegiance.</p>	<p>Christabel Pankhurst stands unsuccessfully as a Women's Party candidate</p>		<p>JBG re-elected to the NAC</p>	<p>FP-L becomes a conscientious objector</p> <p>EP-L stands unsuccessfully as a Labour candidate in the Rusholme constituency (Manchester).</p>	<p>AR unsuccessful in municipal elections</p> <p>SR returns to England</p>		1918

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/ FRANKLIN	YEAR
1919	<i>The Meaning of Socialism</i> published		MB appointed vice-president of the WNLF	JBG's <i>The Meaning of Socialism</i> published			ED dies	1919
1920			Violet Annan Bryce arrested	JBG dies				1920
1921							HF marries Elsie Constance Tuke	1921
1922			JB dies		FP-L unsuccessfully contests the South Islington seat	AR lectures in America and undertakes work for the WILPF in Amsterdam AR leaves SR and returns to Scotland		1922
1923					FP-L becomes the MP for Leicester West beating Winston Churchill			1923
1924								1924
1925								1925
1926					EP-L elected President of the WFL (she remained President until 1935)	AR dies		1926
1927								1927
1928	The Representation of the People Act allows all women over the age of twenty-one the vote.	EP dies		Glen Bruce Glasier dies				1928

YEAR	KEY EVENTS	PANKHURSTS	BRYCES	BRUCE GLASIERS	PETHICK-LAWRENCES	ROBINSONS	DUVAL/FRANKLIN	YEAR
1931							HF stands unsuccessfully as the Labour candidate for Hornsey	1931
1935							HF stands unsuccessfully as the Labour candidate for St. Albans	1935
1937						SR dies		1937
1939			MB dies					1939
1940								1940
1945					EP-L national President of the Six Point Group FP-L given a peerage and appointed Secretary of State for India and Burma			1945
1948					FP-L a key player in the negotiations leading to Indian independence			1948
1950				KBG dies				1950
1954					EP-L dies			1954
1957					F-PL marries Helen Craggs			1957
1958		CP dies						1958
1960		SP dies						1960
1961		Adela Pankhurst dies			FP-L dies			1961
1962							HF dies	1962
1969	All men and women over the age of eighteen can vote.							1969

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## Chapter 5

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### Sharing the burden

#### The Pethick Lawrences and women's suffrage

*June Balshaw*

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The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced a number of political partnerships such as the Webbs and the Bruce Glasiers. The specific cause of women's suffrage also attracted some notable names, including the Pankhursts and the Fawcetts. And yet, there is one partnership that has to be seen as foremost in terms of its crucial role in the women's suffrage movement: that of Emmeline and Frederick Pethick Lawrence. However, despite the importance of their contribution, very little has been written about this partnership<sup>1</sup> although their involvement in the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) has been well documented in other histories. This chapter focuses on the uniqueness of their political partnership in the context of gendered support.

Emmeline Pethick Lawrence (1867–1954) and Frederick Pethick Lawrence (1871–1961) were married for more than fifty years and during that time fought for many causes. However, it is their combined commitment to the single issue of women's suffrage when it was at its most militant, for which they are best remembered. An examination of their partnership with particular emphasis on how, as a couple, they both challenged and reinforced the gendered nature of political work, will raise questions about the ways in which Fred Pethick Lawrence both used and dealt with his masculinity and the reactions to this. Moreover, it will enable their political partnership to be explored by seeing how it functioned and developed during their involvement with women's suffrage, and how their ideas and actions were understood and represented through existing meanings of gender roles in both a political and a familial context.

Emmeline Pethick Lawrence's background and upbringing were typical of one born into a comfortable middle-class family in the mid-nineteenth century. She had a good relationship with her father and

when she was first arrested for her suffrage activities he reacted with pride:

he was met by one of his colleagues on the Bench with expressions of sympathy. 'Sympathy, my dear fellow,' he replied, 'I don't need sympathy. Give me your congratulations! I'm the proudest man in England!'<sup>2</sup>

Like other privileged Victorian women, Emmeline wanted to experience and contribute to the lives of those less fortunate than herself. In 1891 she became a 'sister' at the West London Mission, founded by Mark Guy Pearse whom she had known since childhood. Here her Liberal ideas realigned themselves in a move towards socialism and she met Frederick Pethick Lawrence.

Frederick Lawrence was born in 1871, the youngest of five children. His father, Alfred Lawrence, son of a self-made carpenter, died when Fred was 3 and his Uncle Edwin took over a parental role. Like Emmeline, Fred was sent to boarding school, an experience he did not enjoy and at 13 he went to Eton. Mathematics was Fred's forte and from Eton he went to Cambridge where he took a double first and was president of the Union. In 1897 he won a fellowship at Trinity College but rather than settle into a life of academia, he spent two years travelling around the world. This desire to see how others lived stemmed, in part, from the influence of the economist Alfred Marshall, of whom Fred later said, 'He really cared passionately that a knowledge of economics should be applied to bettering the lot of humanity and in particular of the underdog.'<sup>3</sup>

A further influence was Percy Alden who was warden of Mansfield House University Settlement of which Fred became treasurer whilst reading for the Bar. In addition to this fairly heavy workload, Fred also became a Liberal-Unionist parliamentary candidate at the suggestion of his uncle, Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence. Thus far, Fred's experiences were framed by exclusively male institutions and one of his contemporaries at Cambridge, Dr G. P. Gooch, believed 'he might have succeeded in half a dozen spheres, at the Bar, in the City, in journalism, as Professor of Mathematics or Political Economy no less as a Cabinet Minister'.<sup>4</sup> Yet instead, he channelled his energies into supporting the 'underdog'. Vera Britain attributed this to the combined influence of Alfred Lawrence, Percy Alden and Emmeline Pethick.

From their initial meeting in 1899, until their marriage, both Fred and Emmeline spent a considerable time contemplating their indi-

vidual and mutual futures. Like other couples of their generation, they were initially divided over the Boer War. It was not, however, this issue alone that made Emmeline refuse Fred's initial marriage proposal, for she had no intention of embarking upon a conventional Victorian marriage that accorded her only a secondary role.

Fred determined to see the Boer situation for himself. He returned to England a pro-Boer, no longer harbouring thoughts of being a Liberal-Unionist MP but instead on the verge of converting to socialism. He became owner of the *Echo* newspaper in a bid to put forward the pro-Boer viewpoint, inviting Emmeline to sit on the council responsible for the paper's policy.

After a brief engagement, they were married in Canning Town, London on 2 October 1901. As a public statement of how they intended to conduct their marriage, they combined their respective surnames henceforth becoming known as the Pethick Lawrences. Emmeline continued her work as president of the Esperance Social Guild, Fred devoting his time to the *Echo*. If anything, marriage to Fred had, in some ways, created new opportunities for Emmeline because of his wealth, causing her to write:

now that all this loveliness had fallen into my lap I rejoiced in it, and wanted to share it, as Mary Neal and I had shared all that we had with our working girls and other friends. My husband was ready to encourage all my ideas, and to co-operate with me in carrying them into fulfilment.<sup>5</sup>

In her autobiography, Emmeline makes frequent reference to the 'family' which included friends, colleagues, the working-class girls and children who holidayed at their various properties. In this respect, the Pethick Lawrences as a 'political partnership' perceived themselves to be representing not only their own personal beliefs but also those of a much larger group; they realized that their strength lay in surrounding themselves with others who would work with them, running things on a day-to-day basis, thus enabling them to fulfil the role they had consciously created for themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Their correspondence during the early years of their marriage was romantic, very frequent and often repetitive. On their first wedding anniversary, Fred gave Emmeline her own flat at the top of the Clement's Inn building, effectively giving her a 'room of one's own'. Vera Britain saw this as a sign that 'already he was learning to be not only efficient, but human'.<sup>7</sup> This indicates a shift in their private life and the development of the equality that they advocated both in

public and private. The early letters also indicate a strong combined sense of what they, as an equal couple, stood for. Nowhere is this clearer than in the following extracts from a letter written by Fred to Emmeline in April 1902:

You and I were born to fight dear, ourselves and all the world and all the powers of darkness. . . . Courage lady, sing a poem beloved that you and I are found worthy to stand up together and fight. Fight for the light against the darkness, for truth against the lie, for life against death.<sup>8</sup>

They both had, prior to meeting, a strong sense of justice but for Fred, in particular, the meeting of their two minds extended this into a spiritual calling to embark upon a mission which together they could accomplish. Such dramatic sentiments had yet to be matched with a specific cause but it indicated the direction in which they were heading.

From 1901 onwards, they became more involved with the labour movement under the influence of Keir Hardie. Fred established links with various trade unions as a result of his involvement with Percy Alden and in 1904, after letting the *Echo* cease publication, they went to Egypt, followed by a visit to South Africa in 1905. There, they spent time with Olive Schreiner whose writings had impressed them and she remained a strong influence. Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney were arrested in Manchester whilst the Pethick Lawrences were still in South Africa but the newspaper reports they received aroused their interest sufficiently to make Emmeline, in particular, want to meet these women.

In his autobiography, *Fate Has Been Kind* (1943), Fred admits that at the time of reading about the arrests, he could not see what middle-class women had to complain about, or that they had a specific contribution to make in the world of politics.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, his wife's subsequent involvement with the WSPU and Christabel's political prowess altered his view to such an extent that it was to change his life dramatically for several years and remained a strong influence in his subsequent political work.

The Pethick Lawrences were involved with the WSPU for six and a half years and their combined contribution during this time cannot be underestimated. However, although they achieved a high profile in the public sphere, despite or even because of the challenges they now faced, this period also seems to have fulfilled their desire to be

brought closer together through shared experiences. As Emmeline Pethick Lawrence later observed:

It is one of the intriguing facts about the W.S.P.U. that minds and temperaments so fundamentally dissimilar could have remained for so many years in practical working harmony under the inspiration of a great ideal.<sup>10</sup>

In her autobiography, Emmeline makes it clear that the 'franchise question' was not uppermost in either her mind or Fred's at the beginning of 1906 and that 'political interests were subordinate to our fervent desire to bring about an amelioration of the social conditions of the workers'.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the increasing emphasis they gave to feminist rather than labour agendas is evident. Whilst Fred Pethick Lawrence saw socialism encompassing rebellions against the domination of class, sex and colour, it was the rebellion against the domination of sex that they chose to focus upon.<sup>12</sup> It was Annie Kenney who persuaded Emmeline to meet the others involved in what she later described as the WSPU's 'pathetic little committee'.<sup>13</sup> The result of the meeting was that in February 1906, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence and Mary Neal joined the Central London Committee of the WSPU with Emmeline as honorary treasurer.

Why did the Pethick Lawrences become involved with an organisation that excluded men, creating an ambivalent position for Fred? To what extent was a role consciously developed for him? Their early involvement suggests that they had not deliberately set out to create a specific role for Fred other than that of a supportive nature. Yet from 1907, as he pointed out:

the daily executive control of the agitation passed for a time unobtrusively and almost unconsciously into the hands of an unofficial committee of three persons — Christabel, my wife and myself.<sup>14</sup>

The main reason for this was that Mrs Pankhurst trusted Christabel's judgement and preferred to spend her time touring the country. Christabel, in turn, clearly welcomed the combined expertise of the Pethick Lawrences with the result that all three effectively ran the WSPU.

During the years of militancy, however, Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel's attitudes towards the Pethick Lawrences shifted. Mrs Pankhurst was, according to Emmeline, 'distressed by the way in

which Christabel consulted us about everything and was influenced by our opinion'.<sup>15</sup> Mrs Pankhurst appears to have become increasingly concerned that the Pethick Lawrences, and Fred in particular, were being publicly perceived as the WSPU's true figureheads.

As treasurer, Emmeline recognized that her dealing with the organization and finance of the WSPU meant the others could effectively carry out what she described as 'the guerrilla method of political warfare'.<sup>16</sup> She had her husband's support and assistance and fully acknowledged that it was his business acumen and financial knowledge that helped the union. However, Emmeline also possessed a high degree of business sense and Roger Fulford's suggestion that 'although Mr Lawrence never obtruded himself, the organisation of the union rested on his aptitude and foresight'<sup>17</sup> seems unfair. Rather, the union's success resulted from their combined skills and teamwork. Indeed, if any further endorsement of Emmeline's involvement in matters of business and finance both within the union and elsewhere were needed, then a letter she wrote to Fred from Holloway prison in 1909 reveals that she was not only consulted by him on their private financial dealings but also appeared to direct them – something usually classed as a male responsibility.<sup>18</sup> In this letter Emmeline also discussed issues connected with her role as treasurer of the WSPU and requested the WSPU financial report and balance sheet which required her signature.

In terms of Fred's involvement with the WSPU, it would seem logical to assume that Emmeline would have utilized his services from the outset but there were key moments, particularly during the first year, that help to explain his developing role within the campaign. On 23 October 1906, Emmeline was one of ten women arrested for taking part in a demonstration in the Central Lobby of the House of Commons and was sentenced to two months in prison after refusing to give an undertaking to keep the peace for six months. Suffering from exhaustion, she was discharged four days later after Mrs Pankhurst had sent a message stating she should give the undertaking.<sup>19</sup> The Pethick Lawrences travelled to Italy then he returned to take her place as treasurer whilst she recuperated.

According to Emmeline, her imprisonment 'was the incident that brought him finally to devote all his manifold powers to a cause which needed the help that a trained mind like his could give'.<sup>20</sup> The personal impact of seeing his wife suffer for the cause motivated him into dedicating himself to that same cause, and the most effective way to do this was to use his legal and business knowledge, although

it was not long before his contribution extended into other areas. With the increase in militancy, Fred assumed an essential role, ensuring that those who had been arrested were properly instructed upon how to deal with their defence. Additionally, he also took responsibility for arranging bail, dealing with worried relatives and liaising with the police as well as helping to keep the union running.



Plate 6 The Pethick Lawrences going to the lawcourts, 1908

It was whilst representing three suffragettes in court, in July 1906, that Fred felt he first made a real commitment to militancy. He saw that the dock was dirty and wiped it with his handkerchief. Writing about this incident nearly forty years on, he stated:

Ridiculous as it may seem, this single act, which I performed out of courtesy to my wife's friends, made a greater demand on my courage and resolution than anything I did later in the campaign, not excluding my own prison sentence and forcible feeding. By it I testified that in this matter of the women's revolt I had taken sides with the dock against the bench; and I accepted the full implication of all that that entailed.<sup>21</sup>

His representation of the three suffragettes had, in effect, brought into question conflicting representations of masculinity. Whilst on the one hand the act of wiping the dock could be interpreted as chivalrous, although it could also be seen as effeminate given that cleaning is perceived as women's work, in his position as a barrister defending these women it could be viewed as a threat to the male establishment. This is clearly how Fred himself saw it; he had made a choice about which he wrote, 'C'est le premier pas qui coûte.'<sup>22</sup> The consequences of this action manifested themselves in a number of ways including an unsuccessful attempt to disbar him in 1908, whilst representing a suffragette (Plate 6).

Press coverage initially focused on the support that married suffragettes received from their husbands, although this was soon replaced by stories with headlines such as 'Suffragettes' Neglected Children'<sup>23</sup> challenging the 'manliness' of these husbands through implications of weakness and forced domesticity. The Pethick Lawrences, however, were represented in rather a different way and the press had yet to find the language to express Fred's role in the campaign. He was not a father and had, of course, represented the suffragettes. Emphasis was given to Fred's wealth – he had pledged £10 for every day of Emmeline's imprisonment – and when she was released after four days, one report stated that 'Mr Lawrence, if he chooses, can save quite a considerable sum of money.'<sup>24</sup>

The *Daily Mirror* reported on a statement made by Sir Parteson Nickalls, chairman of the New Reform Club Committee, which stressed that the 'New Reform Club has nothing to do with the Women's Social and Political Union, Mr Pethick Lawrence is not a member of the NRC Committee.'<sup>25</sup> Already, Fred's involvement in

women's suffrage was creating waves within other sites of masculine culture, for which he would eventually be punished.

Fred's lack of an official role within the WSPU is deceptive, for he corresponded on WSPU letter-headed notepaper and was the only man to have done this.<sup>26</sup> What is also significant is Emmeline's comment that 'he was the person with whom the police were glad to deal'<sup>27</sup> for in addition to it being a relief to have him organize these 'troublesome' women, the police clearly found security in dealing with a man, a gentleman in fact. It is as though they were temporarily prepared to ignore conflicting masculine relations and focus on conventional ones.

The Pethick Lawrences had been involved with the WSPU for just over a year when their combined threat to the establishment was brought to the notice of the Public Prosecutor in the form of a letter from a Miss Meechan:

Dear Sir,

May I respectfully ask if it is not possible to break up the Suffragette movement by taking action against Mr and Mrs Pethick Lawrence for conspiring and inciting to serious breaches of the peace. It can very easily be proved that Mr Pethick Lawrence went to East Ham on one occasion and hired a number of women at 2/- per day + expenses and women who carried babies in their arms at 2/6 per day + their expenses. These women were drilled into their work by Mr Lawrence and his assistants and as you will remember took part in very disorderly scenes. . . . These women (& many of the women agitators who are paid £2-5 per week) know nothing of politics or Votes for Women questions and are paid for creating disturbance at command of the leaders . . . [I] like many thousands of women feel it is a dreadful thing to let these cranks bring such discredit on women.<sup>28</sup>

Although the writer suggests taking action against the Pethick Lawrences as a couple, it is Fred who is held responsible for mobilizing the forces. Female opponents of the suffragettes would presumably have viewed Fred's involvement as betraying his own sex. The letter was taken seriously and a CID officer was sent to investigate, subsequently reporting that the writer had retracted much of what had been stated. However, the police were sufficiently interested in the Pethick Lawrences to keep Clement's Inn under 'casual and discreet observation' but found there was no evidence to justify 'that women of the lower order, with or without children, are

drilled or receive instruction in connection with any organised procession of the suffragettes'.<sup>29</sup>

Fred's contribution to the WSPU extended far beyond a legalistic position. He wrote articles, including one entitled 'The Opposition of the Liberal Government to Woman Suffrage' (1908), where he stressed that

It is essential to success in a political fight to discern who are the actual enemies to be fought. In the battle for Woman Suffrage both the teaching of history and of political common sense point to the same conclusion – there is only one enemy, and that is the Government of the day.<sup>30</sup>

It was Christabel Pankhurst who had convinced Fred that this was the way forward and having adopted this position, he explained that

Some people suppose that the enemy of Woman Suffrage is the men of the country. That is entirely a mistake: Woman Suffrage is *not in any sense an anti-man movement*, and as such it should not, and does not, rouse the hostility of the men of the country. On the contrary, in the old days, when petitions were being got up in favour of this reform, large numbers of men signed in favour of it. The Women's Social and Political Union find that at great meetings all over the country, and in particular at the bye-elections, the majority of men give a hearty support to the cause whenever it is properly explained, and carry this to the extent of their vote at the polls.<sup>31</sup>

Fred's profile within the women's suffrage movement and his support of WSPU militant tactics, saw him attempt to defuse the 'sex war' issue by firmly implicating government. The concluding words of the pamphlet are unequivocal about the militant policy adopted:

women will know that it is the Government of the day who stand between them and their enfranchisement, and they will accordingly waste no powder upon any other section of the community who may appear to be unfriendly, but will strike directly at the Government of the day, conscious that in so doing they are fighting the battle against their real enemy.<sup>32</sup>

Now that the 'enemy' had been located, the opportunity existed to turn the dramatic words Fred wrote to Emmeline in 1902 into deeds.

Emmeline and Fred were coeditors of *Votes for Women*, first published in 1907 and in line with the other aspects of their lives

they both contributed. Fifty years later Fulford described the paper as 'occasionally rabid' but conceded that it was 'conducted with force and judgement by Mr Pethick Lawrence'.<sup>33</sup> This is just one example of how Fulford wanted to portray Fred Pethick Lawrence's role in the Women's Suffrage campaign; there was a niche for Fred amongst all this unsavoury militancy and that was to promote his gentlemanly qualities. This way it was easy for him to be perceived as the 'Prince Consort of militancy' and not just Mrs Pethick Lawrence's husband.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps, Lord Pethick Lawrence was happy by this stage to be written about in this way for, when Fulford's book was published in 1957, it was Christabel and Sylvia Pankhurst who were furious about their misrepresentation. Interestingly though, it was to Fred they individually wrote about their concerns and it was Fred who attempted to 'smooth' things over.

On 5 March 1912, the Pethick Lawrences, Christabel, Mrs Pankhurst and Mrs Tuke were charged with 'conspiracy to damage the property of liege subjects of the King'.<sup>35</sup> Christabel had recently escaped to France, Mrs Pankhurst and Mrs Tuke were already in prison. Emmeline and Fred were refused bail and so, for the first time, Fred experienced prison. On 28 March they were released on bail and the trial was held at the Old Bailey in May. Fred conducted his own defence which, as Britain has pointed out, finally introduced a statement on his own position. He said:

I am a man and I cannot take part in this women's agitation, but I intend to stand by the women who are fighting . . . . I think it is a battle waged for the good of the people of this country, waged by one half of the community whose deeds are valuable to the other part of the country and should not be excluded.<sup>36</sup>

Here it is admirably stated that women need to fight their own battles and that, whilst as a man he could offer support, he could not join them. Clearly, this contradicted his practice but perhaps Fred was choosing to focus on his position as one half of a partnership rather than as a man. By removing gender from the equation, he could participate. And yet, it was precisely because of his gender that he was able to contribute in many areas. Moreover, there were men who were actively engaged in acts of militancy and who paid for it by suffering physical violence. Was it a calculated decision that Fred would be better served to distance himself from direct action and use his legal expertise, or was it perhaps the case that there remained in him a natural aversion to behaving in an 'ungentlemanly fashion'.

which brings concepts of class as well as masculinity into play? Even the charge of conspiracy was a step removed from actually damaging something though that is not to alleviate its seriousness (particularly for a lawyer).

The defendants were found guilty and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment as well as having to pay the full cost of the trial, a decision that was met with public indignation. An interesting outcome was that the daughters of Judge Coleridge, who presided over the trial, immediately applied for membership of the WSPU, a good example of how women's suffrage impacted on family politics. However, for the Pethick Lawrences, prison meant something rather different, Fred described the elation of not being 'shut off in General Headquarters, but right up in the front line, sharing its dangers and excitements with the rank and file of my women comrades',<sup>37</sup> highlighting the military element and revealing through those last few words that he was actually an integral part of the movement despite his *claims* in court. In a letter to Fred sent from Holloway prison on 18 June 1912, Emmeline wrote:

the purpose to which we were born and for which we were mated is accomplished. . . . It is enough . . . . I think we two are the happiest and luckiest people in all the world.<sup>38</sup>

This suggests that the Pethick Lawrences had achieved a private, as well as a public, position in terms of their partnership.

Whilst in prison, Emmeline, Fred and Mrs Pankhurst went on hunger strike; Emmeline was force fed once and then released but Fred was subjected to forcible feeding which he described as an unpleasant and painful process over a period of several days before his release on 27 June 1912. He also commented on the visible distress of the head doctor, 'a most sensitive man', concluding that prison reminded him of 'prep' school.<sup>39</sup> Two days prior to his release, Emmeline wrote to him explaining, 'I was privileged to share what our brave comrades had experienced. I never had a moment's fear or a moment's hunger. I should have felt it bitterly had I been released without going through all.'<sup>40</sup> Although the Pethick Lawrences both experienced prison and forcible feeding, their individual interpretations of these events demonstrate that for Fred it was bound up in militarism, whilst Emmeline emphasized the heroic element.

Discussing the meeting that she and Fred had with the Pankhursts in Boulogne shortly after their release, Emmeline's autobiography

emphasizes that the Pankhursts' announcement of a new campaign involving widespread attacks upon public and private property came as a shock, 'as our minds had been moving in quite another direction'.<sup>41</sup> Essentially, what the Pethick Lawrences were advocating was to maximize the public awareness created by the trial by organizing popular demonstrations on a scale hitherto unseen.

After the Boulogne meeting, Emmeline received a letter from Mrs Pankhurst. In describing the position of the authorities, she wrote:

So long as Mr Lawrence can be connected with militant acts involving damage to property, they will make him pay. Nothing but the cessation of militancy, (which of course is unthinkable before the vote is assured) or his complete ruin will stop this action on their part. They see in Mr Lawrence a potent weapon against the militant movement and they mean to use it.<sup>42</sup>

The WSPU leadership now saw Fred as a liability and were not prepared to acknowledge his commitment to women's suffrage.

Emmeline Pethick Lawrence's response could be construed as contradicting her earlier sentiments. However, it is important to recognize how the Pethick Lawrences broadly defined militancy. In her reply to Mrs Pankhurst Emmeline wrote:

Our answer today is the same as it has been since we entered the struggle. You will realise directly we state it that there is only one answer possible. It is the answer which you yourself would give if asked to choose between the Movement (which you and we have in so large a measure jointly built up) and any other possession in life however dear and precious. You would not hesitate for a moment. Neither do we. Our answer is that we shall continue to be jointly responsible with you in the future as we have been in the past, and that the more we are menaced the harder we will fight until victory is won. . . . With regard to Militancy we have never for a single instant allowed our individual interests to stand in the way of any necessary action or policy to be pursued by the Union, and we never shall.<sup>43</sup>

This suggests that she was prepared to condone militancy at any level no matter what the personal cost. It may well have been the case that after a break from WSPU activities, and time to consider their future, the Pethick Lawrences had decided for they were prepared to accept Mrs Pankhurst's autocratic leadership for the sake of the cause. Certainly, the solidarity of the Pethick Lawrences' partnership is undisputed in

the letter. Nevertheless, upon their return to England, Mrs Pankhurst informed Emmeline that she was severing her connection with her. Neither Emmeline nor Fred was prepared to accept this and they felt sure that Christabel would not have been a party to this decision but at a further WSPU meeting on 14 October at which Christabel was present, they were left in no doubt as to their situation.

We need to consider Fred's position in this. Although never a member of the WSPU, his gender automatically excluding him, his contribution was outstanding. Yet Mrs Pankhurst never addressed him personally in this matter until forced to during the second meeting. Elizabeth Robins, who was also present at the second meeting, recorded in her diary how Mrs Pankhurst was opposed to Fred reading a statement after she had made hers and noted that 'we all feel he should be allowed. He does. Mrs P. interrupts. He calls for a quiet hearing. "We listened to you".'<sup>44</sup> The result of the meeting was that a statement was signed by all parties (the Pethick Lawrences, Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel) and printed in the next issue of *Votes for Women*, which remained in the hands of the Pethick Lawrences.

It would seem to be the case that neither Emmeline nor Fred really advocated an increase in militancy. Rather they were prepared to agree to it on the basis that they could convince the Pankhursts of a better alternative and perhaps, more importantly, they could remain in the 'family circle' that had been their life for over six years.

A *Punch* cartoon soon after the split asked, 'Are you a Peth or a Pank?', but this was to reduce the issue to its most basic for, as the next few years were to prove, the Pethick Lawrences and the Pankhursts were to become divided on issues that extended far beyond militancy within the WSPU. In this sense, 1912 has to be considered in terms of the development of the Pethick Lawrences' partnership and its changing focus. During their time with the WSPU, the Pethick Lawrences broke new ground in the public sphere. As a couple, they managed to avoid a complete inversion of roles, for although officially outside the WSPU, Fred's individual contribution was of a sufficiently high profile for him to be recognized by many as an equal half of a partnership rather than just a supporter. This view was not, however, shared by the Pankhursts who never gave him the recognition he deserved. The status Emmeline had achieved publicly through her position as treasurer can be seen as an extension of her status within the marriage although their individual and joint public status was to alter as they pursued new interests.

Despite the Pethick Lawrences no longer being connected with the WSPU, the full consequences of their suffrage involvement were still to come. In June 1913, the Government forced the sale of their personal possessions to meet the costs of the 1912 court case (many of the items were bought by friends and returned to them) and civil actions were brought against them by shops that had suffered broken windows. These actions were contested and both Emmeline and Fred conducted their own defence. Although they were not acquitted, the judge was sympathetic and was particularly impressed by Emmeline's address to the jury, describing it as 'a most eloquent speech'.<sup>45</sup> She used it as an opportunity to highlight the problem of infant mortality, citing New Zealand and Australia where women already had the vote as examples of how death rates had been more than halved since the women of these countries had become enfranchised.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, they were held liable for the full costs and payment was taken from Fred's estate. In her autobiography, Emmeline wrote of Fred: 'thus he underwent every variation of the sacrifice demanded for the freedom of women – imprisonment – hunger strike – forcible feeding – bankruptcy – loss of financial substance – expulsion from his club.'<sup>47</sup> She went on to make the point that 'deep as is the love between us he never took up the women's cause for my sake but as a result of our common outlook'.<sup>48</sup> Even if this were the case, it was Emmeline's involvement that drew him in and Fred himself claimed her first prison experience as a key turning-point for him.

Their dissociation from the WSPU did not prevent the Pethick Lawrences from continuing to be influential. From the *Votes for Women* paper which they continued to edit, the *Votes for Women Fellowship* was formed in early 1913. Emmeline explained in a letter to Elizabeth Robins that it was not intended to compete with the WSPU, writing that 'at the present juncture it is more than ever important to interpret militancy to the average woman and man and this we feel is our little bit of service and is the *raison d'être*'.<sup>49</sup> However, by May 1913 it was receiving around fifty applications for membership daily<sup>50</sup> at a time when some WSPU members were finding it difficult to live with the autocratic Pankhurst leadership. In 1914, the Pethick Lawrences became founder members of the United Suffragists, a mixed-sex organization committed to the suffrage cause.

With the outbreak of the First World War, however, their energies became focused in different directions. Emmeline was a founder

member of the Women's International League (for Peace and Freedom), and was one of only three British women to attend The Hague conference in 1915. She had long-held strong pacifist beliefs and spent the duration of the war campaigning for peace although she never lost sight of the franchise issue.

Brittain has asserted that the war did nothing to advance Fred's political rehabilitation.<sup>51</sup> He became treasurer of the Union of Democratic Control, an organization formed in response, primarily, to the government's foreign policy, whose members included Ramsay MacDonald and H. N. Brailsford, the left-wing suffrage supporter and writer. In 1917, Fred stood as a 'peace by negotiation' candidate in the South Aberdeen by-election but polled only 333 votes. In 1918, when the age for conscription was raised to 50, he became a conscientious objector.

The Pankhursts and the Pethick Lawrences now displayed differing attitudes towards the war but the paradoxical issue of militancy, which was so integral to their relationship, is also worth noting. The latter's militancy during this period helps to explain how, fundamentally, their understandings of it were so different. For the Pankhursts it was tactical action confined to a specific cause, whilst for the Pethick Lawrences it was a type of protest that could be used in varying forms and could affect a whole range of issues. During the war, Fred joined the Society of Authors and both he and Emmeline corresponded with a range of writers including Laurence Housman and Miles Malleson. Vera Brittain has suggested that Fred was looking for 'reinforcement by a respectable professional organisation'<sup>52</sup> after his expulsion by the Reform Club and whilst there may be some truth in this, as his subsequent membership of PEN (Poets, Essayists, Novelists) testifies, this also has to be considered in terms of the balance between work, home and association and how this impacted on socially defining Fred's masculinity. John Tosh has written of the uncertainty of these bases of masculine identification, concluding that men with limited social and economic power were as likely to lose masculine self-respect as they were income.<sup>53</sup> For Fred, however, these three arenas had been solid; he was wealthy, had several homes and membership of a 'decent' club. Being made bankrupt affected all these areas but it was his expulsion from the Reform Club that had the greatest effect on his masculinity. Society, and very likely Fred Pethick Lawrence himself, would have viewed exclusion from such a site of masculine culture as shameful and belittling.

The first general election in which women were allowed to vote took place just four weeks after the end of the war on 14 December 1918. In November 1918, a bill to allow women to stand as Members of Parliament was rushed through and seventeen women stood in the general election, including Emmeline Pethick Lawrence and Christabel Pankhurst. Fred had been adopted as the prospective Labour candidate for Hastings in April 1918, but his decision to become a conscientious objector provoked sufficient disaffection from his supporters for him to withdraw in November 1918, and he was unsuccessful in securing another candidature. In his autobiography he wrote: 'in these circumstances, my wife felt herself free to accept the invitation of the local Labour Party in the Rusholme division of Manchester to contest that seat in the Labour interest.'<sup>54</sup> Fred appears to have seen himself as the one who should pursue a political career and to have perceived Emmeline's candidature as a secondary consideration. Indeed he pointed out, 'there was little prospect of success.'<sup>55</sup> In her autobiography, Emmeline gave her sole reason for standing as being 'that an opportunity was offered to explain publicly the reasons why I believed that the only chance of permanent peace in Europe lay in a just settlement after the war.'<sup>56</sup> Moreover, she gave the election campaign only one page of coverage in her autobiography but enough to make the point that

It was a strange experience for one who had given eight years of life as I had, in the endeavour to win votes for women, to watch working-class mothers, with their babies and small children, eagerly going to the poll to record their votes against me. But not more strange after all than that soldiers should vote for a pacifist.<sup>57</sup>

Paradoxically, it was the soldiers' vote that saved her deposit, helping her to poll 2,985 votes and placing her above the Liberal candidate, but her claim that 'working-class mothers' voted against her is perhaps exaggerated given the terms on which the franchise was extended to women in 1918 – there were still a substantial number of women without the vote.

Whether Emmeline would have been really interested in pursuing a political career is difficult to say, for although it would have been an excellent opportunity to act as a voice for women's rights, her disillusionment was strong enough to cause her to write to Elizabeth Robins in 1919: 'I have come to the end of Politics and all they stand for. I see that the only possibility of real reconstruction lies in finding some new principle of life and way of living.'<sup>58</sup> This view did not,

however, stop her from supporting Fred in his continuing attempt to get elected as a Labour MP and throughout the 1920s and 1930s she campaigned for many women's issues and actively supported women in the labour movement in areas such as the provision of birth control information to working-class women. She was also president of the Women's Freedom League (WFL) for several years.<sup>59</sup>

In 1923, Fred stood as the prospective Labour candidate for Leicester West against the Liberal, Winston Churchill. With Emmeline's support, which Fred openly acknowledged, they set about creating a suitable image for him that would appeal to the electorate. One of the most successful pieces of propaganda was a song (which according to Fred was written by Emmeline,<sup>60</sup> although she attributes it to Harry Peach<sup>61</sup>) entitled 'Vote, Vote, Vote for Pethick Lawrence'. Part of the lyrics read:

Once again the party cry, do not let it pass you by!  
Labour's out to win no matter what they say.  
We are sick of promise vain, must we have it all again?  
We want deeds not words to bring the better day.

*Chorus*

Vote, vote, vote for Pethick Lawrence!  
Work, work, work and do your best!  
If all workers we enrol, he is sure to head the poll,  
And we'll have a Labour man for Leicester West.

So we work to bring the day that will give to all fair play;  
We can do it here in Leicester if we will.

And you Leicester Women too, Pethick Lawrence worked  
for you;

Work for *him* and not for Instone or Churchill.<sup>62</sup>

This was sung at all meetings and undoubtedly helped to instil the name of Pethick Lawrence in the minds of the voters. The lyrics are especially interesting, for they embodied both Fred and Emmeline's political beliefs, as well as serving as a reminder to the electorate, particularly the women, of Fred's involvement in the women's suffrage campaign. 'Deeds not Words' was the phrase originally coined by Christabel Pankhurst when militancy was at its height.

The result of the Leicester West election was that Fred, for the first time, became a Member of Parliament. Whilst supportive of him, Emmeline continued to work for the causes in which they both believed and in that sense, retained her own identity. Harrison has

written of Emmeline that 'though childless, she had no career, and left Fred to manage the finances . . . she contented herself with running the household', and that she 'rarely commented on politics between the wars'.<sup>63</sup> In fact, she spoke all over the world on a vast range of political issues including the inevitability of another war which she (along with many others) had predicted after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Moreover, the WFL annual conference reports show that in her nine years as president, she continued to be heavily involved in feminist campaigns, including the extension of the franchise to all women.

Fred's public status altered as his political career developed and although his involvement in the militant campaign for women's suffrage was not totally forgotten, his immersion in parliamentary concerns soon took over. Nevertheless, his commitment to feminist issues remained because it was, in essence, the basis of their marriage and his *maiden* speech was concerned with the question of widows' pensions.

*Emmeline, on the other hand, once so prominent in the public sphere because of her suffrage activism, could never hope to sustain this role, whereas Fred could take advantage of conventional political openings. Now women had the vote the press were keen for other 'news'. Moreover, the government's interest in those issues of concern to Emmeline was negligible.*

Nevertheless, throughout their political partnership, they succeeded in pursuing their common goals and appear to have adapted well to the shift in their individual political activity, viewing the changing nature of their respective positions both in the public and private sphere as part of some greater plan. Nowhere is this made clearer than in the preface to Emmeline's autobiography in which she wrote: 'Life is one. Separation is a delusion'.<sup>64</sup>

Towards the end of his life, Fred wrote 'The Men's Share', a reworking of a pamphlet he had first written in 1912. In it he stated:

All down history women have supported men in their fight for liberty. They have toiled with them, suffered with them, died with them. There is nothing surprising therefore in the fact that in the militant struggle of British women for their own emancipation some men stood with them in the fight.<sup>65</sup>

The years between 1906 and 1912 seem to have been a time when the Pethick Lawrences were closer than at any other time in their life. Moreover, the results of their efforts continued to manifest

themselves in a variety of ways. As a political partnership, they saw their participation in the suffrage cause epitomizing everything they stood for at a public and a personal level. In effect, it was the culmination of their combined desire to break down the barriers that separated the public and private spheres.

Their prime strength lay in the way in which they complemented each other and in their ability to resolve areas of potential conflict without its appearing to affect their personal relationship or their public image. Additionally, they gave each other the freedom and space necessary for their partnership to be successful. Of course, reading about their lives as written by them, it is difficult to assess to what extent this actually accurately reflects their private relationship as they sought to give the impression that there was little difference between the way they portrayed themselves publicly and the way in which they functioned as a couple privately.

What is interesting is the way in which Fred, after having been involved and thus connected with the women's suffrage movement, was able subsequently to enter into a traditionally male domain, that of parliamentary politics. Nevertheless, as a politician Fred continued his commitment to feminism throughout his parliamentary career. In 1945, he was rewarded for his political work and given a peerage, as well as being appointed Secretary of State for India and Burma.

Sadly, Emmeline's political career after the women's suffrage campaign has gone largely unrecognized other than in the context of being the wife of Fred Pethick Lawrence, the MP. Yet it could be argued that in the interwar period her role was of equal importance though because she was not involved in 'parliamentary politics', she effectively became redundant. Their respective careers are represented in the highly gendered autobiographies they wrote; in Fred's, suffrage is portrayed as a short period in his life, covering four slim chapters, whilst in Emmeline's it is presented as her life's main focus.

The Pethick Lawrences have to be seen as unique in terms of their contribution to women's suffrage and especially during their involvement with the WSPU. Without them, it is difficult to imagine how the organization would have grown in the way it did, such was the importance of their input at so many levels. Nevertheless, they must also be viewed in terms of their broader commitments. Addressing the annual conference of the Women's Freedom League on 13 April 1929, the president, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, said:

Today we rejoice in the fact that a complete Women's Enfranchisement Act has been placed on the Statute Book, and we meet on the eve of the General Election, when, for the first time, young women will be free to exercise their vote.<sup>66</sup>

Whilst women getting the vote was, in part, a realization of all that the Pethick Lawrences had fought for, it was for Emmeline only a beginning. There were still many other issues pertinent to women to be addressed and her belief 'that one in the House and one out of it make the best team',<sup>67</sup> whilst certainly true in their case, remains flawed by the gendered location of those roles and the distance of the house from the House!

#### NOTES

- 1 B. Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987, includes a chapter on the Pethick Lawrences, focusing on the interwar period.
- 2 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, London, Victor Gollancz, 1938, p. 47.
- 3 Quoted in V. Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence, A Portrait*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1963, p. 21.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 5 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 130.
- 6 Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, makes reference to the importance of mostly female servants and secretaries in terms of middle-class feminist achievement, p. 11.
- 7 Brittain, *Pethick-Lawrence*, p. 34.
- 8 Pethick-Lawrence papers, Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge (hereafter referred to as P-L followed by the number), P-L 6/26, Letter from F. Pethick Lawrence to E. Pethick Lawrence, 1 April 1902.
- 9 F. W. Pethick Lawrence, *Fate Has Been Kind*, London, Hutchinson, 1943, p. 69.
- 10 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 152.
- 11 *Ibid.* p. 146.
- 12 Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, p. 247.
- 13 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 148.
- 14 F. W. Pethick Lawrence, *Fate*, p. 75.
- 15 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 283.
- 16 *Ibid.* p. 152.
- 17 R. Fulford, *Votes for Women*, London, Faber & Faber, 1957, p. 167.
- 18 P-L 7/165, Letter from E. Pethick Lawrence in Holloway prison to her husband, 4 March 1909.
- 19 In his autobiography, *Fate Has Been Kind*, Fred wrote that initially Mrs Pankhurst did not want Emmeline to give the undertaking, making some scornful remark about the attitude of husbands, p. 73.

- 20 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 169.  
 21 F. W. Pethick Lawrence, *Fate*, p. 69.  
 22 Translated, this means 'it is the first step which costs'.  
 23 See, for example, the *Daily Mirror*, 5–10 July 1906.  
 24 *Daily Mirror*, 29 October 1906, p. 3.  
 25 *Daily Mirror*, 26 October 1906, p. 3.  
 26 See, for example, Public Record Office (PRO), MEPO 2/1222 XC2585, letter from F. Pethick Lawrence to the police, 13 October 1908, requesting an improvement in conditions at Bow Street cells, etc.  
 27 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 169.  
 28 PRO, MEPO 2/1016 XC2783, pp. 52–3, Letter from Miss A. Meechan to the Public Prosecutor, 23 March 1907.  
 29 PRO, MEPO 2/1016 XC2783, p. 63, Report from Criminal Investigation Department, New Scotland Yard, 11 April 1907.  
 30 Suffragette Fellowship Collection, Museum of London, F. W. Pethick Lawrence, 'The Opposition of the Liberal Government to Woman Suffrage' (1908).  
 31 *ibid.*  
 32 *ibid.*  
 33 Fulford, *Voices*, p. 167.  
 34 *ibid.* p. 139.  
 35 Quoted in Britain, *Pethick*, p. 61.  
 36 *ibid.* p. 62.  
 37 F. W. Pethick Lawrence, *Fate*, p. 89.  
 38 P-L 7/168, Letter from E. Pethick Lawrence to F. Pethick Lawrence, sent from Holloway prison, 18 June 1912.  
 39 F. W. Pethick Lawrence, *Fate*, p. 89.  
 40 P-L 7/169, Letter from E. Pethick Lawrence to F. Pethick Lawrence still in prison, 25 June 1912.  
 41 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 277.  
 42 P-L 9/31, p. 2, Letter from Mrs Pankhurst to E. Pethick Lawrence, 8 September 1912.  
 43 P-L 9/32, pp. 3–4, Letter from E. Pethick Lawrence to Mrs Pankhurst, 22 September 1912.  
 44 Elizabeth Robins diary extract, October 1912, Fales Library, New York University, Information from Angela V. John.  
 45 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 288.  
 46 P-L 7/170, p. 8, E. Pethick Lawrence, speech to the Jury, June 1913.  
 47 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 290.  
 48 *ibid.*  
 49 Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center (HRHRC), University of Texas at Austin, Letter from E. Pethick Lawrence to E. Robins, 14 April 1913, Information from Angela V. John.  
 50 HRHRC, Letter from E. Pethick Lawrence to E. Robins, 5 May 1913, Information from Angela V. John.  
 51 Britain, *Pethick*, p. 76.  
 52 *ibid.*  
 53 J. Tosh, 'What should Historians do with Masculinity?', *History Workshop Journal* 38 (1994), pp. 192–3 (pp. 179–201).

- 54 F. W. Pethick Lawrence, *Fate*, p. 119.  
 55 *ibid.*  
 56 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 322.  
 57 *ibid.* p. 323.  
 58 HRHRC, Letter from E. Pethick Lawrence to E. Robins, 14 November 1919.  
 59 For a detailed history of the WFL, see C. Eustance, "'Daring to be Free': the Evolution of Women's Political Identities in the Women's Freedom League, 1906–1930", DPhil, University of York, 1993.  
 60 F. W. Pethick Lawrence, *Fate*, p. 128.  
 61 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 336.  
 62 P-L 7/6, West Leicester Elector, 30 November 1923.  
 63 Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries*, pp. 253–4.  
 64 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, preface.  
 65 P-L 5/133, p. 1, F. W. Pethick Lawrence, 'The Men's Share', (c. 1960).  
 66 E. Pethick Lawrence, Address to the Women's Freedom League, Report of the twenty-second annual conference, 13 April 1929, Information from Claire Eustance.  
 67 E. Pethick Lawrence, *My Part*, p. 337.