

MARY LILY WALKER OF DUNDEE

MARY LILY WALKER OF DUNDEE:  
SOCIAL WORKER AND REFORMER

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## **ABSTRACT**

Mary Lily Walker (1863-1913) was Dundee's leading activist in matters of social welfare and social reform during the late Victorian and Edwardian period. As the Honourary Superintendent of the Dundee Social Union (DSU), she initiated a number of social welfare services in Dundee for working class women and children. The Grey Lodge Settlement Association, a bustling community centre in present-day Dundee, owes its origins to Lily Walker. Walker was a remarkable Scottish woman, yet until now she has not been the subject of historical study.

This thesis progresses in a broad chronological fashion. Chapter one examines the failure of late nineteenth century philanthropy, and documents Walker's early years until 1889. Chapter two looks in detail at the London settlement house movement of the 1890s. Chapters three and four study Walker's role in the new philanthropy, 1900-1913, examining her contribution to the development of Dundee's social welfare provision. It concludes by critically assessing Walker's achievements.

In summary, the purpose of this thesis is threefold. First, it studies the career of Mary Lily Walker, an important woman in her own right. Second, it reveals the problems faced by women in Scotland when they entered the public sphere as social reform activists. Third, it documents her disillusionment with traditional practices of philanthropy and her recognition of the need for the resources and intervention of the state. Walker's experience was in line with many in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, and serves as a microcosm of the shift from the philanthropic principles of the nineteenth century to the recognition of the state as an agency for the improvement of the collective good.

This thesis is largely based on archival sources in Dundee. Walker left no diaries or memoirs, and evidence on the DSU is fragmented, especially after 1902. Walker's role, contribution and social philosophy, therefore, has been derived largely from newspaper reports and the minute books of local government bodies. Fortunately, some of her personal letters are preserved in the D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson Papers in the University of St Andrews Library. These letters convey a sense of Walker as a person, and not just as a public figure.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<u>COR</u>	<u>Charity Organization Review</u>
COS	Charity Organization Society
CCHF	Children's Country Holiday Fund
DDCM	Dundee Distress Committee Minute Book
DSBM	Dundee School Board Minute Book
DPCM	Dundee Parish Council Minute Book
DSU	Dundee Social Union
DSUM	Dundee Social Union Minute Book
DTCM	Dundee Town Council Minute Book
DWT	D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson Papers
<u>DYB</u>	<u>Dundee Year Book</u>
ESU	Edinburgh Social Union
ICAA	Invalid Children's Aid Association
NUWW	National Union of Women Workers
PP	Parliamentary Papers
SRO	Scottish Record Office
UCD	University College, Dundee
WUS	Women's University Settlement



## INTRODUCTION

There was never a time when so much earnest thought and effort was being expended as now upon the great questions of education (in the widest sense), national health, industrial organization, and economic well-being; the public conscience was never so aroused or so uneasy; philanthropic enterprise was never so great and varied or charity so large; schemes of reform were never more numerous.<sup>1</sup>

In "The Scottish Victorian City," an examination of the Scottish experience of industrial urbanisation, Geoffrey Best quotes Dr. J.B. Russell, Glasgow's Medical Officer of Health, who in 1888, lamented the lack of voluntary citizen initiative in the city and asked: "Why have we not an Octavia Hill in Scotland?"<sup>2</sup> This thesis takes Russell's question as the starting point to examine women's role in Scottish philanthropy. During the late nineteenth century, there was an intensification of the philanthropic impulse as an increasing number of charities attempted to alleviate the living conditions of the urban poor. Victorian women were particularly active in philanthropy as it was the most common and acceptable way for them to enter the public sphere. A number of notable English women social reformers achieved national fame as a result of their philanthropic endeavour.<sup>3</sup> But what was the role and contribution of Scottish women? Why were there no Scottish women among the names of

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<sup>1</sup>Percy Ashley, "University Settlements in Great Britain," Harvard Theological Review (1911): 200.

<sup>2</sup>Geoffrey Best, "The Scottish Victorian City," Victorian Studies (1967-8) 11: 340. **Octavia Hill** (1838-1912) Under the influence of the Christian Socialists and John Ruskin, Hill became interested in improving the dwellings of the poor. She was nationally renowned for her system of house management, which was closely related to COS methods of character reformation.

<sup>3</sup>For example, Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), Louisa Twining (1820-1911), and Josephine Butler (1828-1906). There is a vast literature in the area, of which the best recent study is Jane Lewis, Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England (Aldershot, 1991).

outstanding Victorian female philanthropists? This thesis uses a biographical approach to examine the role of women in Scottish social welfare by focussing on the life and work of Mary Lily Walker (1863-1913) of Dundee. In this manner, the thesis seeks to offer some answers to Russell's question.

For twenty-five years, between 1888 - 1913, Walker was at the forefront of the latest developments in social work and social reform, moving far beyond the traditional fund-raising role of philanthropic women. In 1888, as a member of the newly-founded Dundee Social Union (DSU), Walker began her social work career as a 'lady rent collector,' practising Octavia Hill's method of philanthropic house management, which held that the route to social reform was through personal contact and close supervision of the poor. During the 1890s, Walker spent time at two women's settlement houses in London, and on her return to Dundee, founded her own settlement house, Grey Lodge, which served as a centre of social work connected to the DSU. Walker was motivated by strong notions of citizenship and often addressed Dundee's middle class from a public platform, exhorting them to be "sensible of their responsibilities and obligations towards their poorer neighbours."<sup>4</sup> Between 1900-1913, she roused the DSU from philanthropic lethargy by arranging conferences, bringing in guest speakers, and introducing new branches of philanthropy. In the Edwardian period, realising that voluntary initiative alone would not improve the condition of the poor, Walker extended her sphere of welfare work by serving on local government. In 1905, she co-authored an important sociological survey of Dundee, the DSU Report on Housing and Industrial Conditions and Medical Inspection of School Children, which shocked Dundee's middle class by revealing the appalling living conditions of their fellow-citizens. In 1907, she was one of only seven Scottish women who presented oral evidence to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Walker firmly supported government intervention in the social welfare of its citizens, and worked hard

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<sup>4</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 11 Dec. 1896.

as a member of Dundee's Distress Committee and Insurance Committee to implement locally the new Liberal social welfare legislation. Walker was a progressive Scottish woman social reformer, but outside of certain circles in Dundee, her name is unknown.

At one level, this thesis raises from obscurity a previously unexamined Scot, illuminating her career and assessing her accomplishments.<sup>5</sup> We cannot, however, look at Walker in isolation from the general political, social and economic changes taking place in Britain. At another level, therefore, the thesis uses Walker as a case study to reflect upon a number of national developments in the field of social welfare. Walker's career, which spanned a crucial period in the development of social work and social reform, illustrates the changing views and practices from the late nineteenth century reliance on private philanthropy to the early twentieth century realization that state intervention was necessary.

Walker's career reflects upon the national arguments surrounding state involvement in social welfare. Since 1869, the social philosophy of the Charity Organization Society (COS) had dominated middle class charitable action. The COS, which stressed the individual's sense of responsibility, believed that personal inadequacies caused destitution and that poverty was a moral failing which could be "cured" by the reformation of character. By the end of the century, however, it was clear to some that the strategy of philanthropic societies had failed, and reformers were starting to question the validity of COS doctrine and the value of its methods.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, there was a growing consciousness of urban living conditions. Charles Booth's authoritative, seventeen-volume Life and Labour of the People of London (1889-1904) revealed that destitution existed to a far greater extent than had been realised, and

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<sup>5</sup>Mary M. Paterson, ed., Mary Lily Walker of Dundee: Some Memories (Dundee, [1935]) is the only study of Walker. Her name occasionally appears in a sentence or a footnote in the recent Scottish historical literature.

<sup>6</sup>John A. Hobson, "The Social Philosophy of Charity Organization," Contemporary Review (1896): 710-27. See Gareth Stedman-Jones, Outcast London (London, 1971), Part III, 239-336.

that the majority of the poor were not responsible for their own poverty. The tone of public discussion increasingly shifted from the character of the individual to the condition of his environment.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, some radical Liberal and Socialist thinkers, recognising that poverty and unemployment were features of the economic system and not manifestations of an individual's character defects, wanted a more equitable distribution of wealth and called for the intervention and resources of the state. Nevertheless, the policies and mentalities of the COS, despite their flaws, persisted. The COS adamantly rejected the idea of state intervention, claiming it would undermine personal responsibility and lead to social dependency: the poor could overcome their poverty only by their own exertions, and not by the handouts of the state. They continued to place their faith in the COS methods of meticulous investigation and individual casework. In the individualism versus collectivism debate on poverty and welfare, the COS held that each individual was responsible for his own betterment, whereas the modern reformers viewed the state as a collection of individuals where betterment was a matter for collective action.

Various Socialist ideas, which had been gaining ground since the 1890s, contributed to the shift in thinking about social welfare with their assertion that welfare was a right and not a charity. However, it was the Liberals, traditionally the party of 'laissez-faire' but increasingly finding minimal state intervention politically untenable, who introduced welfare reforms.<sup>7</sup> Beyond the pragmatism of the Liberal welfare reforms was a "passion for improving mankind."<sup>8</sup> Since the 1880s and 1890s, a group of New Liberal theorists had been transforming traditional Liberal principles into the idea of government for the common good. Nineteenth century 'laissez-faire' Liberalism believed in minimal government

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<sup>7</sup>Bentley B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain (London, 1966).

<sup>8</sup>Peter Clarke, Liberals and Social Democrats (Cambridge, 1978), ch. 1.

intervention and stressed the agency of the individual to protect himself. By contrast, the New Liberalism saw social defects as systemic and wanted legislative regulation and social reform. To the New Liberals, Victorian Liberalism could not work because "in a vast number of cases the individual does not find himself in a position in which he can act 'freely'...without the intervention of the state to put him in such a position."<sup>9</sup> The working class should be allowed to become healthy, educated members of society. Between 1906-1911, the Liberals ushered in a period of unprecedented social welfare legislation, which permitted school meals and medical inspection for children, provided pensions for the elderly, labour exchanges for the unemployed, national and health insurance for selected categories of workers, and maternity benefits for some women. The Liberals had established the framework for the welfare state. Theoretically and pragmatically the alternative to COS philosophy came from the Liberal Party.

This thesis is of historical interest for a number of other reasons. First, it examines the professionalisation and feminization of social work. Like many earnest, educated, middle class women, anxious for a career in social usefulness, Walker progressed from unpaid philanthropic voluntary work to paid professional social work. The women's settlement houses of the late nineteenth century played a crucial role in the development of social work as a career as their residents devised systematic training courses combining theoretical and practical instruction in the new science of social work. Second, by setting women's welfare work in the Scottish context, this thesis looks at the distinct legal, social and cultural aspects of the Scottish system of poor relief. Moreover, a study of Walker as an educated middle class woman entering public life allows us to reflect upon class and gender relations within Scotland. Finally, the subject of this thesis, set in late Victorian and Edwardian Scotland, is reflective of current

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<sup>9</sup>Quoted in Clarke, 27.

debates in Ontario today where the present-day arguments of state responsibility versus individual responsibility mirror those of almost a century ago.

## Chapter 1: PHILANTHROPY IN CRISIS

### I. The Nature of Nineteenth Century Philanthropy

"Thus they conceal from themselves their guilt. This is the office of philanthropy."<sup>1</sup>

The philanthropic impulse was a defining characteristic of the late-Victorian era. Brian Harrison has defined a philanthropic society as "any organization devoting money, time, thought, or energy to relieving the miseries of the poor, the neglected, or the oppressed."<sup>2</sup> As the century progressed, the concerned middle class increasingly formed societies to combat the problems associated with rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and population growth. The Charities Register and Digest, an annual compendium of British charities, attests to the vast extent and heterogenous nature of Victorian benefaction. One reason for the proliferation of charitable societies was the ease with which they could be formed. Any group of like-minded people with a scheme for poor relief could, under their own volition, form a society, appoint an executive, and solicit funds; once a year they held a meeting to report on their progress, praise their office-bearers, and appeal for further support. There was much public posturing, but little effective action. Many enthusiastic, new ventures quickly waned when immediate results did not match initial expectations, or when the reality of poor relief proved more complex than anticipated. There was dissension in the philanthropic ranks. Societies were often at loggerheads over methodologies of poor relief, competing with each other, not only for the funds of the

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<sup>1</sup>B. Kirkman Gray, Philanthropy and the State (London, 1908), 323.

<sup>2</sup>Brian Harrison, "Philanthropy and the Victorians," Victorian Studies 9 (1966): 356.

rich, but also for the "custom" of the poor.<sup>3</sup> There was no rationalisation of services between societies, as each jealously guarded its own territory, preferring to "work in glorious independence."<sup>4</sup> The practice of late nineteenth century philanthropy was arbitrary, haphazard, unregulated, and, according to Charles Booth, "defies control."<sup>5</sup>

The Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity (known as the COS), which had been formed in 1869 following the turbulence of 1866, dominated late Victorian philanthropic thought and action. The COS attempted to prevent overlapping of relief by compiling files on applicants and sharing the information with other societies. They held rigidly to their principles, which were well-meaning and theoretically sound, provided one accepts their view of human nature. They believed that relieving the poor by handouts was harmful because it sapped their sense of responsibility and weakened the will to work. Their aim was to encourage each individual to become self-reliant by learning the habits of industry, sobriety and thrift. COS principles were founded on the nineteenth century doctrine of 'laissez-faire': "success denoted strength, fitness, righteousness; failure denoted weakness, unfitness to survive, and unrighteousness."<sup>6</sup> In practice, the COS regarded poverty, not as a result of economic circumstances, but as a matter of moral failure: the poor would not be poor if they would exert themselves to work, save their money, and refrain from drinking. They minutely

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<sup>3</sup>Mrs Dunn Gardner, "The Training of Volunteers," Appendix 1 in Professional Education for Social Work in Britain by Marjorie J. Smith (London, 1965), 76; Harrison, 365-6; James Mavor reports an Edinburgh tenement dweller complaining that she "had six religions up this stair today already" (James Mavor, My Windows on the Street of the World [London, 1923], 154).

<sup>4</sup>Andrew Wallace, "Pauperism and the Poor Law," Proceedings of the Philosophical Society of Glasgow (1878): 186.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Beatrice Webb, My Apprenticeship, (1926; reprint ed., Cambridge, 1979), 252.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Hunter, "The Relation between Social Settlements and Charity Organization," Journal of Political Economy 11 (1902): 75.



investigated applicants for relief, obtaining details on their character and conduct from a wide range of informants, including employers, police, doctors, teachers, headmasters, clergymen, church workers, housing factors, school board officers, poor law inspectors, pawnbrokers and members of other philanthropic bodies.<sup>7</sup> After the process of investigation, which involved "endless letters" and long delays,<sup>8</sup> they judged whether an applicant was "deserving" (that is, capable of becoming self-sufficient) or "undeserving". They gave the "deserving" a small weekly sum and kept them under close surveillance, anxious to ensure that their doles were not subsidising "sly drinking."<sup>9</sup> The "undeserving" they consigned to the poor law authorities. They constantly pontificated to their workers and to the public at large about the "evils of indiscriminate almsgiving" : to give was to pauperise.

Charity workers often found COS principles hard to follow in practice. One woman wrote:

The unfortunate part of it is, that I find it so very difficult to apply the theories of relief, as taught by the COS, to any of the practical cases that I come across; as far as I can see, most of my poor and destitute ones are in that condition chiefly through some fault of their own, and are therefore not to be encouraged, or helped out of their difficulties, by grants of money or food. Of course one sees the theoretical force of it all, but what is one to do next?<sup>10</sup>

Rigid adherence to principles caused confusion even for the experienced, "well-trained worker":

The philosophy of "Don't, don't" has so affected the will of many of the Charity Organization Society workers that...they have developed into...the "Hamlet" type. The agent is always pondering whether "to do or not to do." He is hesitant over every activity. Suffering is before him; starvation about him. He longs to give adequate, generous and immediate relief, but before him always rise the warnings: "Be careful of pauperism; give

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<sup>7</sup>See, for example, Edinburgh COS, Report on the Physical Condition of Fourteen Hundred School Children in the City, Together with Some Account of their Homes and Surroundings (London, 1906), passim.

<sup>8</sup>Gray, 113.

<sup>9</sup>Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London 17 vols. (1892-1904; reprint ed., New York, 1970), 3rd. series, vol. 4, 194.

<sup>10</sup>A.L. Hodson, Letters from a Settlement (London, 1909), 22-3; see also Dunn Gardner, in Smith, 75.

no relief if you can help it; destroy no man's independence."<sup>11</sup>

The COS was preoccupied with imposture and appeared to be more concerned with trapping the scrounger than relieving the destitute. They aroused "suspicion and hatred" among the working class and drew severe criticism from other reformers.<sup>12</sup> George Lansbury, the Christian Socialist and later Labour Party leader, referred to their methods as "heartless and brutal"; Beatrice Webb, the Fabian, called them "the negation of Christian charity"; and the New Liberal theorist, J.A. Hobson, argued that a society which had been formed to help the poor but which censured their relief was "illogical."<sup>13</sup> However, despite the criticisms, COS principles proved to be as tenacious as they were unworkable, and they retained a firm hold on the middle class philanthropic mentality throughout the late-Victorian and into the Edwardian period.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1880s, there was a new ferment of philanthropic activity. According to Elizabeth Haldane, "this was the beginning of all sorts of so-called philanthropic movements with a different orientation from the past."<sup>15</sup> The 1880s was a decade of social revelations, social disturbances, and an increasing awareness of social problems. The "Bitter Cry of Outcast London" (1883), the Dilke Commission on the Housing of the Working Class (1884), and the Trafalgar Square riots in 1886 had revealed both the appalling housing conditions and the rumbling discontent of the poor. Articles in The

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<sup>11</sup>Hunter, 81.

<sup>12</sup>Webb, 203; Olive Checkland, Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland (Edinburgh, 1980), 300-1.

<sup>13</sup>George Lansbury, My Life (London, 1928), 132; Webb, 204; J.A. Hobson, "The Social Philosophy of Charity Organization," Contemporary Review 70 (1896): 723.

<sup>14</sup>Hobson, 711; the majority of the Poor Law Commissioners (1907-9) were prominent members of the COS.

<sup>15</sup>Elizabeth S. Haldane, From One Century to Another (London, 1937), 112. **Elizabeth S. Haldane** (1862-1937) was the only daughter of a distinguished Perthshire family, an early supporter of women's rights, translator of Hegel and Descartes, and author of studies on George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. Haldane was a contemporary of Lily Walker; they had similar interests in social questions, and once addressed the same DSU meeting.

Times and The Nineteenth Century kept the public alert to the problems of poverty, and intellectuals and reformers increasingly questioned the "natural laws" of 'laissez-faire' economics.<sup>16</sup> Some inclined to the Socialist ideas permeating Britain in the 1880s, while others engaged in the new areas of philanthropic reform, of which the most prominent was the settlement house movement. In 1883, Canon Barnett, exhorting reformers to "give not money, but yourselves," founded Toynbee Hall, and Oxbridge undergraduates, influenced by the Idealist philosopher, T.H. Green, and imbued with strong notions of duty and service, flocked to the East End to live amongst the poor. By the end of the Victorian era, there was "an extraordinary plenitude of ideas, theories and activities" for solving the social problem.<sup>17</sup>

Historians have viewed the growth of charitable activity during the nineteenth century from various perspectives. Some have interpreted philanthropic societies as mechanisms of social control, which fostered working class deference and submission. O.R. MacGregor suggests that the impetus for social research and reform sprang from middle class anxieties about the stability of the social order: "from the thirties onwards middle class people were continuously digging channels by which working class demands could be drained away from the foundations of property."<sup>18</sup> Brian Harrison presents multifarious motives for philanthropic activity, including guilt, fear, compassion and altruism, as well as civic pride, social ambition and the "desire for petty office."<sup>19</sup> Harrison also argues that philanthropic societies were counter-productive: they not only relieved the poor, they also relieved the authorities from

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<sup>16</sup>John Saville, "The Background to the Industrial Remuneration Conference of 1885," in Industrial Remuneration Conference [1885] (New York, 1968), 5-11.

<sup>17</sup>Gertrude Himmelfarb, Poverty and Compassion (New York, 1991), 75.

<sup>18</sup>O.R. MacGregor, "Social Research and Social Policy in the Nineteenth Century," British Journal of Sociology 8 (1957): 154.

<sup>19</sup>Harrison, 373-74.

the necessity of taking action.<sup>20</sup> Societies' annual reports contained soothing good news; by highlighting the success stories and concealing the failures, they conveyed delusions of improvement and masked the real state of affairs.<sup>21</sup>

Historians have sharply differing interpretations of the philanthropic ferment of the 1880s. By citing social philosopher Arnold Toynbee's penance to the poor: "We have sinned against you grievously...but if you will forgive us...we will devote our lives to your service," Harrison underscores the Victorian ideas of duty and service, as well as the feelings of guilt among university men in the 1880s.<sup>22</sup> Anthony Wohl suggests that an awakened social conscience spurred the middle class to reform activity, and he credits Andrew Mearns' pamphlet, "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London" (1883), a graphic description of working class living conditions, for shocking them into action.<sup>23</sup> The Marxist historian, Gareth Stedman-Jones, posits that fear of revolt provoked the flow of middle class money and concern, and he points to the vast sums which were contributed "by the sackful" to the Mansion House Fund following the Trafalgar Square riots of February 1886.<sup>24</sup> Tory historian, Gertrude Himmelfarb, strongly disagrees with Jones and others who view philanthropy as "an insidious exercise in 'social control.'"<sup>25</sup> She maintains the flood of contributions to the Mansion House Fund was motivated not by fear but by

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<sup>20</sup>For example, in 1893, during a period of severe unemployment in Dundee, it was reported that "the authorities are averse to providing work and hold that the COS is competent to deal with the distress" (COR [1893]: 22).

<sup>21</sup>Harrison, 362-6; see also T.C. Smout, A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-1950 (New Haven, 1986), 52.

<sup>22</sup>Harrison, 358-9.

<sup>23</sup>Anthony S. Wohl, Introduction to The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, by Andrew Mearns (New York, 1970).

<sup>24</sup>Stedman-Jones, 291-8.

<sup>25</sup>Himmelfarb, Poverty, 51-3; Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Victorian Philanthropy: the Case of Toynbee Hall," American Scholar 59 (1990): 376.

"a surge of sympathy for the poor."<sup>26</sup> Himmelfarb claims that Victorian philanthropists were genuinely altruistic, correctly reminding us that "at no other time did so many people of distinction give so much of themselves to good works."<sup>27</sup> There is validity in all of these views which are as widely differing as the practices of philanthropy itself.

## II. Philanthropy and Women: "This age of service"<sup>28</sup>

It had been an "immemorial custom"<sup>29</sup> for women of wealth and leisure to devote time and money to feeding the hungry, nursing the sick and clothing the destitute, but it was in the nineteenth century that philanthropy played an increasingly important role in the lives of middle class women. As the century progressed, many women moved from the supportive function of ladies' auxiliaries to leadership positions on executive committees.<sup>30</sup> Some took the initiative to form their own societies,<sup>31</sup> and others organized conferences where, before hundreds of other women, they delivered and discussed papers on philanthropic topics.<sup>32</sup> In the 1890s, a small group founded the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW), an umbrella organization of women philanthropists with branch offices throughout

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<sup>26</sup>Himmelfarb, Poverty, 45.

<sup>27</sup>Himmelfarb, "Victorian," 383.

<sup>28</sup>Octavia Hill, Life of Octavia Hill as Told in Her Letters, ed. C.E. Maurice (London, 1913), 530.

<sup>29</sup>Louisa M. Hubbard, "Statistics of Women's Work," in Woman's Mission, ed. [Angela] Burdett-Coutts (New York, 1893), 364.

<sup>30</sup>F.K. Prochaska, Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England (Oxford, 1980), 30-2.

<sup>31</sup>Prochaska, 32; Louisa M. Hubbard, "The Organization of Women Workers," in Woman's Mission, ed. [Angela] Burdett-Coutts (New York, 1893), 275.

<sup>32</sup>"The Conference of Women at Bristol, November 1892," COR (1892): 413-20.

Britain.<sup>33</sup> In 1893, Louisa Hubbard estimated that there were twenty thousand paid officials and half a million volunteers engaged in "philanthropic usefulness."<sup>34</sup> Historian F.K. Prochaska maintains that so many women contributed "in some small way" that, by the end of the century, philanthropy had become "womanized."<sup>35</sup>

Middle class women engaged in philanthropy because there were few alternatives for them as job opportunities were limited, and family duties confined them to the home. By channelling their energies and talents into "useful work", philanthropy allowed women to enter the public sphere and to contribute to the wider world. Philanthropy was considered a socially acceptable pursuit for genteel, middle class women as it corresponded with Victorian ideas of woman's "nature", which emphasised woman's duties rather than her rights, and her capacity for service rather than her need for self-development. Moreover, many Victorian women held deep religious convictions and considered it their Christian duty to minister to the poor.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to recognize that there was a wide spectrum of female philanthropic commitment. At one end of the spectrum were large numbers of women to whom charity work was no more than an occasional pastime, where a minimum of philanthropic effort allowed them to bask in the rosy glow of their own goodness. The Comerton Home in Dundee, a charity which sent invalid children of the poor to the country for two weeks, provides a good example. At the annual summer meeting in 1910, a local minister commended the ladies, telling them:

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<sup>33</sup>Hubbard, "Organization," 275; the NUWW was a forerunner of the National Council of Women.

<sup>34</sup>Hubbard, "Statistics," 364.

<sup>35</sup>Prochaska, 223-4.

<sup>36</sup>For a full discussion of these ideas, see Martha Vicinus, Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920 (London, 1985), ch. 1.

he often met the children going about the country roads or heard their merry laughter as they played in the woods, and he could testify to their extreme happiness when in the Home, their improvement in Health when they left and their grateful recollection of the kindness they had experienced.

At Comerton, there was no personal contact between the philanthropic ladies and the children; their benevolence was expressed solely by means of monetary gifts and knitted goods: "among the pleasant and worthy activities connected with Comerton should be noted the knitting circle where each member undertakes to supply annually two pairs of stockings or any knitted article."<sup>37</sup> The tone of Comerton, and of many philanthropic undertakings, was strictly "hands off" and "feel good." To be "active" in a philanthropic society was more likely to mean successful fund-raising rather than daily soup-ladelling.

At the other end of the spectrum were women seriously committed to philanthropic work, as one contemporary noted: "some can give but fragments of time, others make it practically a life-work."<sup>38</sup> In the late 1880s and 1890s, a growing number of women, inspired by the example of Toynbee Hall, were going to the East End to "take a district", either as a COS visitor, a philanthropic rent collector, or a member of one of the new settlement houses for women. Contemporary accounts reveal the idealism as well as the weariness and self-doubt of earnest, young women with social consciences, anxious to improve the lives of the poor.<sup>39</sup> These women were pioneers in the professionalisation of social work. They developed training programs which combined theoretical fundamentals and practical experience, they recognised the importance of family casework, and they filled an increasing number of paid positions, especially in the child and welfare movement of the early twentieth century.

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<sup>37</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 16 June 1910.

<sup>38</sup>Emily Janes, "On the Associated Work of Women in Religion and Philanthropy," in Woman's Mission, ed. [Angela] Burdett-Coutts (New York, 1893), 142.

<sup>39</sup>Webb, chs. 4-6; Hodson, *passim*.

There has been a considerable shift in thinking in the historiography of nineteenth century philanthropic women. Harrison regards women's philanthropic work as "recreational"; women enjoyed the committee meetings and fund raising projects which provided a change of activity in their drab, constricted lives.<sup>40</sup> According to Prochaska, philanthropy empowered women, allowing them to gain confidence and develop skills which they later used in the suffrage agitation.<sup>41</sup> While emphasising women's agency, Anne Summers also argues that philanthropic visiting diverted attention from the economic causes of poverty, and "subordinated the issue of wages to questions of personal conduct."<sup>42</sup> More recent interpretations view philanthropy as a vehicle for cultural hegemony. Linda Mahood uses Foucauldian methodology to analyze the social control and moral reformation of 'prostitutes' in Lock Hospitals and Magdalene Institutions, where philanthropic women endeavoured to make working class women conform to middle class notions of femininity.<sup>43</sup> In her study of the regime of moral rehabilitation of girls' reformatory schools, Mahood shows that philanthropic women were so bound by their own gender, class and familialist ideologies that they were unable either to understand or to break working class 'family ties'.<sup>44</sup> Mahood also points out that while philanthropy empowered middle class women, it confined working class women: the former left their homes in order to convince the latter to remain in theirs.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Harrison, 359.

<sup>41</sup>Prochaska, 227-9.

<sup>42</sup>Anne Summers, "A Home from Home - Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century," in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. Sandra Burman (London, 1979), 33, 56.

<sup>43</sup>Linda Mahood, *The Magdalenes* (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>44</sup>Linda Mahood, "Family Ties: Lady Child-Savers and Girls of the Street, 1850-1925," in *Out of Bounds*, ed. E. Breitenbach and E. Gordon (Edinburgh, 1992), 42-64.

<sup>45</sup>Mahood "Family Ties," 59.



This study of Mary Lily Walker tries to strike a balance between her accomplishments and her shortcomings; it proposes neither to eulogize her nor to minimize her contribution. Walker operated within a middle class framework of male-dominated committees, whose existence and authority she never questioned. While acknowledging the gender- and class-bound nature of her work, this thesis respects her innovation, strength and sheer effort. While sympathetic to Walker's trials and frustrations, this study also recognises that the hardships she had to face were on a different level from the malnutrition, overwork and early death of the women she tried to help.

### **III. Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland**

It is impossible to substantiate the claim of C.W. Thomson that the "contributions of Scotsmen to charitable objects per head of population greatly exceed those of the southern kingdom."<sup>46</sup> It is possible, however, to substantiate the argument that the need for philanthropy was greater in Scotland than it was in England. A discussion of Scotland's political position, her poor law and her level of poverty supports this argument and also provides the background for an understanding of nineteenth century Scottish philanthropy.

Since the Act of Union, 1707, Scotland had been coupled politically with England but had retained her own Church, as well as her distinct legal and educational systems. This meant that Scotland was governed by the same legislature, but not always by the same legislation as England. The administrative framework to put laws into effect was different in Scotland, and therefore many laws passed in Westminster could not be enforced in Scotland. Neither the Poor Law (Amendment) Act (1834) nor the Public Health Act (1848) applied to Scotland, and it was not until 1845 and 1867,

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<sup>46</sup>C.W. Thomson, Scotland's Work and Worth, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1909), 2:543.

respectively, that Parliament passed equivalent legislation for Scotland. In addition, the Torrens Acts of 1868, 1879 and 1882, which encouraged the improvement of working class housing, were "practically a dead letter in Scotland."<sup>47</sup> By the 1880s, Scotland had fallen far behind England in sanitary and housing reform, which partially accounts for the shameful state of nineteenth century Scottish cities. Scottish affairs in general had been a low priority on the agenda of successive British governments. Scotland's needs had been part of the responsibilities of the British Home Secretary until 1885, when the Scottish Office was created to improve the legislative process for Scotland.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, it was not until 1902 that the first Scottish Secretary, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, was admitted to the Cabinet, providing further evidence of Scotland's lack of a political voice and Westminster's lack of concern for Scottish affairs.

The Scottish poor were more dependent on private charity because of shortfalls in the Scottish system of statutory poor relief. Traditionally the Scots had relied on voluntary collections at the church door to relieve the poor, and it was not until the Poor Law (Scotland) Amendment Act of 1845 that assessments were introduced, and then only at the discretion of each individual parish. The most distinctive feature of the Scottish Poor Law was that it did not provide relief to the able-bodied unemployed or to his dependents; statutory relief was afforded only to those both destitute and disabled.<sup>49</sup> According to Elizabeth Haldane, "the logic of the Calvinist" provided the rationale of the

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<sup>47</sup>Smout, 42-3.

<sup>48</sup>Smout, 239.

<sup>49</sup>For a full discussion on the nineteenth century Scottish poor law, see Audrey Paterson, "The Poor Law in Nineteenth Century Scotland," in The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century, ed. Derek Fraser (London, 1976), 171-93; R.A. Cage, The Scottish Poor Law, 1745-1845 (Edinburgh, 1981); and M.A. Crowther, "Poverty, Health and Welfare," in People and Society in Scotland, vol.2, ed. W.Hamish Fraser and R.J. Morris (Edinburgh, 1990), 265-89.

Scottish system: "if a man could work, he should work and find that work himself."<sup>50</sup> In addition, the administration of the 1845 Act was weak. The Board of Supervision, which had been established by the Act to oversee the system of poor relief, had few powers of compulsion and no powers of audit, and the staffing and remuneration levels of the Scottish inspectorate were much smaller than those of the English.<sup>51</sup> The lack of a strong central administration led to negligence at the local level.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Anne Crowther has demonstrated that there was greater parsimony in Scotland than in England; between 1860-1905, Scottish expenditure on poor relief per head of population was much smaller than English expenditure.<sup>53</sup> Scottish welfare provision in the nineteenth century was "mean, grudging and censorious."<sup>54</sup> The harshness of the law, the laxity of its administration, and the parsimony of the ratepayers all contributed to an inadequate system of statutory relief and to a great need for philanthropic endeavour.

It may also be suggested, although it is difficult to prove, that Scotland's poverty was worse than England's.<sup>55</sup> In the nineteenth century, Scotland had experienced a period of unprecedented economic and industrial expansion as merchant 'princes', tobacco 'lords', and jute 'barons' amassed huge fortunes and formed a new entrepreneurial aristocracy.<sup>56</sup> Although Scotland's wealth had increased and "the gap

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<sup>50</sup>Elizabeth Haldane, The Scotland of Our Fathers (London, 1933), 67.

<sup>51</sup>Crowther, 272-3; PP, Scottish Evidence, 1910, Cd. 4978, xlvii, evidence of MacKenzie, Appendix CLXI(E).

<sup>52</sup>Andrew Wallace, "Pauperism and the Poor Law," Proceedings of the Philosophical Society of Glasgow (1878): 177-91.

<sup>53</sup>Crowther, 269 (differentials ranged between 36%-50%).

<sup>54</sup>Olive and Sydney Checkland, Industry and Ethos: Scotland, 1832-1914 (Edinburgh, 1989), 99.

<sup>55</sup>Crowther, 266.

<sup>56</sup>Checkland, Industry, ch. 1.

between a rich England and a poor Scotland" was closing, the aggregate gain was unevenly distributed.<sup>57</sup> According to Smout, "Victorian Scotland was a very unequal society," with a tiny percentage who possessed vast wealth "in painful contrast" to the great mass of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, who earned wages considerably below those of English workers.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Scotland's housing conditions were not only much worse than England's, they were considered among the worst in Europe,<sup>59</sup> and contemporary accounts have consistently testified to the appalling slums in Scottish cities.<sup>60</sup> There was, therefore, a great need in Victorian Scotland for philanthropic effort because of minimal government concern with Scottish social conditions, low levels of wages, insanitary housing, widespread poverty, and a defective poor law system.

Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), the most famous churchman of nineteenth century Scotland, is central to the history of Scottish philanthropy. Chalmers opposed compulsory assessments, he believed that if relief was based on assessments the poor would expect it as a right and their relatives and neighbours would abstain from helping them in times of distress.<sup>61</sup> He emphasised to the working class individual responsibility and family support, and he preached to the middle class that it was their Christian and civic duty to become involved in the wellbeing of their community.<sup>62</sup>

What was the Scottish philanthropic response? According to both contemporary and historical

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<sup>57</sup>Smout, 109.

<sup>58</sup>Smout, 109-113.

<sup>59</sup>Smout, 34-40.

<sup>60</sup>For example, Chadwick's comment in 1842 that Glasgow's slums were "the worst of any we had seen in any part of Great Britain" (quoted in Crowther, 265); J.B. Russell, *Life in One Room* (Glasgow, 1888); William Bolitho, *Cancer of the Empire* (London, 1924).

<sup>61</sup>See Cage, ch. 6.

<sup>62</sup>Smout, 186; Chalmers was also the source of COS philosophy.

opinion, it was considerable indeed. Smout says that "philanthropists with checkbooks abounded" and that Victorian Scotland was "world-famous for serious philanthropists"; Haldane states, and Levitt concurs, that "innumerable charities" sprang up in the latter half of the nineteenth century; and Olive Checkland has written a 400-page book detailing the scope and extent of Scottish Victorian philanthropy.<sup>63</sup> By most accounts, the Scottish middle class gave generously of their time and money to philanthropic endeavour.

#### IV. Scottish women and philanthropy

But what was the role of women in Scottish philanthropy? Why was there no Octavia Hill in Scotland? Elizabeth Haldane's reminiscence that, in the 1880s, "we were red hot with this idea of social service,"<sup>64</sup> indicates that Scottish women were seriously involved in philanthropy, but not apparently to the same degree or extent as English women. There were no Scots among the outstanding female social reformers of Victorian and Edwardian Britain; Mary Carpenter (1807-77), Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), Louisa Twining (1820-1911), Josephine Butler (1828-1906), Octavia Hill (1838-1912), Beatrice Webb (1858-1943) and Eleanor Rathbone (1872-1946) and were all English women. Margaret Macmillan (1860-1931), the pioneer of nursery school education, is the closest "big name", but as she was born in New York state, and worked in England as an adult, her girlhood years in Inverness (1865-1878) are hardly suffice to designate her "Scottish."<sup>65</sup> The most recent Scottish biographical dictionary lists two nineteenth century women under the heading "philanthropy": Kate Cranston (1850-1934), who

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<sup>63</sup>Smout, 181,186; Haldane, Scotland, 60; Levitt, 14; Checkland, Philanthropy, passim. See also Thomson, 539; Cage, 75, 83, 96; and Crowther, 286.

<sup>64</sup>ESU, Annual Report (1912): 3.

<sup>65</sup>Carolyn Steedman, Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain (London, 1990), 17-21.

is better known for her Rennie MacKintosh-designed tea rooms than for her benevolence; and Annie MacPherson (c.1824-1904), who operated in England and whose schemes to dispatch pauper children to Ontario farms are of dubious benefit.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Checkland's comprehensive study of Scottish philanthropy includes only brief discussions of women's contribution, and a few scattered references to individual women.<sup>67</sup> Nor does Woman's Mission (1893), a 500-page volume containing papers on many aspects of women's philanthropic work, provide evidence of notable contributions by Scottish women.<sup>68</sup>

There was a lack of Scottish women not only in leadership roles but also at the local branch level, as it appears that Scottish women were less inclined than English women to join philanthropic societies. Attempts failed to establish Scottish branches of the Workhouse Girls' Aid Society and the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants (MABYS).<sup>69</sup> In England, women formed local committees to supervise the condition of boarded-out (fostered) children in their communities. By 1895, there were 2,000 such committees in England, but none in Scotland, even although boarding-out had been practised in Scotland much longer than in England.<sup>70</sup> Pauper nursing, which had been banned in English workhouses largely due to the efforts of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, existed in Scottish poorhouses until 1907 at least.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Elizabeth Haldane states that although

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<sup>66</sup>Chambers Scottish Biographical Dictionary, ed. Rosemary Goring (Edinburgh, 1992), xxix, 99, 296.

<sup>67</sup>Checkland includes the early nineteenth century women's auxiliaries (41), the deaconess movement within the Church of Scotland (85-8), and the Queen Margaret Settlement (306-9).

<sup>68</sup>There are fleeting mentions of Annie MacPherson (8, 374, 393), the Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Grizell Baillie, and Mrs John Elder (300-16). ([Angela] Burdett-Coutts, Woman's Mission).

<sup>69</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Haldane, Q60960-1; Bannatyne, Q59802-3.

<sup>70</sup>Summers, 49; PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Bannatyne, Q59800; Haldane, Q60905-8, Q60952-8; Greenlees, Appendix LXIII(16-21).

<sup>71</sup>E.S. Lidgett, "The Work of Women as Guardians of the Poor," in Woman's Mission, ed. [Angela] Burdett-Coutts (New York, 1893), 248-64; PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Haldane, 60748(4-5).

women "south of the border" engaged in work with prostitutes, in Scotland it was considered "shocking."<sup>72</sup> Although the number of female philanthropists in Scotland seems to have been proportionally less than in England, the number of Scottish female paupers was proportionally greater. In a comparison between English and Scottish rates of pauperism, a report for the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws concluded that "in the case of females the Scottish rate is in excess of the English rate."<sup>73</sup>

Why were Scottish women not more prominent in philanthropy? Could it be that there was an Octavia Hill in Scotland whose achievements and records still lie buried? It is well recognised that Scottish women's history has been severely underwritten; in 1986, T.C. Smout called it on the point of becoming "a historiographical disgrace."<sup>74</sup> Valuable work has been done in the last decade, some of which looks at the work of philanthropic women from various viewpoints, but none of which provides an answer to Russell's question.<sup>75</sup> Were Scottish women part of the pattern of women's increased involvement in philanthropic societies during the latter half of the nineteenth century? What was their contribution to the proliferation of Scottish charities at that time? An examination of the life and career of Mary Lily Walker may provide some answers.

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<sup>72</sup>Haldane, Scotland, 66.

<sup>73</sup>PP, Scotland: Statistics, 1911, Cd. 5440, liv: 41.

<sup>74</sup>Smout, 292.

<sup>75</sup>Mahood, The Magdalenes passim; Mahood, "Family Ties" passim; Helen Corr, "The Schoolgirls' Curriculum and the Ideology of the Home, 1870-1914," in Uncharted Lives (Glasgow, 1983), 74-97; Catherine M. Kendall, "Higher Education and the Emergence of the Professional Woman in Glasgow, c.1890-1914," History of Universities 10 (1991): 199-223.

## V. Mary Lily Walker and University College, Dundee

Mary Lily Walker was born on 3 July 1863, the first child of Thomas Walker, a Dundee solicitor, and his wife, Mary Allen. Her only sibling was her brother Arthur, four years her junior. In the mid-1860s, the family moved to a prestigious Dundee address, 61 Magdalen Green. Their house, named "Sunnybank", was a large, distinctive Victorian villa with pleasant views of the Firth of Tay and the Fife hills. Magdalen Green was a long, narrow stretch of public parkland, bordering the banks of the Tay, a place of recreation with tennis courts and a cricket pitch. Walker came from a family of well-established Dundonian solicitors. Since 1824, a Thomas Walker had practised law in Dundee, and from 1850, had occupied offices at 116 Seagate. Between 1869-70, Thomas Walker took on a new partner, John Duff Bruce, the husband of his sister; in 1874 or 1875, he retired from his practice and in February 1876 he died. Within a short time, Mrs Walker and her two children had moved out of Sunnybank and into more modest accommodation, although still in the same well-heeled, west-end neighbourhood. Mr Bruce moved into Sunnybank with his wife, and her unmarried sister, Grace Walker. Lily Walker attended Tayside House, a private school for girls, and received as academic an education as any girl in Dundee could at that time. The curriculum of Tayside House included instruction in English, Latin, French, German, Italian, Early English and Anglo-Saxon, Arithmetic, Mathematics and elementary Science.<sup>76</sup>

Lily Walker was very fortunate to have lived in Dundee at the time of the opening of University College, Dundee (UCD) in 1883. For, at the age of 20, she was granted a privilege denied to young women in all other Scottish cities: she was allowed to attend the same university classes as men. Whereas women in Edinburgh and Glasgow had campaigned loud and long for admission to classes,

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<sup>76</sup>Dundee Directory (1824-5)-(1880-81).



UCD, from its inception, accorded men and women the same education in the same class.<sup>77</sup> UCD was part of the university extension movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the only new university college to be established in Scotland. It had been founded in 1881 by the benefaction of a Dundee family, the Baxters, whose fortune had derived from the importation and manufacture of jute. Three hundred and seventy-three students enrolled for the first session, attending classes in Mathematics, Chemistry, Engineering, English, Classics and History. All historical accounts of UCD remark upon the outstanding calibre of the early professoriate (five were later knighted), and upon their youth, Principal William Peterson<sup>78</sup> being the youngest at age twenty-six. Two appointments were made later: D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson to the Chair of Biology in January 1885,<sup>79</sup> and Patrick Geddes to the Chair of Botany in 1888.<sup>80</sup>

When classes began in October 1883, Lily Walker lived at 6 Airlie Terrace, and at number 5, directly across the street, lived Principal Peterson, along with his widowed mother and sister, Margaret Grace (Meta) who had recently moved from Edinburgh.<sup>81</sup> Lily and Meta, who were among the first students to register for classes, formed a close lifetime friendship. Meta later described Lily as "the

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<sup>77</sup>R.D. Anderson, Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland (Oxford, 1983), 255-7.

<sup>78</sup>**William Peterson** (1856-1921) educated at the universities of Edinburgh, Göttingen and Oxford, was principal of UCD (1882-1895), and of McGill University, Montreal (1895-1919).

<sup>79</sup>**D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson** (1860-1948) biologist and zoologist. Thompson remained at UCD until his appointment in 1917 to the Chair of Natural History at St. Andrews where, in 1945, he celebrated his sixtieth year as a professor.

<sup>80</sup>Donald Southgate, University Education in Dundee (Edinburgh, 1982); Michael Shafe, University Education in Dundee (Dundee, 1982); A.D. Walsh, "Notes on the Early History of University College, Dundee," in Dundee and District, ed. S.J. Jones (Dundee, 1968). **Patrick Geddes** (1854-1932) biologist and sociologist. Educated at Perth Academy and demonstrator in botany at Edinburgh University, Geddes never obtained a university degree. His appointment in Dundee was to teach in the summer sessions only, and he remained based in Edinburgh from where he developed his wide range of interests in sociology and town planning.

<sup>81</sup>UCD Matriculation Lists, RECS A/161, Dundee University Library.

devoted daughter of an invalid mother":

She was, like most of the young women of our time, fully occupied with the duties and interests that filled the life of daughter and sister. Her school education had been of the ordinary type, good as far as it went but not looking beyond the ties of home.<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, Lily Walker had a brilliant university career. At the end of the first year, in June 1884, she won the prize for Classics and Ancient History. The following year she won the Senior Latin, Literature and History prizes and was among the top eleven students who gained first class certificates of merit, the highest honour awarded by the college. In her third year she won prizes in Advanced Latin and Botany, again earning a certificate of merit, and in her fourth and fifth years she took prizes in Embryology, Zoology and Physiology. At the same time, under the guidance of Thompson, she prepared two papers of scientific research for publication.<sup>83</sup> Her papers, written with fine academic detail, "On the Form of the Quadrate Bone in Birds" and "On the Larynx of the Monotremata" were included in Studies from the Museum of Zoology in University College, Dundee (1890).<sup>84</sup> The clarity and precision of her papers and the capacity to become fully absorbed in her subject were later evident in Walker's social work career.

Lily Walker formed a very close friendship with D'Arcy Thompson. She left no diaries, memoirs or other personal papers, but fortunately some of her correspondence with Thompson is preserved in the archives of St. Andrews University, and provides insight into her personal life and character. Thompson (1860-1948), born in Edinburgh and educated at its Academy and University, won a scholarship to

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<sup>82</sup>Mary M. Paterson, ed., Mary Lily Walker of Dundee: Some Memories (Dundee, [1935]), 10.

<sup>83</sup>UCD, Calendars, 1884-85, 1885-86, 1886-7, 1887-8, 1888-9; UCD, Principal's Scrapbooks, RECS A/122, in Dundee University Library.

<sup>84</sup>D'Arcy W. Thompson, ed., Studies from the Museum of Zoology in the University College, Dundee, vol. 1, (Berlin, 1890).

Trinity College, Cambridge in 1879, where he distinguished himself academically before taking up his appointment at UCD in January 1885, at age twenty-four. Thompson tackled his new position with enthusiasm, putting much time and effort into establishing UCD's Zoological Museum and Laboratory.<sup>85</sup>

His classes were popular and by October 1885 he had thirty students "of whom nearly one half (and some of the best) are girls."<sup>86</sup> Thompson later described Walker when he first knew her as "of the simplest, homeliest upbringing, of scanty opportunities, devoted to an invalid mother, knowing little or nothing of the world."<sup>87</sup> They both shared an interest in classics as well as in science, and it is likely that both were members of the college's Homeric Club.<sup>88</sup> Thompson and Walker wrote regularly to each other during their absences from Dundee, and his earliest letter to "My Dear Miss Lily" was dated 5 November 1886.<sup>89</sup> His letters contain details of his work, advice and encouragement about her work, and a fair amount of college gossip. Taken together they convey a sense of two people who work closely together, and are bound by a sympathetic understanding.<sup>90</sup> His letters also contain plans for their future collaboration: "Furbringen of Amsterdam has just produced a colossal work, full of real Teutonic spirit, on the classification of birds. We shall have to look into it in connection with your papers."<sup>91</sup> However,

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<sup>85</sup>UCD, Principal's Reports, (1886-7), in Dundee University Library.

<sup>86</sup>Ruth D'Arcy Thompson, D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (London, 1958), 73.

<sup>87</sup>D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, Fifty Years Ago and Now: a Presidential Address, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Annual General Meeting of the Grey Lodge Settlement Association (Dundee, 1938), 8.

<sup>88</sup>Ruth Thompson 78; in her will, Walker bequeathed Thompson her copies of "Horace and Virgil (the old Editions)" (SRO SC45\34\26 p. 239).

<sup>89</sup>MS 44433, D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson papers, in University of St Andrews Library (hereafter DWT Papers).

<sup>90</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44433-44445.

<sup>91</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44438.

Walker's academic career came to an abrupt end with the death of her mother on 22 January 1889.<sup>92</sup> She entered a long period of mourning away from Dundee, spending several weeks at seaside resorts in England, and visiting her uncle's family in Kendal.<sup>93</sup>

## VI. Dundee: "the most distressful, the most suffering of all Scottish cities"<sup>94</sup>

Dundee, one of Scotland's four major towns, was a place of great poverty during the late Victorian and Edwardian period. According to Christopher Whatley, it was "the closest Scottish equivalent" to Dickens' Coketown,<sup>95</sup> and its insanitary housing conditions were considered by some to be "worse" than those of Glasgow.<sup>96</sup> Dundee's population had expanded from 63,000 in 1841 to 161,000 in 1901 as rural Scots and Irish immigrants, who came to find work in the jute mills, crowded into the congested tenements surrounding them.<sup>97</sup> In 1901, 20% of the houses in Dundee consisted of one room only, 52% consisted of two rooms, and 63% of the population lived in one or the other of this type of house.<sup>98</sup> The density of population of some districts ranged from 773 to 882 persons per acre.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 23 Jan. 1889.

<sup>93</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44446-44466. Although a few months from gaining a B.Sc. from St Andrews University, Walker never completed her degree. It is possible that she suffered a breakdown after her mother's death; she may have felt guilty about spending so much time on outside activities and neglecting her mother.

<sup>94</sup>M.L. Walker, "Women and Children in Dundee," COR (1910): 42.

<sup>95</sup>Christopher A. Whatley, "The Making of 'Juteopolis'-and How It Was," in The Remaking of Juteopolis, ed. C.A. Whatley (Dundee, 1992), 12.

<sup>96</sup>Haldane, Scotland, 82; C.T. Parsons, Report on the Condition of Children...in Scotland, PP, 1910, Cd. 5075, lii: 32-4.

<sup>97</sup>Checkland, Industry, 46.

<sup>98</sup>Mary L. Walker and Mona Wilson, "Housing Conditions," Chapter 1, Dundee Social Union, Report on Housing and Industrial Conditions and Medical Inspection of School Children (hereafter DSU Report) (Dundee, 1905), 1, 3.

The standard of sanitary accommodation was wretched; one toilet for every six houses was standard, and one property, housing 215 persons, had only one privy.<sup>100</sup> Taking in lodgers was common even among families living in one room; some lodgers paid rent for a bed in the room, and others paid for a "share of a bed."<sup>101</sup> Examples of overcrowding are shocking: six persons living in one room measuring 12x10x8'; ten persons in two rooms; six to eight persons sleeping in one bed; and rooms with no beds at all, only sacking on the floor.<sup>102</sup>

Dundee was a woman's town; it had the highest incidence of female labour in all Scottish cities, and there were three females to every two males in the twenty to forty-five age group.<sup>103</sup> In 1901, of the 37,000 persons employed in the jute industry, only 16% were men over age twenty.<sup>104</sup> The jute industry flourished on low-wage female and child labour. The average wage for women in the unskilled processes was below 12s. a week, and between 12s. and 18s. for the skilled processes.<sup>105</sup> Dundee also had the highest incidence of child labour in Scotland; 18% of boys and 16% of girls between the ages of ten and fourteen were employed.<sup>106</sup> In the jute mills, children under thirteen years were 'half-timers' who attended board or factory schools on alternate days; the whole-timers worked 6a.m. to 6p.m. (with

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<sup>99</sup>Walker, "Housing," 15-16.

<sup>100</sup>Walker, "Housing," 16, 7.

<sup>101</sup>Walker, "Housing," 18, 21, 28.

<sup>102</sup>Walker, "Housing," 18-21; Mary L. Walker and Mona Wilson, "Employment and Wages," Chapter 3, DSU Report, 53.

<sup>103</sup>Mary L. Walker and Mona Wilson, "Women's Labour and Infant Mortality," Chapter 4, DSU Report, 65.

<sup>104</sup>Walker, "Employment," 48.

<sup>105</sup>Walker, "Employment," 49.

<sup>106</sup>Walker, "Employment," 48.

two hours free for meals) five days a week and then attended evening school 7:15 to 9:15 until they were fourteen.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, infant mortality rates were much higher in Dundee than in the other principal towns of Scotland.<sup>108</sup>

By the 1880s, conditions were deteriorating. The prosperity of the 1870s, when the jute trade had benefitted from the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian conflict, was threatened in the 1880s by competition from Calcutta, which "forced" Dundee employers to reduce wages.<sup>109</sup> Even the lowly "sack sewers" suffered a reduction in wages. It was "a familiar sight in Dundee" to see

a string of ill-nourished and ill-clad women and children waiting at the door of a...factory for a bundle of sacks...[and then walking] slowly homeward, bent double, and often leaning against a wall to rest or to readjust their burdens.<sup>110</sup>

A bundle of sacks weighed between fifty-six and seventy pounds and involved approximately eighty-four yards of sewing. In 1874, a woman would have been paid 1s. 3d. for hand sewing one bundle, but in 1888, she was getting only 6d.<sup>111</sup> The effects of low wages were exacerbated by Dundee's cost of living, which was the highest in Scotland.<sup>112</sup> It is small wonder that a factory inspector, who had observed conditions throughout Britain, declared in 1904: "Personally, the poorest specimens of humanity I have ever seen, both men and women, are working in the preparing and spinning departments of certain Dundee jute mills."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Smout, 96-7.

<sup>108</sup>Walker, "Women's Labour," 68.

<sup>109</sup>Bruce P. Lenman, Dundee and Its Textile Industry, 1850-1914 (Dundee, 1969), 83.

<sup>110</sup>Walker, "Employment," 53.

<sup>111</sup>Walker, "Employment," 53; DYB (1888): 115.

<sup>112</sup>Whatley, 14.

<sup>113</sup>Quoted in William Sutherland, Social Questions in Scotland (Glasgow, [1910]), 13.

Despite such reproach, Dundee mill owners assumed no responsibility for the living conditions of their operatives. It would have been unprofitable for them to build houses for such poorly paid workers,<sup>114</sup> and they felt no "moral obligation...to see that their workers have as good accommodation as their horses."<sup>115</sup> It was the new UCD professoriate rather than the indigenous industrialists who manifested middle class concern for the poor. D'Arcy Thompson remembered:

Dundee was terribly poor. When I first came here the Greenmarket was full of idle men, walking to and fro, hungry and in rags. Of all those young professors who had just come to the town, I doubt if there was one who was not shocked and saddened by the poverty which Dundee openly displayed.<sup>116</sup>

In 1886, Thomas Carnelly,<sup>117</sup> the Professor of Chemistry, and John Haldane<sup>118</sup>, his demonstrator, were the first to become involved with Dundee's poor when they investigated the effects of breathing foul air. Accompanied by a sanitary inspector, they made surprise visits between 12:30a.m. and 4:30a.m. to one-roomed houses. Taking ten minutes to collect samples of air, measure the room and obtain information, they were "agreeably surprised to find so little objection made to our untimely visit." They compared the samples with those taken from the "houses of acquaintances" and concluded that the poor were exposed "to an atmosphere which is five times as impure as that of an ordinary bedroom of a middle class home," and, that "the mean age at death in the better class houses is almost twice as great as in the

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<sup>114</sup>Lenman, 82, 87; see also Checkland, *Industry*, 176.

<sup>115</sup>David Lennox, *Working Class Life in Dundee for Twenty-Five Years, 1878-1903* (n.d. 1905?), 213, copy of unpublished manuscript, MS 15/28, in Dundee University Library.

<sup>116</sup>Thompson, *Fifty Years*, 4.

<sup>117</sup>**Thomas Carnelly** (1853-1890) During his six years at UCD, Carnelly published twenty-six research papers and established a Chemistry Department of high repute.

<sup>118</sup>**John Scott Haldane** (1860-1935), brother of R.B.Haldane and Elizabeth Haldane (q.v.), continued his research into impure air at Oxford, investigating the effects of coal mine gases and becoming an authority on the physiology of respiration.

one-roomed houses."<sup>119</sup> Carnelly and Haldane made an important contribution to the new germ-theory of disease, and to the understanding of the connection between environment, poverty and ill-health, but it is unlikely that their work held any immediate benefit to the Dundonians roused from their sleep.

## VII. Dundee Social Union

The approach of Alfred Ewing,<sup>120</sup> professor of Engineering, was more practical. He instituted the Dundee Sanitary Association, which originally dispensed advice on remedying defects in houses, and later was incorporated into the Dundee Social Union (DSU) when it was founded in 1888.<sup>121</sup> Previous accounts of the DSU have attributed its founding to Ewing, J.E.A. Steggall,<sup>122</sup> and D'Arcy Thompson.<sup>123</sup> However, while there is no direct evidence to prove it, the DSU's name and its method (philanthropic rent collecting) strongly suggest that Patrick Geddes played a major role. In January 1885, Geddes had founded the Edinburgh Social Union (ESU), whose lady rent collectors endeavoured to raise the standard of working class housing. Geddes was the embodiment of social conscience in action. Acutely aware of the living conditions of Edinburgh's poor, and having little faith in the efficacy of government, he had founded the ESU to undertake "immediate and practical means...for raising...the

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<sup>119</sup>T. Carnelly and J.S. Haldane, "The Air of Dwellings and Schools and its Relation to Disease," Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, B 178, (1887): 70, 82, 73.

<sup>120</sup>**James Alfred Ewing** (1855-1935), a son of the manse of Dundee, was Professor of Engineering at Tokyo University (1878-1883), at UCD (1883-1890), at Cambridge (1890-1916), and Principal of Edinburgh University (1916-1929).

<sup>121</sup>A.W. Ewing, The Man of Room 40: The Life of Sir Alfred Ewing (London, 1939), 80.

<sup>122</sup>**J.E.A. Steggall**, a Cambridge graduate, was appointed at age twenty-seven to the Chair of Natural Philosophy and Mathematics at UCD, which he retained until his retirement in 1933. Steggall was also a member of the Dundee COS and the School Board.

<sup>123</sup>Previous accounts have been based on Thompson's Fifty Years Ago and Now; for example, Shafe, 19; Enid Gauldie, Cruel Habitations (London, 1974), 220.



real well-being of the working class."<sup>124</sup> During a visit to Octavia Hill in London to enquire into her system of house management,<sup>125</sup> Geddes had met Elizabeth Haldane who volunteered to learn Hill's methods first-hand and to teach them to the ladies of the ESU.<sup>126</sup> Thus the Octavia Hill method of rent collecting was introduced to Scotland. Geddes was appointed to UCD on 12 April 1888,<sup>127</sup> and the inaugural meeting of the DSU was held six weeks later on 24 May 1888,<sup>128</sup> with Ewing, Steggall and Geddes as members of the first General Committee. The two major areas of the DSU's early work were housing and sanitation, which suggests that Ewing's sanitary association and Geddes' rent collecting scheme joined forces to form the DSU.

The first General Committee of the DSU, numbering twenty-seven people, consisted of professors, clergymen, professional and business men, Dundee's Provost, and several women, including Lily Walker. Its object was:

to promote the well-being of the inhabitants of the town 1) by improving the condition of the dwellings of the poor; 2) by providing opportunities and cultivating a taste for healthy enjoyments; 3) by any other means which the Union may determine to adopt.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Report of Patrick Geddes, as representative of the Edinburgh Social Union, in Industrial Remuneration Conference (1885; reprint ed., New York, 1968), 240.

<sup>125</sup>The Octavia Hill method was a system of philanthropic house factoring, whereby lady rent collectors attempted to improve the habits as well as the habitations of the poor. The system insisted on punctual payment of rent, linked house repairs to tenants' moral reformation, and guaranteed slum property owners a 5% return on their investments.

<sup>126</sup>Haldane, From One Century, 112-3; ESU, Annual Report (1912):3-5, in the Edinburgh Room, Edinburgh Central Reference Library.

<sup>127</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 13 Apr. 1888, in UCD, Principal's Scrapbooks.

<sup>128</sup>This may seem rather speedy work, but anyone familiar with the accomplishments and character of Geddes will not doubt that he was capable of such alacrity. In addition, the absence of Geddes from the DSU Executive Committee is not an indication that he was not its progenitor; Geddes was much more likely to spark the idea than to perform its quotidian tasks (see P. Kitchen, A Most Unsettling Person [London, 1975], 171).

<sup>129</sup>DSU Inauguration pamphlet, Dundee University Library.

The DSU followed the "give not money, but yourselves" school of philanthropy. Its members did not propose to relieve the poor by handouts, but rather to develop schemes and enlist volunteers to help alleviate their conditions. The Sanitary Committee, of which Ewing was the Convenor, began its work by conducting its own sanitary inspection. In January 1889, the Committee sent visitors armed with questionnaires to listen to the complaints of tenants, and to check the walls, drains, privies, lights, and water supply of selected slum properties. When the results were examined, the Committee were "astonished that so extensive and persistent...violation[s]... of the Police Act of 1882 should be tolerated," and they concluded that "the tenants of these houses were in many cases suffering abuses from which [the] Act provides a remedy." (Sections of the Dundee Police Act of 1882 required owners to whitewash their properties, and empowered the Police Commissioners to ensure the provision of water closets, ashpits, and lighting on stairways and passages). In February, a deputation from the DSU met the Sanitary Committee of the Police Commissioners, pointing out the breaches of the Act, and urging them to take action.<sup>130</sup> The Dundee Advertiser commended the DSU's initiative,<sup>131</sup> and the Sanitary Committee planned an extension of its work throughout the city.<sup>132</sup> However, despite such auspicious beginnings, the Sanitary Committee never realised its program of reform; Ewing left Dundee in 1890 to take up an appointment in Cambridge and, without his leadership, the committee became inoperational. However, the tone of its report, which pointed out the neglect of houseowners and the negligence of authorities, is remarkable, especially in comparison to most contemporary inquiries of

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<sup>130</sup>In 1883, the radical journalist, W.T. Stead, arguing that part of the housing problem was administrative rather than legislative, urged "people who feel deeply...to [find] methods of overcoming the apathy or ill will of the authorities" (Stead, "Outcast London'-Where to Begin," in Andrew Mearns, The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, ed. A.S. Wohl [New York, 1970], 88).

<sup>131</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 28 Dec. 1888.

<sup>132</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1889): 8-19.

working class life which emphasised their thriftlessness, drinking habits and ignorance in housekeeping matters.<sup>133</sup>

The second major sphere of the DSU, the Housing Committee, became a more permanent feature of the Union's activities. Its purpose was to acquire properties and manage them according to Octavia Hill's system; a team of volunteers would function as housing factors, collecting rents, keeping accounts, arranging repairs and evicting defaulting tenants. Furthermore, as rent collecting involved regular personal contact, it allowed the collector to "exert her influence" on the conduct and cleanliness of the tenants. Hill exhorted her workers:

Take but one family under your care; watch its struggles, sympathize with its efforts, advise as to the health, education, preparation for work of its younger members; encourage thrift, stimulate the energy of those who compose it; and you shall see growth instead of deterioration, order succeed disorder, industry reap its quiet but sure reward.<sup>134</sup>

The first DSU Housing Committee had plenty of willing workers; two women volunteered as superintendents, five as collectors, and they anticipated "no difficulty...in procuring the services of other ladies should there be room for their employment."<sup>135</sup>

Lily Walker was one of the first rent collectors. Although attending UCD full-time, writing scientific papers, working in the Zoological Laboratory, and helping to care for her invalid mother, Walker was keen to participate in the new UCD-based project for working with the poor. Thompson believed that, although she was a gifted student, social work was Walker's niche.<sup>136</sup> Like other serious,

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<sup>133</sup>For example, the reports discussed in Ross McKibbin, "Social Class and Social Observation in Edwardian England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th. series, 28 (1978): 175-99.

<sup>134</sup>Octavia Hill's address to ESU (ESU, *Annual Report* [1903]: 6). Octavia Hill's system will be discussed more fully in Ch. 2.

<sup>135</sup> DSU, *Annual Report* (1888).

<sup>136</sup>Thompson, *Fifty Years*, 9.

late-Victorian, middle-class young women, Walker's motivations for engaging in social work were rooted in a mixture of Christian concern and the influence of Victorian "social" novelists and philosophers. Meta described Walker, a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Dundee, as having

grown up in a home whose outlook and daily practice were definitely obedient to the Christian ideal, and she was gradually led to the study of social problems in the light of personal responsibility and opportunity.<sup>137</sup>

Although Walker held strong religious convictions in her later life, in the late 1880s and early 1890s she had wavered in her beliefs. Rev. Gough, the rector of St. Paul's between 1885 and 1894, slightly disapproved of her, and she described herself at that time as a "wicked lapsed mass."<sup>138</sup> Being part of the "generation distracted between the intense need of believing and the difficulty of belief,"<sup>139</sup> Walker was aware of the arguments surrounding religious doubt, including those of Thompson, who wrote to her:

I know, or I think I know, that there are only two resurrections in the world; that of the things that sleep in the night and awaken in the day; and that of the things that perish with the winter and live again in the spring.<sup>140</sup>

Moreover, she saw clearly the differences between nominal Christians and the half-believers and agnostics of the UCD intellectual milieu; she wrote to her friend, Anna Geddes<sup>141</sup>: "I know the follies and with sorrow I say it the dishonesty of many who call themselves Christians and how much better

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<sup>137</sup>Paterson, 12.

<sup>138</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44669, 44661.

<sup>139</sup>Lord Acton, "George Eliot's 'Life,'" The Nineteenth Century 17 (1885): 485, quoted in Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven, 1957), 106.

<sup>140</sup>DWT Papers, typescript, 25.5.98.

<sup>141</sup>Anna Geddes (? -1917), wife of Patrick Geddes.

you are who don't."<sup>142</sup>

According to Meta, George Eliot and John Ruskin were early influences in Walker's life.<sup>143</sup> Eliot's female characters, imbued with a strong sense of duty and yearning to live useful lives, were role models for a generation of young Victorian women longing to contribute to the wider world.<sup>144</sup> Ruskin's writings were at their most influential during the later Victorian and Edwardian periods,<sup>145</sup> and Walker herself once recommended that a young friend should read "Kingsley and Ruskin [as they] would do her more good than anybody, there is plenty of fresh air and sanity about both."<sup>146</sup> Kingsley's reforming novels about the miseries of working class life "helped inspire ladies to charity work in the slums."<sup>147</sup> In Unto This Last (1862), Ruskin turned from art criticism to social criticism, attacking the hypocrisy of a society which worshipped God and Mammon. Pointing to the damage inflicted by the industrial age, he denounced greed, cutthroat competition, and the pursuit of material gain and self-advancement.

Walker, however, did not adopt the high-minded moral tone of Kingsley and Ruskin. Although she disapproved of the frivolous and self-indulgent, she did not regard them with tight-lipped distaste. She wrote to Thompson with warmth about their mutual friend, Adeline,<sup>148</sup> who lived in a "self-indulgent and worldly manner of life": "...I found her trying on new hats! and preparing for an awful

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<sup>142</sup>Geddes Papers, T-GED9/2327, photocopy in Dundee University Library. In her autobiography, Beatrice Webb recorded her "flight of emotion away from the service of God to the service of man" (Webb, 150).

<sup>143</sup>Paterson, 11.

<sup>144</sup>For example, Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch (1872), and Dinah Morris in Adam Bede (1859).

<sup>145</sup>Clive Wilmer, Introduction to Unto This Last, by John Ruskin (1862; reprint ed., London, 1985), 29-30.

<sup>146</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44670.

<sup>147</sup>Wohl, 39.

<sup>148</sup>**Adeline Sergeant** (1851-1904), prolific novelist and Fabian, was a regular contributor to the People's Friend, a Dundee periodical. She lived in Dundee, 1885-7.

spree round the Mediterranean and Palestine - She is most refreshingly human and delightful if naughty...."<sup>149</sup> Walker was neither fervently religious nor rigidly ascetic, she experienced doubts, indecision and confusion as she tried to come to terms with her Christian doubts and feelings of duty. The death of her mother in January 1889 left her with no immediate family obligations, and after a lengthy period of mourning, she set about to find her place in the world, and how she could best fulfil her need for self-development and service.

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<sup>149</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44658, 44655.

## **Chapter 2: "NOT MONEY, BUT YOURSELVES"**

In 1890, at the age of twenty-seven, Mary Lily Walker had few family ties. Both her parents were dead, and neither she nor her younger brother, Arthur, ever married. She was close neither to Arthur, who was a reclusive invalid, nor to her uncle in Kendal, whom she dutifully visited until his death in 1896. Her friendship with Meta Peterson deepened, and she accompanied Meta and her mother on their spring visits to Italy almost every year throughout the 1890s. Unconstricted by Victorian family obligations, and possessing a strong sense of duty and citizenship, Walker expanded her work within the DSU, becoming its Superintendent of Housing in 1891. Although the DSU was a small, insignificant philanthropic society throughout the 1890s, by 1900 it was experimenting with new fields of philanthropy, and by 1913 it played an important part in Dundee's social reform efforts. The root of this transformation lies with Walker. Possessing the attributes of a true reformer, Walker was receptive to new ideas, clever enough to see the possibilities in new approaches, and energetic enough to try them out. Many of the social welfare activities Walker started in Dundee originated from her experience in women's settlement houses in London. In the summer of 1893, she stayed at the Women's University Settlement in Southwark, and in 1898-99, with the Grey Ladies on Blackheath Hill. Walker's experience in settlement houses was crucial to her development as a social worker and reformer. The women's settlement house movement of the 1890s was central to the professionalisation and feminization of social work. For women who took it seriously, work amongst the poor developed from a vocation to a profession.

## I. Toynbee Hall

When Canon Samuel Barnett (1844-1913) founded Toynbee Hall in London's East End in 1884, he initiated a social experiment which had a profound influence on late-Victorian social reformers.<sup>1</sup> Since their marriage in 1873, Barnett and his wife, Henrietta, had lived in Whitechapel, a working class area of London, where he was the vicar of St. Jude's parish. Barnett firmly believed that personal interaction with the poor was the effective route to social amelioration. To Barnett, nineteenth century philanthropy had become increasingly inadequate, having degenerated into "a sort of mechanical figure beautifully framed by men to do their duty to their brother men...drop in a coin, and the duty to a neighbour was done."<sup>2</sup> Barnett, calling for a new approach, wanted a philanthropy which emphasised "personal service; not money; not a cheque; not a subscription written; not speeches on a platform; not tracts; not articles in Quarterly Reviews; none of the old methods: but personal service - 'Not money, but yourselves.'"<sup>3</sup>

To Barnett, the root of the problem was the wide social gap separating the classes: it was impossible to achieve social harmony while the rich lived in the West End and the poor in the East End. Barnett believed that the rich had fled from their social obligations, and by suggesting that graduates come to Whitechapel and live amongst the poor, he was advocating the 'return of the squire to the manor'. In November 1883, in a speech delivered at St. John's College, Oxford, he put forward his idea

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<sup>1</sup>For discussion of Toynbee Hall, see Emily K. Abel, "Toynbee Hall, 1884-1914," *Social Service Review* 53 (1979): 606-32; and K.S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Class in Victorian England*, (London, 1963), 143-174.

<sup>2</sup>S.A. Barnett, "University Settlements," in *University and Social Settlements*, ed. W. Reason (London, 1898), 12-13.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Besant, "On University Settlements," in *University and Social Settlements*, ed. W. Reason (London, 1898), 4.



of a University Settlement, which would be a "common ground for all classes."<sup>4</sup> In Barnett's vision, settlers would become an integral part of their East End neighbourhood, passing on to their poorer neighbours an appreciation of higher learning and culture. By their superior education, their good example, and by their very presence, settlers would elevate the condition of the poor, and restore social harmony.

Barnett sparked an immediate response from his audience, especially from those who, having been influenced by the Idealist philosopher, T.H. Green, already possessed a strong sense of mission and a belief in the importance of personal service. One of his audience later wrote: "He came as a prophet just when it was wanted, and men saw in his settlement proposal exactly the opportunity which their gathering interest in the problem of poverty demanded for its exercise and fulfilment."<sup>5</sup> In addition, the "Bitter Cry of Outcast London", published weeks before Barnett's speech, had further heightened concern over social conditions. Barnett later wrote:

Men at the Universities...heard the "bitter cry" of the poor; they were conscious of something wrong underneath modern progress; they realised that free trade, reform bills, philanthropic activity, and missions had made neither health nor wealth. They were drawn to do something for the poor."<sup>6</sup>

The following year, in 1884, Barnett and a committee, representing some of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges, founded Toynbee Hall, where the focal points were education, recreation and social reform. An array of distinguished visiting lecturers utilised its lecture room, library and classrooms to provide instruction to working class adults in 130 different subjects.<sup>7</sup> The recreational facilities included tennis

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<sup>4</sup>S.A. Barnett, "The Universities and the Poor," The Nineteenth Century 15 (1884): 259.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Abel, 609.

<sup>6</sup>Barnett, "University Settlements," 12.

<sup>7</sup>Inglis, 164.

courts and a club room, where entertainments and activities, from amateur theatricals to political debates, took place. In addition, many settlers became involved in local affairs, serving on poor law and school boards, and agitating for housing and sanitation reforms. As K.S. Inglis has pointed out, however, the settlers did not seek to establish a classless society, but "to restore the right relations between classes"; their aim was "social harmony, but not social equality."<sup>8</sup> The settlement house movement took seed and spread. By 1913, there were thirty-nine settlements in England, twenty-seven of which were in London, one in Wales, one in Ireland, and five in Scotland, including Grey Lodge in Dundee.<sup>9</sup> Apart from being the genesis of the settlement house movement, Toynbee Hall exerted a far-reaching influence on late nineteenth century philanthropic thinking, inspiring throughout Britain various schemes of "befriending the poor."

## II. The DSU in the 1890s: Recreation and Housing Committees

In the early 1890s, the DSU Recreation Committee, following the example of Toynbee Hall, experimented with some "East meets West" schemes. They provided entertainments for DSU tenants in the form of evening concerts in the winter and day trips to country houses in the summer: the broad plan was to invite tenants to tea and reform their character. Contemporary literature repeatedly warned the philanthropic middle class to exercise "care and tact" in their dealings with the poor;<sup>10</sup> but "care and tact" could translate unwittingly into condescension, and nullify even the most sincere attempts at social harmony. Behind the new mood of concern for the poor lay the old habits of condescending paternalism.

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<sup>8</sup>Inglis, 170-1.

<sup>9</sup>Calculated from "List of the Settlements in Great Britain," Appendix, in Werner Picht, Toynbee Hall and the English Settlement Movement trans. Lilian A. Cowell, (London, 1914), 209-45.

<sup>10</sup>Flora Lucy Freeman, Religious and Social Work Amongst Girls (London, 1904), 128.

Early in the 1890s, the DSU Recreation Committee planned concerts, magic lantern shows, and other "simple entertainments" for their tenants.<sup>11</sup> In 1890, Vice-President Steggall claimed that "the tenants appeared to understand the objects" of the entertainments, and he was satisfied that some of them "appreciate[d] the friendly and comfortable air which a drawing room, in comparison with an ordinary hall, lends to such an occasion."<sup>12</sup> However, the number of tenants exhibiting such an appreciation rapidly dwindled. Only eighty out of a possible 350 tenants attended a New Year's Day tea party in 1890, and after a few years, the average attendance at concerts had dropped to fifty-two, most of whom were children.<sup>13</sup> By 1896, the Committee had resolved to arrange "no more entertainments" as "those held last winter had not been attended by those for whom they were principally provided, namely, the grown-up tenants."<sup>14</sup> Class barriers were too deeply rooted to be soothed away by tea and condescension.

A popular philanthropic pastime for middle class ladies was to arrange for working class "guests" to have tea in the garden of a rich friend's country house.<sup>15</sup> Excursions to country houses, however, were as circumscribed by class prejudices as drawing room entertainments. We have only sparse details of DSU outings, and have to rely on Henrietta Barnett to give us an impression of these events. Barnett outlined to prospective hostesses the protocol for the visits, delicately requesting that they suspend normal class relations for the day, and offering them advice on the finer points of class

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<sup>11</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1890): 12.

<sup>12</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 30 Dec. 1890; DSU, Annual Report (1890): 12-3.

<sup>13</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1891): 13; calculated from DSU, Annual Report (1896): 11.

<sup>14</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1896): 11.

<sup>15</sup>For example, Life of Octavia Hill, 447-8, 522.

interaction. "[After] the destination is reached," she suggested:

it is a great help if the host and hostess will come out to meet and welcome the party, as is customary towards guests of other classes. By this simple courtesy, the tone is at once given, and the people feel themselves not brought out to a 'treat' but invited and welcomed as guests.<sup>16</sup>

She also recommended that all the gathering take tea together, as it was "not always amiable" if "the richer members of the party are taken by the hostess to the house."<sup>17</sup> As Inglis points out, "few social occasions can have been grimmer than the [Barnetts'] polite tea parties," which must have emphasised rather than minimized the separation between the classes.<sup>18</sup> J.A. Hobson believed the strain of the visits nullified any potential benefits as "the little differences of manners and even dress form an aloofness which chills the atmosphere of free familiarity."<sup>19</sup> No amount of good intentions could have disguised the artificiality of the afternoon's proceedings.

The DSU Recreation Committee experimented with another common, late-Victorian philanthropic practice: club work. The object of clubs was to keep working class youth off the streets, out of pubs, and, in the case of girls, to make them better mothers.<sup>20</sup> Girls' Club activities ranged from singing, sewing, dressmaking, drill, dancing, and drawing, to penmanship and Bible classes. Many middle class women became involved in a girls' club. Before her marriage, Anna Geddes had founded

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<sup>16</sup>Henrietta Barnett, "'At Home' to the Poor," *Practicable Socialism*, ed. Samuel and Henrietta Barnett (London, 1894), 154.

<sup>17</sup>Barnett, "'At Home,'" 156.

<sup>18</sup>Inglis, 170.

<sup>19</sup>Hobson, 724.

<sup>20</sup>According to one contemporary observer: "it is quite certain that the girls who have been through these clubs will make much better mothers" (Will Reason, "Settlements and Recreations," in *University and Social Settlements*, ed. W. Reason [London, 1898], 85).

her own club in Liverpool;<sup>21</sup> A.L. Hodson ran one as part of her settlement duties;<sup>22</sup> and even Margot Asquith (1864-1945), a self-confessed egotist, visited a group of girls in Whitechapel for eight years before her marriage in 1894.<sup>23</sup> Not all middle class women, however, approved of the concept. One woman wondered whether the clubs would "spoil the labour market for service," and another complained that "it cannot be right for the lower classes to have the same amusements, such as dancing, acting, etc., that we have."<sup>24</sup>

Although most Girls' Clubs restricted their activities to sedate, domestic pursuits, a few moved beyond the sphere of sewing bees, and became concerned about the working conditions of their members. Before her work with the Women's Social and Political Union, the suffragette, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1867-1954) was the leader of a Working Girls' Club in London in the 1890s. "It became our business," she reported, "to study the industrial question as it affected the girls' employments, the hours, the wages, and the conditions."<sup>25</sup> Pethick-Lawrence informed the girls about the various laws governing women's work, and supported their protests against exploitative conditions. Between 1891 and 1894, Walker superintended the DSU Girls' Club, which had thirty to fifty members, until it was discontinued due to a "want of workers."<sup>26</sup> The activities of the DSU Girls' Club were limited to singing, sewing, dance and drill. Despite Dundee having one of Britain's largest

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<sup>21</sup>Philip Boardman, The Worlds of Patrick Geddes (London, 1978), 74.

<sup>22</sup>Hodson, 189-97.

<sup>23</sup>Margot Asquith, The Autobiography of Margot Asquith, ed. Mark Bonham Carter (1920; reprint ed., London, 1995), xxi, 41-4.

<sup>24</sup>Freeman, 41.

<sup>25</sup>Emmeline Pethick, "Working Girls' Clubs," in University and Social Settlements, ed. W. Reason, (London, 1898), 104.

<sup>26</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1891): 14, 13; (1894): 10.

concentrations of working girls and women, Walker did not develop her Girls' Club along the lines of Pethick-Lawrence's. She chose not to interfere in the industrial relations between Dundee's employers and their miserably underpaid female labour force.

Following the example of Toynbee Hall, the DSU had made tepid attempts to befriend the poor and elevate their condition, but with negligible results. By 1896, the DSU had disbanded its Recreation Committee, having failed to cross class lines by means of recreational pursuits. Dundee's class barriers remained rock solid, requiring rather more than an appreciation of drawing room entertainments to surmount them.

The other major area of the DSU work in the 1890s, the Housing Committee, was moderately more successful. As mentioned previously, the work of the Housing Committee was based on the Octavia Hill method of rent collecting, which not only paid owners a 5% return on their capital but also endeavoured to improve the condition of their property and the conduct and cleanliness of their tenants. Hill had been managing slum properties in the East End of London since the late 1860s, and a few years later, she had started training middle class ladies in her methods.<sup>27</sup> By the 1890s, after extensive coverage in newspapers and periodicals, and the publication of her book, Homes of the London Poor,<sup>28</sup> both Hill and her scheme were well known throughout Britain.<sup>29</sup> Under Hill's method, which reflected the social philosophy of the COS, lady volunteers simultaneously collected the rent and established a

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<sup>27</sup>Octavia Hill, Extracts from Octavia Hill's 'Letters to Fellow-Workers', 1864-1911, comp. E.S. Ouvry (London, 1933).

<sup>28</sup>Octavia Hill, Homes of the London Poor (1875; reprint ed., London, 1970).

<sup>29</sup>Most contemporaries regarded Hill with deep veneration, even in Scotland, where in 1902, she received a "royal" welcome when she spoke at an ESU conference, which Walker attended (Hill, Life, 553-4). Historian David Owen is not so admiring, referring to her as "the self-appointed schoolmistress of the poor...bristling with moral superiority and censoriousness" (David Owen, English Philanthropy, 1660-1960 [Cambridge, Mass.], 508). More recent biographers have been kinder; see Gillian Darley, Octavia Hill (London, 1990), and Jane Lewis, Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England (Aldershot, 1991), 24-82, especially p. 56.

relationship with the poor, advising them in the ways of thrift, sobriety and industry. A rent collector, having undergone a "severe course of training," was "versed in the most important facts of the law as to rents, landlord and tenant, and sanitation; acquainted with the defects which occur in houses, and how most economically to remedy them."<sup>30</sup> Home repairs were to be gradual and contingent upon changes in attitude and behaviour, as decreed by Hill: "improvements should be made only by degrees, as the people become more capable of valuing them and not abusing them."<sup>31</sup> Moreover, collectors would set a "great example" by means of their "honesty, truth, punctuality...self-forgetfulness, humility, gentleness, [and] patience."<sup>32</sup> Ladies were to tackle the problems of urban squalor by their superior nature and the judicious allotment of house repairs.

The DSU were among the many organisations which adopted Hill's methods, and by 1895, the DSU managed eight tenements, housing 102 families.<sup>33</sup> They painted walls, built ashpits and closets, installed boilers and tubs in washhouses, insisted that tenants sweep common stairways, and generally encouraged people to take care of their rented rooms. However, their good work was hampered by a rapid turnover in volunteer rent collectors. The initial high expectations in 1888 of anticipating "no difficulty...in procuring the services of other ladies"<sup>34</sup> had quickly faded, and almost every annual report in the 1890s lamented the lack of ladies willing to do the work, especially during the summer months when the Union had to employ a professional house factor.<sup>35</sup> Walker reproached Dundee's ladies of

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<sup>30</sup>Hill, Letters, 13.

<sup>31</sup>Octavia Hill, House Property and its Management, eds. M.M. Jeffrey and E. Neville, (London, 1921), 33.

<sup>32</sup>Hill, Letters, 30.

<sup>33</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1895): 6.

<sup>34</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1888).

<sup>35</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1893): 8.

leisure: "In every place the work has been proved of value, and in every place that I know, except Dundee, it has grown and developed, [and] workers have been forthcoming."<sup>36</sup> She conceded, however, that Dundee's distinctive situation militated against the successful operation of Hill's scheme. The large number of married women working in the jute mills and factories meant that rent collecting had to take place on Saturdays, which was inconvenient for both collector and tenant. As Walker pointed out:

The most ardent enthusiast would find it discouraging to discourse on ventilation on a Saturday afternoon with Tommy scrubbing his face at the sink, Jeanie blacking the grate, the harassed mother with baby wrapped in her shawl, evidently eager to get off to her shopping, and the father of the family, the only one who can take life easily, reading his paper, or perhaps stretched on the bed.<sup>37</sup>

She also recognised the inconvenience to the middle class ladies, but nevertheless appealed to their sense of social duty:

[Saturday is] the very afternoon when we wish to be free--the pleasantest time for enjoyment, tennis, cycling, whist parties, as the season may be--[but] is there nothing in us that responds to the cry of pain and sorrow so audible in this world--not all sunshine and flowers--and makes us glad we have something to sacrifice?<sup>38</sup>

The response to her appeal, however, was minute; and Walker repeatedly failed to enlist a body of reliable rent collectors.<sup>39</sup>

The above quotations reveal not only the difficulties of Saturday rent collecting, but also the wide social differences separating collector and tenant, leading us to wonder about the nature of their interchange. Although we only have the opinions of Walker and the "lady correspondent" of the Dundee

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<sup>36</sup>M.L. Walker, "Paper Read at the Annual Meeting of the Dundee Social Union, December 27th, 1899," Appendix, DSU, Annual Report (1899): 1.

<sup>37</sup>Walker, "Paper Read," 2.

<sup>38</sup>Walker, "Paper Read," 4.

<sup>39</sup>One possible reason for Walker's failure to enlist sufficient philanthropic help from Dundee's women is that Dundee had a "significantly smaller" middle class than the other major Scottish cities (Whatley, 14).



Advertiser, it appears that most tenants accepted the collector, and welcomed the repairs.<sup>40</sup> According to the reporter:

All the tenants seemed very pleased to see Miss Walker--I had inquired beforehand if they resented the ladies calling for the rent but was told that on the contrary they always expected them to come in and sit down for a bit. Only one woman in all of these years is in the habit of paying her rent at the door. The tenants are much disappointed in July and August when the money is collected by a mere man!

She reported that one tenant resented middle class tardiness rather than middle class interference:

One of the tenants, an alert little woman who presided over a very clean house, was exceedingly voluble over her wrongs. One chimney wouldn't go, and as for her clothes line, she had nearly got her death of cold drying her things in the house. She was pacified with the promise that all would be seen to ere we left.<sup>41</sup>

Certainly, not all DSU tenants were docile and submissive.

The issue of class interaction, however, needs further examination, especially when we consider that the proprietors of slum properties were very often middle class women. According to one contemporary Dundonian:

The slums in the city are for the most part owned by trustees, widows and single ladies i.e. by people whose capital is locked up in the buildings and who might have a difficulty in getting an equally good investment for their money if they realised and reinvested in other trust securities. Repairs are not demanded imperatively in slums.<sup>42</sup>

Slum ownership did not pay large dividends, but it was a low-risk, safe investment, and therefore ideal

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<sup>40</sup>This view is supported by Beatrice Webb's account of her rent collecting experience: "From the outset the tenants regarded us...as part of the normal machinery of their lives, like the school attendance officer or the pawnbroker; indeed, there was familiarity in their attitude, for they would refer to one or other of us as "my woman collector" (Webb, 260).

<sup>41</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 9 Dec. 1896.

<sup>42</sup>Lennox, 212.

for single ladies who wanted a secure, steady return for their capital.<sup>43</sup> According to Smout, "Victorian middle class neglect and self-interest" had contributed to the appalling state of Scotland's slums: "an enormous number of middle class people were involved in making a profit from the construction and ownership of the workers' one-and two-roomed houses."<sup>44</sup> There is no evidence that Walker ever exhorted middle class women to be more caring, conscientious owners. In their crusade to improve the condition of Dundee's slums, Walker and her lady collectors concentrated their efforts on working class tenants and avoided confrontation with middle class owners.

The DSU improved the condition of the few houses under its management, but its effect on the housing problem of Dundee was minuscule. As Steggall admitted: "102 houses were not a large proportion of the 10,000 single-roomed dwellings in the city."<sup>45</sup> Even in London, where Hill's methods were extensively practised, they proved to be an inadequate solution to the problem of urban degeneration, as noted by Beatrice Webb:

The lady collectors are an altogether superficial thing. Undoubtedly their gentleness and kindness brings light into many homes: but what are they in face of this collective brutality, heaped up together in infectious contact; adding to each other's dirt, physical and moral?<sup>46</sup>

In both Dundee and in London, Hill's "five percent philanthropy" failed to stem the rising tide of urban squalor.

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<sup>43</sup>Walker herself was part owner of a DSU property, and of one of Patrick Geddes's Town and Gown Association properties in Edinburgh (Inventory of the Personal Estate of Mary Lily Walker, SRO SC/45/31/73, 352).

<sup>44</sup>Smout, 57, 38.

<sup>45</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 11 Dec. 1896.

<sup>46</sup>Webb, 277.

### III. Gender Roles in Philanthropic Societies

The work of lady rent collectors also points to the gendered division of labour which existed in many philanthropic societies: women performed the daily work, while men held the executive positions. While women privately visited tenants in their homes, men took pride of place on the public platform, delivering speeches of praise and reports of progress, applauding the work of the Union and the benefits to Dundee. Moreover, in Dundee Advertiser articles of DSU meetings, the introductory paragraph reported the names, titles, qualifications and civic positions of the men present, while a brief, perfunctory sentence at the bottom of the column recorded a "vote of thanks to Miss Walker and the lady collectors."<sup>47</sup> Newspaper accounts, by their format as well as their content, reinforced the impression that men were the leaders and women the supporters.

It may be argued, however, that men tended to be complacent philanthropists, while women were active and dynamic. Their different attitudes reflected their respective philanthropic functions: men made laudatory, optimistic public pronouncements designed to recruit volunteers and solicit funds; whereas women, by visiting the poor in their homes, were closer to the actual situation and saw less reason to be satisfied. While men accepted that progress was being made, women tended to probe deeper: they questioned assumptions, exposed faults, and agitated for better conditions. For example, in 1873, Mrs. Nassau Senior, the first woman Poor Law inspector, incurred the wrath of male officials when she organised an extensive inquiry, conducted by women, into the circumstances of girls who had been brought up in English workhouses. According to a female supporter:

It was found that fifty-three per cent. of the girls trained in our poor-law schools turned out badly...[and] they frequently returned to the workhouse... The news was disappointing almost insulting to those who had taken pride in the large and costly buildings where these children had grown up, where guardians had made visits of state, and had satisfied

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<sup>47</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 20 Dec. 1894; 27 Dec. 1895; 11 Dec. 1896.

themselves that the children were well clothed and fed, and that they received suitable schooling.<sup>48</sup>

Interestingly, the same gendered difference of opinion was expressed thirty-five years later in Dundee.

In his annual report on the East Poorhouse, the Chairman of the Dundee Parish Council wrote:

Among the inmates of the East House there are about seventy children, and it is always a pleasure to see how happy they are under the conditions. Everything is done in the way of feeding and educating the children, and to provide them with healthy frames to fit them for the battle of life.<sup>49</sup>

By contrast, Walker's opinion of the same children was very different.

My great wish is to get these children out of the poorhouse... nothing distresses me more than to see so many children in the poorhouse when I go there. I wish that all these children could be taken out of that atmosphere.... It is terrible.<sup>50</sup>

In the DSU also, there was a marked contrast between the statements of civic dignitaries and those made by Walker. At the 1896 annual meeting, Dundee's Lord Provost, in ponderous prose, complimented the Union on "another successful year," telling them: "there could be nothing more elevating amongst the class of people sought to be benefited than the influence of frequent visits from ladies of refinement and the social and moral advantages thus conferred must be very great and striking." Walker's address to the same meeting was more direct and blunt:

To be quite frank we are in a very crippled and critical condition, we have lost workers...and we have no fresh volunteers to fill their places... This year is a crisis for this work, either we must extend, get fresh energy, fresh views, be stirred out of our jog-trot routine, or we must give up, and I will not entertain this thought.<sup>51</sup>

Walker, refraining from high-flowing, flowery rhetoric, used her public speeches to issue calls for direct

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<sup>48</sup>Lidgett, 255.

<sup>49</sup>DYB (1908): 59-60.

<sup>50</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Walker, Q63610-2.

<sup>51</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1896): 20.

action.

Women certainly expended more energy on DSU work than men. Although there was a high turnover in lady rent collectors, and barely a shuffle on the slate of male office-bearers, it must be remembered that it was easier to sit on a committee, than to climb stairs and collect rents every week. In addition, although Walker's Girls' Club was not an unqualified success, it did run for four years, compared to the tepid attempt by DSU men to start a Men's Club, which did not survive its first meeting.<sup>52</sup> These examples do not suggest that all women were active and all men passive, but they do contradict previous assumptions that men were the innovative leaders and women the tag-along followers.

Historians are divided over the comparative gender roles in philanthropic societies. Ronald Walton, in his study on the role of women in the development of social work as a profession, claims that, with very few exceptions, men were the "creative influence" dominating the committees.<sup>53</sup> Michael J. Moore agrees, finding that women served either as visitors to the poor or in "lesser administrative posts."<sup>54</sup> Olive Checkland, in her study of Scottish philanthropy, also sees women in secondary roles, performing minor functions.<sup>55</sup> Margaret Simey, on the other hand, claims that in the 1890s, women increasingly became the pioneers in the development of new approaches.<sup>56</sup> F.K. Prochaska considers

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<sup>52</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1891): 13.

<sup>53</sup>Ronald G. Walton, Women in Social Work (London, 1975), 20, 81-2.

<sup>54</sup>Michael J. Moore, "Social Work and Social Welfare: The Organization of Philanthropic Resources in Britain, 1900-1914," The Journal of British Studies 16 (1977): 92, n.5.

<sup>55</sup>Checkland, Philanthropy, 84; Industry, 100.

<sup>56</sup>Margaret Simey, Charitable Effort in Liverpool in the Nineteenth Century (Liverpool, 1951), 125-7.

women to be innovators, decision-makers and leaders;<sup>57</sup> and Leslie Howsam suggests that, even in the mid-Victorian period, "women were active organizers, persuasive collectors and powerful contributors."<sup>58</sup> Obviously these conflicting views largely depend upon the gender of the dominant personalities in the particular organisations that each historian was studying.

#### IV. Walker's Role in the DSU

In the case of the DSU, Walker's role was central to its survival in the 1890s, and to its success in the early years of the twentieth century. Although Ewing and Geddes had been the originators, between 1890 and 1913, Walker increasingly steered the direction of the DSU, her ideas and efforts determining the nature of its activities.

Throughout the 1890s, the DSU was in a state of steady decline. The Recreation Committee had been disbanded, and the work of the Housing Committee did not expand. Memberships dropped from ninety-eight in 1892, to seventy-five in 1895, and to a low of sixty-six in 1899.<sup>59</sup> Yet in the early years of the twentieth century there was an upturn in the activities of the Union: by 1905, there were 168 members; the following year, 197; and by 1913, there were 300 DSU members, including "120 visitors, helpers and rent collectors."<sup>60</sup> What can account for the sudden upsurge of interest in the DSU? It may be suggested that a forceful, energetic, enthusiastic personality at the centre of a philanthropic

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<sup>57</sup>Prochaska, 30-2, and passim.

<sup>58</sup>Leslie Howsam, Cheap Bibles (Cambridge, 1991), 59.

<sup>59</sup>DSU, Annual Reports, passim.

<sup>60</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 7 Mar. 1905; 30 Mar. 1906; 1 Apr. 1913.

organization is a necessary prerequisite to its success.<sup>61</sup> Walker, with her single-minded determination and firm commitment, fulfilled that function in the DSU. An examination of Walker's role in the DSU has to be considered in relation to her settlement house experience. In 1893, Walker spent the summer months at the Women's University Settlement in Southwark, learning first-hand the lessons of Octavia Hill; and from May 1898 until May 1899, she spent a further year in London with the Grey Ladies, a religious settlement house on Blackheath Hill. Walker's experience in women's settlement houses was central to her development as a social worker and reformer.

## V. Women's Settlements

Although the settlement house movement had started with earnest, young, university men living in Toynbee Hall, women had been quick to follow suit, and within a few years, there were more women's settlements than men's. By 1913, there were in Britain twenty-two settlements inhabited exclusively by women, compared with seventeen inhabited by men; with 246 women living in settlements, compared with 189 men.<sup>62</sup> Why were women drawn to settlement work in larger numbers than men? What were some of the differences between men's and women's settlements?<sup>63</sup>

Women's settlements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were the seedbed for the professionalisation of social work. There was a strong link between the expansion of women's higher education, the women's settlement house movement, and the development of social work as a profession.

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<sup>61</sup>In her account of the Manchester University Settlement, Mary Stocks discusses "the force generated at the centre by 'high powered personalities,'" and the diminution of support when they are absent (Mary D. Stocks, Fifty Years in Every Street: the Story of the Manchester University Settlement [Manchester, 1945], 17, 40-42).

<sup>62</sup>Picht, 102.

<sup>63</sup>Apart from Martha Vicinus, Independent Women, Ch. 6, "Settlement Houses", there has been surprisingly little historical research on British women's settlement houses.

Late nineteenth century women, while benefiting from an expansion of higher education, continued to suffer from a lack of career opportunities as many professions remained closed to them. Denied access to the old professions, women therefore constructed their own new one. In 1887, women from Oxford and Cambridge colleges founded Women's University Settlement (WUS), the first woman's settlement house; some working in it and many others supporting it by their subscriptions.<sup>64</sup> Social work was particularly attractive to women like Walker who believed that women's higher education should be "useful" and "serviceable."<sup>65</sup> Walker believed that the practical application of knowledge was more important than knowledge itself: "strictly speaking, study is only preparation for action, the idea is only of value in proportion as it sets the energies of our nature free to work...and [the] strongest claim is undoubtedly social work."<sup>66</sup> Women were as aware as men of the growing problem of poverty and the search for new solutions, which became more immediate in the 1890s with the publication of Booth's volumes. The poor needed help; and earnest, educated, unmarried middle class women who needed a career, chose one in social usefulness. Moreover, by the end of the century, women were becoming increasingly aware of their constraints, and wanted to push back the boundaries of their own lives as much as they wanted to improve the lot of the poor. Emily Abel points out that women graduates were drawn to social work as it was "a profession they themselves controlled."<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the expansion of higher education for women, the development of social consciousness, the Victorian notions of work and duty, and the female desire for self-fulfilment dovetailed to make settlement work an attractive choice

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<sup>64</sup>Margaret A. Sewell and E.G. Powell, "Women's Settlements in England," in University and Social Settlements, ed. W. Reason, (London, 1898), 89.

<sup>65</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44681.

<sup>66</sup>Walker, "Paper read," 3.

<sup>67</sup>Abel, 610.



for some late nineteenth century women.

Men and women had different approaches to their settlement house work: while men concentrated on educational and cultural programs, women emphasised social work. Men lectured on English literature, organised debating societies, and imparted an appreciation of art and music; whereas women undertook district visiting, rent collecting, and work with invalid and cripple children.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, most male settlers, having a profession at which they worked during the day, participated in settlement activities only in the evening. This was in accordance with Barnett's vision of Toynbee Hall as a "club house in Whitechapel occupied by men who do citizens' duty in the neighbourhood...Each one leads his own life [and] earns his own living."<sup>69</sup> Women's settlement houses, however, diverged from the Toynbee Hall model and became "something quite distinct" from the original settlement ideal.<sup>70</sup> Female settlers, having no other profession, devoted their whole time to social work.<sup>71</sup> In the absence of any systematic training in welfare work, women formulated their own, and women's settlements increasingly became "school[s] for social workers."<sup>72</sup> A growing number of professions for women required settlement training.<sup>73</sup> According to the Englishwoman's Yearbook:

The sphere of the welfare worker is one of the newest open to educated women... It is desirable to pass through a University course of Economics, followed up by a year's practical work at a settlement...[and] there is every chance of obtaining a post after

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<sup>68</sup>Percy Ashley, "University Settlements in Great Britain," Harvard Theological Review (1911): 188, 190-1, 195-7.

<sup>69</sup>Barnett, "University Settlements," 18.

<sup>70</sup>E.J. Urwick, "Settlement Ideals," COR (1903): 332.

<sup>71</sup>Picht, 123.

<sup>72</sup>Picht, 124; Urwick, 332.

<sup>73</sup>Picht, 103.,

settlement experience."<sup>74</sup>

Settlement house experience was therefore an important career step for a number of women.

The careers of some male settlers were also enhanced by time spent at a settlement. A number of them subsequently rose to positions of importance in the government and civil service, some becoming high-ranking government ministers and influencing later social welfare legislation.<sup>75</sup> The most notable example is William Beveridge, the architect of Britain's post-World War II welfare state, who was a resident of Toynbee Hall in the early years of the century and sub-warden between 1903-1905.<sup>76</sup> According to Bentley Gilbert, the framers of British social welfare legislation of the early twentieth century, "nearly without exception", had been residents of a settlement house.<sup>77</sup> Future politicians of Scotland and even of Canada also had been settlers in their youth. Scottish Secretary of State, John Sinclair, had been involved with Toynbee Hall in the 1880s,<sup>78</sup> and Canadian Prime Minister, Mackenzie King (1872-1950) spent some months at Passmore Edwards Settlement in late 1899 and early 1900.<sup>79</sup>

Settlement house experience, therefore, laid career foundations for strong-minded, highly-motivated individuals of both sexes, but "career" had relative connotations. Although a small number of women settlers such as Eleanor Rathbone (1872-1946), Violet Markham (1872-1959), Mary Ward

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<sup>74</sup>G.E. Mitton, ed., *The Englishwoman's Yearbook*, (London, 1914), 151. Vicinus, however, claims that few were offered paid jobs as social work was overcrowded with volunteers (Vicinus, 242).

<sup>75</sup>Abel, 615; Bentley B. Gilbert, *The Evolution of National Insurance in Great Britain* (London, 1966), 42-4.

<sup>76</sup>Abel, 622-4.

<sup>77</sup>Gilbert, 44.

<sup>78</sup>**John Sinclair**, appointed Liberal Scottish Secretary in 1905, Sinclair played an important part in the reform of Scottish welfare with particular emphasis on the medical inspection and feeding of school children (Levitt, 49-50, 200).

<sup>79</sup>Lewis, 214-5.

(1851-1920), and Helen Bosanquet (1860-1925) had distinguished careers in social work, for most women settlers, their career goal was simply to do the work. Elizabeth MacAdam's description of "young women, even those whose education had been long and costly," willing to work for low wages and "few chances of promotion"<sup>80</sup> stands in stark contrast to the "junior Members of Parliament, private secretaries to Prime Ministers, permanent secretaries of ministries, [and] junior civil servants" who were among the alumni of Toynbee Hall.<sup>81</sup>

There were other differences between women's and men's settlements. Vicinus notes that they differed in physical appearance: men's settlements resembled Oxbridge colleges with quadrangles and diamond-paned windows, whereas women's were often two or three suburban terraced houses, with walls knocked down to provide connecting passageways.<sup>82</sup> There was also a difference in level of communication and exchange of ideas between settlements. The Federation of Women's Settlements in London met three times a year in each of the London settlement houses by turn, where they heard lectures and held discussions on social problems.<sup>83</sup> Repeated attempts, however, had failed to establish a Union of men's settlements. Werner Picht, a German student of British settlement houses in 1913, found that the men, "so overwhelmed with work," doubted the value of such meetings, and decided that a Union was "unnecessary."<sup>84</sup> Picht found that women, on the other hand, were "less overburdened, and hail the opportunity of seeing and hearing something else as a pleasant refreshment and change. Perhaps

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<sup>80</sup>Elizabeth MacAdam, *The Social Servant in the Making* (London, 1945), 130.

<sup>81</sup>Gilbert, 44.

<sup>82</sup>Vicinus, 216.

<sup>83</sup>Picht, 104-5; E.J. Urwick, "The Settlement Ideal," *COR* (1902): 119, n.1.

<sup>84</sup>Picht, 103-4.

in several cases they are also less familiar with other sources of information."<sup>85</sup> Picht's patronising comments devalued the work and interest of women settlers.<sup>86</sup> Women's support of their Federation was more likely an indication of their serious and conscientious approach towards settlement work.

Other evidence suggests that men were less conscientious and less committed to settlement work than women. Some men lived in a settlement house because it provided comfortable accommodation and stimulating company. Booth called a settlement "a residential club with a purpose"<sup>87</sup>; and Picht noted that many settlers "willingly exchanged the inconvenience of living in a poor district for the release from a lonely bachelor existence."<sup>88</sup> Moreover, a stay at a settlement house became a fashionable experience, undertaken by many for a brief period. E.J. Urwick, the sub-warden of Toynbee Hall in 1902, called this practice the "short-service system", complaining about those who spent "a limited number of months in the hope of doing little and learning much."<sup>89</sup> Mackenzie King's stay at the Passmore Edwards Settlement provides a good example of the "short service system." King was delighted with his quarters: "fine large room, four windows facing out onto a little quadrangle...a most delightful place";<sup>90</sup> and the company: "it is so cheerful, good society, good and helpful."<sup>91</sup> Although he dabbled in Settlement activities, they were no more than a passing interest for him; he quickly tired

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<sup>85</sup>Picht, 105.

<sup>86</sup>Some contemporary women settlers felt chagrin at these and other remarks of Picht's (see Emily Simey, "The Victoria Women's Settlement, Liverpool," COR (1915): 68).

<sup>87</sup>Booth, 3rd. series, vol. 7, 377.

<sup>88</sup>Picht, 103.

<sup>89</sup>Urwick, "Settlement Ideals," 329.

<sup>90</sup>Diary of MacKenzie King, Trans. 13, Microfilm, 11 Oct. 1899.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 30 Oct. 1899.

of keeping "a sort of supervision" over the Boys' Club, finding "it is only play and the time seems wasted."<sup>92</sup> King appreciated the concept of settlement houses, and valued his first-hand experience of staying at one, but his participation was not wholehearted. For King, Passmore Edwards Settlement was an ideal place to live while researching his thesis, and partaking in many activities and social events in London.

By the early twentieth century, some observers felt that settlements had lost their original sense of purpose.<sup>93</sup> In 1911, Percy Ashley reported that settlements faced an uncertain future and put forward two recommendations to render them more effective. Both recommendations were distinguishing features of women's settlement houses: full-time work and training. Ashley suggested that there should be:

a substantial increase in the "professional" element in the settlements. That element (that is, persons who devote their whole time...to the work of the settlements...) has so far shown itself mainly in the women's settlements...it has been absent, on the whole from the men's settlements, where most of the residents pursue unconnected vocations.

When making his second recommendation, that "the settlement worker of the future will need to be more systematically trained," he again noted that women's settlements "have taken the matter up." Ashley concluded that women's settlements "contain a larger proportion of residents who are making settlement work a career than do the men's settlements."<sup>94</sup> For women, settlement work was a profession, and not a well-meaning pastime; a serious business, not a dilettantish experience.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that women settlers were a cohesive, happy band of highly-committed, self-fulfilled social workers. Many pursued their new careers with grim

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 20 Oct. 1899; 27 Oct. 1899.

<sup>93</sup>Urwick, "The Settlement Ideal," *passim*.

<sup>94</sup>Ashley, 201-2.

determination, and there are numerous accounts in the contemporary literature of overworked, harassed, disillusioned women, many on the point of nervous collapse:

The worker who rushes forth after an early breakfast, and returns very cross and tired to a late dinner, often going out again to an evening committee...the very conditions of her life, involving as they do self-denial of the sternest description and strict discipline of mind and body... What wonder if she becomes somewhat dogmatic, somewhat angular?<sup>95</sup>

Vicinus describes the drawbacks of women's settlement house life: the depression and self-doubt, the discord between paid and unpaid workers, and the perennial problems with volunteers.<sup>96</sup> She also, however, recognises that a settlement was: "a refuge, a foothold from which to launch into the wider world, but most of all, it was a home."<sup>97</sup> Although Urwick had referred to them as "a collection of segregated spinsters,"<sup>98</sup> many women enjoyed living in a community of women workers, giving and receiving emotional support. For women with no family ties, or with unhappy ones, the settlement took the place of home and family,<sup>99</sup> fulfilling an emotional as well as a vocational need in the lives of some late nineteenth century women.

## VI. Mary Lily Walker and Women's University Settlement

When Lily Walker went to WUS in July 1893, she was one of the first women to attend the very

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<sup>95</sup>M.Z. Hadwen, "On Workers in Charity," *COR* (1908): 35. See also Hodson, ch. 24.

<sup>96</sup>Vicinus, 224-7.

<sup>97</sup>Vicinus, 31.

<sup>98</sup>Urwick, "The Settlement Ideal," 126.

<sup>99</sup>Hodson, 254-5.

first organised training course for social workers.<sup>100</sup> WUS, the earliest women's settlement house, had been founded in 1887 with a double mission: to promote the welfare of poor women and children in Southwark, and to maintain a house for women doing philanthropic work.<sup>101</sup> In 1890, the WUS Warden had suggested "that anyone who comes here to work for any sufficient length of time should go through at first a regular course of training."<sup>102</sup> Margaret Sewell, the Warden in the 1890s, recognised that there was "a demand for more knowledge and more guidance, coming...from the more earnest of social workers,"<sup>103</sup> and began to plan an organised course of theory and practice. At the same time, Octavia Hill, who had been training recruits in her methods of rent collecting since the 1870s, found that her work had "expanded to the point where something more elaborate had to be arranged."<sup>104</sup> Sewell and Hill joined forces, devising a scheme which combined theoretical instruction at WUS and practical experience with Hill.<sup>105</sup> By 1893, a course of reading, lectures and supervised practical work was formulated; fees were set; scholarships offered; and "'training' was definitely organized and advertised."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Walker went to WUS during July and August 1893, and not for a whole year, as mistakenly remembered by both Meta in 1935 (Paterson, 11); and by Thompson in 1938 (Thompson, *Fifty Years*, 9). See DWT Papers, MSS 44556-9; and DSU *Annual Report* (1893): 2.

<sup>101</sup>Ashley, 181.

<sup>102</sup>Margaret Sewell, "The Beginnings of Social Training, 1890-1903," Ch. 2, in Elizabeth MacAdam, *Equipment of the Social Worker* (London, 1925), 26.

<sup>103</sup>Sewell, "Beginnings," 29.

<sup>104</sup>Smith, 16.

<sup>105</sup>Theoretical instruction included lectures on "Local Government", "The Poor Law", "The Factory Acts", "Thrift", "The Keeping of Accounts", "Public Health", and "Principles and Methods of Relief", (Sewell, "Beginnings," 30).

<sup>106</sup>Sewell, "Beginnings," 29-30.

One route of advertising was an article written by Hill, "Trained Workers for the Poor", which appeared in The Nineteenth Century in January 1893.<sup>107</sup> It is likely that Walker read this article and decided to apply for a training course at WUS during the summer months. Certain aspects of Hill's article would have appealed to Walker. Hill wrote about the necessity and value of special training for "devoted and industrious volunteers"; she emphasised the "opportunities of talking over with experienced workers what is best to be done"; and she specifically addressed "those who have received a university education, and who are likely to prove the most able of future workers."<sup>108</sup> Walker would also have been attracted by Hill's description of women with "no home existing for them," gaining a "family and household duty life with fellow-workers."<sup>109</sup> Moreover, Walker, as a "resident [from] the provinces," would have appreciated "the opportunity of being abreast with new movements and inspired by new ideas."<sup>110</sup> At any rate, Walker was intrigued by WUS's new training program, and by 10 July 1893, Thompson was writing to her: "It makes me sorry to think of you slaving in the Blackfriars Row."<sup>111</sup>

When Walker went to WUS in 1893, it consisted of two houses knocked together at Nos. 44 and 45 Nelson Square, close to Blackfriars Row, and resembled

an ordinary dwelling-house with small rooms and no halls; and instead of ragged children and interesting poor people thronging the house and the entrance, [there were] quite ordinary people coming in or out, or having an ordinary afternoon tea in an ordinary

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<sup>107</sup>Octavia Hill, "Trained Workers for the Poor," The Nineteenth Century (1893): 36-43.

<sup>108</sup>Hill, "Trained Workers," 36, 41, 40.

<sup>109</sup>Hill, "Trained Workers," 38.

<sup>110</sup>Sewell, "Beginnings," 30.

<sup>111</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44557.



drawing-room."<sup>112</sup>

At WUS, there were no large class rooms, lecture halls, or evening entertainments; instead, "writing in connection with one's work often occupies most of the evening."<sup>113</sup> WUS housed thirteen or fourteen residents, some of whom were long-term, staying between one and eight years, and others, like Walker, who came for a limited time period to gain experience.<sup>114</sup> Long-term residents paid £50 - £60 per annum for room and board, and short-term residents paid twenty-five shillings a week, with additional charges for training.<sup>115</sup> The association of Oxbridge women, who managed WUS, paid the rent and taxes of the building, as well as the salary of the warden.<sup>116</sup>

WUS did not initiate its own social work schemes, but rather supported the work of existing agencies, like MABYS, ICAA, CCHF,<sup>117</sup> and the COS. However, according to a senior resident, Hill's work was "the most interesting and best worth doing of any undertaken at the Settlement."<sup>118</sup> Hill had a branch office near the settlement, which was used by the WUS residents who managed seven courts of cottages, housing 120 families, located near Blackfriars Row. On Tuesdays, Hill came to WUS to

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<sup>112</sup>Women's University Settlement, 44, Nelson Square, Blackfriars Road, S.E., " Monthly Packet (1895): 89.

<sup>113</sup>"Women's University Settlement," 95.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>115</sup>Picht, 237.

<sup>116</sup>"Women's University Settlement," 94.

<sup>117</sup>MABYS, ICAA and CCHF were three well-established philanthropic organisations whose members raised funds and provided services for poor children. The Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants (MABYS) superintended the care of fourteen-year old girls recently discharged from Workhouses by placing them as servants in 'suitable' homes. The Invalid Children's Aid Association (ICAA) superintended the care of crippled and invalid children by supplying medicines, bandages, surgical appliances and wheelchairs; they also campaigned for the establishment of special schools. The Children's Country Holiday Foundation (CCHF) organised summer holidays in the country for children from the slums.

<sup>118</sup>"Women's University Settlement," 94.

meet the workers and to hear their reports.<sup>119</sup> Hill described the settlers to her mother:

I hope much from the link with them, and the members interest me much. They are all very refined, highly cultivated (all, I fancy, have been at one of the Universities), and very young. I feel quite a veteran among them; and they are so sweet and humble and keen to learn about the things out of their old line of experience."<sup>120</sup>

It is likely that Walker impressed Hill. Jane Lewis says that Hill, who had a shrewd sense of business, checked all her workers' books with them, which unnerved many women who felt uncomfortable about accounting, especially to Hill's meticulous standards.<sup>121</sup> Elizabeth Haldane mentions the "elaborate and excellent accounts" which Hill "caused us...to make," hinting that she could be a pernicky taskmaster: "Octavia had a very sensitive side that made her easily upset when the little things of life went wrong."<sup>122</sup> Given Walker's intellectual capacity, however, it is likely that she quickly mastered Hill's intricate methods and became a proficient collector. At any rate, Hill was sufficiently impressed to offer Walker a position. According to Meta, after Walker's return to Dundee in September 1893, she received "a letter from Miss Hill telling her about a new and important settlement established in one of the big industrial centres in England, and offering her the post of Warden."<sup>123</sup> Walker, however, turned down Hill's offer, preferring to return to Dundee.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Hill, Life, 501.

<sup>121</sup>Lewis, 65.

<sup>122</sup>Haldane, From One Century, 114-5.

<sup>123</sup>Paterson, 11.

<sup>124</sup>According to Meta, Walker, tempted to accept Hill's offer, was guided by a randomly selected passage in George Eliot's Romola, which persuaded her to return to Dundee, "to live and work among her own people" (Paterson, 12). Walker subsequently maintained contact with Hill, and when they met at an ESU conference in 1902, Hill appeared impressed by Walker's persistence with her scheme in Dundee (Hill, Letters, 36; DSU, Annual Report (1902): 2).

After her visit to WUS, Walker had gained the confidence to stand on public platforms and address DSU meetings, attempting to rouse interest in its work. In 1894, while conceding that the "binding character and weekly routine [of rent collecting] are very exacting and often irksome," she was convinced about "the value of the work" and exhorted the DSU "to grow - to get more property, fresh interests."<sup>125</sup> In 1896, she addressed the DSU at greater length, outlining the social and moral responsibilities of citizenship, which were central to her idea of the Union's work:

It is difficult to state what I believe to be the underlying principle of the Society, its motive power, the ground on which we claim your support. For it is not charity, nor...an aimless attempt to do good in a general way. It is an attempt to set forth in quiet action [the] conviction...that this busy town of Dundee does not consist of a mass of individual units, each at war with his neighbour, but of a large community whose members are bound to each other by indissoluble ties, by common interests, and to whom each member has duties and responsibilities.<sup>126</sup>

Walker's efforts, however, produced negligible results, and the work remained "in the hands of three or four harassed driven workers, who have to overtake the work of ten."<sup>127</sup> The vast majority of Dundee's middle class women remained reluctant rent collectors.

Walker's uncle, who seems to have had a constraining influence over her,<sup>128</sup> died in 1896, allowing her more freedom to choose her own path in life. At the same time, however, she was rootless, having no home of her own. Living temporarily with the female doctors in Dundee, while waiting to move into her quarters at the Women's Hospital, Walker toyed with the idea of a year's training in nursing.<sup>129</sup> She felt keenly the lack of a family; her brother, Arthur, lived as a recluse in the North of

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<sup>125</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1894): 1.

<sup>126</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1896): 17.

<sup>127</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1896): 19.

<sup>128</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44599.

<sup>129</sup>DWT Paper, MS 44656.

England, and spent the last two years of his life in a nursing home.<sup>130</sup> Walker, by contrast, had a warm, affectionate nature. In the absence of a family, Walker's friendships were very important to her, and throughout her life, she formed deep attachments to a number of women, as well as to D'Arcy Thompson.<sup>131</sup>

In September 1897, distraught over the death of a close friend, Walker resigned from the post of Superintendent, and "was tempted to give up the hope of ever convincing the leisured women of Dundee that it was worth while to keep up the work of the Social Union."<sup>132</sup> Rather than abandoning social work, however, she sought spiritual regeneration and moral support from the Grey Ladies in London. When she returned in 1899, she was wholly committed to a life of social work in Dundee. The year with the Grey Ladies was a turning point for Walker and for the course of the Union.

The change in Walker is evident in her letters to D'Arcy Thompson. Walker's letters reveal that before she went to the Grey Ladies, she had many interests and activities outside of the Social Union. She continued to register for classes at UCD in the early 1890s, and again during the 1896-7 session,<sup>133</sup> when she took a course in Practical Chemistry, and "potter[ed] along" in the Laboratory, winning the Chemistry Prize for that year.<sup>134</sup> In June 1897, she attended Patrick Geddes's lectures, which she found

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<sup>130</sup>When Arthur died in 1905, at the age of thirty-eight, only the nurse and the housekeeper were with him; he made no provision in his will for any of his relatives (DWT Papers, MS 14718; SRO ex SC/70/7/28).

<sup>131</sup>In April 1896, Walker wrote to Thompson: "But remember if ever you need one in trouble sickness or any other adversity, remember dear friend, that on my side there is the tie of a very deep affection...." (DWT Papers, MS 44656).

<sup>132</sup>Walker, "Paper Read," 2.

<sup>133</sup>UCD, Matriculation Lists.

<sup>134</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44681; UCD, Calendar (1897-98): 87.

"infinitely suggestive."<sup>135</sup> She taught a class of girls at St. Paul's Episcopal School in Dundee; tutored young women for their B.Sc. exams at St. Andrews University; and played an important role in the founding of Dundee's Private Hospital for Women.<sup>136</sup> She also enjoyed an active social life, touring the Trossachs, staying with friends in London, and continuing her annual excursion to Italy with Meta and Mrs. Peterson.<sup>137</sup> In addition, like many other late nineteenth century women, Walker discovered the bicycle. In May [1896], she wrote to Thompson: "I have got a bicycle at last...I was very courageous, I made it home on Saturday by way of Elmwood - my first real attempt on the road. I set my teeth at all the carts and the hills...."<sup>138</sup> A few months later, in August, she wrote from Kirkmichael:

I bicycled all the way up here yesterday - 32 miles - left Dundee 1:45 and reached here 7p.m. with 15 minutes in Blairgowrie for tea. Two Fidlers met me 7 miles down in case I needed to be towed in, but we came in great style and a lovely road."<sup>139</sup>

Walker's enjoyment of cycling demonstrates not only her determination but also her energy and physical strength.

By contrast, Walker's letters to Thompson after her year with the Grey Ladies are, apart from enquiries about his family,<sup>140</sup> almost exclusively concerned with DSU and Women's Hospital business.

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<sup>135</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44659, 44681.

<sup>136</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44661, 44669, 44659, 44671, 44680.

<sup>137</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44659, 44681, 44603, 44657, 44468, 44494, 44544, 44773, 44591.

<sup>138</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44680.

<sup>139</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44664.

<sup>140</sup>In 1901, Thompson had married Maureen Drury, his stepmother's niece. Upon his engagement in December 1900, Thompson had written to Walker with the news that "the old bachelor is to be a bachelor no more...I need scarcely tell you that you are the first to whom I write outside my father's house" (DWT Papers, MS 44635). Their friendship remained firm after Thompson's marriage, Walker becoming godmother to their second child, who was christened Mary Lily, but was called "Molly." (DWT Papers, MS 14724; SRO SC/45/34/26, 242; Ruth Thompson, *D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson*, passim).

As Thompson was on the executive of both organizations, Walker frequently wrote to give him instructions, ask his advice, or inform him about the latest internal wrangles.<sup>141</sup> Her later letters are hurriedly scribbled, imperfectly punctuated, and frequently signed "Yours in haste." They convey an impression of someone operating at a high pitch of intensity, completely absorbed in her work. For example, in [1905], she wrote to Thompson:

...to ask if you could come to the Annual Meeting on Thurs 29th and propose the office bearers! Mrs J Maitland is to move report. The Lord-Provost in Chair - Town Hall. I have the card[?] in proof and am just waiting to get your answer...Do try and come if possible - I shall be at Grey Lodge till 10:30 tomorrow then 356a (Public Health Office 11-12 noon  
Could you ring me.

Yours in haste  
the medical report will be in print early next week.<sup>142</sup>

In order to understand more fully this change in Walker, we must examine her association with the Grey Ladies.

## VII. Mary Lily Walker and the Grey Ladies

It is uncertain whether the College of Women Workers (commonly called the Grey Ladies) could be properly classified as a "settlement". Although Will Reason and The Englishwomen's Yearbook numbered it among their listings of settlements, Werner Picht did not include it in his directory, and Charles Booth classified it as a deaconess institution.<sup>143</sup> It was not a settlement in the strictest sense of the word because the Grey Ladies did not live "in the midst of the poor." Instead they lived in "three quaint Charles II houses, opening into one another, on the breezy heights of Blackheath Hill," from

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<sup>141</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 14733-6, 14742.

<sup>142</sup>DWT Papers, MS 14720.

<sup>143</sup>Charles Booth, 3rd. series, vol.7, 350.

which they travelled daily to the slums, returning by bus or train late at night, "to the peace and quiet of the country."<sup>144</sup>

The Grey Ladies further differed from most other women's settlements because of their affiliation to a church and not to a university. The Grey Ladies institution had been founded in 1893 by E.F.E. Yeatman and her brother, Huyshe Yeatman-Biggs, the Bishop of Southwark, specifically to support the parochial work of the clergy in the Bishop's diocese. According to Miss Yeatman, she and her brother:

saw many clergymen's wives of South London with domestic duties clamorous for them, overweighted in addition with the care of classes, meetings and Clubs, because none of the Church members were sufficiently leisured to assist them; and they also knew ladies of wealth who were sick at heart and miserable because they had nothing to do, and with only the thought of where they should go next Spring or Summer, how they should spend next month, next week to occupy their minds. To bring such ladies to help in the work of the busy South London parishes had been the aim of the Grey Ladies and the Society was set agoing and grew and grew and still grows.<sup>145</sup>

Miss Yeatman had started the Grey Ladies in 1893 with one other woman, and by the time Walker arrived in 1898, there were thirty full-time and about fifty part-time Grey Ladies to cover the twenty four parishes of South East London.<sup>146</sup>

The distinctive grey and black uniforms of the Grey Ladies also differentiated them from other women settlers. The Grey Ladies were only one of a number of communities of uniformed women, mostly sisterhoods or deaconess institutions, engaging in social work in the slums of London at this time. According to Booth:

All wear distinguishing dresses; some of which are black and nun-like, others smart

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<sup>144</sup>Mary Hirst Alexander, "Women's Settlements in London," *Temple Magazine* (1901): 310; Hodson, 139.

<sup>145</sup>*Dundee Advertiser*, 15 Oct. 1902.

<sup>146</sup>T-GED9/2327; Alexander, 310.

uniforms of various shades of grey and lavender, with collars, cuffs and bonnet strings in white, veils thrown back, and long flapping cloaks. Everywhere they may be seen going independently about their work, and they find the dress a great protection. Many are quite young women.<sup>147</sup>

The Grey Ladies, falling midway between a settlement and a sisterhood, were closest to deaconesses.<sup>148</sup>

Anglican sisterhoods had been in existence decades before settlements. Connected to the Oxford Movement of the 1840s,<sup>149</sup> sisterhoods adopted a life of prayer and worship in a community under vows, and their social work was secondary to their religious vocation. Deaconesses and Grey Ladies, on the other hand, regarded their primary function as "pastoralia" : working amongst the women and children of the parish, visiting homes, teaching classes, and organising clubs. Deaconesses, however, had a firmer attachment to the church than that of the Grey Ladies, having been "set apart by the bishop with the laying on of hands, and a permanent ministry...bestowed upon [them]."<sup>150</sup> As Booth had observed: "there are communities and institutions of every shade and shape, in doctrine as well as in dress."<sup>151</sup>

As Walker's experience with the Grey Ladies was a pivotal point in her life, her decision to go there needs close examination. The death of her friend, Madge Valentine, in August 1897 was central to her decision. Madge was the niece of Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897), the novelist. Born the same year as Walker, Madge was orphaned at age twelve, and, as a "chilly, scared, distrustful little thing" was

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<sup>147</sup>Booth, 3rd. series, vol. 7, 349; MacKenzie King also remarked upon the prevalence of uniformed ladies: "one sees these nurses and deaconesses everywhere in England and they add a pure and poetic beauty to the general scene" (*Diary*, 14 Oct. 1899).

<sup>148</sup>For the distinction between deaconesses and sisterhoods, see Brian Heeney, "Women's Struggle for Professional Work and Status in the Church of England, 1900-1930," *The Historical Journal* (1983): 332-3.

<sup>149</sup>A High Church revival movement in the Church of England; a group of Oxford clerics, dissatisfied with the decline of Church standards, moved closer to the theology of the Roman Catholic Church by stressing the importance of the priesthood and the sacraments.

<sup>150</sup>Quoted in Heeney, 333.

<sup>151</sup>Booth, 3rd. series, vol. 7, 349.



sent to school in Germany.<sup>152</sup> Their shared feelings of rootlessness may have formed the basis of their friendship. In 1893, at age 30, Madge had married William Valentine, a partner in a Dundee jute manufacturing firm, and in early August 1897, she contracted scarlet fever two days after the birth of their second child.<sup>153</sup> Walker's letters to Thompson, who was abroad at the time, poignantly described Madge's deteriorating condition and her death. Despite the contagious nature of scarlet fever, Walker visited Madge throughout her illness, telling Thompson: "I fear everybody will think me a terrible fool for going near their house, but I love her very dearly, and if one can help them at all surely one may be forgiven for running the risk."<sup>154</sup> Two weeks later, she wrote: "This is the very saddest letter in all our friendship...Madge, who for me is the incarnation of life and hope and brightness died last Friday... I loved her intensely and I hear from them all that she loved me too."<sup>155</sup> One month after Madge's death, Walker resigned from the DSU, and it was not until January 1898, that she wrote: "I am very much better... I feel for the first time the strain off and shall come home better and trust not the less able to do what one can."<sup>156</sup> Harrison points out that "personal suffering seems often to be connected with philanthropic zeal," citing the example of Josephine Butler, who plunged herself into the Contagious Diseases agitation after the death of her child.<sup>157</sup> Walker also used the therapeutic value of work to overcome grief, and pledged herself to a life of social work in Dundee.

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<sup>152</sup>Margaret Oliphant, *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant: The Complete Text*, ed. Elisabeth Jay (Oxford, 1990), 150.

<sup>153</sup>Oliphant, 171; DWT Papers, MS 44662.

<sup>154</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44662.

<sup>155</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44665.

<sup>156</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44674.

<sup>157</sup>Harrison, 362.

Walker was well aware that a life of social work, without support, could be demoralising and dispiriting. She therefore prepared herself by seeking emotional support from the Grey Ladies. She found Miss Yeatman a sympathetic warden, as she explained to Thompson in June 1898, shortly after her arrival at the Grey Ladies:

She had a long talk with me, told me how much she had had in her heart the difficulties women of leisure got into, who had no definite ties and no reason to do anything in the world. How she felt that to help them to do something systematically and to give them the support...might save them from these nervous troubles and absolute wretchedness. ...and if I stay long enough to see at what and how the ladies work and get friendly and to know them, I will feel much less isolated when I go back to Dundee and have a centre to be in touch with. This I feel quite true.<sup>158</sup>  
 ...I should have a right to come up here whenever in London - a right to expect visits from them, a right to come for advice or a little consolation if too much worried.<sup>159</sup>

Walker gained strength from being a member of a larger body.

Madge's death had also intensified Walker's search for spiritual purpose. While at the Grey Ladies in September 1898, she wrote to Anna Geddes:

It has always weighted on my conscience that the last time I saw you I said something that was not quite true... You said why had I come up here? to get more sociological experience? and I just said 'yes', and it was not quite the whole truth... I told Prof. Geddes eighteen months ago that the religious and spiritual side of things were becoming larger, and I don't know how during that terrible time a year ago, somehow the spiritual world really did come to be a fact in one's life and not to be overlooked.<sup>160</sup>

Walker went to the Grey Ladies for spiritual guidance and sustenance as well as emotional support. She wrote to Thompson: "I only see very dimly and struggle and fail and struggle again to attain and translate into life the ideal of love and fuller life that we all strive after."<sup>161</sup> According to Thompson: "the religious

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<sup>158</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44658.

<sup>159</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44673.

<sup>160</sup>T-GED9/2327.

<sup>161</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44673.

side of [her] life was deepened in the Grey Ladies' House...she lacked help and consolation, and the Grey Ladies found it for her."<sup>162</sup> Walker was a good Christian lady whose religious beliefs were strong, but quietly held. There is no evidence that she ever proselytized; the focus of her work was the alleviation of bodily suffering and not the saving of souls.

We also have to consider why Walker went to the Grey Ladies and why she did not return to WUS. Since Walker's visit in 1893, WUS had extensively developed its social work training program, especially after 1896, when representatives from WUS, the COS and the NUWW had formed the Joint Lectures Committee.<sup>163</sup> Why, then, did Walker not go to WUS where she would have benefited from the latest ideas on training? It may be argued that Walker did not return to WUS because she had rejected COS principles and practices. There was a close affiliation between WUS training and COS principles. Bernard Bosanquet, the Idealist philosopher and leading member of the COS, had delivered some of the first "elementary lectures" on the principles of social work to WUS residents.<sup>164</sup> Moreover, residents were routinely sent for training to a COS district office, where they learned "the best methods of helping cases of distress"; they listened to applicants, visited homes, checked references, and compiled dossiers to present to the COS committee, who judged the applicants' worth.<sup>165</sup> In addition, Margaret Sewell, the WUS warden and a firm believer in the efficacy of COS methods, had proposed "three months...in daily (five days a week) work at a C.O.S. office" for new students.<sup>166</sup> WUS training,

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<sup>162</sup>Thompson, *Fifty Years*, 10.

<sup>163</sup>Smith, 21.

<sup>164</sup>Sewell, "Beginnings," 27. Most women's settlements had a close connection with the COS.

<sup>165</sup>"Women's University Settlement," 90.

<sup>166</sup>Extracts from the Confidential Report of the Social Education Committee of the C.O.S.," Appendix III, in Smith, 111.

therefore, was a thorough grounding in COS principles and procedures.

It is probable that, like Alice Hodson, another former WUS resident, Walker recognised the contradictions and inadequacies of COS methods. Hodson has left us a first-hand account of WUS training. She describes the bureaucratic paralysis of the COS office where she was trained to write letters of inquiry about applicants:

As all the letters are looked over by a secretary before they go to the post, mistakes are detected; but to have a letter back to be rewritten is an awful disgrace, and one I am trying hard to avoid. Unfortunately, the treasurer sits in the office a great deal, and as he is surprisingly economical with the writing-paper, I have to tear up my spoiled sheets very quietly, so that he shall not be annoyed by so much waste. The letters are not only looked over, but also copied, and the copy is kept forever.<sup>167</sup>

The over attention to perfect clerical detail conveys the impression that the COS concentrated on casework more than on cases. Hodson also shied from interviewing COS applicants for relief:

To sit opposite a proud, sensitive man and be obliged to ask him all sorts of questions about his family, his work, his income, and debts, makes me feel hot and cold all over. The temptation to skip the difficult questions is almost irresistible, and yet one feels that unless the circumstances are recorded fully and accurately, not only will the work be incomplete and unsatisfactory, but also, at the next committee meeting, when the subject has to be fully discussed, and the case dealt with, the incompleteness of the information supplied will be obvious to every capable member present.<sup>168</sup>

It would appear that the COS intimidated their volunteers as much as their applicants. Nor was Hodson alone in her views; she describes district visitors' weekly meetings, where the vicar coordinated the activities of "the curates, the nurse, the Scripture readers, the blue ladies and the grey ladies, the ladies from the West End, and the Bible-women", who worked in his parish. According to Hodson, at these

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<sup>167</sup>Hodson, 25. Compare to the remark of Mrs Dunn Gardner: "often the Secretary will have to spend part of his afternoon in re-writing letters produced by volunteers in the morning" (quoted in Smith, 73).

<sup>168</sup>Hodson, 31.

meetings, "C.O.S. principles [were] looked upon as impossible,"<sup>169</sup> and blatantly disregarded:

At the C.O.S. we are always hearing about the evils of coal and milk tickets...and how little real help it is to give a man who is out of work a grocery ticket. Well, having digested all this...we proceed, at this meeting, to grant tickets in the most unblushing way.... It is very difficult to do nothing for [the poor] when they are cold and starving.<sup>170</sup>

The rigid adherence to COS principles precluded any chance of humane, effective action. It is highly likely that during her two months at WUS in 1893, Walker had seen enough of COS methods to convince her not to return. Moreover, the furtive disposal of error-laden letters would have run counter to her energetic personality. Walker's rejection of COS methods is important in understanding her attitude towards her social work and her subsequent development as a social reformer.

Walker's reasons for going to the Grey Ladies may have been complex, but her satisfaction at being there was clear. Walker enjoyed her year with the Grey Ladies immensely; she wrote to Anna Geddes: "I am very happy here, I love Miss Yeatman more the more I know her - she is so unselfish and good and at the same time so wise and large-minded and full of fun."<sup>171</sup> She enjoyed living in a community of women workers, and made many new friends, including Rhoda Bethell who became a lifetime friend.<sup>172</sup> She found district visiting a daunting task: "oh me what are those awful buildings in South London the outcome of - do you know Queen's Buildings in Southwark, they are my hunting ground at present, 6 or 7 stories A.B.C. block - 3000 or 4000 inhabitants - it makes one very sick at

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<sup>169</sup>Hodson, 137.

<sup>170</sup>Hodson, 142, 146.

<sup>171</sup>T-GED9/2327.

<sup>172</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44654, 44673; Paterson, 17-8; Rhoda Bethell was the primary beneficiary of Walker's will (SRO SC 45/34/26, 237-8).

heart sometimes."<sup>173</sup> Every week she taught eleven classes of girls of all age groups, and particularly enjoyed telling fairy tales and bible stories "colloquially and dramatically."<sup>174</sup> She was enthusiastic about the lectures on "sociological subjects," persuading Patrick Geddes to deliver one.<sup>175</sup> Walker even liked the Grey Lady uniform, and continued to wear it on her return to Dundee.<sup>176</sup>

It must have taken a considerable amount of courage for Walker to continue wearing the uniform, which might have been a common sight in London, but would certainly have been conspicuous in Dundee. Thompson told her about one Dundonian who displayed a "want of sympathy...with monastic institutions, anglican principles and philanthropic practices."<sup>177</sup> Indeed, Thompson himself did not initially support Walker's decision to spend a year with the Grey Ladies. He wrote to her in May 1898, before she went: "I wish to goodness you weren't going into that place"; and a few weeks later: "You and I both know that you are clinging to the old beliefs to which all those who love and sorrow cling."<sup>178</sup> Their relationship cooled during the summer months,<sup>179</sup> but by November, Thompson was reconciled to his friend's decision. He wrote: "O, my dear Lily, you seem to me to be taking the hardest step of all," but he recognised "the ideals of duty or helpfulness or loving charity" that she gained from the Grey Ladies, and reassured her that "it is really true that I have perfect faith in what you do."<sup>180</sup> She

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<sup>173</sup>T-GED9/2327.

<sup>174</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44653, 44670, 44672, 44675.

<sup>175</sup>T-GED9/2327.

<sup>176</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44673; Thompson, Fifty Years, 9-10.

<sup>177</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44610.

<sup>178</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44608, 44609.

<sup>179</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 44614-6.

<sup>180</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44620.

had received support from Reverend Simpson, the vicar of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Dundee, who told her: "it was good for you to go away for a while before appearing in your new character...a break with the past is good: you will come back to a certain extent as a different person.... Something like a discipline and training is essential, if the enthusiasm of the amateur is to be tempered with the wisdom of the professional worker."<sup>181</sup> Walker's decision had not been taken lightly, but she achieved her objective, and returned to Dundee fortified by her year with the Grey Ladies.

### VIII. Walker's Role in the DSU

Walker returned to Dundee in May 1899, with renewed energy and vigour, determined to inject life into the DSU. In December 1899, she addressed the annual meeting, assailing her listeners with a mixture of Marx and Carlyle:

A thoughtful writer remarks that...we may be divided into workers and parasites, the former class comprising those who in any way add by their activity to the output of the manifold life...and the latter, those who live on the labour, that is, the life of others. Amiable and cultured lives though they be, they are the lives of parasites... It is the merest truism to say that we women of leisure are living on the labour of others. The food we eat, the frocks we wear, are literally so much of the life of others -- for ten hours a day, week in, week out, is the bigger part of life... Work is the only legitimate end of all culture, all sensibility... And at this present time the outlet which is nearest and presents the strongest claims is undoubtedly social work.<sup>182</sup>

Walker had moved very far from the comfortable, mutual-congratulatory milieu of philanthropic societies. Walker's speech was the turning point of the DSU. As previously mentioned, there was a marked increase in Social Union memberships, volunteers, and fields of philanthropic work. From a low point of 61 members in 1899, there were 168 in 1905; 197 in 1906; and by 1913, there were 300 DSU

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<sup>181</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44648.

<sup>182</sup>Walker, "Paper read," 2-3.

members, including "120 visitors, helpers and rent collectors."<sup>183</sup> Moreover, in the late 1890s, DSU endeavour concentrated on the Housing Committee alone; by 1913, there were several areas of activity, including the Infant Visiting and Restaurant, Country Holiday and Recreation, Brabazon, Social Inquiry, and the Aid to Invalid Children Committees. By 1913, the Social Union was playing an active, integral part in the social fabric of Dundee.

Walker succeeded in stimulating interest in the Social Union, not only by the force of her personality or the power of her rhetoric, but also by directing it along new paths.<sup>184</sup> In 1901, she organised a series of lectures on social issues, inviting distinguished speakers such as May Tennant<sup>185</sup> and John Sinclair to address the Social Union.<sup>186</sup> The DSU reported that "the lectures have resulted in the growth of a wider interest in our social work, and have induced volunteers to come forward."<sup>187</sup>

Walker also transplanted two new fields of philanthropy from London to Dundee: the Invalid Children's Aid Association (ICAA) and the Brabazon Scheme. Her strategy of introducing them into Dundee was clever and effective: she hosted a public conference in October 1902, and invited guest speakers from Glasgow to talk about their experiences with the schemes. After the speeches and animated discussions, conference participants eagerly proposed two resolutions: that "the Dundee Social Union should take up the work [of the ICAA] in Dundee"; and that "the Dundee Social Union

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<sup>183</sup>Dundee Advertiser 7 Mar. 1905; 30 Mar. 1906; 1 Apr. 1913.

<sup>184</sup>The discussion in this chapter refers only to developments in the DSU until 1903.

<sup>185</sup>**May Tennant** (1869-1946) Born in Ireland, May Abraham came to London in 1887, where she became an early promoter of trade unions among women. In 1893, she was appointed the first woman factory inspector in England. Although she resigned her post in 1896, following her marriage to H.J. Tennant, Liberal M.P. and subsequent Secretary of State for Scotland, May Tennant continued to work for factory legislation.

<sup>186</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1901): 1. In 1897, John Sinclair was elected M.P. for Forfarshire, which brought him into contact with Dundee (Levitt, 49-50).

<sup>187</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1901): 2.



should...put the Brabazon Scheme in operation." Walker made sure that "papers were passed around which might be signed by all willing to become members of the Social Union."<sup>188</sup> A few weeks later, a large number of women occupied positions on two new DSU committees.<sup>189</sup> At the end of 1902, the DSU was able to report that the year's work had been "progressive and encouraging...[and] our staff of workers has been increased."<sup>190</sup> Throughout the 1890s, Walker had repeatedly failed to stimulate sufficient interest in rent collecting, but had easily succeeded in promoting the ICAA and the Brabazon scheme. While this feat is a testament to Walker's determination and organizing skills, it may also suggest that Dundee's middle class women preferred to work with handicapped children and the institutionalised elderly than to collect rent from the robust poor in their own homes.

Another explanation for the upsurge of interest in the DSU at the beginning of the century was Walker's recruitment of professional help. She was well aware that volunteer work was patchy and limited, and that to be really effective she needed trained social workers rather than part-time philanthropists. "Ladies from a distance," including Rhoda Bethell and other Grey Lady colleagues, came to Dundee "to take up the work of the Social Union."<sup>191</sup> Most of these women were career-track social workers, who would benefit from three or six months experience in Dundee before assuming more permanent positions. One woman, Miss Picot, worked as Assistant Superintendent for the DSU in 1900, before leaving to take up "active duty in South Africa on the Army Nursing Staff."<sup>192</sup> It is likely

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<sup>188</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 28 Oct. 1902.

<sup>189</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1902): 15-6.

<sup>190</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1902): 1-2.

<sup>191</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1900): 1.

<sup>192</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1900): 1.

that the experienced newcomers took over rent collecting, while the volunteer Dundonians concentrated on the Brabazon scheme and the ICAA.

## IX. Grey Lodge

Walker's need for a core of reliable, full-time workers led to the foundation of Grey Lodge Settlement House. Probably in 1903,<sup>193</sup> Walker bought Grey Lodge, a solid, stone Victorian villa, at 9 Wellington Street, situated high on a steep hill, with bracing winds and good views of the Tay Estuary. Grey Lodge was the fourth settlement house to be established in Scotland, but the first one without a connection to a university.<sup>194</sup> Most settlements were established by a corporate body, usually a church, school, university, or even an organization like the NUWW.<sup>195</sup> Walker was part of a select group of women who founded their own settlement houses. Mary Ward had been the driving force behind the Passmore Edwards Settlement in 1896; and Violet Markham had founded the Chesterfield Women's Settlement in 1902.<sup>196</sup> Grey Lodge was entirely the brainchild of Walker. Although she owned the house, she realised that she needed the co-operation of an institution like the DSU for funds and volunteers.<sup>197</sup> Walker presented a proposal to the DSU outlining "the work already undertaken by the

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<sup>193</sup>There are no DSU records for the period 1902-06; only one document remains of Grey Lodge's early days.

<sup>194</sup>The forerunners were: New College Settlement, Edinburgh (1889); Glasgow University Students' Settlement (1889); and Queen Margaret Settlement, Glasgow (1897); a fifth one, Edinburgh University Settlement followed in 1905 (Picht, 240-4). By 1914, there were five settlements in Scotland, compared to thirty-nine in England; four out of the five Scottish settlements were connected to a university, whereas in England, the ratio was one in three (Picht, 99, 102).

<sup>195</sup>The Birmingham Women's Settlement and the Victoria Women's Settlement in Liverpool were both established by the NUWW (Cecile M. Matheson, "Birmingham Women's Settlement," *COR* (1915): 24; Emily Simey, 61).

<sup>196</sup>Picht, 226-7, 213.

<sup>197</sup>Vicinus points out that all settlements were linked to an institution (Vicinus, 223).

DSU," and setting forward her idea of "Grey Lodge":

I am quite willing to undertake the responsibility of this as a social settlement if the Social Union agree to find the salaries for two paid workers - at a salary of £100 each, that is £50 to Grey Lodge for residence and £50 beyond; so that each lady would be offered board and residence and £50.

Excluding rent I find that the house can be managed for £200 with four residents. I would contribute the £100 and have a student, who would come for training if she had board and residence. If voluntary workers came the charge would be a £1.1 a week; but my experience is one cannot depend on them.

In this way we would really be four workers and I would be able to give my time to supervision and training instead of being overburdened with detail.

... Without some such support and response I cannot continue.<sup>198</sup>

Walker ensured that she would retain control of Grey Lodge affairs by including in her proposal: "It would be however a rule that no work should be undertaken, no class started without [my (deleted)] consultation and permission, and for this part I should like a small advisory committee."<sup>199</sup> This allowed Walker much more autonomy than other settlement wardens, almost all of whom were accountable to a governing Committee, which often lead to conflict and sudden resignations. In 1901, both Margaret Sewell and Kay Bannatyne, the acting Warden, resigned at the same time from WUS.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, both Alice Crompton and T.R. Marr, the head wardens of the Manchester University Settlement, suddenly departed in 1907. The sudden loss of leadership had an adverse effect on the activities and morale of the settlement.<sup>201</sup> According to Will Reason, a permanent resident head with "sufficient powers" was essential to provide continuity of work and to gain the respect and confidence of the district.<sup>202</sup> Walker's

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<sup>198</sup>M.L. Walker, "The Work already undertaken by the D.S.U.," paper in GD/OC/GL 4/6/5, in Dundee City Archives.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid.

<sup>200</sup>"Editorial notes," *COR* (1901): 67.

<sup>201</sup>Stocks, 37-42.

<sup>202</sup>Reason, 98-9.

autonomous position at Grey Lodge was conducive to dynamic initiative. Walker, however, was not completely unconstricted in her work. As there was a great divergence of opinion within the DSU, Walker had to be diplomatic in order to keep her financial network intact. There is no evidence that she ever again lectured Dundee's middle class women on their parasitical tendencies.

Although Grey Lodge became "the centre" for DSU social work, it was as a home for social workers rather than as a gathering place for the poor. By establishing Grey Lodge, Walker was fulfilling an objective she had had since Grey Ladies, when she had written to Thompson: "Though you may laugh and think it very conceited, I think if one could be brave and unselfish enough, one might make a very real home and help...the struggling 'gentle' girls and women."<sup>203</sup> In Grey Lodge, Walker made her home among other women, creating her own family-like environment.

We have seen that in philanthropic societies, early enthusiasm quickly dissipated as volunteers decamped and committees dissolved. A strong individual was necessary to inject a sense of purpose and bind the society together. Walker performed that role in the DSU; without her, it would either have faded into oblivion, or become a mere shadow, preserving the form of a philanthropic society, but performing no real function. In 1907, Isobel Carlaw-Martin, a member of the Dundee School Board and of the DSU, while giving evidence to the Poor Law Commissioners along with Walker, told them:

Miss Walker is very modest in what she said about the Social Union. She really started it herself, and she has found it uphill work in getting workers. She has now educated public opinion to a certain extent, and we have a larger body of workers than we have ever had.<sup>204</sup>

In the DSU, men were the figureheads, but Mary Lily Walker was the leader. Walker's thinking had progressed considerably during the 1890s. At the beginning of the decade, she had followed Octavia

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<sup>203</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44658.

<sup>204</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Carlaw-Martin, Q63438.

Hill's method of house management as the route to social reform;<sup>205</sup> by the end of the decade, she wrote to Anna Geddes: "I know you will agree with me that we cannot change the fate of a man entirely by improving his dwelling! at least I have found it so!"<sup>206</sup> Although the DSU Housing Committee continued to function, Walker extended her activities into other areas. With her nucleus of workers in Grey Lodge, aided by the financial support and a growing body of volunteers in the DSU, Walker forged ahead with innovative plans for maternal and child welfare in Dundee.

## X. Cui bono?

In 1902, E.J. Urwick criticised the evolution of the settlement house movement, complaining that settlers had wandered far from "the original Settlement idea," that they were too concerned with activities, numbers and results, too preoccupied with doing impressive good works.<sup>207</sup> Ninety years later, how can we assess settlements? What were the achievements of the "give not money, but yourselves" mentality which gripped so many earnest individuals at the end of the nineteenth century? It is probably fair to say that settlements brought some education, entertainment, and "small comforts" to a "tiny" percentage of the urban poor.<sup>208</sup> However, as Vicinus points out, the benefits to educated, single, middle class women were considerable: "[they] found scope for their talents, satisfaction for their ambitions, friendship among equals, and a cause greater than themselves."<sup>209</sup> Indeed, a theme running consistently through philanthropic literature emphasised the benefits that settlements conferred to the

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<sup>205</sup>DSU, Annual Report (1893): 2.

<sup>206</sup>T-GED9/2327.

<sup>207</sup>Urwick, "The Settlement Ideal," *passim*.

<sup>208</sup>See Abel, 619.

<sup>209</sup>Vicinus, 231.

middle class themselves. Settlement life was deemed to be 'good for you': your life took on new interest; by doing good, you became a better person. One woman wrote in a periodical:

If anyone is suffering from too much leisure, from ennui and boredom, let her come and ask a Settlement for a share in some of its work. It is absorbingly interesting. Let those who want to get away from self, from sad thoughts, from the numbing effects of a great sorrow, come and try it --they will achieve the inestimable boon of a new interest in life.<sup>210</sup>

There are many other examples of the self-conscious pursuit of self-improvement: Mrs. Hirst Alexander explained that, after living in a settlement, "all life has become richer, fuller, deeper";<sup>211</sup> MacKenzie King believed that his stay at Passmore Edwards would "fit me better for a life of greater usefulness";<sup>212</sup> and Margot Asquith, trying to inveigle a factory manager into letting her run a girls' club among his workers, told him: "I was not thinking of them. I am so very unhappy myself."<sup>213</sup>

There are also signs of broader benefit. It may be suggested that, through their settlement house experience, some settlers reached a better understanding of the working class. The Victorian middle class viewed the poor not as people, but as "a race apart."<sup>214</sup> In 1938, D'Arcy Thompson explained the prevailing view of late Victorians:

...it is none too easy nowadays to understand. Class distinctions were so rooted in Victorian minds that even good and kindly people spoke of the poor, or the "people in shops," as though they were a different race of beings to themselves.<sup>215</sup>

By living among the poor, middle class settlers came to recognize the working class as fellow human

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<sup>210</sup>"Life at a Women's University Settlement," Temple Bar 125 (1902):457-8.

<sup>211</sup>Alexander, 310.

<sup>212</sup>Diary of MacKenzie King, 8 Feb. 1900.

<sup>213</sup>Asquith, 41.

<sup>214</sup>Gilbert, 21.

<sup>215</sup>Thompson, Fifty Years, 7.

beings. Alice Hodson, whose early impressions of working class life centred on drink, gossip, and "indescribable" dirt;<sup>216</sup> assessed her year with WUS:

What [did] we learn?...To us the poor and the working people are no longer an unknown quantity.... We find among them the same faults and defects which are sometimes spoken of as the special property of the rich. There is the same extravagance and love of display...and a puzzling number of class distinctions. On the other hand, we know how many working-class fathers and mothers are just as thoughtful and concerned for the welfare of their children as those who are better educated. We see what a clever wife of a working man can do...how hard she works, and how well she manages.... We have seen her fight for her baby's life with the same skill and devotion as our friends fight for theirs.<sup>217</sup>

The views of Samuel Barnett, the father of the settlement house movement, also changed. Although Barnett had been one of the founders of the COS in 1869, his years of living in close quarters with the poor had alerted him to the disjunction between COS philosophy and working class reality. In 1883, he strongly condemned thrift, one of the cardinal tenets of the COS:

By self-denial, by abstinence from drink, by daily toil, he and his wife are able to feed and clothe the children. Pleasure for him and for his is impossible; he cannot afford to spend a sixpence on a visit to the park, nor a penny on a newspaper or a book.... The saddest monument is that erected to Thrift--'the respectable working man.' His brains...have been spent in saving pennies; his life, which might have been happy and full, has been dulled and saddened by taking 'thought for the morrow.'<sup>218</sup>

Barnett broke with the COS, supported Booth's call for old age pensions, and asked "Why should not the State provide what is needed?"<sup>219</sup> By "giving themselves and not money," Barnett and other settlers reached a better understanding of the working class which contributed towards a new view of the poor that paved the way for the social legislation of the early 1900s.

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<sup>216</sup>Hodson, 14-6.

<sup>217</sup>Hodson, 260-1.

<sup>218</sup>Samuel Barnett, "Practicable Socialism," *The Nineteenth Century* (1883): 554-5.

<sup>219</sup>Barnett, "Practicable Socialism," 555.

### Chapter 3: THE NEW PHILANTHROPY

#### I. From Private Philanthropy to State Intervention

The first decade of the twentieth century was a period of transition from the voluntary philanthropic work of the nineteenth century to the increasing intervention of the state in the lives of the poor. One of the reasons for the transition was a heightened public awareness of the condition of the poor, much of which stemmed from Charles Booth's seventeen-volume Life and Labour of the People in London (1889-1903). Booth had embarked on his investigation into working class life in order to refute the claim of H.M. Hyndman, leader of the newly-formed Social Democratic Federation, that one quarter of the population was destitute. As no reliable data existed, Booth undertook to discover the facts by financing his own sociological study.<sup>1</sup> Life and Labour revealed that poverty was more extensive than previously supposed, even by Hyndman: 30% of the population of the world's richest city were living in grinding poverty. One contemporary was surprised to discover from Booth's study "that so many thousands of men apply daily for work at the dock gates and fail to get it...that there are tens of thousands of men in London out of employment, men who would be willing to work."<sup>2</sup> Booth's survey not only raised public awareness, it also focused attention on the conditions of poverty rather than on the character of the poor.

Reformers began to realize that poverty was so widespread and complex that the resources of the state were needed to tackle the situation. Booth himself called "for the State to nurse the helpless

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<sup>1</sup>Norman MacKenzie, Introduction to My Apprenticeship, by Beatrice Webb, xxxiv-xxxv. Gertrude Himmelfarb questions the Hyndman connection, suggesting that it was the 1885 Mansion House Committee which aroused Booth's interest (Himmelfarb, Poverty, 90-2).

<sup>2</sup>Alden, 84.



and incompetent as we in our own families nurse the old, the young, and the sick, and provide for those who are not competent to provide for themselves."<sup>3</sup> His concern for the elderly led him to suggest that the state provide "non-contributory, universal old-age pensions, given as of right."<sup>4</sup> The Royal Commission on the Aged Poor (1893-4) set the ideological battle lines of the self-help versus state help debate between the "two great camps":

the one camp says poverty is in the main due to the failure of the individual, and for its cure we must look to the regeneration of the individual. The other camp declares that poverty is in the main of social creation, and must be remedied by the collective action of the community.<sup>5</sup>

On one side, Octavia Hill and C.S. Loch, the Secretary of the COS, "held high the banner of individualism,"<sup>6</sup> stoutly defending the precepts of the COS with their firm belief that state provision of welfare would weaken individual responsibility. On the other side, Booth, Barnett, and the Fabians were aligned with the economist Alfred Marshall, who told the Commission that "poverty ought to be regarded, not indeed as a crime, but as a thing so detrimental to the State that it should not be endured."<sup>7</sup> The individualism of the nineteenth century was under attack, and the radical notion of state intervention was gathering force.

In 1902, Seebohm Rowntree's social investigation of York, Poverty: a Study of Town Life, further revealed the precariousness of working class life. According to Rowntree, those on the "poverty line" lived at bare subsistence level: with no reserves to fall back upon, a week's unemployment could

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Webb, 254.

<sup>4</sup>Webb, 255.

<sup>5</sup>"Miss Markham on the C.O.S.," COR (1912): 129.

<sup>6</sup>Owen, 508.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Owen, 509.

mean destitution; and even by practising the most stringent economy, wages were inadequate to ensure a minimum standard of good health. Rowntree surmised that "every labourer who has as many as three children must pass through a time, probably lasting for about ten years, when he will be in a state of 'primary' poverty; in other words, when he and his family will be underfed."<sup>8</sup> Booth welcomed Rowntree's survey, stating that it reinforced his own findings to show that "a more or less uniform standard of poverty in connection with industrial life exists throughout the whole English urban population."<sup>9</sup> The COS, on the other hand, bridled at Rowntree's disclosures. Helen Bosanquet, calling them "valueless," "incomplete," and "misleading," insisted that Rowntree had "obviously exaggerated the intensity of poverty" with his "picturesque way of talking."<sup>10</sup> Booth's and Rowntree's surveys, however, had clearly shown that the majority of the poor were not responsible for their own poverty; the tone of public discussion increasingly shifted from the character of the individual to the condition of his environment.

The impetus for state intervention received a boost from the South African War (1899-1902), which made social reform "imperative."<sup>11</sup> By revealing the pitiful physical condition of many working class recruits, the war focused national attention on 'the deterioration of the race.' The reports of two government commissions, the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland) (1903), and the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904) provided further evidence of the relationship between poverty and physical decline.<sup>12</sup> The wellbeing of the working class became a

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<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Helen Bosanquet, "The 'Poverty Line,'" COR (1903): 22.

<sup>9</sup>Booth, final volume, 28.

<sup>10</sup>Bosanquet, 13, 14, 18, 21.

<sup>11</sup>Gilbert, 58.

<sup>12</sup>Gilbert, 88-90.

matter of national concern; according to Bentley Gilbert, "social reform had become an inevitable concomitant of national greatness."<sup>13</sup> The attention of reformers increasingly focussed on the health of the child, and throughout Britain, children were weighed, measured, investigated, medically inspected and fed.<sup>14</sup>

Various Socialist ideas had been gaining ground in Britain since the 1880s, and by the beginning of the century, the new Labour Party was contributing to the state intervention debate with its view that public assistance was a right and not a charity. Nevertheless, it was the Liberals, traditionally the party of 'laissez-faire' but increasingly finding the nineteenth century Gladstonian view of minimal state intervention politically untenable, who introduced welfare reforms. While Bentley Gilbert makes the point that social welfare reforms were "politically profitable' for the Liberals,<sup>15</sup> Peter Clarke points to the theory which accompanied the pragmatism. The New Liberal theorists, Graham Wallas (1858-1932), J.A. Hobson (1858-1940), L.T. Hobhouse (1864-1929), and J.L. Hammond (1872-1949), aware of the abuses of capitalism, wanted its benefits to be more equitably distributed across society. They saw the state as an agency for improvement and advocated a policy of state action for the collective good.<sup>16</sup> Between 1906-1911, the Liberals ushered in a period of unprecedented social welfare legislation, which permitted school meals and medical inspection of children, provided pensions for the elderly, labour exchanges for the unemployed, national and health insurance for selected categories of workers, and maternity benefits for some women. The Liberals had established the

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<sup>13</sup>Gilbert, 87.

<sup>14</sup>For a discussion of the infant welfare movement at the beginning of the century, and for the relation between the child, the family and the state, see Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," History Workshop Journal (1978): 9-65.

<sup>15</sup>Gilbert, 95.

<sup>16</sup>Clarke, ch. 1.

framework for the welfare state.

Welfare reforms signalled the end of some philanthropic activity as state agencies began to take over the work of many societies. However, private philanthropy continued to play an important role as the government encouraged local authorities to utilize the resources and services of voluntary organizations. There was a transitional period of close interaction between the activities of voluntary organizations and those of municipal and state authorities, which later became known as "the new philanthropy" : "a unique partnership between the voluntary sector and the state."<sup>17</sup> Settlements were intimately connected to the new philanthropy: they pioneered social welfare reforms, principally in the field of infant and child welfare, which were later taken over by the state; and their social workers were frequently drafted onto statutory committees to help implement new social welfare legislation.

Mary Lily Walker played an active part both in voluntary organizations and on statutory committees, and therefore provides a good example of a "new philanthropist." Walker retained her faith in the value of personal service with the poor, while advocating that the state should be involved in improving the welfare of its citizens. Walker was motivated by her notion of citizenship, which was central to her ideas of social work; she believed the middle class had a civic duty to intervene in the lives of their poorer townsfolk, and unlike the COS, she firmly supported state intervention. Through his study of the Bradford Guild of Help, Michael Moore shows that at the beginning of the twentieth century new philanthropic agencies were breaking away from the "philanthropic mold" of the COS, advocating state sponsored social welfare, and urging the cooperation between voluntary organisations and local authorities.<sup>18</sup> Walker's framework for Grey Lodge included her willingness to work alongside local

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<sup>17</sup>According to Jane Lewis, Elizabeth MacAdam coined the phrase in The New Philanthropy: A Study of the Relationships between the Statutory and Voluntary Social Services (London, 1934) (Lewis, 281).

<sup>18</sup>Moore, 86.

authorities. She had written in her "Scheme of Work" that the objective of Grey Lodge would be:

...to strengthen the hands of existing agencies...to work with

- I. The Public Health
- II. The School Board
- III. The Poor-law.<sup>19</sup>

As far back as 1903, Walker had envisaged a partnership between Grey Lodge and the municipal authorities.

The remainder of this thesis examines Walker's role in the new philanthropy, 1900-1913. A study of her work allows us to examine the interrelationship between the voluntary and state sectors; to reflect upon the early twentieth century debate over state intervention; and to consider the role of women in the development of social welfare programs. Chapter Three concentrates on Walker's work in connection with voluntary organizations: the DSU and Grey Lodge. Chapter Four will examine her role on statutory committees.

## II. DSU Report

The work of Booth and Rowntree inspired other social surveys, including the DSU's Report on Housing and Industrial Conditions and Medical Inspection of School Children. In the summer of 1904, members of the DSU formed a Social Enquiry Committee to conduct a sociological investigation of Dundee.<sup>20</sup> The Committee provides a good example of collaboration between a voluntary organization and civic authorities; it included D'Arcy Thompson and other representatives from the DSU, as well as

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<sup>19</sup>Walker, "The Work already undertaken."

<sup>20</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 1 Mar. 1905; as there are no surviving records for the DSU, 1902-1906, we cannot know for certain the origins of the Social Enquiry Committee.

members of the Parish Council<sup>21</sup> and the School Board, the ex-convenor of the Sanitary Committee of the Town Council, and Dundee's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Charles Templeman.<sup>22</sup> Although the Committee had some control over the finished version of the DSU Report, it took no part in its research and writing, entrusting "the direction and oversight of the whole enquiry...to two ladies": Lily Walker and Mona Wilson from London.<sup>23</sup>

Before beginning the Report, the Committee had consulted Booth and Rowntree, who advised them to employ "experienced hands" rather than rely upon "amateur assistance."<sup>24</sup> In hiring Mona Wilson (1872-?) as the Superintendent of Enquiry, the Committee had chosen well. At age thirty-two, Wilson was already an "experienced hand" with an impressive list of credentials. An early expert in workplace legislation, she had specialised in explaining complex laws in layman's terms, primarily for the enlightenment of social workers and others who wanted to advise industrial workers on their legal rights.<sup>25</sup> After a period as Secretary of the Industrial Law Committee in 1900, Wilson had worked for the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) before coming to Dundee in 1904.<sup>26</sup> Other professionals

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<sup>21</sup>In Scotland, Parish Councils were local bodies elected to administer the Poor Law.

<sup>22</sup>DSU Report, 4; Dundee Advertiser, 1 Mar. 1905.

<sup>23</sup>DSU Report, vii; there was one exception: Dr Templeman was both a Committee member and a contributor to the Report.

<sup>24</sup>DSU Report, vi-vii.

<sup>25</sup>Mona Wilson, "Employers' Liability and Workmen's Compensation," Westminster Review 149 (1898): 194-203; "Factories and Workshops," in Good Citizenship, ed. J.E. Hand (New York, 1899), 186-217; Our Industrial Laws: Working Women in Factories, Workshops, Shops and Laundries, and How to Help Them (London, 1899).

<sup>26</sup>Mackenzie King once met Mona Wilson at the WTUL; he described her as "rather an interesting person, a girl with a languid, sad yet sort of beautiful and bright expression on her face" (Diary, 9 Jan. 1900, Trans. 14). After Dundee, Mona Wilson had an illustrious career, first as the co-author of West Ham: A Study in Social and Industrial Problems (London, 1907) and later as a civil servant. In her retirement, she became a distinguished literary critic. One of Walker's closest friends, Wilson went for "a long tramp in the Tyrol" with her in the spring before her death (Paterson, 17).

aided Walker and Wilson with the production of the Report: five local physicians conducted medical examinations of school children and wrote reports; Dr. W.Leslie MacKenzie, the Medical Officer of Scotland's Local Government Board, advised them on the new practice of school medical examinations; Jesse Argyle, Booth's Secretary, proofread Walker and Wilson's chapters; Clara Collet, from the Board of Trade in London, gave advice;<sup>27</sup> and four women, who held the certificate of the Incorporated Sanitary Association of Scotland, assisted with the house-to-house visitation.<sup>28</sup> The greater part of the work, however, was undertaken by Walker and Wilson, who "laboured untiringly" as the principal writers and researchers.<sup>29</sup>

Walker not only researched and co-authored the Report, she also raised the funds to finance it. Booth and Rowntree, both wealthy men, had financed their surveys themselves. In Dundee, the Social Enquiry Committee had to raise subscriptions to cover the cost of the investigation and printing.<sup>30</sup> Walker resented having to spend time raising funds instead of writing; she complained privately to Thompson:

We are quite penniless! and I do want the Committee to remember that this has overworked us dreadfully. Out of the £500 raised, the Committee only raised a portion Mr MacKay got Mr Armistead's £100 and Mr Ogilvie Miss Symer's £50 - but all these £5 I

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<sup>27</sup>DSU Report, xvi; Collet had experience with conditions in Dundee, having written about women jute workers in an 1898 report for the Labour Department of the Board of Trade (The Times, 21 Apr. 1898). She had also assisted Booth in his work, and had written some parts of Life and Labour. Privately, Walker found Collet's advice a burden; she wrote to Thompson: "Further, we have to remember Miss Collet...for whose benefit we have to qualify every sentence.... I shall show you Miss Collet's remarks when I see you - she for instance refused to accept the statement that..."(DWT Papers, MS 14722).

<sup>28</sup>DSU Report, 4.

<sup>29</sup>DSU Report, xvi.

<sup>30</sup>The Report cost £618; by March 1906, they had raised £545 by subscription, and £55 from the sale of copies, with £16 remaining to be collected. Of the 1000 copies printed, only 125 remained unsold after six months (Dundee Advertiser, 30 Mar. 1906).

had to beg for with extraordinary work.

Fund-raising was not the only point of conflict between Walker and the Committee, and she vented further complaints to Thompson:

I do not think you realize the difficulty of the job - we have understaffed (sic) all along were told distinctly by the Committee that we must simply curtail our work. This means that the last month Miss Wilson and I have been wrestling through tabulations etc. when we ought to have been quite free for the writing Our directions were no opinion only above statement of fact - and give numbers.... It seems to me that the most we can hope under these conditions is to present results in a form that cannot be discredited.<sup>31</sup>

Walker and Wilson were both working under great pressure to complete the Report. Wilson later remembered "the strenuous year of the Dundee Social Union Enquiry [and] the various crises and perplexities which assailed us,"<sup>32</sup> while Walker wrote to Thompson when the Report was nearing completion: "now this report is practically off I hope to become human once more."<sup>33</sup>

Despite the difficulties and strains, Walker and Wilson nevertheless produced an impressive document. The DSU Report was issued in two parts; the first part, the Medical Inspection of School Children, was published as a separate pamphlet in February 1905. In keeping with the contemporary scientific analysis of poverty, Walker and Wilson used the British Association's Anthropometric Tables to compare the height, weight and general health of school children of the same age belonging to different social classes.<sup>34</sup> The results showed that there were "wide differences" between schools, with "large numbers of badly nourished and undersized children" in the poorer schools of Dundee.<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>31</sup>DWT Papers, MS 14722.

<sup>32</sup>Paterson, 17.

<sup>33</sup>DWT Papers, MS 14729.

<sup>34</sup>DSU Report, 92.

<sup>35</sup>DSU Report, 110, Tables I - XVI.



Medical Inspection also attacked the system of "half-timers" whereby the School Board granted exemption from school to children of twelve and thirteen years to allow them to work in factories for ten hours a day, and then "rigidly enforced" their attendance at school for two hours a night, four evenings a week. Although the investigators were not allowed to examine the children in Dundee's two exemption schools, they believed that "no examination or special knowledge was required to perceive that a number of the children were in a condition of great physical exhaustion."<sup>36</sup>

In September 1905, the second part was completed and the Report was issued in its entirety as the Report on Housing and Industrial Conditions and Medical Inspection of School Children. The new part contained Walker and Wilson's chapters on "Housing Conditions," "Family Income and Expenditure," "Employment and Wages," and "Women's Labour and Infant Mortality." The chapter on housing contained shocking descriptions of overcrowding and lack of sanitation, revealing that many homes had neither bathrooms nor running water, and in some houses "refuse of every kind was kept all day and put out in a 'bucket' at night."<sup>37</sup> The most disturbing chapter, however, was the one on women's labour and infant mortality. Using the 1901 Census, Walker and Wilson showed that Dundee had the highest percentage of wage-earning females, the highest rate of illegitimate births, and by far the highest infant mortality rate of all large Scottish towns. They believed that the employment of women a few weeks after child-birth contributed to Dundee's staggeringly high infant mortality rate.<sup>38</sup> Walker and Wilson recognised that Dundee women worked "from pressure of poverty," and that their daily earnings were "of vital importance." They also recognised that manufacturers regarded married women's work

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<sup>36</sup>DSU Report, 94.

<sup>37</sup>DSU Report, 16.

<sup>38</sup>DSU Report, 65-9.

as "indispensable." They therefore suggested that, as a "channel for [their] charity," manufacturers should institute "some system of assisted insurance to enable these women to stay at home for a certain period after child-birth."<sup>39</sup> Walker and Wilson's suggestion, although far-sighted, was hardly feasible. Dundee's jute manufacturers were not renowned for a paternalistic attitude towards their female workforce and were unlikely to provide maternity insurance benefits.<sup>40</sup>

### III. The Achievements of the DSU Report

The aim of the DSU Report had been to expose conditions of working class life in Dundee in order to shake middle class complacency and to prod local authorities into taking informed action.<sup>41</sup> This aim was in accordance with Booth's original design, which was "solely, to observe and chronicle the actual, leaving remedies to others," and to "impress upon the authorities the necessity of some sweeping change."<sup>42</sup> The DSU Report also followed the pattern of development of settlement house work. Emily Abel has shown that in Toynbee Hall, especially after the appointment of W.H. Beveridge as sub-warden in 1903, there was a shift in focus from the educational and cultural programs of the 1880s and 1890s to the social investigations of the early twentieth century. Reformers now wanted to improve society by conducting social research and analysis, which they hoped would prompt the government to enact

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<sup>39</sup>DSU Report, 71-2.

<sup>40</sup>Some jute manufacturers refused even to provide sufficient toilet facilities for their women workers. See correspondence between Cox Brothers and Miss Vines, Senior Lady Inspector of Factories for Scotland, regarding the provision of "sanitary conveniences for women and girls" at Cox's Camperdown Works, Lochee. On 17 November 1910, Miss Vines wrote: "When I visited your Works in December 1909 there were 2266 women and girls employed, but only 49 conveniences, the additional number needed is 42.... When revisiting I found that very little indeed had been done to bring the existing conveniences into compliance with the Law" (MS 66/II/10/40, Dundee University Library).

<sup>41</sup>DSU Report, vii, ix.

<sup>42</sup>Booth, final volume, 215; 36.

social legislation.<sup>43</sup> We will assess the achievements of the DSU Report by examining the extent to which it caught middle class attention, stimulated local government action, and influenced national legislation.

The DSU Report succeeded in drawing middle class attention to the circumstances of working class life. One Scot recorded on the flyleaf of his/her copy: "An admirable Report. It is astonishing to find such deplorable conditions existing in Scotland in the 20th. century. e.g. 215 persons, one privy."<sup>44</sup> In Dundee's local press, the DSU Report became a point of heated discussion. In February, the Advertiser responded to the Medical Inspection of School Children with a three-column coverage and sensational headlines: "The Degenerate Bairns," "A Startling Medical Indictment," "Diseased and Defective Scholars."<sup>45</sup> Within a few days, however, the press had focussed on minor details, noting, for example, that "the part of the report which has attracted most attention is the practice of children being sewed up in their clothes."<sup>46</sup> (While undressing the children for their medical examination, investigators had noted that there were "three classes" of children's clothes: "sewn up...pinned on, and...fastened with buttons or strings."<sup>47</sup> Similarly, attention was paid to the high incidence of eyestrain among girls, which launched a lively debate in the press on "the evils of microscopic sewing" taught in schools.<sup>48</sup> Public discussion tended to concentrate on trivialities and to ignore the graver issues raised by the Report.

Some Dundonians misinterpreted the Report, failing to see its point. Clutching to late nineteenth

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<sup>43</sup>Abel, 622-7.

<sup>44</sup>Inscription on the copy of the DSU Report in the library of Northwestern University.

<sup>45</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 20 Feb. 1905.

<sup>46</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 21 Feb. 1905.

<sup>47</sup>DSU Report, 91.

<sup>48</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 21 Feb.; 28 Feb.; 1 Mar.; 7 Mar. 1905.

century parlance, they rationalized the condition of poor children by employing the well-worn, stock phrases of "neglectful mothers" and "improperly cooked food." According to one observer: "it was neglect on the part of the working mother that was to blame; while, as regarded feeding, it was often the lack of proper food rather than the absence of food altogether...."<sup>49</sup> By using easy platitudes, they denied the seriousness of grinding poverty. Despite the DSU Report's carefully tabulated results and clear, objective commentary linking poverty and poor physical development, people continued to blame "lazy, ignorant" working class mothers for the sorry state of their children's health.

Public criticism was directed not only at working class mothers for their poor parenting skills, but also at the DSU for producing its Report as "some looked on [it] as an opprobrium upon the city."<sup>50</sup> A Dundee Courier editorial recoiled from Walker and Wilson's suggestion that jute manufacturers provide maternity insurance for their female workers; they counterattacked with their own solution, having identified Dundee's working class man as the root of the problem:

Undeterred by his gloomy prospects he marries, and becomes partially or solely dependent upon the wages earned by his wife. His future misery is the result of his own actions, and it would be as reasonable to compel him to remain a bachelor until he is in receipt of a living wage for two or more persons as it would be to compel his wife's employer to make provision for the matrimonial inconveniences to which she is naturally subject.<sup>51</sup>

According to Mary Paterson,<sup>52</sup> in response to the "flood of local criticism and abuse" directed at the

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<sup>49</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 1 Mar. 1905.

<sup>50</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 30 Mar. 1906.

<sup>51</sup>Dundee Courier, 22 Sept. 1905.

<sup>52</sup>**Mary Muirhead Paterson** (1864- ?) One of the first two women factory inspectors in Britain (the other was May Tennant), Paterson first met Walker in 1897 when she came to Dundee to investigate the working conditions of women. In 1912, she was appointed the female member of the National Health Insurance Commission (Scotland) which had been formed to implement the new National Insurance Act. (SRO, HH3/2, National Health Insurance Commission (Scotland) Establishment Record). See also Adelaide Mary Anderson, Women in the Factory (London, 1922), passim.

Report, Walker "held on her way answering only by the simple question, 'Are the statements true?'"<sup>53</sup> Dundonians might resent the DSU Report's bleak portrayal of their city, but they could not dispute its accuracy.

Did the Report achieve its aim of prodding local authorities to take action? By exposing the pitiful condition of many of Dundee's children, Walker and Wilson had hoped that the Dundee School Board would take an interest in the physical as well as the educational development of the children under their jurisdiction, although they noted that it had "no plans" to do so.<sup>54</sup> The Advertiser also expected action from the School Board, pointing out that "the School authorities already possess powers of which apparently they make no excessive use."<sup>55</sup> The School Board, however, responded to the expectations of the Social Union and the local newspaper with a series of procrastinating decisions. At a meeting on 27 February 1905, they "agreed to consider the Report at the next meeting"; on 6 March, they instructed the Clerk "to procure and send to each member a copy of the Report"; and on 13 March, they decided "to adjourn further consideration thereof."<sup>56</sup> On 5 June, the matter resurfaced and once more the Board agreed to "take up this Report at the next meeting"; on 12 June, they appointed a Sub-Committee to prepare a report on the Report; and on 23 June, after discussion, they "deferred taking any action thereupon until the issue of Part II of the Report."<sup>57</sup> However, as Part II of the Report made no further

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<sup>53</sup>Paterson, [5-6].

<sup>54</sup>DSU Report, 91-2.

<sup>55</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 20 Feb. 1905.

<sup>56</sup>Dundee School Board Minutes (hereafter DSBM), in Dundee City Archives, 27 Feb. 1905; 6 Mar. 1905; 13 Mar. 1905.

<sup>57</sup>DSBM, 5 June 1905; 12 June 1905; 23 June 1905.

reference to the condition of school children, the Board felt no further need to discuss it.<sup>58</sup> At the School Board, the DSU Report was not ignored, but conveniently forgotten.<sup>59</sup>

The Town Council's response to the DSU Report was rather brisker than that of the School Board. Its Public Health Committee agreed that it "should lose no time in investigating the matters dealt with in the Report," and called a special meeting "at an early date" to discuss it.<sup>60</sup> Dundee's Inspector of Cleansing, Medical Officer of Health, and Sanitary Inspector drew up detailed reports and Council implemented a number of measures, including an improved system of removal of household waste, the paving and draining of courts, and the installation of a number of water-closets, washing-houses, and new ashpits.<sup>61</sup> The Town Council, however, did not undertake the clearing of slum properties, although it was empowered to do so under existing legislation. Nor did the Council plan to build new working class houses, although some Dundonians had been agitating on the issue since at least 1901. By pointing to Dundee's large number of unlet houses, the Council satisfied itself that further building was unnecessary.<sup>62</sup>

Criticized in the local press, "forgotten" by the School Board, and achieving only small measures of success with the Town Council, the DSU Report nevertheless was used as "grist to the mill of social

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<sup>58</sup>There is no evidence in the School Board records to indicate further discussion.

<sup>59</sup>When we examine the social composition of the Board, we find that, out of fifteen members, five were Protestant ministers and two were Catholic priests, leading us to conjecture that, whatever their motives for seeking election to the School Board, the physical wellbeing of school children may not have been the primary one (DYB (1903): 106).

<sup>60</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 11 Oct. 1905.

<sup>61</sup>Minutes of Dundee Town Council (hereafter DTCM), (1905-1906): 111-4, 116.

<sup>62</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 5 Dec. 1901.

legislation"<sup>63</sup> when politicians in the House of Commons used it to support their arguments for the state feeding of school children. Future Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, speaking in the House of Commons on the Education (Provision of Meals) (Scotland) Bill, said: "so far as Dundee was concerned, the report issued by the Dundee Social Union on housing and social conditions furnished sufficient evidence for the application of this measure."<sup>64</sup> His seconder, Alexander Wilkie, "also relied greatly upon the [DSU] report to establish his case."<sup>65</sup> In spite of local hostility and misapprehension, the DSU Report nevertheless contributed towards a change in attitude at both local and national levels.

Today, the DSU Report is a valuable historical source for Scottish historians and students of Scottish history.<sup>66</sup> Rhona Morrison calls it "a document of the first importance in the social history of Dundee."<sup>67</sup> William Walker, the Marxist historian of Dundee's textile workers, evaluates it more critically, calling it a "detached recital of facts" by "mild but earnest reformers" who were "most anxious to avoid political argument."<sup>68</sup> William Walker is correct up to a point: Lily Walker and Mona Wilson did not engage in political argument, and they did not blame jute industrialists for the shocking condition

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<sup>63</sup>The phrase is found in Stocks, 33-4.

<sup>64</sup>The Times, 2 Mar. 1907.

<sup>65</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 2 Mar. 1907; see also Levitt, 57, 74, n.44 for another example of the Report being used in Parliament.

<sup>66</sup>Several leading Scottish historians, including T.C. Smout, Ian Levitt, Christopher Whatley, Richard Rodger, Eleanor Gordon, and William Walker, have used it in their work.

<sup>67</sup>Rhona Morrison, "Poverty, Distress, and Social Agencies," The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: The City of Dundee (Arbroath, 1977), 611.

<sup>68</sup>William Walker, 76, 74, 76; William Walker's criticism may be tempered in the light of the conditions imposed by the Committee on Walker and Wilson ("our directions were no opinion only above statement of fact," DWT Papers, MS 14722). Also, the examples of "confusion and contradiction," which William Walker found in the Report, may be explained by the difference in authorship between the Preface, written by the Social Enquiry Committee and the body of the Report, written by Walker and Wilson.

of their workers; neither, however, did they pass moral judgement on Dundee's working class mothers. There is a considerable difference between the approach of Walker and Wilson and that of other "lady investigators," who continued to insist on the reformation of character as the solution to the problem of poverty. Helen Bosanquet is a notable example of the latter approach. According to Ross McKibbin, Bosanquet "insistently repeated" two themes in her writings: working class women's "incompetence at cooking and incompetence in the management of money."<sup>69</sup> Bosanquet attached great significance to sound instruction in the principles of thrift as she believed that "in the great majority of cases a wise economy is all that is needed to remedy the poverty."<sup>70</sup> Bosanquet also wanted to correct working class women's "incompetence" in child-rearing. Addressing the 1904 DSU Annual General Meeting, she told her audience that "infant mortality...was due to bad feeding. She did not mean under-fed, but improper food given by ignorant mothers. One thing they had to do was to teach them their duty towards their children, and how to perform it."<sup>71</sup> Whereas Walker and Wilson thought that working class conditions were disgraceful, Bosanquet thought the people were.<sup>72</sup>

The DSU Report may also be compared to the contemporaneous publication of the Edinburgh COS, Report on the Physical Condition of Fourteen Hundred School Children in the City, Together with Some Account of their Homes and Surroundings, which is merely a tabulated listing of COS case notes, with the medical condition of the children attached, and the drinking habits of their parents heavily

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<sup>69</sup>McKibbin, 178-9.

<sup>70</sup>Quoted in McKibbin, 180. My use of McKibbin's work differs from the purpose of his article.

<sup>71</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 26 Feb. 1904. Helen Bosanquet probably travelled from St. Andrews rather than London to address the DSU meeting, as her husband, Bernard, was professor of moral philosophy at St. Andrews University, 1903-1908.

<sup>72</sup>For a more sympathetic view of Bosanquet, see Lewis, Women, 146-192.



underscored.<sup>73</sup> In her writings on the poor, Walker did not use the COS catchwords of "intemperance," "thriftness," or "ignorance"; rather, she wrote: "We are repeatedly told that drink is at the root of these miserable homes, but in many cases it is the miserable conditions of life that send husband and wife to the public-house."<sup>74</sup> Rhona Morrison correctly states that "there is never in [the DSU Report] or any report of the Social Union the faintest trace of an intention to discriminate between deserving and undeserving, and never any mention of imposture."<sup>75</sup> The DSU Report may have been a "detached recital of facts," but they were facts which described the living conditions of working class people, and not their character deficiencies.

#### IV. Mary Lily Walker, Grey Lodge, and the DSU, 1905-1913

One important result of the DSU Report was to stimulate further interest in the DSU, which by 1913, had 300 members, a large number of volunteers, and several new committees.<sup>76</sup> The work had expanded to such an extent that in 1913 the DSU rented an office and hired "a permanent paid employee" to handle the clerical tasks and the £2,400 which "pass[ed] through the Union yearly."<sup>77</sup> Grey Lodge also grew, and by 1909, it could accommodate six residents, who were frequently referred to as "Miss Walker's staff." As the work of the DSU expanded, some long-term settlers were appointed

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<sup>73</sup>Edinburgh COS, Report on...Surroundings (London, 1906). Very little of the DSU Report deals with intemperance, although it was obviously a topic of much interest in a city whose Prohibitionist candidate defeated Winston Churchill (the incumbent since 1908) in the 1922 General Election. (C. Whatley, The Life and Times of Dundee [Edinburgh, 1993], 170).

<sup>74</sup>Walker, "Women and Children," 38.

<sup>75</sup>Morrison, 611-2.

<sup>76</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 1 Apr. 1913.

<sup>77</sup>DSUM, 18 Jan. 1913; DWT Papers, MS 14751.

to positions of authority within the DSU, having responsibility for a particular area of work. Other residents, who wanted to be professional social workers, came on a bursary, which provided free residence and training for a year. With the increase in funds and workers, Walker was able to develop a number of programs, primarily in the area of maternal, infant and child welfare.

The greatest factor in explaining the DSU's growth and success during these years was Walker herself. Walker was the central point of the Social Union, directing almost all of its activities. She contradicts Vicinus' assessment of settlement women who "were only peripherally active in sexually mixed political and social organizations."<sup>78</sup> Walker, the only woman at DSU Executive and Business meetings, forged ahead, developing schemes and drawing up plans, rarely encountering opposition from her fellow executive members. Although clashing with Steggall, she was consistently supported by her old friend, Thompson, and by Alexander MacKay, a chartered accountant and President of the Social Union. Both men had enlightened ideas about women's role, having daughters who went to university and pursued professional careers.<sup>79</sup> Always alert to new ideas in social work, she often suggested that the Union adopt a new scheme "as an experiment." Phrases indicating her agency in the Union pepper the pages of the DSU Minute Book: "Miss Walker recommended... approved"; "Miss Walker submitted a proposal...it was agreed"; "Miss Walker was asked to represent the Union in this matter"; "arrangements were discussed and it was left to Miss Walker to go into the matter."<sup>80</sup>

As well as devising new schemes of social work, preparing the accounts and writing the reports,

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<sup>78</sup>Vicinus, 244.

<sup>79</sup>DWT Papers, MS 19028. Thompson and Mackay were the only men whom Walker remembered in her will, bequeathing to MacKay "Charles Booth's Works on London" (SRO SC/45/34/26, 239).

<sup>80</sup>DSU Minute Book, 1906-1920, (hereafter DSUM), 6 Mar. 1911, 8 Jan. 1912, 24 Feb. 1913, GD/OC/GL, 1/1/1, in Dundee City Archives.

Walker also organised the AGMs.<sup>81</sup> She contacted the visiting speakers, many of whom were notable personages on the British social reform lecture circuit. Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Helen and Bernard Bosanquet, Gertrude Tuckwell, Louise Creighton, Dorothy Ward, C.S. Loch, and T.C. Horsfall addressed the DSU between 1905 - 1913. During the winter months, she organised public "lectures on social subjects." The 1906-1907 lecture series included Dr. Leslie MacKenzie of the Scottish Local Government Board on "Parish Council Possibilities" in October; Patrick Geddes on "Contemporary Social Evolution" in November; "The Work of the City Guild of Help (Bradford and Halifax)" in December; Margaret Rutherford, Warden of Glasgow's Queen Margaret Settlement in January; a UCD professor in February; and Dorothy Ward, daughter of Mary Ward, at the AGM in March. She also ran a Social Union Reading Club, which met in Grey Lodge monthly to read and discuss papers "on the practical work of the Union."<sup>82</sup> She continued to stress her ideas of citizenship as the motivating force of the Social Union's work, insisting that the DSU "was not a charitable Society, but a Union of citizens desiring to promote the well-being of the inhabitants."<sup>83</sup>

Between 1905-1913, Walker directed the focus of DSU work from philanthropic housing management to maternal and child welfare. Although the Housing Committee continued its work, it did not expand. Moreover, there was a shift on the Committee from factorship to proprietorship. When a DSU-managed property came up for sale, the Housing Committee bought it themselves, and its work increasingly reflected the interests of its members as proprietors.<sup>84</sup> For example, when the new House

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<sup>81</sup>See for example, DSUM, 24 Feb. 1913.

<sup>82</sup>DSUM, insert, n.d.

<sup>83</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 26 Mar. 1909.

<sup>84</sup>DSUM, 14 Sept. 1907; 8 Oct. 1907.

Letting Act was passed, they "remitted to Miss Walker to consider the advisability of increasing the rents to meet the increased charges due to the Act."<sup>85</sup> In addition, the Committee used part of the Commission Fund (the money earned from factoring), not to repair tenants' houses, but to fund the activities of other DSU committees, including paying part of the wages of Grey Lodge social workers.<sup>86</sup> Although the Housing Committee wielded discretionary power over DSU tenants, it was in a less harsh manner than most middle class landlords. Walker frequently intervened with the Committee to save defaulting tenants from eviction,<sup>87</sup> and when evictions did occur, the Committee allowed tenants to store their furniture in the Social Union Hall in Maxwelltown.<sup>88</sup>

The Social Union's new focus on infant, maternal and child welfare reflected the national movement at the beginning of the century to reduce infant mortality rates and to improve the health of school children. In his history of the infant welfare movement, G.F. McCleary praises the work of several civic leaders, stating that the initiative for the movement at the beginning of the century did not come from the central government health authority, but "from a few enterprising municipalities."<sup>89</sup> Michael Moore, documenting the development of the early twentieth century Guild of Help movement, notes that women neither "initiate[d] the formation of social service agencies," nor held leadership positions in them.<sup>90</sup> More recently, Hilary Marland, in a study of Huddersfield's nationally-renowned, early twentieth century infant welfare scheme, has corroborated the findings of both McCleary and

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<sup>85</sup>DSUM, 20 Mar. 1913.

<sup>86</sup>DSUM, 28 Jan. 1907.

<sup>87</sup>DSUM, 19 Oct. 1908; 15 Mar. 1909.

<sup>88</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 26 Mar. 1909.

<sup>89</sup>G.F. McCleary, The Early History of the Infant Welfare Movement (London, 1933), 112.

<sup>90</sup>Moore, 86, 92.

Moore: in Huddersfield, two powerful municipal leaders, the Mayor and the Medical Officer of Health, initiated a scheme of infant visiting and organized voluntary "committees of ladies" (of which the Mayor was President) to carry it into effect.<sup>91</sup>

In Dundee, we find a reverse situation: female voluntary initiative preceded civic action. Walker pioneered a number of experiments in maternal and child welfare; she had the foresight to organize them, the resources of the DSU and Grey Lodge to make them operational, and the persistence to prod the local authorities into taking them over. Walker spent a lot of time and energy trying to stimulate Dundee's municipal authorities into exercising their statutory powers. Originally she had envisaged Grey Lodge assisting in the work of the local authorities, but increasingly the settlement assumed a leadership role rather than a supporting one. We will examine the new DSU Committees, with reference to their relationship with the local authorities, in particular the Dundee School Board. Although the Education Department had advised school boards to procure the assistance of "philanthropic agencies,"<sup>92</sup> when we examine the records carefully, we see that in Dundee, the pattern was one of voluntary initiative and civic inertia.

#### **i. The Invalid Children's Aid Committee**

Many women's settlements operated a branch of the Invalid Children's Aid Association (ICAA), and were associated with the running of a school for invalid and crippled children. In 1898, when Mary Ward of the Passmore Edwards Settlement applied to the London School Board for assistance in establishing an Invalid Children's School, they agreed to her proposal by providing a school room and

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<sup>91</sup>Hilary Marland, "A Pioneer in Infant Welfare: the Huddersfield Scheme, 1903-1920," Social History of Medicine 6 (1993): 37.

<sup>92</sup>DSBM, 15 Oct. 1901.

a teacher.<sup>93</sup> In 1901, the Glasgow School Board and the Queen Margaret Settlement had collaborated on a similar arrangement.<sup>94</sup> Although the Dundee School Board had sent an officer in 1902 to investigate the Glasgow school, they deferred taking action, preferring "to wait in the meantime to see how the work progressed."<sup>95</sup> As previously mentioned, in 1902 the DSU had established an Invalid Children's Aid Committee, which organised country holidays and lessons at home for invalid children. Within a few years, however, the Committee, finding there were too many children to visit individually, called for "a properly equipped invalid school such as existed in Glasgow."<sup>96</sup> They suggested a collaborative effort with the School Board, offering to supply the bus and the classroom if the Board would provide the teacher.<sup>97</sup> When the School Board rejected their offer, the DSU set up its own school: they rented a hall, hired a teacher, and arranged transportation; six months later, they returned to the Board, requesting that it pay for the teacher's salary.<sup>98</sup> Eventually, after consultation with the Education Department, there was a gradual process of transfer from the philanthropists to the authorities. By 1907, a Joint Committee of representatives from the ICAA and the School Board managed the school. The ICAA provided mid-day dinners and fortnight holidays, and the School Board, with the help of government grants, employed additional staff and bought special equipment like bath chairs.<sup>99</sup> By 1912,

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<sup>93</sup>Lewis, 215-6.

<sup>94</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 22 Oct. 1901.

<sup>95</sup>DSBM, 26 May 1902; Dundee Advertiser, 28 Oct. 1902.

<sup>96</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 26 Feb. 1904.

<sup>97</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 26 Feb. 1904.

<sup>98</sup>DSBM 20 Feb. 1905.

<sup>99</sup>DSBM, 27 Mar. 1905; 24 Apr. 1905; 4 May 1905; 26 Apr. 1906; 10 May 1906; 14 Sept. 1906; 20 Sept. 1906; 11 Oct. 1906; 22 Oct. 1906.

the Board had taken over the running of the school completely, and, with a grant from the Education Department, was planning a new building with "ten classrooms, dining rooms, playrooms and spray baths" to accommodate 200 children.<sup>100</sup> The genesis of the school lay entirely in voluntary initiative and action.

## ii. The Country Holiday and Recreation Committee

Modelled after the Children's Country Holiday Foundation (CCHF) in London, the DSU Country Holiday and Recreation Committee arranged day trips or fortnight holidays for children who lived in the slums. The Committee allocated fortnight holidays on the basis of health needs; every year, they consulted the headmasters of the poor schools "for the names of delicate children requiring a change."<sup>101</sup> They also worked in conjunction with the School Board to provide "vacation schools" and playgrounds.<sup>102</sup> In 1908, a philanthropic organization, Pearson's Holiday Fund, approached the School Board, offering a large amount of money to pay for excursions for school children. The School Board, however, "could not see their way to recommending the Board to undertake and carry out the arrangements for the School Children's Holidays during summer months on account of the great responsibility involved."<sup>103</sup> Lily Walker willingly accepted what the School Board had rejected. In April 1910, the DSU Holiday Committee formed a sub-Committee "for the administration of Pearson's Fund." Within a month, they had selected schools, set dates, arranged boat sailings, and organised food purveys

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<sup>100</sup>DYB (1912): 50.

<sup>101</sup>DSUM, Apr. 1913.

<sup>102</sup>DSBM, 8 May 1907; 9 June 1908; 25 Apr. 1910; 29 June 1911; 11 Dec. 1911; 22 Apr. 1912; 21 June 1912; 28 Aug. 1912.

<sup>103</sup>DSBM, 13 Apr. 1908.

for 3000 children.<sup>104</sup> In subsequent years, Pearson's Fund continued to provide the money, and the DSU supplied the organization to give thousands of Dundee children a short respite from the slums and the great excitement of a summer day's outing.<sup>105</sup> The Committee provides another example of the benefits of voluntary initiative and action.

### iii. The Restaurant Committee

Much of Walker's pioneering work in Dundee derived from her knowledge of social work practices in London. The Invalid Children's Aid and the Children's Holiday Committees were both ideas borrowed from London settlement houses. According to Checkland, Scottish philanthropy functioned on "an imitative and emulative basis, rather than by invention and innovation. Time and again the story is one of borrowing ideas from the larger world, especially England,"<sup>106</sup> The DSU's Restaurant for Nursing Mothers was a departure from the usual pattern of Scottish philanthropy. The Restaurant arose out of Walker's concern over Dundee's infant mortality rate (the highest in Scotland). As a result of her work on the DSU Report, Walker believed that conditions of working class life contributed to Dundee's high rate: overcrowded, insanitary living conditions, poor nutrition, and the necessity for mothers to work ten-hour days in the jute mills one month after childbirth.<sup>107</sup> In December 1905, Walker read an article in the London Times, "How they fight infant mortality in Paris," explaining the work of Mme. Henri Coulet, who had established a restaurant to provide nourishing meals for nursing mothers.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>DSUM, 19 Apr. 1910; 19 May 1910.

<sup>105</sup>DSUM, Feb. 1912; May 1912.

<sup>106</sup>Checkland, Philanthropy, 332.

<sup>107</sup>DSU Report, 66-75.

<sup>108</sup>The Times, 26 Dec. 1905.



Walker went to Paris to investigate Mme. Couillet's scheme first-hand.<sup>109</sup> On her return, she submitted a proposal for a similar restaurant to the DSU Business Committee, informing them that an anonymous benefactor had offered "£100 per annum for three years" to finance "the experiment."<sup>110</sup> In May 1906, Britain's first two Restaurants for Nursing Mothers opened in Hilltown and Maxwelltown, Dundee.<sup>111</sup>

The objects of the restaurants were to encourage women to breast feed and to discourage them from returning to work a month after childbirth. By law, factories were not allowed to re-employ their workers until one month after childbirth. The restaurant provided a three-course dinner (for 2d. to mothers who could afford to pay, and at no charge to "necessitous cases") on the condition that the mothers brought their babies to be weighed and did not return to work. The restaurants developed into Baby Clinics, where staff weighed the babies, kept charts, dispensed advice, and made follow-up visits to homes. The restaurant superintendent, a Grey Lodge resident, and a DSU "committee of ladies" conducted the work of the restaurant which was expanded by Dr Templeman, the MOH, who supplied them with lists of newborn babies in their districts.<sup>112</sup> In 1908, on the recommendation of ILP councillor John Reid and in consultation with Walker, Dundee Town Council established two additional restaurants for nursing mothers in Dundee, granting £250 p.a. from the Common Good to finance the municipal restaurants, and awarding £50 p.a. to the DSU restaurants.<sup>113</sup> The restaurants provide a further example of collaboration between voluntary and municipal forces, and of voluntary experiment

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<sup>109</sup>Paterson, 21.

<sup>110</sup>DSUM, 8 Mar. 1906.

<sup>111</sup>According to Walker herself, Dundee's restaurants were the first in Britain (M.L. Walker, "Work among Women," Handbook and Guide to Dundee and District [Dundee, 1912], 72). McCleary notes that a Mrs Gordon opened a "small kitchen" for nursing mothers in Chelsea on 28 January 1906 (McCleary, 118).

<sup>112</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 24 Mar. 1908; 26 Mar. 1909; 17 Mar. 1911.

<sup>113</sup>DTCM, 16 Apr. 1908; 9 June 1908; 31 Aug. 1908; 13 Oct. 1908; 4 Oct. 1910.

leading to municipal provision.

In "Imperialism and Motherhood," Anna Davin has linked the newfound concern over infant welfare at the beginning of the century to British imperial ambitions. As children became a 'national asset', "maternal ignorance" was made the scapegoat for infant mortality. One practical approach of attacking the problem of infant mortality was the St. Pancras "Babies Welcome and School for Mothers," which was established in June 1907. Davin's description of the St. Pancras institution closely resembles Walker's Restaurant: dinners for mothers, weighing of babies, and visiting the homes in consultation with the local MOH. According to Davin, the St Pancras dinners were "well-patronised" and popular, and the attitude of the lady volunteers "though patronising and class bound, was at least relatively sympathetic and tactful."<sup>114</sup> But did the institutions decrease the infant mortality rate?

According to a 1910 report by Walker:

To those working on year after year the improvement if any is imperceptible; moreover the distress caused by the unemployment of last winter obscured all other aspects. Nevertheless, looking back on the past five years, some encouragement may be gained. There is a distinct improvement in the cases immediately connected with the restaurants.<sup>115</sup>

Although the number of mothers and babies attending the restaurants was small, their infant mortality rate was considerably lower than the rate for the town.<sup>116</sup>

#### iv. School Dinners Committee

The tussles between the DSU Country Holiday and Invalid Children's Aid Committees and the

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<sup>114</sup>Davin, 38-41.

<sup>115</sup>Walker, "Mothers and Children," 41.

<sup>116</sup>Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, Evidence, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1921), evidence of Walker, Q35268.

Dundee School Board had been relatively free of conflict. By contrast, Walker's attempts to induce the School Board to undertake the feeding of necessitous school children became a bitter area of dispute for a number of years. The School Board's reluctance in this issue amounted to more than civic inertia; rather, it was a symptom of the national debate between state responsibilities and parental duties, which took place 1903-1908. Those who felt that the state had a responsibility to intervene in the welfare of children locked horns with those who believed that state maintenance of children would loosen the bonds of parental duty. One contemporary observer explained the "two fires" of the dispute:

On the one hand there is the attack of the Charity Organization Society with its description of free dinners as an 'insufficient and pauperising system of relief.'... On the other side, the current of public opinion has begun to have less reliance on the irresponsible action of charity, and to demand official control of these school meals.<sup>117</sup>

The opponents of state intervention had little objection to philanthropic feeding schemes, but balked at the idea of feeding school children out of public funds. According to a COS editorial:

It would strike a blow at parental responsibility, family life, and independence of character, as all indiscriminate doles invariably do, and, further, would encourage the collectivist teaching, that it is the duty of the State to provide food, clothing and accommodation for all.<sup>118</sup>

The reports of two government commissions, the Royal Commission on Physical Training (Scotland) (1903), and the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904) (and later, the DSU Report) had revealed the existence of a great number of undernourished and underdeveloped children. Both government reports had recommended that school boards collaborate with voluntary organisations to feed school children.<sup>119</sup> Some politicians, linking "underfed children" with "national efficiency" and

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<sup>117</sup>Gray, 292.

<sup>118</sup>"Editorial Notes," COR (1907): 116; see also Levitt, 56-7.

<sup>119</sup>Levitt, 48; Gilbert, 107-9.

"degeneration of the race," lead a public outcry for the state legislation of school meals, to which Balfour's Conservative government responded with the "ancient subterfuge of another committee of investigation."<sup>120</sup> In 1906, the new Liberal government, amid "violent controversy," passed the Education (Provision of Meals) Act.<sup>121</sup> Although the Act only permitted, and did not require, local authorities to provide meals, it was nevertheless a watershed Act; according to Gilbert, "the passage of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act of 1906...marked the beginning of the construction of the welfare state."<sup>122</sup> The new Act, however, did not apply to Scotland. Balfour's claim that "most Scottish public bodies were against it" had caused the House of Lords to amend the Bill to exclude Scotland.<sup>123</sup> In 1907, Ramsay MacDonald proposed the Education (School Meals) (Scotland) Bill to bring Scotland into equity with England. The Education (Scotland) Act of 1908 finally permitted the rate-supported feeding of Scottish school children.<sup>124</sup>

What was the local reaction in Dundee? In 1903, in response to the Physical Training Commission's recommendation that school boards collaborate with voluntary organizations to provide feeding, the Dundee School Board was satisfied that "suitable provision had been made for supplying dinners." They praised the "good work of the voluntary effort in the City," and asked the public to contribute "additional funds to carry on this work."<sup>125</sup> Once more, voluntary effort had relieved the authorities from taking action. The issue, however, like the hungry children, did not disappear, and

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<sup>120</sup>Gilbert, 98.

<sup>121</sup>Gilbert, 103.

<sup>122</sup>Gilbert, 110-2, 102.

<sup>123</sup>Levitt, 58; Gilbert, 112, n.26.

<sup>124</sup>Levitt, 59.

<sup>125</sup>DSBM (1903-1904): 226.

pressure mounted for the Dundee School Board to take action, especially after the publication of the DSU's Medical Inspection of School Children report, but to no avail. The Dundee Board was only one of several Scottish school boards which adamantly opposed the rate-supported feeding of school children. In early March 1907, while MacDonald was debating the Bill in the House, (and using the DSU Report to support his case), representatives from Scottish School Boards, at a specially-convened conference in Edinburgh, adopted the resolution "that Parliament not pass any legislation which would place feeding of school children on the rates."<sup>126</sup> Later in the month, a joint deputation from Edinburgh, Dundee and other school boards travelled to London to lobby support for their resolution with the Secretary of State for Scotland.<sup>127</sup>

While most Dundee School Board members firmly opposed rate-supported feeding, some fervently supported it.<sup>128</sup> Agnes Husband,<sup>129</sup> a member of the ILP and newly appointed to the Board, persistently tried to goad it into action, denouncing its members in one "heated debate" for not doing "their duty in respect of feeding poor children."<sup>130</sup> The other female School Board member, Isobel Carlaw-Martin, however, did not believe in "feeding children off the rates,"<sup>131</sup> but rather favoured the

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<sup>126</sup>DSBM, 4 Mar. 1907.

<sup>127</sup>DSBM, 11 Mar. 1907. Dundee Town Council also passed a motion (11-3) that Council petition Parliament not to pass the Bill (DTCM, 25 Mar. 1907).

<sup>128</sup>The division was three members for feeding and thirteen members against it. (DSBM, 25/11/06).

<sup>129</sup>**Agnes Husband** (? - 1929), who was also a member of the DSU Social Enquiry Committee, the Parish Council and the Distress Committee, often supported the same social reforms as Walker. According to her obituary in the Dundee Advertiser, Husband was "a pioneer in asserting the claims of women and their competence to participate in public affairs." Husband received the freedom of the city in recognition of her services.

<sup>130</sup>DSBM, 25 Nov. 1906; 8 Feb. 1910.

<sup>131</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 7 Mar. 1905.

'cookery school' approach. Helen Corr has described Scottish female school board members who campaigned for domestic science teachers and kitchen equipment in Scottish schools "to raise the level of domestic competence."<sup>132</sup> Carlaw-Martin believed that the Dundee School Board "did more than any other school board in giving cookery lessons and domestic training to girls."<sup>133</sup> She herself had instituted a scheme in Dundee where it was "compulsory" for school girls to go to "a little house furnished like a workman's home" for four hours a week, to learn "domestic work, cooking, laundry and housewifery."<sup>134</sup> To Carlaw-Martin, the answer to social problems lay in domestic education, not state relief.<sup>135</sup>

Walker firmly supported the state feeding of school children. After the passage of the 1908 Act, she publicly expressed her hope that the "School Board, with its new powers, would provide feeding centres for school children."<sup>136</sup> When it became apparent that they would not, she employed the same tactics she had used to help establish the Invalid School: she organised the feeding of school children herself (although the numbers she fed were very small).<sup>137</sup> Working through the DSU School Dinners Committee, she rented a hall, provided "penny dinners" of soup and pudding to about 100 children a week, and repeatedly wrote to the School Board, suggesting they contribute towards the cost.<sup>138</sup> Although they paid the small sums asked, the Board went no further; unlike the situation with the

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<sup>132</sup>Corr, "Schoolgirls' Curriculum," 87.

<sup>133</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 21 Feb. 1905.

<sup>134</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Carlaw-Martin, Q63487-8.

<sup>135</sup>Gertrude Tuckwell once told Carlaw-Martin at a DSU meeting that "they could not teach people to cook what they had not got" (Dundee Advertiser, 7 Mar. 1905).

<sup>136</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 26 Mar. 1909.

<sup>137</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 18 Jan. 1907.

<sup>138</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 18 Jan. 1907; DSBM, 8 Nov. 1909; 30 Jan. 1911.

Invalid School, they did not gradually assume responsibility for a social service initiated by voluntary action.

By 1912, Edinburgh had a progressive new school board using public money to supply school dinners, which were cooked in a "central cooking institution under the charge of a trained chef" and distributed in "closed boxes" to schools throughout Edinburgh.<sup>139</sup> The new scheme did not constitute a great burden on the rates; in 1911, the total cost of £1200 worked out at one-tenth of a penny per £ on the rates. Moreover, the difference between the amount donated to charity and the potential amount raised by the rates was considerable. Whereas Edinburgh's Flora Stevenson Fund for feeding hungry children generated between £400 and £500 per annum, a levy of "one penny on the rates" could produce between £10,000 and £12,000 in Edinburgh.<sup>140</sup> With a considerable increase in revenue, a more efficient system of feeding was possible.

The Dundee School Board, by contrast, held firm to its habit of making enquiries and taking no action. Four years after the Education Act had been passed, they were still "considering this matter...they were collecting details in reference to the number of children in the city who were in necessitous circumstances and to the number of centres that would be required."<sup>141</sup> In 1912, a series of strikes in the jute industry led to "a great deal of distress and privation in the city." The Advertiser reported that increasing numbers were seeking the "shelter of the Poorhouse," and many were "on the borders of starvation."<sup>142</sup> Walker and the DSU were certainly not alone in their concern for Dundee's

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<sup>139</sup>DWT Papers, MS 14747; Dundee Advertiser, 14 Nov. 1912.

<sup>140</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 14 Nov. 1912.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 19 March 1912.

poor children; various voluntary schemes cropped up to provide, among other things, "free cocoa and bread for necessitous children."<sup>143</sup> In March 1911, when the Secretary of the United Trades and Labour Council asked the School Board "to put into operation any powers they possess to relieve the existing Distress among School Children in Lochee," the Board promised to "make further inquiries."<sup>144</sup> In March 1912, when it was pointed out that there was "an urgent need for feeding necessitous school children in consequence of the strike now proceeding," the Board reaffirmed that they would provide aid "if necessity should arise."<sup>145</sup> The Board's cautious stance in the midst of a rapidly deteriorating economic situation hinged on their interpretation of Section Six of the 1908 Education (Scotland) Act, which stated:

...if it shall be shown...that such parents or guardians are unable by reason of poverty or ill health to supply sufficient and proper food or clothing for the child... the school board, if satisfied that the necessities of the case will not be provided for by voluntary agencies, shall make such provision for the child out of the school fund as they deem necessary.<sup>146</sup>

According to Levitt, a subsequent Circular from the Education Department "swept aside caution" over Section Six, suggesting that "school boards should, if a child's appearance cast doubt on its well-being, give assistance without delay."<sup>147</sup> In 1912, the Chairman of the Dundee School Board, explained the Board's interpretation of Section Six:

...in reference to Section Six of the Act... they had interpreted it as meaning that it was only after voluntary effort had been exhausted and a careful examination had been made into the circumstances of each necessitous child and also after prosecution of parents that

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<sup>143</sup>Ibid.

<sup>144</sup>DSBM, 13 Mar. 1911.

<sup>145</sup>DSBM, 11 Mar. 1912.

<sup>146</sup>Quoted in Levitt, 59.

<sup>147</sup>Levitt, 59.



the Board was entitled to exercise the power of feeding these children.<sup>148</sup>

At the end of 1912, Walker made a determined effort to shame the School Board into exercising their powers under the 1908 Act. After seeking advice from experts in Edinburgh and London, she organized "a round-table conference" to discuss the feeding of school children.<sup>149</sup> Walker utilized the power of civic prestige. By holding the conference in the Town Hall, with the Lord-Provost presiding, and Professor D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson as convenor, she ensured the respectful attention of Dundee's middle class. On the suggestion of Helen MacKenzie, wife of Leslie MacKenzie, Walker had invited Mr J. Cunningham from the Edinburgh School Board to explain the innovative Edinburgh system.<sup>150</sup>

Under the headline, "What School Boards Can Do," the Dundee Advertiser reported the proceedings. Thompson began by pointing out that "times had changed and opinions had altered and mellowed in this matter." While praising the "splendid work" done by individual headmasters of poor schools, he pointed out that it was not enough, and he put forward a plea for the feeding of poor school children "not as a matter of charity...but as an absolute necessity." In reply, the Chairman of the School Board unconsciously conceded that public opinion had swung in favour of "feeding" when he remarked that "he could remember when anyone suggesting that the feeding of necessitous children should be a charge on the rates was looked upon as a rank Socialist." He underplayed the seriousness of the situation by a carefully-worded reference to the MOH's latest annual report, which, he said, "did not lay great stress on there being a great number of underfed children in Dundee." After Walker read a report

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<sup>148</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 14 Nov. 1912.

<sup>149</sup>DWT Papers, MSS 14737, 14747, 14750.

<sup>150</sup>DWT Papers, MS 14747.

on the latest developments in London, Mr Cunningham detailed the Edinburgh scheme, concluding with the statement:

It seemed perfectly clear that those who desired to promote the welfare of destitute children could now best attain their object by bringing all influence to bear on School Boards to exercise their powers under the 1908 Act and to avail themselves of the cooperation of voluntary workers who had some personal knowledge of the people in the various districts.

The Conference closed by passing a resolution recommending that the Dundee School Board introduce a system of feeding necessitous school children "similar to that adopted in Edinburgh."<sup>151</sup>

Procrastination marked the proceedings of the School Board, which was stolidly anti-reform, refusing to deal with the welfare of their pupils, and limiting their mandate to education. According to Carlaw-Martin: "School boards could not undertake the duties of parents and teachers at the same time."<sup>152</sup> Although it is convenient, it is also too easy to lay all the blame on the members of the Dundee School Board. Leslie MacKenzie, on a different occasion, took issue with the "carping criticism" aimed at popularly-elected municipal boards. He pointed out that:

it was because the general public of Scotland took so little interest in actual administrative affairs. Only 20-23 per cent of the electorate had the slightest interest in a School Board election, and one did not wonder that the institution that arose out of that indifference should be more or less imperfect.

He reminded his middle class audience that elected bodies were "really themselves--simply an expression of themselves, an expression of their desires and ambitions," pointing out that elected bodies "failed in their duty" because "every individual citizen...had first failed in his."<sup>153</sup> MacKenzie had a good point: school boards were merely a reflection of the indifference and social conservatism of Scotland's middle

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<sup>151</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 14 Nov. 1912.

<sup>152</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 21 Feb. 1905.

<sup>153</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 30 Oct. 1906.

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## **V. Assessment of the New Philanthropy**

### **i. The Voluntary Sector: "to soften social antipathies"**

The experience of Mary Lily Walker shows the important role of voluntarism and the agency of women in the development of social services in Dundee at the beginning of the twentieth century. We have to recognize, however, that Walker was a progressive social reformer and an exceptional individual; we therefore cannot make a balanced assessment of the new philanthropy entirely through the lens of her work. We have to consider other factors, peripheral to the experience of Walker, which may cast aspects of the new philanthropy in a different light.

It is important not to confuse the progressive, reformist work of Walker and her Grey Lodge staff with the fundamentally conservative function of the DSU. The DSU was a hybrid organization; having been founded in the 1880s, it retained the features of a late nineteenth century philanthropic society, onto which was grafted Grey Lodge, which exemplified the early twentieth century approaches to social welfare. As a result, there were great ideological differences and frequent conflicts of opinion within the DSU. For example, the social philosophy of J.E.A. Steggall, a DSU Vice-President and founding member, was staunchly in line with that of the COS. Steggall was adamantly opposed to the rate-supported feeding of school children, protesting that "free food for the children was only a paraphrase of free drink for the father," and taking exception to the idea of "a clean sober and industrious worker being called upon to pay for the dinners of children of drunken and not industrious parents."<sup>154</sup> He also grumbled about the Restaurant for Nursing Mothers, arguing that:

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<sup>154</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 30 Mar. 1906; 14 Nov. 1912.

If they could show that the proposed expenditure upon the feeding of prospective mothers would tend to make the position of the children permanently better, he would not have a word to say against it. He had no such hope.<sup>155</sup>

Steggall and other DSU members warmly applauded guest speaker, former Conservative M.P., Sir John Stirling Maxwell, when he made it clear that his notions of housing reform centred not on higher wages, but on issues of drink and domestic economy:

To his mind the housing problem was much less complicated than people often supposed. Though less complicated, it did not follow that it was easy. There were people who thought that the problem would be settled if there was a rise of wages. But that could only be the case for a moment, because the cost of houses was bound to rise in proportion with wages. No one who had the interest of the industry of Dundee at heart and of the working people would clamour hastily for a rise of wages, because it was practically certain to mean a heavy loss of trade where trade was precarious. That was a solution which most thinking people would rule out of the question....

If people were to move into better houses, they must find some fund upon which to draw for the difference. There were two such funds. One was the money which was spent upon drink--(applause)--and the other, the money which was wasted in almost every house through ignorance of the first principles of domestic economy. (Applause).<sup>156</sup>

Stirling Maxwell's rationale was typical of conservative observers: confronted by the enormous problems of capitalism, they took comfort in reducing them to small, definable categories like "sewed-up clothes," "drink," and "domestic economy."

Many in the DSU remained intensely conservative as philanthropy tried to fulfil its traditional function of "preserv[ing] an unjust status quo."<sup>157</sup> In 1912, during the period of strikes and starvation, yet another guest speaker, Mr G.F. Barbour, addressed the DSU with some urgency:

The work of the Union...had never been more necessary than at the present moment. They were met together under the shadow of a great national crisis.... The time they were passing through seemed more gloomy because it represented not any external conflict, but

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<sup>155</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 30 Mar. 1906.

<sup>156</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 30 Mar. 1906.

<sup>157</sup>Harrison, 368.

a rift in the unity of the nation.... The signs of the day seemed to point to a growing estrangement and embitterment between class and class....

The work of the Union must not be allowed to pause or flag. It would be needed more during the coming weeks...[they must] go on with their efforts which they believed were already doing much to soften social antipathies.<sup>158</sup>

Dundee's middle class continued to rely upon philanthropy as a means of shoring up the social system.

## ii. The Statutory Sector: Prosecuting the Parents

Just as we should not view the DSU as a progressive, ideologically-cohesive organization, neither should we believe that state intervention in the lives of the poor was fuelled solely by humanitarian concern for hungry children. Many who called for rate-supported feeding of school children did so in the name of "national efficiency" : a well-conditioned working class was an essential prerequisite to Britain's continuance as an imperial power.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, when we look closely, we see that early twentieth century social welfare legislation greatly increased the power of the state to intervene in the lives of the poor: the corollary of state intervention was state control. As the state assumed responsibility for the welfare of poor children, it also assumed the power to exert control over their parents. For example, under the terms of the Children Act, 1908 (the broad purpose of which was the state protection of the child), authorities could forcibly remove children from a parent (usually a widow) who refused to allow them to be boarded out.<sup>160</sup>

Greater state control led to a hardening attitude towards working class parents, and new social

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<sup>158</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 19 Mar. 1912.

<sup>159</sup>See Davin for a full discussion on this topic.

<sup>160</sup>James Motion, "The Working of the Children Act in Glasgow," COR (1911): 124.

legislation included clauses to enforce parental responsibility. Previously, the middle class had blamed working class, "neglectful parents" for their child's poor physical state; now they had the power to prosecute them. A good example of parental prosecution stemmed from Dundee School Board's contorted indecisiveness over Section Six of the Education (Scotland) Act. In 1910, the Board interpreted Section Six in terms of neglectful parents rather than hungry children, and issued the following circular:

Dear Sir or Madam, ---It has been brought to the notice of the School Board by the headmaster of the school that your child, ....., who is attending.....School, is unable, by reason of lack of food or/and clothing, to take full advantage of the education provided, and I am instructed to inform you that unless immediate measures are taken by you to remedy this unsatisfactory state of affairs, and to provide the child with the necessary food or/and clothing, it will be the duty of the School Board to summon you, as the parent of the child, to appear before them to give an explanation of the child's condition. If the School Board find that such explanation is not forthcoming, or is insufficient or unsatisfactory, and that the condition of the child is due to neglect, a prosecution may be instituted under the Education (Scotland) Act, 1908, and Children Act, 1908, whereby you may be liable to a fine of £25 and imprisonment, with hard labour, for a term of six months.... Yours truly, John E. Williams, Clerk.<sup>161</sup>

Whether the system was nineteenth century philanthropy or the new philanthropy, the effect on the working class remained the same: they were in a "no-win" situation.

The voluntary component of the new philanthropy, therefore, was often concerned with efforts "to soften social antipathies," while the statutory component was frequently punitive, leading to massive intrusion into the lives of the working class by prosecuting parents and rupturing families. Nevertheless, evidence indicates that those who advocated radical notions of state intervention had greater knowledge and a more realistic view of the conditions of working class life than those who continued to place their trust in self-help, the reformation of character, or the teaching of domestic science.

A study of Lily Walker shows the importance of voluntary initiative at the local level. Although

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<sup>161</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 29 Apr. 1910.

she was unsuccessful in prodding the School Board to provide dinners or in persuading jute employers to institute maternity insurance schemes, Walker nevertheless accomplished a great deal. She laid the foundations for the Invalid School (later Fairmuir Special School), Dundee's baby clinics, and Scotland's first Infant Hospital; four years after her death, Dundee was the first city in Scotland to possess "a fully-organized municipal infant health service."<sup>162</sup> Walker made an appreciable difference in the lives of a few. Probably her greatest contribution was the DSU Report. Even although it was misinterpreted and maligned, it did contribute to changing the tone of public discussion at a local and national level. With the Report, her social work activities, conferences and lectures, she kept the condition of the poor and the idea of social reform before the public mind of Edwardian Dundee, niggling at their indifference and social conservatism.

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<sup>162</sup>Morrison, 613; Paterson, 15, 20-1.

## Chapter 4: "SERVANT OF THE TOWN"

Walker's social work efforts were not confined to her voluntary DSU and Grey Lodge activities as she was also active in local government until her death in 1913. As a member of the Parish Council from 1901, the Distress Committee from 1905, and the Insurance Committee from 1912, Walker was closely involved in the official provision for the relief of the poor. By serving on civic committees, Walker was one of a number of British settlement workers who attempted to improve the condition of the poor through the medium of local government. Public service work was part of the settlement house ethos. Canon Barnett, recognising that local government was "gradually absorbing many of the functions of the Church and of charity," but was "often wanting in knowledge," believed that it needed the presence of settlers "to formulate its mission" and "to inspire [it] with a higher spirit."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the role of settlement women in local government increased between 1905-1912, when they served on local committees to implement the new social welfare legislation. A resident of Birmingham Women's Settlement believed that the settlement, as "the centre to which local authorities...turn for information on social subjects," had become the "servant of the town."<sup>2</sup>

### I. Dundee Parish Council

Scottish parish councils, similar to English Boards of Guardians, were popularly elected local bodies which administered the Poor Law.<sup>3</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, the Scottish Poor Law was

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<sup>1</sup>Barnett, "University Settlements," 23-4.

<sup>2</sup>Matheson, 28.

<sup>3</sup>The following discussion relies heavily on Levitt, Poverty and Welfare, chs. 4-5.



more harsh and parsimonious than the English one, especially in its denial of relief to the able-bodied unemployed and his family. Moreover, a tone of moral discrimination marked the discussion and proceedings of Scottish parish councils. Offering outdoor relief only to those "of good character," they endeavoured to punish drunkards, stigmatize illegitimate mothers, and send the "idle" to labour colonies "to re-instil the work ethic."<sup>4</sup> The social stigma of "going on the parish" was so great that, according to one official, the Poor Law "has come to be shunned rather than sought by many of those that have an unquestionable claim to its powers."<sup>5</sup> Ian Levitt has shown that between 1904-1912, there was an important shift in the philosophy of Scottish welfare which derived from changes in the national administration as Liberals replaced Conservatives in the high-ranking posts of the Scottish Local Government Board.<sup>6</sup> Two appointments in particular contributed towards the new philosophy. In 1904, Dr. Leslie MacKenzie (q.v.) was appointed the Medical Member of the Board, and in December 1905, John Sinclair (q.v), an alumnus of Toynbee Hall, was appointed the Liberal Secretary of State for Scotland. Both men emphasised environmental causes of poverty and encouraged a greater role for the state in matters of welfare. In accordance with New Liberal ideas, they believed that state intervention was the only way for the vast majority of individuals to reach a position in which they could act "freely."<sup>7</sup> Although the national administration favoured a radical change in the provision of Scottish welfare, local parish councils continued to adhere to traditional, discriminatory methods of poor relief. According to Levitt, "the philosophy of welfare had come a long way since 1900...yet in 1914 the

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<sup>4</sup>Levitt, 81.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted in Levitt, 45.

<sup>6</sup>Levitt, 50.

<sup>7</sup>See Clarke, 27.

implementation of this policy had barely begun."<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, there were a number of progressive parish councillors who "wanted to fashion the Poor Law into an active instrument of social improvement."<sup>9</sup> Levitt cites Walker as an example of "the small group of philanthropically minded ladies with their concern for children, women and the sick who pushed the discussion away from past issues towards the new philosophy."<sup>10</sup>

Women were not eligible for membership on parish councils until 1894, when the Local Government (Scotland) Act restructured the administration of the Scottish Poor Law, making it less undemocratic. Under the terms of the Act, the property qualification for membership was reduced from £20 to £5, and popularly elected parish councils replaced the old parochial boards; for the first time, working class men and a few independent women became eligible for election.<sup>11</sup> Although the Act stated that "no person shall be disqualified by sex or marriage from being elected, or being a member of a parish council," most Scottish women were still disqualified as the qualification was based on ratepaying rather than residence, and a husband and wife could "not both be registered in respect of the same property."<sup>12</sup> As a result, "most married women, daughters living at home, or sisters living with brothers" remained ineligible for a seat on parish councils.<sup>13</sup> The Act further discriminated against women: it was legal for a woman to become chairman of the parish council (if she was elected by the council members);

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<sup>8</sup>Levitt, 71-2.

<sup>9</sup>Levitt, 76.

<sup>10</sup>Levitt, 77.

<sup>11</sup>Levitt, 24, 76.

<sup>12</sup>J. Patten-MacDougall and J.M. Dodds, The Parish Council Guide for Scotland: A Handbook to the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1894 (Edinburgh, 1894), 42-3, 12.

<sup>13</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Greenlees, Appendix LXIII.

but it was illegal for a female chairman to become a justice of the peace, whereas a male chairman was automatically a justice of the peace "by virtue of his office."<sup>14</sup> The Act therefore limited the number of women eligible for election, and restricted their eligibility for civic promotion.

Scottish women also faced cultural prejudices as well as legal disabilities. There was in Scotland a great deal of disapprobation about women on public boards. According to Elizabeth Haldane: "it was considered wrong for women to take part in any public scheme...and very wrong to speak in meetings."<sup>15</sup> Another Scottish woman reported: "it was felt that public work was rather derogatory, and as for serving on public boards, no lady would dream of such a thing."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, some contemporary Scots held those eligible for membership in very low esteem:

A woman householder is usually either a widow or an elderly spinster...more or less a piece of flotsam drifted by life into a backwater, and living usually a stagnant and uninteresting existence. She is precisely the kind of woman least likely to desire the vote, and least able to use it wisely.<sup>17</sup>

Given such prejudice, it is hardly surprising that few Scottish women sought election to parish councils. In gaining membership to Poor Law boards, Scottish women lagged twenty years behind English women. In 1875, an English woman had been elected to the Kensington Board of Guardians, and by 1898, before Walker even stood for election, there were 950 women guardians in England.<sup>18</sup> It is not known how many Scottish women parish councillors there were during this period, although it is likely that there were not more than a handful. It took considerable courage for Scotland's first women parish

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<sup>14</sup>Patten-MacDougall, 38, 104.

<sup>15</sup>Haldane, Scotland, 66.

<sup>16</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Carlaw-Martin, Q63438.

<sup>17</sup>Mabel Atkinson, Local Government in Scotland (Edinburgh, 1904), 33.

<sup>18</sup>Walton, 30-1.

councillors to invade a traditionally all-male enclave, to disregard Scottish sensibilities of proper female conduct, and to overcome the social disadvantages of a "stagnant and uninteresting existence."

In her study of English women councillors, Patricia Hollis has shown a progression from philanthropy to poor law work as many active philanthropic women sought a place on local boards in the hope that they would be more effective vehicles for change than philanthropic societies.<sup>19</sup> According to Hollis, some English women "were renouncing the self-indulgence of personal philanthropy for the discipline of elected and accountable public office."<sup>20</sup> Walker, also aware of the limitations of philanthropy, hoped that the resources and legal clout of local government would allow her to effect social improvement on a wider scale than the activities of the DSU. Although Walker achieved some small successes on the Council, most of her efforts at reform were hampered as Dundee's early women councillors faced hostility and opposition from both their fellow councillors and the local press. Her experience on the Dundee Parish Council affords us a look at the statutory provision for the Scottish poor and its failings, as, in Walker's eyes, the Council fell far short of its potential as an agency for social improvement.

When Walker stood for election in November 1901, she campaigned not on the basis of her higher education, or her considerable experience with the poor, or even her advanced training in social work. Instead, she campaigned on the superiority of her domestic skills and reduced her campaign platform to gender identities: women knew how to make soup and manage a household better than men. In a church hall in Dundee, Walker addressed her audience:

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<sup>19</sup>Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914*, (Oxford, 1987), 20-29, 201-2.

<sup>20</sup>Hollis, 28.

What was the management of poorhouses but housekeeping on a large scale? Questions of bedding, of clothing and of food were constantly arising. She did not say that these were outside a man's province, for with the help of a cookery book and his mathematical training he might easily work the sum in simple proportion - if one pound of lentils makes soup for four persons, how many pounds are required for four hundred? (Laughter) But there was soup and soup, and the difference between attractive and nutritious soup and what might be styled water bewitched, soup begrudged, was not a matter of pounds, shillings and pence, but a trade secret of the profession of housekeeping. (Laughter and applause).

... but there were other [matters] of human interest and deeper moment. Those women and children that came under the care of the parish council were struggling and often suffering human beings. Were there no matters which could be dealt with there by women to women?<sup>21</sup>

In this speech, Walker was acknowledging contemporary thinking which held that "women...are peculiarly suited both by opportunity and sex [for] Local Government work [which] may be likened to housekeeping on a large scale."<sup>22</sup> Helen Corr has shown that, at this time, a group of articulate, well-educated female members of Scottish School Boards campaigned vigorously for the introduction of domestic science into the elementary school curriculum as they "viewed the integration of domestic subjects as an assertion of female power and authority within the educational sphere."<sup>23</sup> In a similar vein, progressive women standing for election as parish councillors perpetuated women's subordinate position by reinforcing the notion that women's qualifications for entering public life were predicated on their "good housekeeping" talents. It is clear, however, from her speech that Walker's main agenda lay not in women's skill with lentil soup, but in the sympathetic concern women could show to other women.

Just as Walker emphasised woman's domestic talents to justify her candidature, others

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<sup>21</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 26 Oct. 1901.

<sup>22</sup>The Englishwoman's Yearbook, (1914): 157.

<sup>23</sup>Corr, "The Schoolgirls' Curriculum," 91.

emphasised woman's 'delicate nature' to explain their opposition to lady councillors. Objections centred on the "rough language which sometimes took place at the meetings." One Council member declared: "it was not for a lady in a company of gentlemen to hear of such cases as sometimes came before the Council...he would not like a sister of his to sit in the Council and hear accounts of them."<sup>24</sup> The "bad language" issue was a common ploy used by men to dissuade women from public service work. Hollis mentions that it was an issue in some English towns; and in Edinburgh, a member of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals plaintively opined: "ladies would have to retire [from the meeting] because there were not very nice things for ladies to hear....ladies could help far more by not being on the Board."<sup>25</sup> Behind the patronising platitudes lurked male anxiety about the encroachment of women into their traditional territory.

In November 1901, despite the public fuss, Mary Lily Walker and Agnes Husband became the first two women parish councillors in Dundee. The Parish Council was the most inflexible, male dominated committee on which Walker served, and its meetings were often the scene of gender conflict as the majority of male councillors adamantly opposed the women's proposals for change. Corr has shown that a similar pattern existed on Scottish school boards where male members blocked the agendas of their female colleagues.<sup>26</sup> Conflict on the Council, however, was not restricted to gender issues. The low property qualification had given working class men a place on Council along with middle class members.<sup>27</sup> This led to petty bickering between the labour councillors, who complained that the

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<sup>24</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 30 Oct. 1901.

<sup>25</sup>Hollis, 211; Dundee Advertiser, 2 Nov. 1901.

<sup>26</sup>Helen Corr, "'Home Rule' in Scotland: the Teaching of Housework in Scottish Schools, 1872-1914," in Girls in Their Prime: Scottish Education Revisited (Edinburgh, 1990), 44-5.

<sup>27</sup>The majority of Dundee parish councillors in 1901 were local tradesmen and small shopkeepers (DPCM, 11 Dec. 1901).

business men had no "fellow feeling" for the poor, and the business councillors, who responded with mutterings about the "Socialistic element" lowering the tone of the Council.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the Council's management of "an enormous sum of public money"<sup>29</sup> led to the likelihood that some councillors sought election for personal gain rather than altruistic motives. Beatrice Webb, as a member of the Poor Law Commission, noted that "corrupt self-interested folk" were associated with poor relief administration. She recorded in her diary: "I am not impressed with Scotch local government; there is less capacity, public spirit and integrity in the unpaid representatives than in England--especially those of the greater towns--more graft, I think."<sup>30</sup> Certainly, the Dundee Parish Council Minute Books support Beatrice Webb's impression, as details of tenders and contracts fill the pages much more than discussions of the poor and needy.

Although Council often threw out Walker's efforts at reform, they did allow her and Agnes Husband to introduce the Brabazon Employment Scheme into Dundee's Poorhouse during their first term in office. Walker often combined her voluntary philanthropic work with her statutory committee work; we have already seen that, in October 1902, the DSU had formed a Brabazon Committee, which proposed to teach handicrafts to Poorhouse inmates. The way in which Walker and Husband implemented the Brabazon Scheme illustrates the extent to which the Council valued formality and correct procedure. The women did not approach the Council themselves in their capacity as parish councillors; instead Steggall, in his capacity as Honourary Secretary of the DSU, wrote formally to ask "whether the Council will permit the Union to introduce the Brabazon Scheme among the inmates of

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<sup>28</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Anderson, Q63690(6); and Chisholm, Appendix XXIX.

<sup>29</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 30 Oct. 1901.

<sup>30</sup>Webb, 382. See also Hollis, 203, 210-15, 249.

the Poorhouse. Miss M.L. Walker will explain the object of the scheme in detail...."<sup>31</sup> By carefully following due process, the women organised the scheme, and by the following year, the Chairman was pleased to express "Council's gratification at the success of the Scheme."<sup>32</sup> In general, Walker's early work on the Council was characterised by a gendered division of labour as the two women were appointed to all the sub-committees dealing with domestic chores. They disposed of applications for clothing and boots from the outdoor poor; they arranged a special tea for the poorhouse inmates as part of the Coronation Day celebrations; and, when the poorhouse cook complained about the quality of the food supplied to her, they investigated the housekeeping practices of the poorhouse.<sup>33</sup>

At the November 1904 election, Husband lost her seat, and Walker became the only woman on Council, working alongside twenty-nine men. Between January and August 1905, she rarely attended Council owing to the intensive work of the DSU Report, but in September she returned to weekly meetings, and in October was appointed as one of the Council's representatives on the newly-formed Distress Committee.<sup>34</sup> In November, however, Council summarily rejected her recommendation for the appointment of a Female Assistant Inspector.<sup>35</sup> Throughout her tenure on Council, Walker campaigned vigorously for the appointment of a female official to supervise the care of pauper women and children. Walker's suggestion would have helped to correct a serious imbalance in Scottish Poor Law administration: while practically all Poor Law officials were men, the vast majority of paupers were women and children. According to the 1906 census of Scottish paupers, "the number of women in

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<sup>31</sup>DPCM, 7 Jan. 1903.

<sup>32</sup>DPCM, 1 June 1904.

<sup>33</sup>DPCM, 17 Dec. 1901; 29 May 1902; 27 Oct. 1902.

<sup>34</sup>DPCM, 26 Oct. 1905; 1 Nov. 1905.

<sup>35</sup>DPCM, 28 Nov. 1905.



receipt of relief is more than twice as great as the number of men."<sup>36</sup> The appointment of female officials was a common concern among Scottish women parish councillors. Levitt reports that it took "nearly a year of hard argument from [Edinburgh's] lady councillors to persuade the council to appoint a specialist nurse" for the children in the poorhouse.<sup>37</sup> After the abrupt dismissal of her proposal, Walker's participation in Council business during the remainder of her second term was merely perfunctory.<sup>38</sup>

After the 1907 election, three other women joined Walker on the Council, including her friend, Dr. Alice Moorehead. Immediately she attended more Council meetings, and within a month of the election, had visited the Poorhouses with Moorehead, submitting a report on leaking pipes and other defects.<sup>39</sup> A few months later, Moorehead, backed by Walker, launched an investigation into the conduct of the resident physician of the West Poorhouse. After comparing the Sick Registers of both Poorhouses, Moorehead had noticed that while the cost of medicines to the East Poorhouse had fallen slightly, there had been a "large increase" in the cost of those supplied to the West Poorhouse.<sup>40</sup> When questioned on the discrepancy, the physician "could give no satisfactory information regarding the cases treated...on account of his having failed to record in his Sick Register any cases treated...."<sup>41</sup> In exposing probable corruption, Moorehead reflected a pattern we have seen in earlier chapters of female agitation disturbing male complacency.

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<sup>36</sup>The figures were: 39,782 women, 16,440 men, 18,785 girls, and 19,717 boys (Memorandum on Census of Paupers, March 31st, 1906, in PP, Scotland: Statistics, 1911, Cd. 5440, liv: 39).

<sup>37</sup>Levitt, 91.

<sup>38</sup>DPCM, 28 Nov. 1905.

<sup>39</sup>DPCM, 19 Dec. 1907.

<sup>40</sup>DPCM, 29 June 1908.

<sup>41</sup>DPCM, 2 July 1908.

In November 1907, when the four women were elected, the Dundee Advertiser had little to say other than "three ladies have been appointed to the Parish Council to assist Miss Walker (returned unopposed)."<sup>42</sup> A few weeks later, however, the Advertiser had a lot to say about the apparent 'faux pas' of a newly elected female member, who had given 2s 6d to a starving woman in the street, and, the paper falsely claimed, had later asked the Council clerk for reimbursement. The Advertiser gleefully ridiculed and reprimanded the new councillor:

Those within the inner circles of Dundee public life are smiling up their sleeves at the predicament of a new member of the Parish Council - a lady to boot - whose knowledge of Poor Law administration is too profound for the understanding of those who have been all their lives at the work, and who are now being "educated"....  
...The moral of this story seems to be that ladies when they enter public life should pay less heed to feminine gossip and attribute some little knowledge to people who have been longer at the business than themselves.<sup>43</sup>

The women councillors responded quickly. Walker immediately called the attention of the council to the "untrue allegations", and Moorehead fired off a response to the Advertiser.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, the editorial, an example of gender conflict and class tension, had revealed hostility to educated middle class women, and a determination to keep them in their place. In the 1910 election, when the number of female parish councillors increased to five, the Advertiser conceded that "the administration of the poor law is a public duty which women are specially fitted to discharge," and that "women have a special aptitude for this kind of work."<sup>45</sup> However, the newspaper did not want Dundee women to become overly ambitious in their pursuit of civic equality, and made it clear that women's presence on the Parish

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<sup>42</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 6 Nov. 1907.

<sup>43</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 24 Dec. 1907.

<sup>44</sup>DPCM, 24 Dec. 1907; Dundee Advertiser, 25 Dec. 1907.

<sup>45</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 31 Oct. 1910; 2 Nov. 1910.

Council was no reason to grant them the franchise because, as the paper explained, there was "a difference between national politics and the dispensation of a local poor rate."<sup>46</sup>

The election of five women councillors in November 1910 gave Walker a core of support in her campaign for the appointment of a female assistant inspector. Walker's argument that a woman inspector should supervise the welfare of pauper children had been validated by the Poor Law Commission's 1909 Report on Scotland which included as one of its recommendations that "a certain proportion of the assistant inspectors should be women."<sup>47</sup> The Commission had paid attention to the large number of Scottish witnesses, both male and female, who advocated the appointment of lady inspectors.<sup>48</sup> The Commission had also been guided by C.T. Parsons' report on Scottish children, in which he severely criticized the quality of Scottish inspectors, stating that it was "in the fitness of the inspectorate...that the failure of the administration is most patent." Assistant inspectors, Parsons pointed out, were:

men chiefly between the ages of twenty-three and thirty who have graduated for their work by the ordinary routine of office clerks. It is obvious that for such duties these young men are quite unfitted...by age, training or education.

He noted that their function was confined to the relief of destitution, and that their "two minutes at the door" did nothing to further the welfare of the children. "The exception to these circumstances," concluded Parsons, was "the woman inspector."<sup>49</sup>

Shortly after the release of the report, the Scottish Local Government Board appointed Dr

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<sup>46</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 1 Nov. 1910.

<sup>47</sup>PP, Report on Scotland, 1909, Cd. 4922, xxxviii:115.

<sup>48</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Hadwen, Q61896; Haldane, Q60748(8); Walker, Q63373(31); Anderson, Q63690(8); Burnett, Appendix XXV; Greenlees, Appendix LXIII.

<sup>49</sup>PP, C.T. Parsons, Report on the Condition of Children...in Scotland, 1910, Cd. 5075, lii: 31-2.

Elizabeth McVail as its first lady inspector.<sup>50</sup> Other large Scottish towns followed suit, and by 1911, Edinburgh, Perth and Govan all had lady sub-inspectors.<sup>51</sup> Glasgow had been the exception, leading the way in 1900 by hiring the first female social worker in Scotland, and having five lady sub-inspectors on staff by 1911.<sup>52</sup> But Dundee Parish Council continued to procrastinate,<sup>53</sup> even although Parsons had been particularly critical of Dundee, where, he stated:

There is no supervisory care exercised and no responsibility accepted by the parish for the widows and children on the books....No notice is taken of the children's health, [or] the sanitary condition of the dwellings...[and] the utter absence of any attempt to improve or raise their standard of living is a sufficient proof of the laxity of administration.<sup>54</sup>

Dundee's women parish councillors, therefore, were well supported in their arguments for a female assistant inspector.

In addition, the Children Act, 1908, had authorised parish councils to appoint "infant life protection visitors" to monitor the care of foster children in the parish. In 1911, when Dundee female councillors intensified their campaign for a female inspector, they focussed on the appointment of an infant life protection visitor, repeatedly calling attention to the fact that the Council had made no provision for carrying out its responsibility under the terms of the Act.<sup>55</sup> In October 1911, the women's

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<sup>50</sup>Once more, the English system was far in advance of the Scottish. In 1873, the English Local Government Board had appointed Mrs. Nassau Senior as assistant inspector of workhouses, and in 1885, Miss M.H. Mason as Inspector of Boarded-out Children (Hilda Martindale, Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938 [London, 1938], 30-3).

<sup>51</sup>DPCM, 20 Mar. 1911. Aberdeen and Paisley also did not employ a female inspector.

<sup>52</sup>Levitt, 94-6.

<sup>53</sup>DPCM, 4 Apr. 1910; 15 Apr. 1910; 20 Mar. 1911.

<sup>54</sup>Parsons, 24-5.

<sup>55</sup>DPCM, 20 Mar. 1911; 5 Sept. 1911; 20 Oct. 1911; 24 Oct. 1911.

persistence was eventually rewarded when Council formed a sub-committee to consider the matter.<sup>56</sup> As a member of the sub-committee, Walker proposed a motion "that as an experiment, a Lady be appointed Infant Protection Visitor", which won by a narrow majority. The sub-committee forwarded a recommendation that a lady should be appointed to "overtake the visitation of the children boarded out in the Parish" for a salary of £50 and a uniform.<sup>57</sup> However, one week later at the Relief Committee meeting, when Walker moved approval of the recommendation, a male councillor, moving disapproval, suggested that the Inspector of the Poor should be appointed Infant Life Protection Visitor instead of a woman. The women and some sympathetic male councillors were defeated by nine votes to twelve.<sup>58</sup> The women did not give up quietly, and raised the matter at the next general Council meeting. However, although the meeting "was characterised by several breezy passages," the women's efforts were quashed as the majority of Dundee's men councillors stolidly refused to appoint a female assistant inspector.<sup>59</sup>

Why were Dundee's male councillors so adamantly opposed to the appointment of a female assistant inspector? Generally resistant to change, the councillors were especially resistant to change that involved females in positions of authority. Although the Council had approved the appointment of two female typists in the Inspector's office, at salaries of £45 p.a. and £37.10s p.a., they would not countenance employing a female assistant inspector at £50 p.a.<sup>60</sup> They sanctioned the employment of women in ancillary positions, but not in those associated with the 'professional' work of men. Perhaps they were also anxious to avoid the experience of the Dundee School Board, where there was a "heated

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<sup>56</sup>DPCM, 24 Oct. 1911.

<sup>57</sup>DPCM, 13 Nov. 1911.

<sup>58</sup>DPCM, 21 Nov. 1911.

<sup>59</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 7 Dec. 1911.

<sup>60</sup>DPCM, 22 Aug. 1907.

debate" over "the interference of the lady inspector," one member exclaiming that "the Board should not be dominated or domineered over by 'bloated officials.'"<sup>61</sup> In addition, personal animosities and factionalism often dictated the decisions of the Parish Council; as one councillor revealed to the Poor Law Commission:

The time arises when one member finds fault with another for some bit of business, and you will be sorry to know that that affects them when they come to grant relief. The very fact of one member advocating one case would put the other members against it.<sup>62</sup>

Some councillors would, as a matter of course, vote against the recommendations of Dundee's female councillors, who also tended to vote as a block, and almost always on the losing side.

The issue, however, involves more than male resistance to females in authority, and we should also consider the social composition and mindset of Dundee's parish councillors. As a large percentage were local tradesmen, they tended to regard the administration of poor relief in terms of the construction and repair of buildings. Thomas Ferguson has noted that during this period, there was a large rise in Scottish poor relief expenditure, which reflected an increase in poorhouse construction rather than in the numbers relieved.<sup>63</sup> The Council spent vast amounts of money on buildings. In 1893, a new poorhouse hospital, "unequalled by any of the same kind in Scotland," had been built at the cost of £25,000. Constructed of the finest quality material, it included two marble tablets on each side of the entrance hall, with "inscriptions in bevelled gilt letters" of the names of Council members.<sup>64</sup> In 1902, the Council built new administration offices at the cost of £7,304 2s 6d;<sup>65</sup> and in 1903, it took over the

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<sup>61</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 8 Feb. 1910.

<sup>62</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Anderson, Q63734.

<sup>63</sup>Ferguson, 246-9.

<sup>64</sup>DYB (1893): 156-60.

<sup>65</sup>DPCM, 24 Mar. 1902.

management of the Westgreen Asylum, setting off such a saga of remodelling and repairs that by 1909, the "amount expended on improvements was £7898 7s 5d."<sup>66</sup> Annual reports of Parish Council business invariably included a description of at least one Council building "in the hands of tradesmen, undergoing alterations."<sup>67</sup> One perceptive Dundonian, in a letter to the Advertiser, attacked "our public boards [who] vie with each other in erecting palatial offices, schools, [and] asylums," and who "focus their lordly minds on the palaces instead of the poor specimens of humanity who are to occupy them for a brief space."<sup>68</sup> The expenditure of £50 p.a. to appoint a woman to supervise the welfare of pauper children would have been a very small sum in the Council's budget, especially compared to the vast amounts that it spent on buildings, fittings and repairs.

But what of the women councillors? One week after their defeat over the appointment of a female assistant inspector, the five women once again assembled together in the Council offices, but on this occasion their task was to dispose of applications from the outdoor poor for boots and clothing.<sup>69</sup> Their effectiveness on Council had been restricted to their ability to dole out old clothes. Walker had first gained her seat on the Parish Council in 1901 by basing her campaign on women's domestic skills, and ultimately her function on the Council was restricted to that role.

## II. Assessment of Walker's work on Dundee Parish Council

Patricia Hollis, in her study of English women in local government, describes the

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<sup>66</sup>DYB (1909): 56.

<sup>67</sup>See for example, DYB (1908): 60; (1907): 27; (1904): 6.

<sup>68</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 17 June 1910.

<sup>69</sup>DPCM, 11 Dec. 1911.

"embarrassment, indifference, marginalizing, or outright hostility" confronting women guardians; she also points out their many victories, claiming "women remade the poorhouse" by humanizing the care and improving the diet, comfort and cleanliness of the inmates.<sup>70</sup> In Dundee, Walker experienced the hostility, but not the victories. Martha Vicinus, in her work on female settlers, describes their effectiveness on local government committees: "when experienced women settlers spoke out, men were forced to recognize the importance of meeting the separate needs of women and children."<sup>71</sup> This certainly does not reflect Walker's experience in Dundee. Rather than resembling the successful, pioneering English women guardians described by Vicinus and Hollis, Walker's experience more closely reflects Levitt's description of Scottish parish councils. Although there was a progressive movement at the national level of Scottish poor law administration, at the local level, there was "an attachment to established practices of discriminatory treatment...[and] the provision lay more or less ossified."<sup>72</sup> When Walker tried to introduce new ideas to the Parish Council, she encountered inflexible resistance to change, which her tenacious efforts were unable to overcome.

Walker had sought election to Dundee Parish Council in order to extend the sphere of her welfare work. The Council had the funds, the resources and the statutory powers to make it an effective mechanism for social improvement, but it fell far short of Walker's expectations. Her experience on Council was one of frustration and disillusionment. Small hints scattered throughout the minute books point to her dissatisfaction: "Miss Walker declined to vote on the egg contract," and the frequent recording of "Miss Walker had left the meeting early before the vote was taken" indicate her impatience

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<sup>70</sup>Hollis, 15, 282-5, 247.

<sup>71</sup>Vicinus, 238.

<sup>72</sup>Levitt, 98.



at the commercialism and bombast of her co-councillors.<sup>73</sup> The pattern of her attendance at Council meetings also suggests disillusionment: she attended more meetings during the first year of each three-year term of office than she did in the second and third years, when her attendance record dropped as she realised her lack of progress.<sup>74</sup> In her evidence to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, she outlined several shortcomings of the system. First, she felt that it was "the duty of the Parish Council to give sufficient aliment," especially to the elderly and widows with children, but the amount they awarded was insufficient "to keep soul and body together."<sup>75</sup> Second, she was dissatisfied with the Scottish system of poor law medical care, which withheld assistance from the sick wives and children of the able-bodied, causing "a great deal of hardship and suffering."<sup>76</sup> Third, she bemoaned the "want of personal knowledge on the part of the administrators of the lives of those whom they relieve":

There is in the administration of the Poor Law a certain hard and rigid officialism.... The officials have no time, and the Councillors do not come in contact with their poor; there might be more personal friendly care of the aged pensioners and of the boarded-out children.<sup>77</sup>

This criticism was closely tied to her fourth complaint: the lack of women inspectors. She explained to the Commissioners: "when so many of the problems are connected with women and children, the employment of some women inspectors might be fraught with great benefit."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>DPCM, 2 Oct. 1907; 6 Sept. 1911; 1 Nov. 1911.

<sup>74</sup>1905, the year of the DSU Report, was an exception to this pattern. In 1902, 1908 and 1911, the first years of council terms, she attended an average of 64 meetings, which dropped to an average of 45 meetings in the other years.

<sup>75</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Walker, Q63374(29); Q63656; Q63415.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., Q63582.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., Q63374(30).

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., Q63374(26, 31).

After twelve years of meetings, votes, sub-committees and reports, Walker had very little success in trying to change the policy of Dundee Parish Council. Although she had some small successes in introducing the Brabazon Scheme and in exposing corruption and leaking pipes in the Poorhouse, she failed to persuade the Council to adopt a fixed scale of relief or to appoint a female inspector. Rather than extending the sphere of her welfare work, her tenure on Parish Council curtailed it.

### III. Dundee Distress Committee

In 1905, the Unemployed Workmen's Act established Distress Committees to deal with the growing problem of unemployment. The intention of the Act was to provide relief work for the temporarily unemployed, skilled workman to save him from coming under the Poor Law. According to Jose Harris, the Act was "doomed to failure from the outset," as it lacked the support of the Conservative government which sponsored it and of the Liberal government which came to power shortly after its enactment.<sup>79</sup> Although the Act was ultimately unsuccessful, it nevertheless represented an admission that the problem of unemployment lay in socio-economic conditions and not in the character of the workman; it also set the precedent of government responsibility for solving the problem.<sup>80</sup> Originally the Conservative government had intended to exclude Scotland from the Bill.<sup>81</sup> After some political manoeuvring, however, an all-party Parliamentary group managed to include Scotland and ensure that all British workmen received equal treatment under the Act. Balfour and the

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<sup>79</sup>Jose Harris, *Unemployment and Politics* (Oxford, 1972), 165-7.

<sup>80</sup>Gilbert, 234-5, 243-4, 39.

<sup>81</sup>See Levitt, 53-6.

Scottish Secretary were displeased; according to Levitt, the Act represented "a drastic alteration in the philosophy of Scottish welfare: the unemployed now had a right to public assistance."<sup>82</sup> The government's expectation that the Act would be a stop-gap, three-year measure proved unrealistic. The Act lasted a lot longer than three years, but it took only one year for people to realize that it was ineffective legislation which did little to alleviate the lot of the unemployed skilled workman. By early 1907, W.H. Beveridge, the civil servant, declared: "the attitude of nearly all those engaged in its administration may fairly be described as one of growing hopelessness."<sup>83</sup>

The government had introduced legislation which relied on voluntary funds for its financing and voluntary workers for its implementation. Distress Committees comprised representatives from the Town Council, the Parish Council, and others "experienced in the relief of distress." Committees were to review applications for relief, ascertain that they were genuinely seeking employment, and provide them with temporary work, or help them to emigrate or relocate to another area. They established labour exchanges or employment registers, provided relief works, and determined the rate of pay. Moreover, the government hoped that local voluntary contributions would provide the funds to pay the wages of relief workers.<sup>84</sup> In 1906, when voluntary contributions fell short, Parliament provided a grant from the Imperial Exchequer of £200,000, of which Scotland received £10,000.<sup>85</sup>

Unlike the Dundee School Board or the Dundee Parish Council, the Distress Committee was marked by a burst of short-lived enthusiasm. It quickly opened a local Labour Exchange and formed

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<sup>82</sup>Levitt, 56.

<sup>83</sup>Quoted in Gilbert, 243.

<sup>84</sup>Gilbert, 242-3; Ferguson, 326-30.

<sup>85</sup>Ferguson, 328.

an Investigative Sub-Committee to meet every Monday evening at 7:00p.m. to review applications for relief.<sup>86</sup> Walker, one of the most energetic members of the Dundee Distress Committee, quickly took a leadership role. Within months of its formation, she was chairing sub-Committee meetings, signing the minutes "M.L. Walker, Chairwoman," and exercising "the power...to abstract from the register the most necessitous and urgent cases."<sup>87</sup> For two years Walker attended weekly meetings at the Labour Exchange where she classified applicants according to "their urgency," which she determined by the employment status of the workman's wife and children. As Walker explained to the Poor Law Commission:

As long as the wife can work there is 10s. or 11s. coming into the house, but when she is unable to work, either from illness or recent confinement, the household is reduced to destitution.<sup>88</sup>

When the Chairman of the Commission implied that applicants "lived on" the wages of their wives and children, Walker retorted sharply: "The men are not so bad as that. These men were applicants for work and not for relief."<sup>89</sup> Her primary function on the Committee was to 'save' families from starvation by issuing the husband a ticket which allowed him to break stones, clean streets or construct sewers for a maximum of 5d. per hour.

In March 1906, 733 people had registered with the Dundee Distress Committee; the following year, there were 1106; by the end of 1909, a total of 2794 people had applied to the Committee for relief

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<sup>86</sup>DDCM, 4 Dec. 1905; 9 Feb. 1906.

<sup>87</sup>DDCM, 18 Dec. 1906; 20 Feb. 1906.

<sup>88</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Walker, Q63374(46, 49); Q63482. According to Harris, "nearly all distress committees gave priority to workmen with the largest number of dependents or to the most urgent cases of need" (Harris, 172-3).

<sup>89</sup>PP, Scottish Evidence, evidence of Walker, Q63485-6.

work.<sup>90</sup> Ironically, as the number of applicants for relief increased, the number of members on the Distress Committee decreased. After two years, the Committee was holding much fewer meetings, and the Clerk was reporting "an unusual number of resignations."<sup>91</sup> After August 1909, Walker rarely attended meetings. The Dundee Distress Committee, like all other Distress Committees in Britain, had failed to fulfil its function as defined by the terms of the Unemployed Workmen Act.

The primary reason for the Committee's failure was the lack of funds to pay for relief wages. By empowering Distress Committees to use public money to set up "the machinery" of the Committee, the Act had conveyed the impression that the rates would also provide the funds for relief wages; as a result, the Committee found it very difficult to attract voluntary contributions.<sup>92</sup> Nor was the grant from the Exchequer of much help; in 1907, Dundee's share of Scotland's £10,000 was £321.<sup>93</sup> The Clerk of the Distress Committee expressed his frustration:

Here we were in Dundee with between 700 and 800 applicants for work...more than one-half of whom...were deserving cases and were necessitous cases. What was the position of the Distress Committee towards these applicants? The position of the applicant was "You have invited me to apply and I have applied. You have submitted me to a most searching investigation and I have satisfactorily undergone that investigation. You have found that I am a suitable applicant, that I am willing to work, and that I and my family are on the verge of starvation. Now what are you going to do for me?" The answer of the Distress Committee is: "All that you say is true. It is our place to provide work for you but as we have received no money from the public to enable us to provide that work, we have nothing further to say to you. If and when we have money, we shall try to provide work, but so long as we have no money we can do nothing."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>DDCM, 14 Mar. 1906; 31 Jan. 1910; 6 Dec. 1909.

<sup>91</sup>DDCM, passim; Dundee Advertiser, 19 June 1907.

<sup>92</sup>See for example, DDCM, 19 June 1907.

<sup>93</sup>DDCM, 22 Apr. 1907.

<sup>94</sup>Report by Clerk of Distress Committee, Distress Committee Documents, File 3, TC/SF/306/3, in Dundee City Archives.

In addition, the Dundee Distress Committee had briefly discussed but summarily dismissed the Act's ambitious plans for assisted emigration. Although plenty of Dundonians were anxious to emigrate, and although the Canadian Government Agency in Glasgow was confident that it would have "no trouble in placing...selected and approved single men" on Canadian farms, the Committee "did not entertain the idea of assisting any persons to emigrate."<sup>95</sup>

Between 1906-1908, Walker spent much time and energy trying to fashion the Dundee Distress Committee into an effective instrument for social amelioration. She became involved in numerous committees, sub-committees, special committees, and conferences which held lengthy meetings and passed ineffectual resolutions.<sup>96</sup> By 1909, the Distress Committee finally admitted defeat, sending a letter to the Prime Minister informing him that "it is the experience of the Dundee Distress Committee that the Unemployed Workmen's Act 1905 is quite inadequate to deal with recurring distress from unemployment." They stressed that the problems of unemployment "transcend the powers of a local body" and urged the necessity for "national action."<sup>97</sup> Like her work on the Parish Council, most of Walker's work on the Distress Committee was an exercise in futility as she was caught in a quagmire of inconsequential committees, trying to find solutions to an insurmountable problem.

#### **IV. Insurance Committee**

Although Distress Committees failed to solve the problem of unemployment, Gilbert claims that they led "serious social thinkers" to find alternatives and the national system of unemployment insurance

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<sup>95</sup>Distress Committee Documents, File 3; DDCM, 28 Feb. 1906; 14 Mar. 1906.

<sup>96</sup>DDCM, 13 Sept. 1907; 30 Sept. 1907; 22 Oct. 1907; 28 Jan. 1908; 30 Jan. 1908; 24 Mar. 1908; 8 June 1908.

<sup>97</sup>DDCM, 20 Dec. 1909.

developed as a result of their failure.<sup>98</sup> The National Health Insurance Act, passed in December 1911, provided unemployment and sickness insurance for workers in three industries, which was paid for by weekly contributions from employees, employers and the state. The Act also included a maternity benefit of 30s. to wives of insured persons, or to mothers who were themselves insured persons. A Scottish Insurance Commission was appointed to carry the Act into effect in Scotland, with Walker's friend, Mary Paterson, serving as the female Scottish Insurance Commissioner.<sup>99</sup> Insurance Committees, which were constituted in every county and large burgh to administer the Act locally, dealt with claims for treatment and made provision for sickness and maternity benefit. They operated via three sub-committees: Finance, Sanatorium Benefit, and Medical Benefit. Once again Walker took a leadership role, serving as a member of the Sanatorium Benefit Sub-Committee, and as Convenor of the Medical Benefit Sub-Committee.<sup>100</sup> According to Paterson, Walker saw the Act as "a great step forward...[and] she set herself to explain and 'popularise' it especially among the working women in Dundee."<sup>101</sup> As there are no surviving records for Dundee's Insurance Committee, we cannot examine her role on it. Her tenure was short, however, as the Act came into effect less than one year before her death.

## V. Assessment

We have seen that there was a close relationship between female settlement workers and the expansion of state social welfare services. The Unemployed Workmen Act (1905), the Notification of

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<sup>98</sup>Gilbert, 238.

<sup>99</sup>Scottish National Insurance Commission, Establishment Record, SRO HH3/1.

<sup>100</sup>Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, Evidence, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1921), evidence of Walker, Q35103(1).

<sup>101</sup>Paterson, 9.

Births Act (1907), the Children Act (1908), the Labour Exchange Act (1909), the National Insurance Act (1911), and the Acts providing for the feeding and medical inspection of school children all required the services of volunteer workers. Local authorities frequently enlisted the help of settlement women whom they considered valuable volunteers because of their knowledge of local conditions. Female settlers therefore played an important role at the local level in implementing national legislation. Yet, as Jane Lewis has pointed out, very few of them crossed over into positions on central government to take part in the policy-making processes of welfare reforms.<sup>102</sup> This echoes our discussion in Chapter Two: women did the work, but men got the government jobs.<sup>103</sup>

There was a further anomaly in the Liberal government's attitude to women settlers. While they relied on the voluntary efforts of women to implement their new social legislation, they continued to deny them the vote. As Mary Stocks observed: "The Liberal Government, which so boldly demonstrated the possibilities of legislative action in the field of social reform, exasperated women by its obstinate negation in respect of a democratic franchise."<sup>104</sup> Just as central government positions were considered outside of women's spheres, so was their participation in national politics. Stocks surmises that the government's refusal to grant women the suffrage was actually detrimental to the development of social service work, as many settlement women transferred their energies into suffrage agitation to the extent

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<sup>102</sup>Jane Lewis, "Gender, the family and women's agency in the building of 'welfare states': the British case," *Social History* 19 (1994): 37-55.

<sup>103</sup>Interestingly, two of Walker's friends were exceptions to this pattern: Mary Paterson was the Female Insurance Commissioner for Scotland, and Mona Wilson held the same position for England (*The Englishwoman's Yearbook*, (1914): 166; see also Ford, 267-9). Three other Scottish women mentioned in this thesis also served on national government committees: Elizabeth Haldane, Agnes Husband and Helen MacKenzie (P. Ford, *A Breviate of Parliamentary Papers, 1900-1916* [Oxford, 1957], 372, 268).

<sup>104</sup>Stocks, 34-5.



that "the social services were drained of woman-power."<sup>105</sup> Dundee was one of the major centres of the Scottish suffrage movement.<sup>106</sup> Leah Leneman has shown that after May 1908, when Winston Churchill became the candidate for the safe seat of Liberal Dundee, "the heavy guns of the national suffrage movement were wheeled into Dundee."<sup>107</sup> Two of Walker's colleagues on Parish Council, Agnes Husband and Elizabeth Scotland, who were prominent members of the local Freedom League, viewed parish council work as a stepping-stone to the vote.<sup>108</sup> There is no indication, however, that Walker supported the suffrage movement, and it seems likely that her commitment to social work overrode all other concerns.

Walker's experience on public bodies varied. On the Parish Council, an established committee with long-standing methods of doing business, her efforts at reform were consistently blocked by her fellow male councillors. By contrast, on both the Distress and Insurance Committees, which had no previously defined guidelines or patriarchal precedents, she assumed a leadership role. What can account for her exceptional position, considering the resistance from Scottish men towards women in positions of authority? First, after the publication of the DSU Report, she was considered a local authority and a source of information on Dundee's social conditions. Second, Vicinus has pointed out that the severe dark clothing of social workers of this period provided a "kind of immunity," conveying an impression of professionalism and asexuality.<sup>109</sup> Walker's Grey Ladies uniform, which she always

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<sup>105</sup>Stocks, 35.

<sup>106</sup>Leah Leneman, "Dundee and the Women's Suffrage Movement: 1907-1914," in The Remaking of Juteopolis: Dundee circa 1891-1991, ed. Christopher A. Whatley (Dundee, 1992), 80-95.

<sup>107</sup>Leneman, 81.

<sup>108</sup>Leneman, 87.

<sup>109</sup>See Vicinus, 220, 40.

wore, probably facilitated her access to positions of civic responsibility. Third, through her long experience on the DSU, Walker was adept at devising and organising schemes, and was very comfortable with committee work, even in a male-dominated environment. She was simply good at doing her job.

Although we admire Walker's efforts on local government, they probably made little contribution to her long-term goals as hidebound conservatism and bureaucratic paralysis stifled voluntary initiative and action. She also had to face problems inherent in local government, including inefficiency, petty squabbling and even corruption. Vicinus has noted that as women settlers became "volunteers working for the state and its agencies," the tone of their work became "more bureaucratic" and "less personal."<sup>110</sup> Walker's work on the Distress Committee was also marked by a process of growing bureaucratization as she became immersed in committee and paper work. Ironically, by trying to extend her sphere of welfare work through statutory committees, Walker actually spent a lot less time on personal social work, which she had always believed was of the first importance.

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<sup>110</sup>Vicinus, 244.

## CONCLUSION

### I. Mary Lily Walker : An Assessment

We have to admire Walker's energy, effort and agency. She prepared herself for a life of social work in Dundee by going to the Grey Ladies, and between 1900-1913, she pursued her goal with determination and initiative. She started her own settlement house, providing Dundee with an enclave of women trained in the new ideas of social work. She never hid behind false delusions of philanthropic improvement, but rather conducted an authoritative social investigation, revealing the appalling conditions of life of Dundee's working class. By means of the Grey Lodge social workers and the DSU machinery she started a number of social services for women and children.<sup>1</sup> Recognising that effective reform must have the authority of the law, she moved into local government work, where she was comfortable, although not always successful, in the male-dominated world of public committees. Although often thwarted on the Parish Council, she was popular with the electorate, easily outmatching her four male opponents in the 1910 elections.<sup>2</sup> She tried to fulfil her original vision of Grey Lodge as a centre working in conjunction with the Public Health, School Board and Poor Law. She prodded public bodies into using their statutory powers, and she kept topics of social reform before the public by arranging conferences, meetings, and guest speakers. A forceful personality, responsive to new ideas, Walker was non-judgemental in her attitude towards the poor, writing about them with great sympathy.

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<sup>1</sup>Leslie MacKenzie, paying tribute to Walker, frequently refers to the DSU in describing services in Dundee for mothers and children (W.L. MacKenzie, Scottish Mothers and Children (Dunfermline, 1917).

<sup>2</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 2 Nov. 1910.

Motivated by a strong sense of civic responsibility, she was intelligent, hard-working, thorough and capable, with a pragmatic approach to her work. She was Dundee's leading activist in matters of social welfare and reform.<sup>3</sup>

Walker became a recognized authority on conditions in Dundee. In 1907, she prepared a detailed report for the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, was one of only seven Scottish women who presented oral evidence to them, and accompanied Commissioners Loch, Lansbury and Hill when they visited Dundee to investigate conditions first-hand.<sup>4</sup> In 1908, in conjunction with Templeman, she produced a report on Infant Mortality for the Home Office.<sup>5</sup> In 1910, Jessie Allen, one of her Grey Lodge staff, and Superintendent of the Restaurant for Nursing Mothers since 1906, gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Divorce in London, outlining the legal difficulties and financial expenses which made it almost impossible for the Scottish poor to obtain a divorce.<sup>6</sup> In early 1913, Walker prepared a report for the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland.

But what good did she do for working class women and children? Apart from the day trips for 3000 school children, it appears that the numbers benefiting from her schemes were small. The Housing Committee had 140 families on their books, the School Dinners Committee fed approximately 100 children per week, the Restaurants about 130-150 nursing mothers per week, and the Country Holiday

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<sup>3</sup>Walker was involved in more activities than have been discussed in this thesis. She was also the Secretary of Dundee's Hospital for Women, and a member of the Children's Welfare Committee.

<sup>4</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 12 June 1907.

<sup>5</sup>Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, Evidence, (Edinburgh, 1921), evidence of Walker, Q35103(6). In 1907, the Home Secretary launched an inquiry in selected industrial areas of the effect of women's employment on infant mortality, but did not publish the results (MacKenzie, 144).

<sup>6</sup>Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes, Evidence, 1912-13, Cd. 6481, xx: 129.

Committee arranged fortnight holidays for probably two to three hundred children every year.<sup>7</sup> The Restaurants lowered the infant mortality rate in their surrounding areas, but had an imperceptible effect on Dundee's rate as a whole. In 1908, the mortality rate of babies whose mothers attended one Restaurant was 60 per 1000, compared to 200 for the district and 170 for the town. However, it is likely that the number of babies associated with the restaurants formed a small part of the 4,500-4,600 births in Dundee every year.<sup>8</sup> Walker's practical achievements were small scale and local.

We also have to look at the nature of the relief as well as the numbers relieved. Walker provided ameliorative measures such as meals for mothers and day trips for children, but avoided tackling the serious issues of child labour in the mills or low wage rates for women. She provided services to alleviate their condition but did not attack the root causes of the problem. Walker frequently chastised local authorities for not using their legal powers, but she did not challenge jute industrialists over the wages or working conditions of their employees. The DSU Report recommended that employers adopt maternity insurance schemes, and suggested that they provide more jobs for men, but Walker did not campaign to effect change in these areas. She tried to soften the blows without changing the system.

Moreover, Walker was an integral part of the process of greater middle class intrusion in working class lives. In the early twentieth century, as children became figures of political importance, the state passed legislation for their welfare and "protection," which included the power to prosecute parents for "neglect" of their children. The legislation also increased the authority of women health visitors, giving them greater powers to visit and inspect working class homes. After the 1907

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<sup>7</sup>It is impossible to determine exact numbers from the evidence available.

<sup>8</sup>Walker, "Mothers and Children," 40-1; Dundee Advertiser, 24 Mar. 1908; 29 Mar. 1910; DYB (1909): 65-6; (1912): 53; (1913): 107. Dr Templeman cited the restaurant as a factor contributing to the decline in infant mortality (see MacKenzie, 146-7).

Notification of Births Act, which required parents to register the birth of an infant within a few days, Templeman, the MOH, was able to provide lists of newborns to the Restaurant superintendent who visited the infants. The volume of Social Union visiting increased from 199 visits in 1905 to 1073 visits in 1912.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Walker's Parish Council campaign for the appointment of an Infant Life Protection Visitor, if successful, would have led to an even greater number of visits to working class homes. Moreover, historians have noticed a paradox in the efforts of early women social workers: unmarried, financially independent, middle class women were "bent on leaving their homes" in order to persuade impecunious, working class mothers to stay in theirs and bring up their babies.<sup>10</sup> Walker is a prime example of this paradox. She firmly believed that mothers returning to work one month after childbirth was a major factor in Dundee's extraordinarily high infant mortality rate, and throughout her social work career, she urged new mothers to be at home with their babies and not at work in the mills.

How can we view middle class lady visitors? Were they self-opinionated busybodies wielding authority over working class women, prying into their affairs, admonishing them for their 'faults,' and exacerbating class antagonisms? Or were they genuinely helpful and sympathetic, offering good advice on feeding babies and washing bottles? Evidence suggests that both possibilities were at work. The description of Glasgow's lady health visitors supports the former view:

Since the appointment of additional lady inspectors, parents are being daily visited and cautioned.... These ladies carefully examine the bodies, clothing, bedding and food provided for the children.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, *Evidence*, (Edinburgh, 1921), evidence of Walker, Q35103(45).

<sup>10</sup>Lewis, *Women*, 33; Vicinus, 239; Mahood, "Family Ties," 59.

<sup>11</sup>James Motion, "The Working of the Children Act in Glasgow," *COR* (1913): 119.

Nevertheless, Jane Lewis believes that, despite class barriers, some middle class women could "reach an understanding of their lives that was remarkably sympathetic and balanced."<sup>12</sup> Jessie Allen, the Grey Lady who gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Divorce, visited the poor under the Notification of Births Act, and was taken into their confidence as she was told "many tales of matrimonial complications and hardships."<sup>13</sup> Middle class attitude to the poor, although loaded with condescension, encompassed a very wide spectrum, and there was scope for a sensitive approach on a personal level.

It is important not to underestimate the seriousness of conditions in Dundee. Eleanor Gordon has shown that a large number of Dundee's female jute workers were energetic, militant and held spontaneous strikes.<sup>14</sup> Many others, however, needed help. The Restaurant superintendent's visiting-book recorded cases of multiple pregnancies and child deaths: one woman had "twelve children, two premature and two still-born, seven are dead"; another with "ten children, four dead"; and yet another who had "nine children, three died under one year."<sup>15</sup> Malnourished mothers and children were a fact of life in Dundee; in one case "a Union visitor found an infant being fed with warm water, there being no food in the house."<sup>16</sup> Parsons' report describes Dundee women as "miserable...hopeless and depressed, as well as physically unfit. The mill-work, child-bearing and year after year of low earnings

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<sup>12</sup>Lewis, Women, 268.

<sup>13</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 10 Nov. 1910.

<sup>14</sup>Eleanor Gordon, Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland, 1850-1914 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991).

<sup>15</sup>Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, Evidence, (Edinburgh, 1921), evidence of Walker, Q35103(23).

<sup>16</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 26 Mar. 1909. The Social Union was not a relief agency, but in cases of extreme distress, they provided small amounts of material aid as well as maternal advice; in 1911 they spent £37 on "coal and groceries to help the distressed" (Dundee Advertiser, 9 Mar. 1912).

and bad housing make the lot of the women hard."<sup>17</sup> Evidence of women's suffering during pregnancy and childbirth comes not only from middle class observers but also from working class women themselves. Maternity: Letters from Working Women, published in 1915, contains harrowing accounts of malnourished mothers who often "went without" food when pregnant. One woman wrote: "hard work and worry and insufficient food had told on my once robust constitution, with the result that I nearly lost my life through want of nourishments, and did after nine months of suffering lose my child." According to another woman, there was a "great need for a place where a young mother could go and get advice and, if necessary, nourishment."<sup>18</sup> The Restaurant for Nursing Mothers was, therefore, not merely the imposition of middle class mores on working class lives, but was a practical response to the needs of working women.

For some Dundee mothers, life was so unbearable that they smothered their newborn babies. William Walker has investigated Dundee's extraordinarily high rate of infant deaths due to "overlaying" (lying over an infant in bed and suffocating it).<sup>19</sup> Calculating rates of overlaying in the four principal cities of Scotland between 1881-1910 and comparing them to English data, Walker finds Dundee's rate was "staggeringly disproportionate." The discrepancy cannot be explained simply in terms of overcrowded conditions and drunken mothers rolling over in bed because, as William Walker points out, Glasgow had more overcrowding, greater drunkenness, and "far fewer suffocations." Overlaying was fifteen times more likely to happen to illegitimate than legitimate babies; and 46% of the deaths

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<sup>17</sup>PP, Parsons, Condition of Children...in Scotland, 1910, Cd. 5075, lii: 45.

<sup>18</sup>Women's Co-operative Guild, Maternity: Letters from Working-Women, ed. Margaret Llewelyn Davies (London, 1978), 23, 152. The letters were written by the "better-paid" workers, whose situation would have been less severe than women in Dundee.

<sup>19</sup>William M. Walker, "Infant Suffocation - Historical Myth?" Scottish Economic and Social History 8 (1988): 56-72.



happened between Saturday night and Sunday morning: further indications that "overlaying" was deliberate. Walker surmises that a "soft pillow" and "drink sufficient to fortify resolve" played a part in Dundee's high rate of infant deaths due to suffocation.<sup>20</sup>

It is indisputable that, for some Dundee women, conditions were desperate, and they needed help. We cannot adequately assess Walker's effectiveness in providing it. We have seen that she had a negligible effect on policy changes in local government; and that her practical achievements were small scale and local. Nevertheless, her efforts were remarkable, and they brought small comforts to the lives of many, although they formed a small part of Dundee as a whole. Walker was working among conditions she was powerless to change. As Anna Davin has pointed out:

No amount of instruction or advice...or a district visitor's calls at the house, could remove the basic handicaps of overcrowding, of damp, ill-drained, airless, bathless, tapless lodgings, of shared and filthy ash closets and middens.<sup>21</sup>

Walker herself saw little progress as a result of her work. Her 1913 report for the Royal Commission on Housing conveys a tone of weariness and disillusionment as she looked at Dundee's housing situation to see "what improvement there has been, if any, during the past ten years." On the density of population, she wrote: "the districts remain much as they were.... The Local Authority has never taken action under...the Housing of Working Classes Act, 1890 (amended). Until the areas...are dealt with as a whole, very little real improvement is possible." On the problem of overcrowding, she reported: "the results are discouraging in the extreme.... In Dundee, hundreds of families, consisting of husband and wife, with children varying in number from two to six, live in [one-roomed houses], or rather exist on a low level of civilisation." She continued:

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<sup>20</sup>Walker, 61, 66-7.

<sup>21</sup>Davin, 52.

It is hardly possible to imagine the friction, the strain on nerves and temper involved in living in such close quarters. The average size of the Dundee rooms was 1005 cubic feet.... It gives very little space in which to carry on the activities of five or six human beings, and death when it enters these houses is robbed of solemnity, of reserve, even of decency.

She referred to "the question of married women's labour...[which] baffles the would-be reformer at every point," and concluded: "For the past ten years I have hoped against hope that some turn towards betterment might come. Efforts were made.... Nothing has come."<sup>22</sup>

Disillusionment was common among social reformers.<sup>23</sup> In 1894, Canon Barnett, reflecting on twenty years of work, noted some improvements:

But it is disappointing to reflect how little all these improvements mean: how poor the poor remain, how inadequate are the average wages to meet the needs of life, how vast is the body of labour still unorganised, how low is the standard of health in East London compared with that of West London.<sup>24</sup>

Patrick Geddes had also been "baffled" by the problems of Dundee. In 1919, at his farewell lecture in Dundee, he told his audience: "Beyond this little garden I have practically failed to make any real impression upon this great industrial city."<sup>25</sup> Bruce Lenman believes that although Geddes' influence was "not spectacular," he nevertheless contributed to "a gradual change of outlook in significant circles in Dundee."<sup>26</sup> Perhaps this was also Walker's greatest contribution to Dundee. She placed the condition of the poor squarely in the public view. In 1913, D'Arcy Thompson believed that, as a result

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<sup>22</sup>Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, Evidence, (Edinburgh, 1921), evidence of Walker, Q35103(12), (15), (16), (28), (41), (50), (8), (63).

<sup>23</sup>See Vicinus, 239.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel Barnett, "A Twenty Years' Retrospect," Introduction to the 2nd. ed. Practicable Socialism: Essays on Social Reform (London, 1894), 1-2.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted in Lenman, 96.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

of Walker's work, "we all know something more of the true facts that constitute poverty":

We know better...the conditions under which the poor live, and see more clearly the troubles and the hardships, the disabilities and the wrongs.... By her labours...it has come about that we know a hundredfold more than we did when her work began, of the lives of our poorer neighbours in this City of Dundee.

We know better...of the conditions under which children pine and dwindle for lack of meat, and air, and sun, and holidays; of how oftentimes mothers go hungry that the children may be fed....<sup>27</sup>

After the publication of the DSU Report, it became increasingly difficult for people to believe that the poor state of Dundee's workers was caused by "thriftlessness," "intemperance," or "ignorance"; or that a solution could be found in the reformation of character; or that instruction in domestic science would be a cure-all for the conditions of poverty.

Walker not only contributed towards a change in Dundee's opinion, there was also a shift in her own opinion. In the last year and a half of her life, she wrote frequently to Mary Paterson who noticed her changing views:

As her knowledge grew and her sympathies deepened, she abandoned, often with regret, opinions and methods to which tradition and education had led her, and adopted others which she felt more nearly satisfied her ideals of Christian citizenship.<sup>28</sup>

Hints of the nature of the shift may be found in her Housing Commission report. She no longer made fervent exhortations to the middle class to get involved in the wellbeing of the community. She now believed that "the most clamant need is to make our workers discontented with their present surroundings, and in some way to fire their imagination with a concrete ambition towards a higher standard in their condition of life." She continued:

I have known families, decent, hard-working people, who have lived in [two-roomed] houses twenty, thirty, and, in one instance, forty years. It seems to me most disquieting

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<sup>27</sup>Dundee Advertiser, 2 July 1913.

<sup>28</sup>Paterson, 9-10.

that this is all we can offer our workers as a home, most depressing that they acquiesce in it.

It would seem that the only hope of real amendment lies in the movement among the workers towards the standardisation of wages and demand for a minimum wage.

Walker's last words in her report were: "our industrial condition has abolished home life."<sup>29</sup> Walker had undergone a considerable shift in her social work career: from the 1890s when she adhered to Octavia Hill's tenets that personal interaction with the poor was the route to social reform, to the early years of the century when she advocated state intervention, to 1913 when she turned to the issue of wages. Walker had moved from Girls' Clubs to Distress Committees to the "clamant need" for a minimum wage.

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Lily Walker died on the 1 July 1913, at the age of forty-nine. Her death was a great shock to her friends and co-workers, although it is highly likely that she herself had known for some months that she was dying. By April 1913, she had prepared her will, leaving to her many friends selected personal items. Walker's will also included a trust disposition leaving Grey Lodge in the hands of trustees "to be used and employed by them as a Settlement House so as to provide a focus for social work, and place of training for ladies engaged in such work and that similar to the way it may be used and employed by me prior to my decease." The work of the Dundee Social Union and Grey Lodge Settlement continued until the 1930s when they were formally amalgamated into the Grey Lodge Settlement Association "to ensure the continuance of the work so well founded by Miss Walker."<sup>30</sup> Today Grey Lodge, as a thriving community centre, providing a variety of services to pre-schoolers, teenagers, young mothers and

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<sup>29</sup>Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland, Evidence, (Edinburgh, 1921), evidence of Walker, Q35103 (61), (55), (63).

<sup>30</sup>Grey Lodge Settlement Committee, GD/OC/GL 3/1/1.

pensioners, continues Walker's contribution to the social life of Dundee.

In 1935, twenty-two years after Walker's death, Mary Paterson, then in her sixties, edited a memorial volume, Mary Lily Walker of Dundee: Some Memories, to which Mona Wilson, Meta Peterson, Rhoda Bethell and other old friends contributed glowing testaments. Even more poignant than their reminiscences, however, is a letter written to D'Arcy Thompson on the evening of Walker's funeral, by Denny Oliphant, the sister of Madge Valentine, whose death in 1897 had been the catalyst for Walker to seek solace and social work training with the Grey Ladies. Denny, who had spent her life raising her sister's children, wrote to D'Arcy:

I feel I cannot go to bed tonight without saying a word to you. It seems alas that there is hardly anyone to whom one can speak of her or whom one can expect to understand what dear Lily's death means to us the children and myself... All her life of devotion and endeavour and achievement are to me a thing apart - a continual source of awe and wonderment - but it is her own self- her great goodness and tenderness and friendship to us in those bitter days, now long ago, that make her feel to us a piece of ourselves....

I felt for some years that we had got out of touch with Lily - I'm sure it was somehow my fault and that no doubt the children and our own immediate interests absorb me too much, and I did not enter into or try really to understand all her many interests...for surely there are few women living with her intellect - but this last year I felt it was different and that she had come back to us and liked to and I am so thankful to remember several evenings that she was here and that seemed to be like old days - and also that I saw and had a talk with her on the last Friday - when she seemed perfectly well - I had hoped we would have seen so much more of her now.

Your tribute to her was very true and just and beautifully expressed. In old days would not her memory have inspired pilgrimages - what more after all did the Saints do? - though I know such an idea would have been most unwelcome to herself.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>DWT Papers, MS 44689.

## II. Why was there no Octavia Hill in Scotland?

The study of Mary Lily Walker suggests some possible answers to the question expressed by J.B. Russell and echoed by Geoffrey Best. Walker was deeply involved in social work in Dundee for twenty-five years, but she was not an Octavia Hill. Whereas Hill devised a nationally recognised philanthropic scheme, Walker's achievements were small scale and local and confined to Dundee. Nevertheless she proves that Scottish women could be as highly committed to social work as English women. However, much of her work remained unrecognised by the public. The Advertiser accounts did not reveal the behind-the-scenes meetings, minutes, letters, notes, phone calls, plans, and reports as she rushed from Grey Lodge to the Public Health department to the Parish Council offices and on to a DSU committee meeting. The Advertiser hardly mentioned her in its extensive coverage of the Feeding of School Children conference, which she had initiated and organized. Moreover, the DSU Report was almost entirely the work of Walker and Wilson, yet their names do not appear on the title page, and are only listed opposite the Table of Contents, and below the names of the Social Inquiry Committee. There was little public recognition of the extent of her work. Yet Walker did not seek public acclaim; indeed, as we have seen from Denny Oliphant's letter, it would have been "most unwelcome" to her. In Scotland, it was frowned upon for anyone, male or female, to make a public show of benevolence. It was socially acceptable to do good works, but not to seek public recognition for doing them. According to one nineteenth century Scot:

Benevolence exerted in secret is attended with no display...it brings no applause to its author. There is show and pomp however in a public contribution.... The vanity of this public charity deadens the conscience of many a man otherwise well disposed; it transforms a modest virtue into a gaudy vice; and it makes a duty which ought to originate in tender pity, flow from the impure spring of ostentation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Quoted in Cage, 67.

Disdain of ostentation is one of the reasons why we do not know more about Scottish women philanthropists: they neither wished to be publicly recognised nor have they been.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, evidence suggests that Scottish women were not involved in philanthropic societies to the same extent as English women. Well-established philanthropic societies in England failed to establish branches in Scotland, and Walker's failure in the 1890s to induce Dundee women to "take up the work" support this view. Why were English women more inclined to join philanthropic societies? It may be argued that many English women joined societies because of their "recreational" value," as pointed out by Harrison.<sup>34</sup> Some Scottish women, by contrast, regarded benevolence as a serious business, and not to be treated in a frivolous or light-hearted manner. Miss Mary Ann Baxter, whose gift of £115,000 had founded UCD, was a generous benefactress to numerous causes, but would not give money to a Church bazaar, as they were "deeply injurious to the pure spirit of Christian giving and degrading to religion."<sup>35</sup> The austerity of Scottish Calvinism militated against philanthropy as a form of recreation.

Moreover, philanthropy was connected to wealth and rank. As Harrison has pointed out, "philanthropic activity could be a means of attaining social mobility" as it enabled the middle class to "co-operate openly with the aristocracy."<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Haldane was struck by the degree of subservience in English philanthropy, claiming that it "shocked my Scottish democratic mind considerably."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Leah Leneman talks about a hard-working Dundee suffragette who gave sterling work to the cause, but "whose name never appeared either in the popular or suffrage press" (Leneman, 91).

<sup>34</sup>See Harrison, 360.

<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Jones, 378.

<sup>36</sup>Harrison, 364-5.

<sup>37</sup>Haldane, From One Century, 80, 121.

Perhaps the Scots showed less deference to their "betters" because they had less experience in dealing with them. Absentee landlords were a prominent feature in Scotland as many lairds and their ladies had abandoned their Scottish estates for London residences.<sup>38</sup> As a result, Scotland lacked a strong tradition of 'noblesse oblige'; there was less likely to be a 'lady bountiful' in the manor house dispensing soup to starving villagers. Moreover, if the Scottish aristocracy were not engaged in philanthropy in Scotland, there was less chance of the Scottish middle class emulating aristocratic practice, or attaching themselves to philanthropic societies for status-seeking reasons. The Scottish middle class therefore had a weaker philanthropic tradition than that of the English.

According to T.C. Smout, Scotland was "an exceptionally male-dominated society."<sup>39</sup> Did Scottish women face greater male resistance than English women when they tried to enter public life? Compared to English women, Scottish women were later in gaining access to poor law boards and were less effective on them. Walker had much less success in promoting change on the Parish Council than English women guardians. Moreover, in the nineteenth century, Scottish women were legally more disadvantaged than English women as the 1870 Married Women's Property Act did not apply to Scotland.<sup>40</sup> In 1880, one Edinburgh woman bitterly complained:

She did not think it was altogether a question of property...it was a question of power. [Husbands] could not bear that the wife should have any power. She knew that women who had been in the habit of giving liberal subscriptions to benevolent objects had after their marriage been compelled to drop them, because their husbands refused to give them the power to indulge in such benevolent and pleasurable feelings.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>See Haldane, Scotland, 63.

<sup>39</sup>Smout, 292.

<sup>40</sup>"Property of Married Women," in Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Edinburgh Meeting, 1880 (London, 1881), 181-201.

<sup>41</sup>"Property of Married Women," 199.



Some Scottish women, therefore, did not engage in philanthropic activity because their husbands forbade them.

Yet we cannot accept that all Scottish women were docile and passive. We have seen evidence that in philanthropic organisations, in settlement houses and on local government, women could be more dynamic than men by asking awkward questions, and exposing corruption. As Leneman has shown, however, Scottish women were active in the suffrage movement, but were less likely to be active in their home towns as "it was not easy for Scottish women to face imprisonment and a barrage of publicity on their home ground."<sup>42</sup> Conformity and respectability, as well as patriarchy and disdain of ostentation, were factors inhibiting Scottish women from assuming a prominent position in public.

Finally, perhaps Scottish women were less inclined to be philanthropically-minded than English women because of the Scottish middle class long-held faith in "sturdy Scottish independence." Thomas Chalmers wanted the Scottish poor to be self-reliant and free from doles; the Scottish Poor Law refused relief to the able-bodied and his dependents; Scottish School Boards petitioned Parliament NOT to allow the feeding of Scottish school children; and many Scots objected to the Liberal social welfare legislation because it would undermine two characteristic traits of the Scottish people: independence and self-reliance. According to Elizabeth Haldane:

Scotland had a more individualistic and self-sufficient quality at the beginning or middle of the century than had England. It would have been difficult, for example in Scotland to carry on many of the 'charities' which were absolutely a part of English rural life half a century ago, when, so far as material needs were concerned, the squire was a sort of 'Deus ex machina' to the village.... [In Scotland], no self-respecting working man or woman would have received the gifts they were bestowed in the South.<sup>43</sup>

Although life in Scotland was wetter, colder and bleaker, and Scottish poverty was among the most

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<sup>42</sup>Leneman, 89.

<sup>43</sup>Haldane, Scotland, 64.

desperate in Britain, the Scottish middle class were less inclined to give aid to the poor because they had faith in the sturdy independence of the Scottish peasantry and the Scottish working class. Causes deep in Scottish society provide some answers to Russell's question.

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