

FROM SUFFRAGE TO INTERNATIONALISM

FROM SUFFRAGE TO INTERNATIONALISM:  
THE IMPACT OF THE GREAT WAR ON SOME EDWARDIAN WOMEN ACTIVISTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the political evolution of a number of Edwardian women activists. The careers of the three women who are central to this work, Kathleen Courtney, Catherine Marshall and Helena Swarwick, illustrate the developing political consciousness of this second generation of feminists who built upon the work of their Victorian predecessors. The leadership and inspiration of the three women, which began in the suffrage movement, took a new direction in 1914. With the outbreak of war, they turned their efforts to peace work. The refusal of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies to support this new cause led to a realignment of forces when the dissenting members, led by the three, joined the ranks of men and women, particularly in the labour movement and the Union of Democratic Control, dedicated to seeking the peaceful resolution of international disputes. The opportunity to combine work for peace and suffrage was provided in April 1915 with the establishment of a new women's organisation at the Congress held at The Hague. The British section of this new body was the Women's International League. This organisation became at once an integral part of the national peace movement, while retaining its identity as an women's organisation. The purpose of the WIL was two-fold: one was to secure an enduring peace; the other, to educate women for citizenship. This war-time advocacy of a new basis for international relations led to a life-long commitment to

internationalism for Courtney, Marshall and Swarwick.

Although in the short run they failed in their objective of revolutionising international relations, they did effect some enduring achievements. They contributed to popularising the idea of a League of Nations. Above all, they pressed successfully, some steps further along the road, their claim to equal citizenship for women.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BWL British Workers' League  
CMA Competent Military Authority  
CO Conscientious Objector  
DORA Defence of the Realm Act  
EFF Election Fighting Fund  
ELF East London Federation of the Suffragettes  
FOR Fellowship of Reconciliation  
FWS Friends of Women's Suffrage  
ICW International Congress of Women  
ICWPP International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace  
ILP Independent Labour Party  
IWSA International Women's Suffrage Association  
LNU League of Nations Union  
MSA Military Service Act  
MSB Military Service Bill  
NAC National Administrative Council (ILP)  
NCAC National Council Against Conscription  
NCAS National Council for Adult Suffrage  
NOCL National Council for Civil Liberties  
NCF No-Conscription Fellowship  
NUSEC National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship  
NUWSS National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (also NU)  
PLP Parliamentary Labour Party  
PNC Peace Negotiations Crusade  
UDC Union of Democratic Control  
WCG Women's Co-operative Guild  
WEA Worker's Educational Association  
WFL Women's Freedom League  
WIL Women's International League  
WILPF Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
WLL Women's Labour League  
WPC Women's Peace Crusade  
WIUL Women's Trades Union League

## INTRODUCTION

Addressing the Memorial Service in honour of Kathleen Courtney held at St Martin-in-the-Fields on 11 April 1975, Philip Noel-Baker, himself a veteran internationalist, declared that she had given herself to the two greatest causes of her time - women's suffrage and internationalism. He observed that:

If there are historians in the future to judge the progress made, the true progress made in her time they will not praise scientific development. The true progress in civilisation in our twentieth century has been two-fold. First the emancipation, just now slowly starting, of the women of the world. Second, the founding of the international institutions of the League of Nations and the United Nations, which will some day become the democratic government of mankind. To both these civilising causes Kathleen Courtney made a contribution of world importance, which only those who saw it at the time can fully understand.<sup>1</sup>

By her efforts, he added, Kathleen Courtney helped form "the juristic conscience of mankind." She had, however, not been alone in her commitment to suffrage and internationalism. The qualities and purpose which she brought to a life-time's work were shared by many women, and not least by her friends and colleagues Catherine Marshall and Helena Swarwick. It is these three women, who played a leading and creative role in the suffrage and the peace movement, who form the subject of this work.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Address by Philip Noel-Baker at St Martin-in-the-Fields, 11 April 1975, Courtney Papers, Fawcett Library, London (hereafter FL) KDC/H1/1-8.

<sup>2</sup>Kathleen D'Olier Courtney 1878-1974. Catherine Elizabeth

These women were of the generation that has been described as "changing the world"; although, as Kathleen Courtney later observed, it was a world ripe for change as "new ideas were jostling old conventions." It soon became obvious to those women, who were led by their consciences into social work, that it was the causes of injustice that must be removed, not merely the consequences. And to do this they needed the vote. Thus women's suffrage became the greatest challenge of the early twentieth century. Enfranchisement was not only regarded as a political necessity but also as an admission of the need to reform the relations between the sexes.<sup>3</sup> To women, it meant the recognition that they were partners in civic responsibilities. The vote was the symbol and the substance of equal citizenship. No nation, the suffragists believed, that excluded over half its adult population from participation in the body politic could claim to be democratic. The attainment of complete democracy, therefore, was the ideal for which they strove. Their pursuit of liberty, peace and social justice was founded on their understanding of the meaning of liberal democracy. Their unwavering convictions sustained these women through the vicissitudes of the intellectual journey from suffrage to internationalism. The search for the fulfillment of the democratic ideal was not only the underlying theme of their activities but in a changing world lent consistency to their policies.

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Marshall 1880-1961. Helena Maria Lucy Swarwick (nee Sickert) 1864-1939.

<sup>3</sup>Courtney's talk on A. M. Royden for the Australian

The outbreak of war in 1914 shattered many certainties, not least, the liberal belief in the inevitable progress of mankind and civilisation. For some it was the occasion for the reassessment of values, for others, a confirmation of existing convictions. Courtney, Marshall and Swanwick and many like-minded women, regarded war as the supreme test of certain fundamental principles. War, they held, was the enemy of feminism, democracy and internationalism. The elevation of military values threatened the position of women in society; the conduct of war encouraged the erosion of "inalienable" civil rights; and the erection of national barriers contravened the brotherhood of man. Thus the outbreak of war added an even greater urgency to the women's demand for inclusion in the political system. Many of the suffragists believed that they had a responsibility to attempt to ensure that this disaster was never repeated. In order to protect the special interests of women and to provide them with the necessary education and political experience, a specifically women's peace organisation was founded - the Women's International League (WIL). The work for enfranchisement had taught women that the only way to be politically effective was by organising as a group. And so they applied the lessons learned in the suffrage movement to their labours for peace. At the opening of hostilities the women in this study already saw themselves as internationalists in the sense that they were part of the world-wide suffrage movement. But it was only in the

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process of defining their opposition to war and in searching for a peaceful means of resolving conflict that they came to champion a system of international political co-operation.

In the course of their search for an understanding of the causes of war Courtney, Marshall and Swarwick made common cause with other men and women dedicated to similar ends. Inevitably their criticism of the Government brought them into conflict with authority and a clash with sections of popular opinion. In setting themselves up as critics of the Government, these women became associated with a long and distinguished tradition of English dissent. This tradition has been documented by A. J. P. Taylor.<sup>4</sup> As radicals, democrats, feminists, pacifists and internationalists, Courtney, Marshall and Swarwick drew on a common fund of liberal ideals. During the First World War all those who either opposed the war, or looked for the means to eliminate force from international relations, were referred to indiscriminately as "pacifists." Yet the pacifists were more noteworthy for their diversity than their homogeneity. They had become critics for a variety of reasons. Some opposed war on religious grounds believing that all war was wicked; some were socialists who believed in the brotherhood of man, and were against all capitalist wars; and others believed that this war was unnecessary and had arisen from the international anarchy that reigned in the years before 1914.

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<sup>4</sup>A. J. P. Taylor, The Troublemakers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939 (London, 1985).

Whatever the details of their disagreement the various groups were, ultimately, able to combine on broad issues. Therefore, I have observed the usage of the time and retained "pacifist" as an all-encompassing term to describe those who sought an alternative to force in the conduct of international relations.<sup>5</sup> It was only in the 1930s when the peace movement divided over its response to fascist aggression that "pacifism" took on its modern connotation. Thereafter, the term came to be equated with what was formerly described as "absolute" pacifism. Those who proposed, and were prepared to support a system of transnational government which included sanctions, came to be more properly described as "internationalists."

To a large extent, therefore, the history of the women, after the formation of the WIL in 1915, is that of the peace movement in general. The mainspring of their dissent, like that of their fellow critics, was their liberal convictions. Peace and libertarian issues were as one in the pacifist mind. Therefore, the campaign directed against the erosion of civil liberties must be seen as an essential part of the fight for peace. In the first instance, they regarded the outbreak of war as the result of the failure of the existing system of representative government. Secondly, they ascribed its continuation to the suppression of the truth about the Government's war aims. As a

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<sup>5</sup>Martin Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945 (London, 1980). Ceadel builds on the distinction originally made by Taylor in The Troublemakers, between pacifists as absolutists, and pacificists as those who look for the removal of force from international relations.

token of their faith in the good sense of their countrymen, they believed that if the true facts were revealed, public opinion would compel the Government to make peace. Yet when peace finally came it was not the just settlement for which the women had worked. And so the campaign to remove the causes of dispute between nations continued even up to the eve of the Second World War.

The object of this study is not to provide a history of the WIL. Rather it is a collective study of three of the leading members of that organisation who were outstanding women of their generation. The careers of these women link together several pacifist groups. Moreover, the activities of the three provide the thread that links suffrage to internationalism through the transitional war years. To date, only fragments of this narrative have been told and it still remains to supplement the information available and to show the ideological homogeneity of this period. There have already been studies of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) and the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF). In articles Jo Vellacott has given a general overview of the work of these women. The prewar years have been well served through two able accounts by Sandra Holton and Leslie Hume of the radicalisation of the suffrage movement as represented by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Sandra Holton, Feminism and Democracy (Cambridge, 1986).  
Leslie P. Hume, The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, 1897-1914 (New York and London, 1982).

The story of women and peace has been less well served. The literature dealing with the peace movement has, on the whole, kept separate the role of the pacifist women and the activities of the wider peace movement. Feminist historians have tended to isolate the women's contribution from other efforts to secure peace as though it were something unique. The inclination has been to highlight the dramatic events of April 1915 when representatives of the pacifist women of Europe and America met at The Hague. The protest against the war has received more attention than the subsequent constructive, albeit prosaic, daily efforts to make a reality of the resolutions framed at the Hague Congress. An attempt to rectify the impression that this was a uniquely feminine contribution to peace has been made by Sandi E. Cooper. She has demonstrated the continuity of this assembly with its predecessors in the nineteenth century. However, Cooper has treated the Congress as part of the peace movement, rather than as a product of suffrage and feminism. Admittedly, it is not always possible, or even necessary, to separate the various strands that combined at The Hague.<sup>7</sup> Richard Evans, in his comparative study of the women's peace movement in Europe, America and Australasia, has put the activities of the British women in a broader perspective.<sup>8</sup> While a valuable

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<sup>7</sup>Sandi E. Cooper, "Women's Participation in European Peace Movements: The Struggle to Prevent World War One", in R. R. Pierson and S. Brodribb (eds.), Women and War: Theoretical, Practical and Historical Perspectives (London and New York and Sydney, 1987).

<sup>8</sup>Richard Evans, The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia 1840-1920 (London, New York, 1977) and Comrades and Sisters (Sussex, New York, 1987).

picture of world wide pacifist activity is presented, inevitably the treatment of each country is schematic and the role of the British women in the peace movement of their country is only lightly touched upon.

If feminist historians have been inclined to isolate women, historians of the institutions of the peace movement have ignored them. Yet, no account of the peace campaign in the war years that omits mention of the women can call itself a complete chronicle. As Taylor wrote of the "troublemakers": "They existed: therefore they deserve to be put on record" - especially in any work that deals with foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> Robbins' invaluable survey of the whole range of peace activity does indeed cast a glance in the direction of the women. But in a work of such compass, the WIL and its leaders receive short shrift.<sup>10</sup> Nor, it should be noted, is he particularly sympathetic towards the aspirations of the peace movement. In Swartz's history of the UDC they receive no mention at all.<sup>11</sup> This omission occurred despite the fact that women comprised a large fraction of the membership and that Swarwick was the UDC's official historian.

The purpose of this work, therefore, is to restore the balance by marrying what have largely been two separate approaches. By

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<sup>9</sup>Taylor, The Troublemakers, 15.

<sup>10</sup>Keith Robbins, The Abolition of War (Cardiff, 1976).

<sup>11</sup>M. Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War (Oxford, 1971).

correcting some of the biases and filling many of the lacunae it is hoped that a more complete story will emerge. Nonetheless, this is not intended as merely a work of synthesis. In the process of dealing with the journey of the three women from suffrage to internationalism I propose to demonstrate both how representative and instrumental they were in this transition. In so doing, I hope to offer a new perspective and analysis. The link between suffrage and the war work of Courtney, Marshall and Swanwick has also been suggested by Jo Vellacott in her papers "Feminist Consciousness and the First World War" and "Catherine Marshall: from liberalism to feminism, pacifism and socialism." This present work elaborates her contentions and takes the story, in the last chapter, to its fruition and conclusion in the inter-war years. Of the three women who, she suggests, were the torch-bearers of the new idealism in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) only Catherine Marshall has received Vellacott's detailed attention and this for her work with the No-Conscription Fellowship during the war.<sup>12</sup> The failure to document the roles of Courtney and Swanwick can perhaps be attributed to a dearth of material. However, by drawing upon published writings the handicap of the lack of personal papers can to a large extent be overcome in the case of Swanwick. This work has

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<sup>12</sup>Jo Vellacott, "Feminist Consciousness and the First World War", in Pierson and Brodribb, Women and War (London, 1987); also in History Workshop 23 (Spring 1987), 81-101. "Catherine Marshall: from liberalism to feminism, pacifism and socialism," unpub. 1984. Jo Vellacott, Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War (Brighton and New York, 1980). Vellacott is also writing a biography of Marshall.

focussed mainly on her because she was, I believe, the embodiment of the WIL. Swarwick was the theorist of the movement as well as being largely responsible for its organisation. As a prominent member of the Union of Democratic Control and of the Independent Labour Party, two of the political organisations most active in their opposition to the Government, her activities illustrated the closely knit nature of the pacifist community. Kathleen Courtney, unfortunately, has left neither private papers (except for her diaries kept during the time of her Serbian relief work) nor public writings for the war period. The result is that her contribution in these years must be traced through the correspondence with her friends and through the records of organisations.

My approach is based on a profound belief in the need to integrate an account and analysis of women's contribution with the history of their own age. At the same time I have endeavoured to preserve that which is particular to their development and achievement. No account would be complete without the voices of the women themselves to explain their aspirations. They did not think of themselves as unusual. Rather, they saw themselves as concerned citizens taking their place alongside other concerned citizens in attempting to save civilisation as they knew it. All problems they believed were human problems; not merely issues of gender. By staking their claim to a share in determining the most important questions facing mankind the women took an important step towards their political and psychological emancipation.

## CHAPTER I

### THE EDWARDIAN LEGACY: 1908-1914

"Fetters of gold are still fetters and the softest linings can never make 'em so easy as liberty." Mary Astell "A Serious Proposal to the Ladies" (1694)<sup>1</sup>

The members of "our group", as Kathleen Courtney described her friends and colleagues Catherine Marshall, Helena Swarwick and Maude Royden in 1921, were united by a close friendship forged over more than a decade of work for suffrage and peace. Their distinguishing characteristic was single-minded adherence to the high ideals of social democracy at home and internationalism abroad. These ideals they pursued with vision, intelligence, integrity and tenacity. All were remarkable women. As second generation feminists they made their own distinctive contribution to the work begun in the nineteenth century to emancipate women from dependency and imprisoning restrictions - be they mental, social or political - of the Victorian and Edwardian years. They fought not only to secure their rights but to educate women in their corresponding social and political responsibilities, for as good Victorians, they knew that no right could be theirs without the appropriate obligations. They also took the movement a stage beyond that of the early "radical" suffragists who had begun the liberation of the suffrage movement from its emphasis on equality. As "democratic"

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<sup>1</sup>Common Cause, 23 February 1917, 603.

suffragists, a term first coined by Margaret Llewelyn Davies, they had widened the range of their activities and appeal to form a political and, later, ideological link with the Labour Party.<sup>2</sup> From the outset Courtney, Marshall and Swarwick were always conscious of the world-wide nature of the movement for women's enfranchisement but through their association with Labour they came to view their activities in the context of the larger movement to remove discrimination not only by sex but by class. The war provided the opportunity for the members of the group to apply and extend the scope of the democratic beliefs that had informed their suffrage work. The promotion of the common good by co-operative effort, they believed, should be the ultimate criterion of both national politics and international relations. The only way to achieve this ideal was by the establishment of complete democracy. Their optimism and faith sustained them through the disillusioning years of the war just as they had done through the disappointments of working for enfranchisement. However, the peace was not destined to be the peace of their ideals and so the struggle to realise their goal continued, only to be defeated by the outbreak of war in 1939.

The nineteenth century had witnessed a significant degree of emancipation of women from their legal, economic and professional

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<sup>2</sup>In Sandra Holton, Feminism and Democracy (Cambridge, 1986), 152-3, the term "democratic suffragist" is defined as an organising concept. The term is "used to identify an impulse, an orientation, within the suffrage movement," not a particular group. Whereas, "radical suffragist" has been used by historians since the 1970s to distinguish those concerned with the vote as the necessary precursor of social reform from those individualist feminists who considered enfranchisement as a goal in itself.

restraints. Thanks to the efforts of pioneers of both sexes they had won access to higher education, control of their own earnings and property and entry both to some professions and to local government. Although many more disabilities remained to be removed before women could claim complete legal equality, by the beginning of the twentieth century it was enfranchisement that had come to symbolise the last barrier. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, leader of the constitutional suffragists, had voiced the opinion of many when in 1886 she asserted that

women's suffrage will come as a necessary corollary of the other changes which have been gradually and steadily modifying during this century the social history of our country. It will be a political change, not of a very great or extensive character in itself, based upon social, educational, and economic changes which have already taken place. It will have the effect of adjusting the political machinery to the altered social conditions of its inhabitants.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, there were many men in the country and Parliament who were prepared to resist this "necessary corollary."

A university education was a liberating experience for the Victorian young woman. For the first time they escaped family restraints and, above all, were free to choose their own friends. These friendships based on "affinity of mind and admiration" proved in some cases to be life-long.<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Courtney and Maude Royden

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<sup>3</sup>M. G. Fawcett, quoted in Constance Rover, Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain 1860-1914 (London and Toronto, 1967), 2.

<sup>4</sup>Francesca Wilson, "Three Twentieth Century Women of Action," unpublished typescript, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, 11. R. Fulford, Votes for Women (London, 1957), 299.

formed such a friendship in 1897 at Oxford which endured until the latter's death in 1956. The universities proved also to be the forcing ground not only for intellectual development but of social awareness. Not surprisingly, many a radical was created by these formative experiences. Several of the university women were daughters of liberal bourgeois families of advanced opinions. Helena Swarwick numbered amongst her friends at Girton College, Margaret Llewelyn Davies whose father had been a friend and associate of the Cambridge ethical socialist F. D. Maurice, and Maggie Cobden, daughter of Richard Cobden, the leading Victorian free-trader.

On coming down from university many of those women who possessed an independent income chose to continue this emancipation from the family by finding employment or taking up social work. After leaving Cambridge Margaret Llewelyn Davies and Rosalind Shore-Smith (later Vaughan Nash) organised the Women's Co-operative Guild (WOG) for working-class women. This organisation was destined to be a considerable force in the social and political education of these women. Others were attracted to the suffrage movement as an alternative outlet for their ability and energy. As a generation they were united by the conviction that they were pioneers, accepting with this role all the attendant responsibilities. For a long time, Helena Swarwick claimed, one of the heaviest handicaps at university was the feeling of having to make good for their entire sex. Failure was not regarded by the men as owing to personal fault but arose rather as a question of sex; whereas, any success was because they were

"exceptional women."<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly much of this spirit accompanied them into the suffrage movement.

Helena Swanwick was a feminist before she became a suffragist. Her own experiences as a young woman reflected the social inequalities practised even within a relatively free and easy household such as that maintained by the Sickert family. As the only girl among eight children she was particularly bitter about the domestic and emotional claims that were all too frequently the lot of the daughter in a Victorian family.<sup>6</sup> It was with great difficulty and only through the financial assistance of her godmother that she was able in 1882 to escape to Girton. Here she read Moral Sciences, studying Economics under Alfred Marshall and John Neville Keynes, Ethics and Politics with Henry Sidgwick and Psychology with James Ward - all outstanding scholars of their generation. As it was not until after 1918 that the ancient universities awarded degrees to their women students, Swanwick obtained an MA ad eundem from Dublin. After leaving Cambridge she was appointed lecturer in Psychology at Westfield College, Hampstead. Only on her marriage when she left home could she claim any of the rights that had been automatically granted to her brothers. The marriage to Frederick Swanwick was long, loving and mutually supportive and

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<sup>5</sup>Helena M. Swanwick, I Have Been Young (London, 1935), 124.

<sup>6</sup>Helena's father, Oswald Sickert, was a naturalised Dane who was an artist and cartoonist. The whole family was gifted either artistically or musically. Her brother Walter was one of the foremost British artists of his day. The Sickerts numbered among their friends Oscar Wilde, the Morrises, the Burne-Joneses, Bernard Shaw and many other well-known people. J. Bellamy and J. Saville eds. Dictionary of Labour Biography (London and Basingstoke, 1972-87).

permitted her the independence of mind and action so essential to her temperament and intellect. The success of the alliance reinforced her belief in the necessity and value of co-operation between the sexes. Alone, of "our group", Swarwick did not possess a private income. All her life she felt constrained by the need to earn her living. This she did by journalism. She was to write for many newspapers, including the Daily News, the Observer and the Nation. Her earliest and longest association was with the Manchester Guardian. This connection began in 1894 with gardening contributions and correspondence and in 1907 at the request of C. P. Scott, owner and editor of the paper, she began to cover women's meetings. After nearly fifty years, she broke with the Manchester Guardian over what she believed to be its vilification of Nazi Germany.<sup>7</sup>

As one who was disenfranchised, Swarwick had stood aloof from political involvement, believing that all political parties were equally dishonest in their attitudes to women. However, when the nation's attention was drawn to the plight of the voteless women by Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney of the new Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), Swarwick, in common with many others, responded to their call. The occasion for the WSPU protest was a Liberal parliamentary candidates meeting addressed by Sir Edward Grey held in Manchester in October 1905. Like countless others who were indignant

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<sup>7</sup>Women's Who's Who (London, 1913). H. M. Swarwick, I Have Been Young (London, 1935), 221. H. M. Swarwick to Arthur Ponsonby, 30 April 1939, Mss. Eng. Hist. c681/100, Ponsonby Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford (hereafter APP), .

at the refusal to allow the women to speak and the rough manner in which they were removed from the hall, Swarwick sent Christabel Pankhurst a subscription. At forty-one years of age she reluctantly came to the conclusion that she, too, must enlist in the struggle for the enfranchisement of women. Later, Swarwick wrote: "It did not attract me; it bludgeoned my conscience. I could do no other than become one of those who were heaving the wheel of reform out of its rut."<sup>8</sup> However, it was not to the "suffragettes," as the WSPU was later to be labelled, but to the non-militant constitutional suffragists that Swarwick gave her allegiance. She joined the North of England Suffrage Society (later the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage). Thereafter, she became Honorary Secretary and one of the society's most sought after speakers. In 1908 alone, she addressed 150 meetings.<sup>9</sup>

Swarwick's later adoption of socialism largely resulted from her war-time contact with the working classes and a limited attachment to its tenets. It was more likely a sense of duty that was in accordance with the social responsibilities expected of her class that led her into social work. On her marriage in 1888, Swarwick moved to Manchester where her husband held a university appointment in mathematics. Here, she lectured occasionally for the University Extension courses and began her career as a journalist. She first made contact with working women through lectures for the Women's

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<sup>8</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 182-3.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 193. Swarwick claimed that the meetings were attended on average by 600 people.

Co-operative Guild and as a member of the Women's Trade Union Council. In common with many other women of her class, such as Courtney, she became involved in organising and assisting social clubs for men, women and working girls. Notwithstanding her affection for them, she was occasionally exasperated by the girls' fondness for mindless and repetitive activities. But for the working class woman she developed a considerable respect. Later, Swanwick admitted that contact with these "modest heroines who do so much in addition to all the insistent and never-ending toil of a working-woman's home ...gradually whittled away the rather laissez-faire economics which I had absorbed at Cambridge." She later claimed that she did not "consciously become a Socialist till the Suffrage movement proved that the Socialist was the only party willing to stand or fall by the political freedom of women."<sup>10</sup> In reality, it is doubtful if she ever was a true socialist. Her allegiance to Labour, like that of so many "ex-Liberals," appeared to be a response to the party's absorption of liberal principles and policies.

By virtue of her twenty years social work among factory girls and working people of Manchester, Swanwick was invited in 1910 to testify before the Royal Commission on Divorce. This Commission was set up to examine the gross inequalities in the divorce law between men and women and between rich and poor. She was one of many witnesses who sought to combat the Church's opposition to any measure that would lead to the erosion of its moral influence. Swanwick believed that the

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<sup>10</sup>Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 162.

divorce question had become complicated by the confusion between religion and morals and civil law. Marriage, she declared, should become a civil contract and in cases where it had broken down, the law should give relief by making divorce available to either party. Although she hardly needed further evidence of the need to enfranchise women, or the necessity for their economic independence, her experience as a witness only confirmed her opinion that women were not likely to win equality before the law until they had the vote.<sup>11</sup>

The traditional home of so many radical causes, Manchester was also the birth-place of radical suffragism. It was here that Swarwick and Kathleen Courtney first became colleagues. Preceded by a reputation for efficient organisation, in 1908 Courtney came to Manchester to become the paid Secretary of the society. At first sight Kathleen Courtney, with her particular family background, might seem an unlikely worker for suffrage and peace. The Courtneys were from the Anglo-Protestant Ascendancy in Dublin. On both sides of the family there was a military tradition. Her father, a distinguished soldier, had been sent to relieve Gordon at Khartoum. Her earliest memories were of the life enjoyed by an officer's family, for she was born at Chatham and raised at Woolwich "to the sound of trumpets and drums and the tread of soldiers marching." Kathleen was the fifth daughter in a family of seven children of which the two youngest were boys. The Courtney children were brought up in a "free and sensible way" that was

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<sup>11</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 210-11. Report of the Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes, 1912. Cmd. 6478, 6481, vol 2, 459.

unusual in Victorian days. Although her interests were shared by Dorothy, the sister immediately above her in age, Courtney had little in common with the rest of the family. They never sympathised with her activities on behalf of women's suffrage and "thought the subject a bore and did not see its necessity." She, alone, received a university education. This fact Courtney attributed to her parents not knowing what to do with her. So they sent her to the "highly respectable" Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford where she read French and German.

At Lady Margaret Hall her "greatest discovery" was Maude Royden. The two women remained close friends until Royden's death in 1956.<sup>12</sup> While at university they gained experience in settlement work. This "slumming" at Oxford and, in the case of Kathleen Courtney, her later work at the Lambeth Girls' Club, revealed to these privileged upper-class young women the need for a fundamental attack on the roots of poverty. They recognised, however, that as long as women had no influence in Parliament the laws would never be changed. It was this "passionate feeling about the wrongs of women that drew Kathleen Courtney to the suffrage movement." Indeed, it was her sense of moral outrage and compassion that drew her to both suffrage and the pursuit of lasting peace. Kathleen Courtney's assertion that "I am not interested in myself" can be taken as the motto for this entire

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<sup>12</sup>Agnes Maude Royden 1876-1956. Feminist, pacifist, socialist and pioneer advocate of the ordination of women in the Church of England. She was assistant preacher at the City Temple in 1917; in 1921 she had her own church, the Guildhouse, Pimlico, until her retirement in 1936. Royden was a founding member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and was an absolute pacifist.

generation of women for whom service was a living commitment.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the other women in "our group" Catherine Marshall did not attend university. This lack of formal higher education was a protective measure taken on the grounds of the delicacy of her health. She did, however, attend the progressive boarding-school St. Leonard's in Fifeshire. The Marshall family was at once a practitioner of liberal ideas and a supporter of the Liberal Party. Therefore, it was not surprising that Catherine should become involved in Liberal politics. While in Harrow, where her father was a house-master, she and her mother founded the Women's Liberal Association, and Catherine became its Secretary. In common with many Liberal women she was drawn to suffrage by the party's avowed principles. But it was not until after 1908 that her feminism took precedence over her liberalism. Three years after her father retired to the Lake District, she and her mother formed the Keswick Women's Suffrage Society in 1908. The next few years were spent in energetic and fearless campaigning among the small rural and mining towns and villages of the Lake District. Over the next few years, before moving to London, Marshall was responsible for organising suffrage in Cumberland and Westmorland as Secretary of the North West Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies. Her first work at headquarters was on the publicity committee and then in March 1912, owing to the increased burden of parliamentary work, she was appointed Assistant Parliamentary Secretary with a seat on the executive. In June 1912 she became Secretary of the new Election

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<sup>13</sup>Wilson, "Three Twentieth Century Women".

Fighting Fund set up to aid Labour parliamentary candidates. When in September of that year she became Parliamentary Secretary much of the responsibility for the political work of the NUWSS was concentrated in her hands. It was then that her constructive genius flowered.<sup>14</sup>

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In 1880s the bitter irony for women was that although "advanced" Liberals talked of self-determination and the rights of the individual, they appeared to be more willing to apply these tenets to small faraway nations than to their own kin. As the father of this late nineteenth century liberalism, J. S. Mill was the unimpeachable authority to whom the women appealed. In his work On the Subjection of Women (1869), which had become the suffragists' Bible, Mill defended their right to enfranchisement both on rational and human grounds. His underlying assumption was of the dignity of each individual, regardless of gender. The demand for admission to the political structure on the grounds of equality and sameness was perceived by men as a threat to the hierarchical structure of the Victorian family. However, the theoretical basis on which the demand for enfranchisement had been made was modified in the early years of the twentieth century. The vote had come to be represented as the only means by which social reform, particularly in regard to improving the lot of women and children, could be achieved. The vote was an expedient not merely a symbol of equality. (The exception among the suffrage societies in accepting the

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<sup>14</sup>Jo Vellacott, "Catherine Marshall: from liberalism to feminism, pacifism and socialism. A British Case Study: 1909-1918." Unpublished 1984. Women's Who's Who (London, 1913).

new basis of the franchise was the WSPU who continued to epitomise what Courtney described as the "me too" attitude.) This change of direction of the constitutional suffrage movement as represented by the NUWSS has been attributed to the influence and work of Kathleen Courtney, Catherine Marshall and Helena Swarwick.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly the new policy was a reflection of their radical beliefs and their broader conception of the women's movement. What has been described in the nineteenth century as two distinct causes - the feminist and the women's movement - were in the early twentieth century fused into one broadly based crusade. In the nineteenth century feminists had tended to focus on equal rights; whereas, the women's movement had been largely devoted to moral and social reforms improving the condition of women - a campaign that did not necessarily include the demand for the franchise. The terms became reciprocal once previous distinctions became blurred by the acceptance by the suffragists of the vote as a means, rather than a goal in itself. Certainly, Swarwick regarded suffrage as an integral and indispensable part of the women's movement. More importantly, she saw this movement as part of the progress towards the establishment of a complete democracy.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>E. Rathbone, "Changes in Public Life" in R. Strachey, ed. Our Freedom (London, 1936), 15. Jo Vellacott, "Feminist Consciousness and the First World War" History Workshop 23 (Spring 1987): 81-101.

<sup>16</sup>W. O'Neill, The Woman Movement: Feminism in the United States and England (London, 1969, Quadrangle Books, 1971), 32. Richard Evans, The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia 1840-1920 (London, New York, 1977), 39. H. M. Swarwick, The Future of the Women's Movement (London, 1913).

However derivative from the earlier individualist theory, the essential distinction that was becoming more common, in the years immediately before the war, was that women were equal but different. This is to say that woman's human nature, on which the individualists based their claim to equality, is modified by her sexual nature and experience as a wife and mother.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, it was also accepted that their concerns were different from those of men. This new understanding which was in the process of definition in the last years of peace was given a significant boost by the onset of war.

In passing it might be noted that the changing basis of the women's claim has been seen as a reversion to the "separate spheres" of male and female interest and activity whereby men concern themselves with public affairs and women with the home, or its extension into the political arena as social concerns. This description was first elaborated by Brian Harrison in his work Separate Spheres. Since then the model has been transposed into different areas of activity with the result that conformity to sexual roles have become the criterion by which all actions are judged.<sup>18</sup> This unfortunate preoccupation with "separate spheres" has proved to be a red herring that has obscured the real importance of the contribution of these women. First and foremost, they were at the heart of the progressive movement of the early twentieth century. They saw themselves as feminists and

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<sup>17</sup>For a discussion of the individualist feminist movement and the influence of J. S. Mill see chapter 1 in John Charvet, Feminism (London, Melbourne and Toronto, 1982).

<sup>18</sup>Brian Harrison, Separate Spheres (London, 1978).

democrats and they addressed themselves to these concerns regardless of "sphere."

Although "our group" may have orchestrated the changes in the NUWSS in accordance with their own beliefs, their efforts would have come to nothing without the consent and co-operation of Mrs Fawcett. The Chairman of the NUWSS, with her usual political acumen, recognised that the suffragists must respond to the same political pressures that were compelling the Liberal Party to widen its proclaimed aims to court the new working-class constituency created by the democratic reforms of the nineteenth century. In practice, individualist tenets were being modified by the Edwardian Liberal Party's interventionist legislation. In common with most reforms the underlying motives were compounded of genuine social concern and the need for political survival. The theoretical justification for the new approach was that those who were less equal than others needed the helping hand of the state to mitigate the disadvantages that hindered their individual development.<sup>19</sup> As the new era of mass politics began to dawn the NUWSS was faced with the task of making women's suffrage a popular cause. In order to do this they had to shed the middle-class image and approach by presenting enfranchisement as a classless, democratic reform; as the culmination of the democratic movement initiated in the nineteenth century. This process of adaptation involved finding new allies and new theories as

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<sup>19</sup>See M. Freedon, Liberalism Divided (Oxford, 1986) and Bentley B. Gilbert, The Evolution of National Insurance in Britain. The Origins of the Welfare State (Oxford, 1966). Charvet, Feminism, 43.

the basis of their claim. Yet, it would be unjust to present this as an entirely pragmatic venture. The shift of position of the NUWSS was entirely in harmony with the changing times. It was at once a response to political pressure and a sign of the greater social awareness of the immediate pre-war years.

Although the factor mainly responsible for the NUWSS's new look was the entente with the Labour party in 1912, there was an earlier movement that began in 1909 to radicalise the constitutional suffragists through the agency of its newspaper Common Cause. The attempt by the paper to create a new social awareness and change attitudes may well have contributed towards forming the climate of opinion necessary for the acceptance of the new political policy in 1912. For it was this co-operation with Labour that was the truly novel departure for the NUWSS. In the three years before the war the NUWSS was forged into a politically effective movement by the binding together of all previous policies which were taken a step further by the new vigorous leadership. This fresh spirit was injected largely by the efforts of Kathleen Courtney, Catherine Marshall and Helena Swarwick.

The Common Cause was launched from Manchester in April 1909 with the financial support of Margaret Ashton and the moral support of C. P Scott of the Manchester Guardian.<sup>20</sup> As creator and editor Swarwick believed that the suffrage movement needed a different kind of

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<sup>20</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 207. H. M. Swarwick to M. G. Fawcett, 14 December 1908 and 22 December 1908; Manchester Public Library Archives (hereafter MPL), (M50/2/1/259 and 261).

paper from those already in existence, a paper of "wider interests and more advanced political thinking." The primary object remained the advancement of suffrage which Swarwick believed could best be achieved by addressing men as well as women. With the intention of creating a "'weighty paper' that shall serve interpret women to men and to each other," she had originally suggested that the paper be entitled The Interpreter. Instead, she chose the title Common Cause as indicating "the recognition of humanity as bi-sexual; the recognition that there were no 'women's questions' and no 'men's questions', but that all were human questions." Secondly, she sought for her audience "the wide public of intelligent women interested not only in the franchise but in the whole world-wide women's movement."<sup>21</sup> Swarwick's vision was always on the grand scale of principles and ideals. She endeavoured to convey to her readers something of her own sense of being part of a world-wide feminist movement united in its struggle for justice. The foundation of the paper came at a time when the WSPU was becoming increasingly militant and by their words and deeds representing suffrage as a gender rather than as a democratic question - the approach favoured by the constitutional suffragists. By presenting the case in its widest humanitarian terms, Swarwick endeavoured to redress the balance.

For the next three years Common Cause bore the impress of Swarwick's personality and ideas. Her philosophical bent led her to

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<sup>21</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 228-30. H. M. Swarwick to M. G. Fawcett, 15 December 1908, MPL M50/2/1/260; H. M. Swarwick to M. G. Fawcett, 22 December 1908.

attempt to clarify the principles and ideals on which she believed the suffrage movement was based. Her Millite arguments were tempered by what has come, increasingly, to be regarded as the basis of the "new feminism," the propagation of the idea that women were equal but different. In her writing Swarwick underlined the special contribution that women could make to society based on their different interests and experiences. She emphasised the complementary, not the competitive, nature of women's role in politics. This was an argument that was to be adopted by the NUWSS, particularly after their entente with Labour. However, it was in the women's peace campaign during the war that this argument received its fullest exposition.

In the belief that knowledge was essential to the discharge of the responsibilities of citizenship, Swarwick set out to educate the women of the NUWSS. She recognised that this would be a slow but, she believed, a worth-while process. So from the beginning, "taking the world for my province," she set out to simplify, clarify and expose her readership to a whole range of issues. War, the birth rate, tariffs or the miners' eight hour day - these were all issues that had as much to do with women as with men. By attempting to enlarge the scope of the NUWSS's interests she was also extending the appeal of suffrage, for she believed that "everything in modern society is an 'argument' for women's suffrage, and the more widely we can throw our net of interest, the more we shall find men and women who are led to our cause through the particular interest they have in some department of life." Yet she did not look for instant results in her educational campaign. And she

was under no illusions about the immediate results of enfranchisement, later declaring that: "I looked more to the slow effect on the minds of women and in their social status for generations to come. I was quite prepared to find that, when they did get votes, they would use them foolishly."<sup>22</sup> This opinion, expressed in 1935, may well have been derived from the hindsight of the election of 1918 in which women voted for the first time and, in Swarwick's judgement, voted disappointingly.

The NUWSS executive proved to be more conservative in outlook than the editor of Common Cause. In response both to criticisms that the paper was "too advanced" and "too individual" and to repeated attempts by the executive to exercise an editorial role, Helena Swarwick in August 1912 resigned the editorship. Released from all constraints she was now able to speak freely against the militancy of the WSPU. Some members of the executive and others in the Society regarded it as disloyal for women to criticise women. When Swarwick was critical, she was treated, she declared, as if she "had spat upon the pyx." She added that she "never considered" it her "business to defend women as women right or wrong, or to refrain from commenting on or criticizing the actions of women." It was the very people, she believed, "who are most imbued with the idea that men are always unfair to women are those who are most insistent that women must never criticize, still less laugh at their fellow women."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 230-1, 183.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 229, 231.

Swarwick was firmly opposed to the WSPU for two reasons. One argument was that by their violence the suffragettes were destroying all that the constitutional suffragists had laboured to achieve in building moderate opinion in favour of enfranchisement. Second, violence was abhorrent to Swarwick, for she regarded it as a negation of the rationality of man. She believed that for any achievement to endure it must be accepted on its merits, for "a freedom that is won by force may easily be lost again by force." The whole campaign of the WSPU was based on intimidation, not on persuasion. Nor did she approve of the martyrdom sought by the militants. She claimed that it was "dishonest and cynical" and "based on bally-hoo not reason."<sup>24</sup> Later in 1918 when women won the vote, she suspected that the fear of a renewal of the pre-war violence had pushed the Government into granting the limited measure of suffrage. Nonetheless, she hoped that time would vindicate the justice of the act.

If Swarwick's pacifism was foreshadowed in her attitude towards the WSPU, the pre-war years were also harbingers of that interest in internationalism that was to become her consuming passion during and after the war. Although Common Cause had been devoted largely to domestic affairs, on the occasion of the acceleration of the arms race in 1909 and the debate on the naval estimates in 1913, in common with other Radicals, she had expressed the fear that this was a policy destined to lead to European conflict. Indeed, after the Agadir crisis in 1911 she was ever fearful of the outbreak of hostilities. In 1913

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<sup>24</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 188-9.

along with Marshall, Courtney and other NUWSS representatives she attended the International Womens' Suffrage Association meeting in Budapest. At the meeting there was already talk by the European delegates of impending war.<sup>25</sup>

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The reluctance of the NUWSS to change its tactics was transformed by the failure in March 1912 of the Conciliation Bill. The effect of the defeat of this non-partisan, limited suffrage bill persuaded Courtney and Fawcett that a private member's bill held no prospect of success. Therefore, they must look for party support if enfranchisement was ever to become a reality. The only party with any record of support for women's suffrage was Labour. The idea of co-operation with Labour had been in the minds of the Chairman and Secretary for some months, ever since the proposal had first been broached by H. N. Brailsford, the socialist journalist who had been the originator of the Conciliation Bill. Probably, the suggestion was made after Asquith's announcement in November of the Government's intention to introduce its own Reform Bill.<sup>26</sup> Lloyd George's prediction that a government bill for full manhood suffrage would "torpedo" the more limited measure was vindicated when at the second reading on 28 March the Conciliation Bill was defeated. Several factors conspired against the success of the bill, not least, as the NUWSS and Brailsford

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<sup>25</sup>Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 235-6.

<sup>26</sup>K. D. Courtney to M. G. Fawcett, 8 April 1912, M50/2/1/357 MPL. H. N. Brailsford to A. Henderson, 6 May 1912, LP/wom/12/14 Labour Party Archives (hereafter LPA) .

believed, the fear and party interest of the Liberals.<sup>27</sup> The proposed government measure was both more democratic and side-stepped the contentious issue of women's enfranchisement that was dividing the Cabinet. Many rank-and-file Liberals, influenced by rumours of Cabinet resignations, believed that the enactment of women's suffrage would bring down the Government. The renewal of WSPU violence alienated many moderates and provided them with the excuse to renege on their promises of support. All of these reasons, allied with the continuing opposition of the Irish members, ensured that the bill was defeated.

In April, letters received from Ethel Williams of the Newcastle Society and other members of the NUWSS proposing an alliance with the Labour Party persuaded Courtney that the time had arrived to sound out the possibilities for co-operation.<sup>28</sup> Earlier in the month in Common Cause, Mrs Fawcett had also hinted that the society might extend its political links. Labour, alone of the political parties, had a satisfactory record with regard to suffrage. At the party's Annual Conference in January 1912 a resolution that "no Bill can be acceptable to the Labour and Socialist Movement which does not include women," made Labour the first political party to support women's suffrage. This satisfactory record was further enhanced in the suffragists' eyes by the fact that no Labour Member voted against the Conciliation Bill. Convinced that the only way to exert pressure in the House was to have

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<sup>27</sup>NUWSS Annual Report 1912, 19, Catherine Marshall Papers, Cumbria Record Office (hereafter CEMP). D/Mar/3/14, H. N. Brailsford, "The Reform Bill and the Labour Party" Englishwoman, 41, (May 1912).

<sup>28</sup>K. D. Courtney to M. G. Fawcett, 8.4.12 MPL M50/2/1/357.

the backing of a party, Courtney opened negotiations in April with Arthur Henderson, Secretary of the Labour Party.

There was a degree of reluctance on the part of Henderson, and even more so on the part of Ramsay MacDonald, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), to enter into an arrangement with the NUWSS. The Labour Party wanted, indeed sorely needed, suffrage money. The Labour grandees, however, were equally reluctant to avoid a public admission of NUWSS support for fear that it would compromise the party's independence and create the impression that they had been "bought for an object outside Labour interests." Despite the resolution at the Annual Conference, there was still considerable ambivalence over the question of support for women's suffrage.<sup>29</sup> Brailsford castigated Henderson for this reluctance to make a public admission, reminding him that the women also needed assurances of Labour's good faith. If the NUWSS merely announced a scheme for the support of parliamentary candidates without mentioning the Labour Party by name, as Henderson proposed, it would be in effect a continuation of the old scheme of aid for pro-suffrage candidates. What the NUWSS needed, both Brailsford and Courtney explained, was an "intelligible and hopeful scheme to bring in money."<sup>30</sup> They reminded the Labour Secretary that the women were also making sacrifices by seeking an

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<sup>29</sup>Hume, The NUWSS, 149-50. Holton, Feminism and Democracy, . "Interview of Mrs Fawcett and Miss Courtney with Mr J. R. MacDonald, MP, May 13, 1912," FL Box 89/68.

<sup>30</sup>K. D. Courtney and E. Palliser to A. Henderson, 6 May 1912, LP/wom/12/15; H. N. Brailsford to A. Henderson, 6 May 1912, LPA LP/wom/12/14.

alliance. Moreover, there was suspicion and opposition from within the NUWSS, as it was feared that this association would lead to the accusation that "suffragists are socialists." In pointing out the potential gains to Labour, Brailsford asserted that many of the "more active" of the disillusioned Liberal women were prepared to back plans for co-operation with Labour. He predicted that:

In the course of a fighting alliance most of these would end up becoming decided and permanent adherents of the Labour party. But that certainly will not happen if at this crucial juncture women realise that you do not care to avow any co-operation with them, and in effect reject a plan which involves from most of them sacrifices of party ties.<sup>31</sup>

As neither party was anxious to be seen to be compromised, Courtney suggested that it be made clear that it was the individual candidates that were being supported, not the Labour Party.<sup>32</sup>

The Special Council meeting held on 14 May 1914 was an historic occasion for the NUWSS. With only a few dissenting voices, the meeting endorsed a new political departure. The NUWSS agreed to support individual Labour candidates in any constituency where it was thought advisable to oppose a Liberal who was "unsatisfactory on the suffrage question." In order to carry out this policy, it was agreed to form a special committee for raising and dispensing a fund to maintain this campaign. The objects of this arrangement were to punish the Liberals by challenging all Liberal anti-suffragists; and, also it was intended to build up the Labour Party in the House. By forcing a number of

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<sup>31</sup>H. N. Brailsford to A. Henderson, 6 May 1912.

<sup>32</sup>K. D. Courtney to A. Henderson, 6 May 1912.

three-cornered contests, and thereby splitting the progressive vote, the Liberals' already precarious position would be further endangered. This pressure, it was hoped, would encourage the Government to introduce a Reform Bill that session and persuade Liberals to vote for a womens' enfranchisement amendment. "At the same time the Labour Party would be strengthened."<sup>33</sup>

Labour was not alone in having to cope with internal opposition to the proposed entente. Courtney and Fawcett quickly had to set about reassuring the doubtful in the NUWSS. The new departure was presented as an extension of the old policy of giving aid to selected parliamentary candidates of women's suffrage sympathies. The difference, it was explained, was that now not only would the candidate's views be taken into consideration but that of his party. Great pains were taken to present the policy as a continuation of the NUWSS's non-party stance. In an artful piece of casuistry, the policy was claimed to be merely a continuation of former tactics of giving support to the "best friend of women's suffrage," which at the moment happened to be the Labour Party. Fawcett denied charges that this policy represented an "alliance" with Labour on the grounds that they were not giving general support to the party; only on the suffrage question would there be active co-operation. She endeavoured to justify the entente by warning her members that Labour was the "great electoral force" which would in the future have to be reckoned with by

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<sup>33</sup>NUWSS Resolutions passed at the Council Meeting - May 14 and 15 1912, FL Box 89. NUWSS Annual Report 1912. NUWSS Circular from K. D. Courtney 2 May 1912, CEMP D/Mar/3/14.

all parties. Given this eventuality, it was better to have this force on the women's side.<sup>34</sup> Undoubtedly this was a marriage of convenience for Fawcett and the majority of the NUWSS, perhaps even for Courtney. The closer involvement with Labour over the next two years, however, converted several of the more radical women to the Labour vision of a more just society.

A detailed account of the work of the Election Fighting Fund for Women's Suffrage (EFF) set up by the NUWSS in June 1912 to implement the new policy can be found elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> The concern in this work is to note only the degrees by which the commitment to Labour intensified and the effect of this closer association on the minds and lives of certain women. The direction of the new EFF policy, from June 1912 onwards, was largely the work of the Secretary, Catherine Marshall. When, in September 1912 she also assumed the position of Parliamentary Secretary, she became responsible for the conduct of the political policy of the NUWSS. These positions provided the opportunity to give full rein to the exceptional organising ability and political acumen that was to earn her the reputation of being one of the best women organisers of her time. Paying tribute to her friend,

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<sup>34</sup>M. G. Fawcett, "The Election Policy of the NUWSS" Englishwoman, 42 (June 1912): 241-45. See also H. N. Brailsford, "The Reform Bill and the Labour Party" Englishwoman, May 1912. Brailsford emphasised the need for party support for the success of any suffrage measure. The Labour party was at this time very small and had only forty-two seats in the Commons.

<sup>35</sup>See Hume, The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies 1897-1914; Holton, Feminism and Democracy; Liddington, The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper 1864-1946 (London, 1984).

Swanwick observed, that "she opened ministerial doors that had been closed to women petitioners for very long."<sup>36</sup>

As had been anticipated by Brailsford and Courtney, the new cause was taken up with enthusiasm by many of the NUWSS. At the Special Council meeting in May £1,000 had been raised spontaneously for the EFF and by the end of five months the committee had received a total of £4,500 in donations. This money was to remain separate from the NUWSS funds in order to preserve the notion of an independent identity that was required to appease the critics of the new departure.<sup>37</sup> In June, even before the agreement had been ratified by Labour, the NUWSS was pitched into its first by-election at Holmfirth as the ally of Labour. By the end of September four by-elections had been fought. Although Labour actually lost the seat at Hanley through local circumstances, the assault on the Liberals was judged to have been successful.<sup>38</sup> The progress at Holmfirth encouraged Marshall to announce to the Provincial Council meeting in July that now the NUWSS had "a real sword" in their hands "instead of a foil with a guarded

<sup>36</sup>Labour Leader, 13 April 1916. Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 185.

<sup>37</sup>Fawcett, "The Election Policy of the NUWSS." C.E. Marshall to A. Henderson, 14 October 1912, CEMP D/Mar/3/54. Hume, The NUWSS, 153. In H. M. Swanwick, The Future of the Women's Movement (London, 1913), 6, it was estimated that the women raised and spent £100,000 in working for the vote. The NUWSS, alone, raised £42,000.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 161. The election results were: Holmfirth, June 1912, a Liberal seat which was held with a reduced majority; Hanley, July 1912, Labour lost the seat to the Liberals; Crewe, July 1912, the Unionists won the seat from the Liberals; Midlothian, September 1912, the Unionists won the seat from the Liberals.

tip." She also observed, perhaps prematurely, that "our enemies in the Liberal camp have uneasy doubts." In answer to criticisms, she admitted that "we certainly shall make enemies, but an enemy anxious to make peace is better than a friend who does nothing."<sup>39</sup>

The first step in setting up a network and organisation was to engage organisers and Marshall promised W. C. Anderson, Chairman of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), that organisers with Labour sympathies would be found. In September, Margaret Robertson was appointed and by the next February she headed a team of ten organisers.<sup>40</sup> Her opposite number in the ILP, Fenner Brockway, claimed that Robertson's talents were such that had she stayed in politics she could have become the leader of that party.<sup>41</sup> The ILP was the first organisation in the labour and socialist movement to support unequivocally women's suffrage. In November 1911 it had inaugurated an equal political rights campaign and in 1912 its Annual Conference instructed MPs to oppose any suffrage reform measure that did not include women.<sup>42</sup> The

<sup>39</sup>C. E. Marshall, NUWSS Provincial Council, 12 July 1912, CEMP D/Mar/3/53.

<sup>40</sup>C. E. Marshall to W. C. Anderson, 28 June 1912, CEMP D/Mar/3/53. NUWSS Resolutions passed at the Provincial Council 9 and 10 October 1912. NUWSS Annual Report 1912, 28. Margaret Robertson (from August 1914, Hills), educated at Somerville College, Oxford. She resigned a teaching post to become a NUWSS organiser. She was most successful in building up relations between the NU and labour. She spoke at the Durham Miners' Gala in 1913 and 1914. She edited two editions of Keats' poetry.

<sup>41</sup>A. Fenner Brockway, Inside the Left (London, 1942), 33, 42.

<sup>42</sup>Liddington, The Life and Times, 223-30.

rest of the Labour movement were more cautious and many of the unions, particularly the miners, were hostile.

Buoyed up by the successes of the summer, in October 1912 Marshall proposed extending the commitment to Labour. Not only would the NUWSS assist in the challenge to selected Liberal incumbents but, she proposed, it would work in constituencies already held by Labour. She offered increased financial aid, some of which would go towards the maintenance of Labour agents, also, speakers and canvassers for the constituency work. Already Marshall was thinking of building up an efficient constituency organisation in readiness for the next General Election. Before the NUWSS could be persuaded to agree to this extension of support, she warned Henderson that the Union would require assurances that Labour would oppose any franchise reform that did not include women. Marshall suggested that it "would be a great encouragement" if the unease of some of the NUWSS members at recent pronouncements by certain Labour MPs could be dispelled by a public declaration of Labour support for a women's suffrage amendment. The forthcoming meeting at the Albert Hall to raise funds for the EFF, she believed, would be an appropriate occasion for such a reassurance.<sup>43</sup> The "reassurance" to the NUWSS became official when, on 30 January 1913 at the Annual Conference, Labour resolved to oppose any reform bill that did not include women. This was a decision that also bound the

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<sup>43</sup>C. E. Marshall to A. Henderson, 5 October 1912, IPA LP/wom/12/39. C. E. Marshall to A. Henderson, 14 October 1912, CEMP D/Mar/3/54, notifying him of the results of the Provincial Council Meeting and promising the appointment of speakers and canvassers sympathetic to Labour.

Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) to oppose proposals that omitted women.

The resolution was in protest against the Government's recent withdrawal of the bill. The Speaker announced on 23 January 1913 that the inclusion of a women's suffrage amendment would alter the character of the bill. As a result, he warned, he would be compelled to rule that the bill be withdrawn and reintroduced. The very situation that the women had predicted would arise if suffrage was not made an integral part of the bill had now occurred. The subsequent Cabinet decision to withdraw the Bill and, as recompense, to offer facilities for a private member's bill in the future was regarded by the suffragists as a breach of Asquith's pledges made in 1908, 1909 and 1911 to allow amendments to a government bill.<sup>44</sup> This latest betrayal destroyed any lingering vestiges of hope (for all save the staunchest adherents of the party), that the Liberals would be the instrument of their emancipation. Therefore, with an even greater determination, the NUWSS extended its links with Labour.

Few were perhaps as bitterly articulate as Helena Swanwick who accused the Liberal leaders of lying and prevaricating "to the disenfranchised Liberal women who had helped put them in power." Enfranchisement was for her the touchstone of the party's commitment to liberalism and it had been found wanting. This failure, she believed, marked "the beginning of the disintegration of the Liberal party." She wrote in 1913:

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<sup>44</sup>NUWSS Annual Report 1912, 14-19.

The future will deride those Liberals of the early twentieth century who talked of the Will of the People and forgot the mothers; who boasted of their intention to enfranchise every person 'of full age and competent understanding' and left out half the people; who, declared that citizenship 'should be the basis of voting rights' and denied these rights to all women."

She continued:

No external defeats could have so sapped the prestige of the political Liberal party as the fact that it failed altogether, as a party, to recognize the force of progressive idealism of the women's movement.<sup>45</sup>

Nor was she alone in this contention. Many stalwart Liberals also believed that the Liberal Party "by shutting its eyes to a great democratic movement, has weakened its moral fibre." The forecast that this retrograde attitude, which was so much at variance with its own declared principles, would send the party marching towards a "well-merited destruction," has been vindicated by recent historical writing.<sup>46</sup>

The reaction of the NUWSS was to sanction a policy of direct opposition to the Liberals. At the General Council held in February 1913 the decision was taken that work at the next General Election would concentrate on opposing every anti-suffrage minister. Further, it was decided to withhold support from government candidates, although

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<sup>45</sup>Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 222-3; The Future of the Women's Movement, 51-2. P. Clarke, Liberals and Social Democrats (Cambridge and New York, 1978).

<sup>46</sup>J. Malcolm Mitchell, "Women's Suffrage and the New Liberalism" Englishwoman, June 1914, 214-8. Mitchell's and Swanwick's judgements have been vindicated by later historians, notably P. Clarke Liberals and Social Democrats (Cambridge and New York, 1978).

"tried friends" would not be resisted. The focus was now on the forthcoming General Election. The NUWSS was determined to see the return of a weakened Liberal Party so that Labour pressure for the inclusion of women in a government bill could be made effective. Meanwhile, the concern was no longer to embarrass but to shorten the term of the present Government. Yet, this policy also had its critics and the effect of this decision was to polarise opinion within the NUWSS.<sup>47</sup>

Undoubtedly, the closer co-operation demanded by this new policy had the effect of radicalising the NUWSS. In the pursuit of a closer relationship with Labour and a more efficient organisation, working-class organisers, such as Selina Cooper and Ada Nield Chew, were appointed to tour and work in the constituencies with the purpose of bringing together support for suffrage and Labour. In the process of familiarising themselves with party policy in order that they could become effective speakers and canvassers, many suffragists also became adherents of Labour. In the summer of 1913 there was some disquiet in the NUWSS that some of the constituency workers were in fact putting Labour politics before suffrage.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Fawcett's contention, that the NUWSS were not supporting Labour generally, soon became a fiction. A highly efficient electoral machine was being built under Catherine Marshall's direction in preparation for a General Election. Although

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<sup>47</sup>Hume, The NUWSS, 195. Holton, Feminism and Democracy, 100-1, 113.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 110, 113. Hume, The NUWSS, 195.

the efficacy of the campaign is difficult to judge, the Labour organiser and Henderson both believed that the co-operation was fruitful and were impressed by the women's organisation and capacity for hard work.<sup>49</sup> As part of the effort to broaden the appeal of enfranchisement the Friends of Women's Suffrage (FWS) was formed. The purpose of this organisation, first suggested by Maude Royden and Ida O'Malley, was to organise working-class sympathisers for suffrage. Hume contends that the FWS, in conjunction with the formation of suffrage clubs for social and educational purposes, was largely instrumental in establishing contacts between the NUWSS and suffrage's working-class supporters. In attempting to attract this untapped constituency, she believes that after 1913 the NUWSS changed the basis of its appeal from equality to "expediency."<sup>50</sup> This meant that the vote was no longer regarded as a symbol of equality but as the means of securing reform. Yet, this policy was not novel. Since the early 1900s, when Esther Roper and Eva Gore-Booth had endeavoured to organise working women in Lancashire and Cheshire, the Manchester Society had had a history of involvement with working women.<sup>51</sup> This change of emphasis served to reassure the working man that women's suffrage did

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<sup>49</sup>Hume, The NUWSS, 158, 162.

<sup>50</sup>Circular to the Societies from A. M. Royden and I. O'Malley, May 1912, FL Box 89. Hume, The NUWSS, 197-8; the FWS had 46,000 members by August 1914.

<sup>51</sup>For an account of the work of Esther Roper and Eva Gore-Booth see J. Liddington and J. Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement (London, 1974, 1984), 77-82. Hume, The NUWSS, 194 uses the term "expediency" borrowed from Aileen S. Krador, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920, 45-46.

not mean a revolution in domestic life and to encourage working women to believe that their lot could be improved. Although it is impossible to estimate the degree of success of this campaign to woo the working-classes, it is certain that suffrage as a cause reached into many, hitherto untouched, sections of the community. Hume contends that, at the very least, prejudice against women's suffrage, which had always appeared to be a middle-class cause, was eliminated.<sup>52</sup> It was hardly to be expected that class barriers would tumble overnight but now suffrage took on the appearance of a genuinely democratic movement. Political necessity, therefore, provided the short-cut to the theory that Swanwick had tried to establish through education in the Common Cause.

Not all of the women who had accepted the EFF policy as a necessary expedient were, however, prepared to follow it to its present conclusion. Had the war not intervened, these divisions within the NUWSS, between those who had supported the EFF on grounds of expediency and those like Marshall and Swanwick who saw women and labour as part of the same democratic front, might well have split the constitutional suffragists.<sup>53</sup> Some of the die-hard Liberals still believed that the best chance of enfranchisement lay with their party. A small group of these women led by Eleanor Rathbone mounted a clandestine campaign within the Union against the EFF. To counter this threat, Marshall set out to demonstrate the error of their arguments. In an article in the

<sup>52</sup>Hume, The NUWSS, 198.

<sup>53</sup>Holton, Feminism and Democracy, 115.

Englishwoman, she recalled the record of broken Liberal pledges, and reiterated her conviction that only a Liberal Party weakened by electoral defeat would accede to pressure for reform. Fearful that the dissension and criticism would undermine the delicate relationship with Labour, she sought to allay any fears with an article in the Labour Leader. Abandoning the pragmatic arguments that served to rally the NUWSS, she expressed her own beliefs concerning the principles at stake in the relationship between the labour and suffrage movements. Their co-operation, she emphasised, was based on the recognition that combined they could achieve more than they could singly and, also, upon a shared principle. This principle, which was a reversion to Millite claims, was of the right of all human beings to equal opportunity for self-development and for service. The common enemy of both labour and women, she believed, was the "spirit of monopoly and power" that conspired to deny Labour, on grounds of class, and women because of their gender, the equal opportunities that were their right.<sup>54</sup> This conviction concerning the solidarity of the women's and the labour movement was again stressed when in April 1914 she addressed the ILP Conference at Bradford. Here, once more, she drew attention to the proximity of purpose and ideals. But in this speech Marshall also made a comparison between the internationalism of the ILP and the internationalism of women through their "sense of common motherhood." Both, she believed, were hastening the day "when the brotherhood of

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<sup>54</sup>C. E. Marshall, "Women's Suffrage and the Next General Election" Englishwoman, 56 (August 1913): 121-6; "The Labour and Woman Suffrage Entente," Labour Leader 28 August 1913.

humanity will be something more than the prophet's vision or the preacher's platitude," and thereby, ensuring peace.<sup>55</sup>

What had the EFF achieved? It is agreed by the historians of the NUWSS that by expanding the horizons of the movement by the co-operation with Labour the campaign was socially, and probably politically, successful. The enforced appeal to a wider constituency established suffrage as a popular cause and removed the taint of its middle-class associations. At a political level, although only eight by-elections were fought, it caused unease in the Liberal Party and it is believed that the EFF did much to make the upsurge in Labour candidates in Liberal held constituencies effective.<sup>56</sup> The Westminster Gazette, a supporter of women's suffrage but an advocate of a non-party measure, regarded the policy as having a limited effect. The paper was of the opinion that "as a form of pressure it is more annoying to the Government than any of the activities of the militant organisations. Whether ultimately it is likely to promote the cause is a very different question." For the Westminster Gazette believed that the policy could only be influential in constituencies where the margin was small.<sup>57</sup> The anticipated General Election, where the effectiveness of the EFF policy would be put to the test, never materialised. War broke out in August 1914 and by common consent all

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<sup>55</sup>Common Cause, 17 April 1914.

<sup>56</sup>Hume, The NUWSS, 163 quotes M. Pugh, Electoral Reform in War and Peace (London, Henley and Boston, 1978), 23.

<sup>56</sup>Westminster Gazette, 5 June 1914.

political activity was suspended. As Brailsford had predicted, however, the "fighting alliance" brought many of the democratic suffragists into the Labour camp, particularly that of the ILP. During the war this alliance, the fruit of the EFF campaign, was to be cemented by a profound belief in the necessity of applying democratic principles to the pursuit of peace.

## CHAPTER II

DEFINING A MINORITY: AUGUST 1914 - APRIL 1915

We were unprepared, morally and mentally. War, in 1914, was a revelation of evil outside our categories...we did not talk of peace; we had no need to. We did not talk of war; it was far away, remote, unreal. This remoteness gave 1914 the force of a bomb, which blasted us, suddenly, violently, and with acute pain, out of our habitual thinking, broke up our patterns and violated our standards. It was a charge of dynamite applied not only to the forms of our lives but to the ideas by which we had lived.<sup>1</sup>

The bemused response of Mary Agnes (Molly) Hamilton and her circle of young professionals depicted in her novel Dead Yesterday was typical of the reaction of many in the country at large in August 1914. The shocked response to war was that of a nation that had been preoccupied with national politics and blind to the implications of events in eastern Europe. This was a myopia fostered by Government and press alike. As Kathleen Courtney commented later: "We women knew nothing about international affairs, nor did the general public...they were considered the concern of the Foreign Office."<sup>2</sup> The initial and instinctive reaction of many in the country when it became clear in late July that Britain could be drawn into a European conflict was to urge non-intervention. However, with the German rejection of the British ultimatum on the night of 4 August the hastily conceived and belatedly

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<sup>1</sup>Mary A. Hamilton, Remembering My Good Friends (London, 1944), 63.

<sup>2</sup>Francesca Wilson, "Three Twentieth Century Women of Action."

implemented neutrality campaign of the previous few days gave way, virtually overnight, to the formal closing of the national ranks. Labour's appeal to the international solidarity of all working people which had been the theme at the enormous meeting of labour and trade unionists at the meeting in Trafalgar Square on the previous Sunday was quietly dropped. By the end of August the Labour party was lending its support to the Government's recruiting campaign. The most notable exception to this conformity was the party's parliamentary leader, Ramsay MacDonald.<sup>3</sup> His attack on Grey's speech to the Commons on 3 August, in which he denied the necessity of Britain's entry into the war, rendered MacDonald the most hated man in England. The Foreign Secretary's speech with its appeal to "honour" and "conscience" was, in fact, the master-stroke that recalled the errant Liberals to their party. The Gladstonian moral overtones, the combined appeal to the residual public school spirit of fair play and honour won over even those who only a few days earlier had staunchly opposed intervention. From the hindsight of 1916 Mary Agnes Hamilton commented bitterly:

The sanction of the House of Commons was a formality; the question of Belgium came after the fact. If France were in, we were in; and France was in....Efforts to secure neutrality were wasted words; for they were all based on the belief that the commitment to France did not exist which Grey now felt an obligation of honour. Of course, it was an obligation of honour.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>In the early months of the war MacDonald supported a recruiting campaign in his constituency at Leicester.

<sup>4</sup>Mary A. Hamilton, Dead Yesterday (New York, 1916), 212.

The liberal press also abandoned its non-interventionist campaign. Those powerful editors C. P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian and A. G. Gardiner of the Daily News only a few days earlier had been forcefully and eloquently maintaining that war would be contrary to the country's interests and a denial of liberal principles. They particularly abhorred an alliance with autocratic and barbaric Russia. Yet, with the declaration of war they changed their tune and Scott spoke for the nation as a whole when he declared that "all controversy is therefore now at an end. Our front is united." It was agreed that all must stand together to attain decisive victory over Germany.<sup>5</sup>

This plea for unity from the liberal press was echoed at a meeting of women from suffrage and working-women's associations held on 4 August at the Kingsway Hall in London. Four days earlier when the conference was announced, the intention had been to lend support to the Foreign Secretary in what they believed was his bid to maintain British neutrality. When the representatives assembled, however, the ultimatum had been sent to Germany and the Chairman, Mrs Fawcett, admitted that what had been intended as part of the nation-wide demonstration for European peace, could now only be a call to all women to do their duty. Her plea, relayed to the entire membership of the Union by Common Cause, was for the suffragists "to bind ourselves together for

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<sup>5</sup>Manchester Guardian, 28 July, 5 August 1914. Daily News, 5 August 1914.

the purpose of rendering the greatest possible aid to our country at this momentous epoch." In this same vein, she later enjoined the members of the NUWSS to "let us show ourselves worthy of citizenship, whether our claim to it be recognised or not."<sup>6</sup> Not all the speeches were as overtly patriotic as that of the President of the NUWSS. In her address, Helena Swarwick made it clear that her idea of duty was for women to reflect upon the war, to think how to bring it to an end and to work for the prevention of its repetition. She observed that although the NUWSS had taken no position on this particular war, or on Britain's share in it, that suffragists had always been against the arbitrament of force.<sup>7</sup> Although Fawcett's injunction was to set the tone of the NUWSS's war effort, Swarwick's speech foreshadowed future divisions within the suffrage society. The relationship she perceived between suffrage and anti-militarism was to become the cornerstone of her campaign to persuade the NUWSS to work for peace.

Of the two resolutions carried by the Kingsway meeting, one urged the women's groups to use their organisations to alleviate the inevitable suffering caused by the social and industrial dislocation. It was immediately put into effect. The other, which appealed to the Government to "support every effort made to restore peace", was destined to be differently interpreted and a source of conflict within the NUWSS.<sup>8</sup> Notwithstanding their differences, Swarwick and Fawcett

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<sup>6</sup>Common Cause, 7 and 14 August 1914.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 7 August.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

were united in their horror of the impending chaos. The older woman, although accepting the necessity of war, saw it as the destruction of her life's work. Swarwick, believing that the conflict could have been avoided, was rent by the folly and "senseless brutality" of it all. Yet despite her conviction that her actions to avert a similar disaster in the future would be misrepresented, she knew that "I could do no other."<sup>9</sup>

Helena Swarwick was to become a member of that minority of men and women who were to resist the turn of the tide of popular opinion. Several of this group were pre-war critics of foreign policy, others were socialists, some were pacifists and some combined elements of all these positions.<sup>1</sup> All, however, were united in their dissatisfaction with the Government's professions as to the causes of the war. The conflict, they believed, was the outcome of the arms race of the previous decade and the entangling alliances that were the fruit of secret diplomacy. Nonetheless, in spite of their conviction that the war was unnecessary and could have been avoided, few of the Government's critics believed that the war could be halted.<sup>10</sup> Some, although Swarwick was not one of these, looked to a short war, an allied victory and, when peace came, the opportunity to effect a diplomatic revolution by revising the principles on which the

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<sup>9</sup>Ray Strachey, Millicent Garrett Fawcett (London, 1931), 275. Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 241.

<sup>10</sup>B. Russell to the editor of the Nation, 4 August 1914. Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 254.

settlement would be concluded. However, no changes could be accomplished without public support. Yet, the national mood, fanned by the popular press and by government propaganda, was becoming increasingly xenophobic. This was not an attitude that would be conducive to creating the conditions necessary to secure an enduring peace. Thus, for the next four years the battle for the public mind was joined. For Britons it was to be a battle that was second only to that being fought on the western front.

The organisations taking the lead in this crusade were the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the newly formed Union of Democratic Control (UDC) and, from October 1915, the Women's International League (WIL). The UDC had its origin in August 1914 in a group of disaffected Liberal MPs who sought to establish contacts with like minds in the Labour party. The intention of this group was to explore the possibility of creating a wider movement by linking up with opinion outside parliament.<sup>11</sup> Amongst the founders of this group were the Liberal Radicals Charles P. Trevelyan, Arthur Ponsonby, the internationalist Norman Angell and the ILP leader J. R. MacDonald. The basis of their future campaign was the four cardinal principles that they believed must be established in order to secure international peace. These were: self-determination; an international council to regulate relations between states; the control and limitation of arms

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<sup>11</sup>C. P. Trevelyan to E. D. Morel, 5 August 1914, E. D. Morel Papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science (hereafter EDMP) F/6.

manufacture and export; and the cornerstone of UDC policy - the democratic control of foreign policy. From its earliest days many individuals from the ILP were prominent in the UDC. This association was to be put on an official footing in April 1915 at the Annual Conference of the ILP at Norwich. In response to the combined appeal of Trevelyan and MacDonald the conference sanctioned the hitherto unofficial affiliation of local branches of the party with the UDC.<sup>12</sup>

The decision to court women as well as labour had been, in part, sparked by their enquiries and offers of support. The approach was made despite the reservations of at least one of the founding fathers - Norman Angell.<sup>13</sup> Early in September, E. D. Morel, the renowned crusader against Belgian atrocities in the Congo, now Secretary of the UDC, approached Maude Royden requesting a meeting between prominent women and representatives of the UDC. He admitted to be gathering together "enlightened opinion" against the time when the group's propaganda could be put into action. At this stage the organisers were thinking of a separate women's body "associated" with the UDC. Morel suggested forming:

a distinct committee of women... adopting broadly our policy, co-operating and keeping in touch with us, opening the avenues of women's organisations all over the country to permeation by our views, spreading our literature and its own

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<sup>12</sup>Report of the Norwich Conference April 1915. ILP Series I Pamphlets and Leaflets (microform) (Brighton, 1975).

<sup>13</sup>E. D. Morel to C. P Trevelyan, 17 September 1914, EDMP F6/2.

special literature among women from one end of the land to the other."<sup>14</sup>

Apparently, a similar approach was made to Swanwick. In her reply she was, as she always had been, unequivocal in her rejection of the suggestion of segregated political activity. She believed strongly that there was a real need for men and women to educate each other, rather than to perpetuate misunderstandings about each others' views. She admitted that there were plenty of "war-mad" women but nonetheless, she was of the opinion that "the great mass of women are by temperament and vocation and interest predisposed to peace as men are not and probably never will be. Biological this!" While she did not doubt that there would be a large response to appeals by her fellow suffragists Isabella Ford, Maude Royden and Ethel Snowden, the women's peace society that they would form, she warned Morel, might prove to be incompatible with the men's. As one who believed "intensely in the sovereignty...of reason", she acknowledged that she was "bored beyond patience by the mindless flapping of the purely instinctive." No doubt she feared that the likely religious and emotional appeals of her suffrage colleagues would fall into this category. Never one to mince her words, she wrote, "I know I don't want to go tiger-shooting with them. They are not critical enough."<sup>15</sup> An emotional appeal would subvert all that she was fighting for, all that she had ever fought

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<sup>14</sup>E. D. Morel to A. M. Royden, 9 September 1914 (copy), EDMP F6/2.

<sup>15</sup>H. M. Swanwick to E. D. Morel, n.d. probably 21 September 1914, EDMP F6/2. Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 273.

for - to present women as rational beings. She believed that women, if given the opportunity, were as capable as men of understanding issues of policy, be they domestic or foreign. All her life she had fought the compliance with which her sex drifted into inferior positions in mixed organisations and deferred to male opinions.

Notwithstanding her reservations about the society's attitude to women, from their first meeting on 23 September Swarwick became a devoted admirer of Morel and a convinced supporter of the organisation's policies. As a "political pacifist" she knew that the diplomatic revolution she believed necessary to secure an enduring peace could only be won by working through the political system. The ideal instrument for this purpose was the UDC. Swarwick later remarked to a correspondent that she was glad that she had joined the UDC at its beginning, as it and the Women's International League (WIL) had been her greatest pleasures during the terrible war years. It appears that she actually joined the organisation in February 1915, whereupon, she was speedily elected to the executive and to the General Council.<sup>16</sup> For the next fourteen years she was to devote herself to the organisation. During the war she rarely missed an executive committee meeting and was one of the UDC's most frequent speakers. From 1924 to 1926, she succeeded Morel as editor of the monthly newspaper, The UDC.

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<sup>16</sup>H. M. Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 254. H. M. Swarwick to Lady Kate Courtney, 12 October 1916?, Courtney Papers, BLPES, Fol 4. Fragment from the minutes of the General Meeting 9 February 1915, UDC Papers, Brynmor Jones Library, University of Hull (hereafter UDC) DDC 6/15.

She also became the organisation's official biographer with her Builders of Peace (1924).

By the first General Council Meeting in November 1914, the UDC could claim a membership of 5,000 including the affiliation of over twenty ILP branches.<sup>17</sup> Five of the eighteen members of the General Committee were prominent women. By November, in spite of their reservations about the attitude of the society to women, Ethel Williams and Isabella Ford, both influential in the NUWSS, had become members. In February, they were joined by Catherine Marshall, Margaret Hills (formerly Robertson) and Maude Royden as well as several of the younger generation of suffragists such as Mary Agnes Hamilton, Irene Cooper Willis and Caroline Playne.<sup>18</sup> Organised women (as they described themselves) in the labour movement also showed an interest. By December 1914 the Women's Labour League announced their acceptance of the four cardinal points of the UDC and branches were discussing affiliation. The barrier that had existed for many women with regard to the attitude of the organisation to women's suffrage was to be removed at the Council Meeting in February 1915. A resolution was passed declaring that "the UDC, convinced that democracy must be based

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<sup>17</sup>Secretary's Report First General Council, 17 November 1914, UDC DDC 1/3.

<sup>18</sup>For an analysis of the Liberal *volte face*, see Irene Cooper Willis, England's Holy War (New York, 1972). Originally published as three books, How We Went to War (1919); How We Got On With the War (1920); How We Came Out of the War (1921). Also, see Caroline E. Playne, Society at War 1914-1916 (London, 1931) for a discussion of the psychological aspects of a society at war.

on the equal citizenship of men and women invites the co-operation of women."<sup>19</sup> The largest body of organised women in the country, the NUWSS, was, however, to remain aloof.

The battle to mobilise the mind and resources of the NUWSS to serve peace was to be fought from within by those democratic suffragists who had done so much to radicalise and make the society a political force. They had come to believe that the schemes for relief, now successfully "under weigh", were insufficient contribution to the war. Although the outbreak of hostilities had provoked different responses, the general consensus amongst those destined to be labelled as "pacifists", (which, incidentally, was a term applied to all who discussed peace, whether at that time or in the future), was that the NUWSS must extend the scope of its work.<sup>20</sup> Less clear was the direction they advocated for the suffrage society. Was the Union to embark on an educational policy to enlighten its members on the ethics and issues of war and peace? Or was it to cast in its lot with the peace movement by the advocacy of the principles which they believed should inform the settlement at the conclusion of hostilities? In response to opposition from the so-called "patriots" in the NUWSS and also because of the fact that, in this context, only a thin line divided education from propaganda, these two positions became one.

The extremes in this debate were represented by Mrs Fawcett strongly supported by the London Society and Swanwick, Ford and

<sup>19</sup>UDC Council Meeting Minutes, 9 February 1915, UDC DDC/6/15.

<sup>20</sup>See preface n. 5 .

Royden.<sup>21</sup> Between these poles there existed a more moderate group exemplified by Courtney and Marshall. The discussion was initiated by the request from several members for a pronouncement regarding the NU's policy on the war. Such a decision would enable those who were involved in public speaking on behalf of the Union to follow the official line; while those members desirous of working for peace could find another vehicle if the NUWSS decided not to embrace this cause.<sup>22</sup> Swanwick presented these queries on behalf of anxious members to the executive committee in October for their consideration. She also seized this opportunity to propel the executive in the direction she believed the suffrage society should be taking on the question of war. Swanwick believed that the scope of the NUWSS would be extended in a logical and moral sense by a stand against militarism. She stated flatly that if it truly adhered to the principles it professed, then the Union must embrace this position. The group led by Fawcett rejected the contention that work for suffrage and for peace were necessarily related. Nor were they prepared to countenance the utilisation of the resources and machinery of the suffrage society in the interests of an unpopular peace campaign. However great her disillusionment with the Liberal Government's failure to deliver suffrage, Fawcett accepted the rationale for war and rallied to support her Government.

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<sup>21</sup>A. Clark to C. E. Marshall, 15 November 1915, CEMP  
D/Mar/3/39.

<sup>22</sup>E. Williams to C. E. Marshall, 6 October 1914, CEMP  
D/Mar/3/37.

The pacifists also rallied to the support of the Prime Minister. They took as their inspirational text the speech made in Dublin by Asquith on 26 September 1914. In this speech he claimed that the object of the war for Britain was to effect the establishment in Europe of the Gladstonian ideal of public right. This announcement was at once a repudiation of militarism as a means of settling international disputes and an assertion of the right to self-determination. The avowed intention was that "the clash of competing ambitions" and the alliances which resulted from these aspirations should be replaced by "a real European partnership based on the recognition of equal right and established and enforced by a common will." The recognition of equal rights would permit the "independent existence and free development of the smaller nationalities." Asquith declared his belief that "if and when" the Allies were victorious the opportunity would be presented to make a reality of Gladstone's claim of 1870 that "the greatest triumph of our time will be the enthronement of the idea of public right as the governing idea in European politics."<sup>23</sup> Hereafter, this speech became the central point of reference for the democratic women. Faith in the liberal ideals of the Government was restored. The pacifist women were reinforced in their conviction, born of the suffrage movement, that right not might must prevail. For they were quick to note the parallel between the

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<sup>23</sup>Dublin Speech in Anne Wiltsher, Most Dangerous Women (London, Boston and Henley, 1985), 224-5.

subjection of women and the exploitation of the small states by the great powers.

Ironically, the speech provided sustenance both to those anxious to prosecute the war to the bitter end and to those who desired an early conclusion to hostilities with a view to the implementation of these principles. For the former, the conflict was not only endorsed but, even more importantly, the Liberal volte face was justified by investing the conflict with the seductive appeal of a "Holy War." To the latter, by contrast, the speech provided grounds for optimism; it was to be used as the moral goad to urge the Government, when departing from its declared intentions, along the path of principle. The identification of the principles expressed by Asquith with those on which the struggle for enfranchisement had been based ensured that the Dublin speech became the focus of debate in the NUWSS. The argument was not over the acceptance of its principles but whether the suffragists should work for their implementation. Herein lay the rub.

The sobering effect of six weeks of war made for a marked contrast between the pronouncement at Dublin and the Prime Minister's speech at the Guildhall on 9 November. In this the last of a series delivered in the national capitals of the country, Asquith enlarged upon the conditions under which the establishment of public right, as pledged at Dublin on 26 September, could be implemented. He vowed that Britain would never "sheathe the sword" until Belgium had recovered "in full measure all and more than she had sacrificed" and until the French boundaries could be guaranteed from aggression. The war would be waged

until "the military domination of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed."<sup>24</sup> These proclaimed objectives had the effect of entrenching the characterisation of the conflict as a struggle between democracy and autocracy. There could only be one end to this battle - outright victory. Mrs Fawcett and her followers and, indeed, the nation at large, perceived no incompatibility between the Dublin and the Guildhall objectives. Victory was seen as the pre-condition for the establishment of public right. Patriotism aside, the defeat of militarism had a particular appeal to all suffragists. For whatever their political stripe the women were agreed that a society based on military values was inimical to their interests and liberty. The threat to "progressive democracy," Fawcett believed, came entirely from German ambitions; whereas her opponents were convinced that the greater danger was from the growth of militarism at home.<sup>25</sup>

The patriots had the advantage of being united, whereas the anti-war position embraced a range of opinion. Even the extremist pacifists, although they created an impression of unity "by the ardour of their non-resistance line" differed as to the basis of their belief.<sup>26</sup> Isabella Ford was a Quaker and opposed to all war. Maude Royden, although regarded as an absolute pacifist, was on record as

<sup>24</sup>Manchester Guardian, 10 November 1914.

<sup>25</sup>Jus Suffragii, 1 October 1914, 175.

<sup>26</sup>A. Clark to C. E. Marshall, 15 November 1914, CEMP D/Mar/3/39.

having admitted that Britain had no alternative but to go to the defence of Belgium. This was an opinion held by many pacifists at the outset, including, Catherine Marshall.<sup>27</sup> The champion par excellence of anti-militarism, however, was Helena Swarwick. Her views were not new. She had spoken against war on a suffrage platform in 1908; and she had always opposed the use of force and been an outspoken critic of the militancy of the suffragettes of the WSPU. Yet it was the outbreak of war in 1914 that provided the opportunity for the fullest exposition of her credo.

Not all the "pacifists" were as strong in their initial conviction as Helena Swarwick. There were many others, such as Kathleen Courtney who, shocked and bewildered by the outbreak of war, groped towards some understanding of what had come to pass. Attempting to confront her own and what she believed to be the universal ignorance, she suggested that the Union undertake an educational campaign to instruct its members on the ethics and issues of war and peace. As it was the suffrage society's policy to inform its members on the major questions of the day, this suggestion did not appear to be unreasonable. At this early stage both Courtney and Marshall were convinced that if women were to make a contribution to the resolution of the problem of war their first duty was to be informed. They wished to see the influence of the NUWSS exerted to support the Prime Minister

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<sup>27</sup>NUWSS Executive Meeting Minutes 18 March 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/45. The book in which this opinion was expressed was A. M. Royden, The Great Adventure (1915).

against the growing xenophobia in the country. Unlike the so-called "patriots" they recognised that the hatred of the enemy being fostered by the popular press could not lead to a conciliatory peace. In order to ensure the establishment of public right against the inevitable demands for revenge from Britain's allies France and Russia, Marshall urged that the country must present a united front. She, in common with most of the other pacifists, accepted the Dublin speech at its face value as being a true statement of the Government's intentions. And it was axiomatic for these women that any enlightened discussion must result in support for these principles. Such an assumption belied the initial distinction being drawn by the advocates of an educational policy between education and propaganda.

The issue that was ultimately to divide the NUWSS was whether the organisation was established exclusively for the political purpose of winning the vote, or whether suffrage was only a small part of the much wider women's movement, and, if so, how should this movement be interpreted? The answer to these questions was to be found in the differing responses to the war. The various opinions that had been aired in committee were put before the Union at the Provincial Council Meeting at Wallasey on 12 November 1914 with a view to defining NUWSS policy with regard to the war. The suffragists had always repudiated the methods of the militant WSPU and at Wallasey Swanwick demanded that the Union live up to its professed principles. In her speech on "The Meaning of the Physical Force Argument," she attempted to focus the

debate on the purposes and principles of the suffrage movement and to show that a relationship existed between suffrage and work for peace.

She believed that if suffragists rejected the use of force, then logically, they must oppose war which is essentially arbitrament by force. The constitutional suffrage movement, she argued, had always believed in the virtue of moral force - of right not might. "Votes for women," which was based on an appeal to human rights, she reminded her audience, "was the supreme negation" of the militarist argument that authority was conferred by the power to coerce. Although she admitted that there were occasions when the employment of force was necessary, she believed that this must be under the direction of moral force. To prevent nations acting as their own judges in these matters, she proposed that an impartial international authority be set up to arbitrate between states. In domestic affairs, restraints on the use of force should be exercised through the control of the representatives of the whole people.<sup>28</sup> / In essence, these were the arguments being promoted by the UDC. The unacknowledged problem was how to avoid taking a position on the war while talking about the terms of peace. Although no doubt, Swarwick was fully aware of the inherent contradiction.

The moderate line pursued by Courtney and Marshall, with their emphasis on duty rather than on principle, was more immediately

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<sup>28</sup>F. Marshall to C. E. Marshall, 7 August 1914, CEMP D/Mar/2/30. Provincial Council Meeting at Wallasey 12 November 1914, CEMP D/Mar/3/39.

comprehensible and, therefore, more effective in influencing the Council. They trod a conciliatory path between two potentially damaging extremes.<sup>29</sup> The case for the NUWSS to work for the building up of opinion in support of the Dublin principles was presented as just an extension of the war work to which the suffragists had committed themselves in August. Now that the Union was showing some success in helping to mitigate the effects of the war on women and children, it was time to look ahead and start work to ensure that this should indeed be a "war to end war." Women, it was suggested, were in a unique position to help create the climate of opinion in which an enduring peace could be made. As the "mother-sex" which did not fight, it was easier for women to rally to the Prime Minister and take a lead in healing the nation's wounds. As members of the NUWSS and, therefore, part of the International Women's Suffrage Association (IWSA) they also had the opportunity to foster goodwill amongst the women of the warring nations.<sup>30</sup> Marshall had no doubt, as she later informed Fawcett, that the issue under discussion was an "integral part of the whole question of women's political duties."<sup>31</sup> Evidently the assembled representatives of the constituent societies were swayed by the reasonableness of these arguments, for they moved that the Union

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<sup>29</sup>A. Clark to C. E. Marshall, 15 November 1914, CEMP D/Mar/3/39.

<sup>30</sup>NUWSS Provincial Council Meeting, 12 November 1914.

<sup>31</sup>C. E. Marshall to M. G. Fawcett, 28 November 1914 (draft), CEMP D/Mar/3/39.

should work to build up public opinion on the lines of the Dublin speech. As a first step in educating the Union in the issues of war and peace, they also gave authority to Maude Royden, the editor of Common Cause, to publish articles on these topics.

The apparent sympathy of the Provincial Council to their cause encouraged Courtney to believe that a compromise between the opposing views could be found. In order to preserve the unity of the society both she and Marshall were prepared to make sacrifices and they assumed that the same would be true of Fawcett.<sup>32</sup> However, the bitter struggle over the next few months to win the mind of the NUWSS proved that any accommodation would be unlikely. As the consent of a General Council was necessary for a change of policy (and Fawcett had resisted summoning a special Council during the autumn) all eyes were fixed on the forthcoming assembly. Therefore, between November 1914 and February 1915 when the General Council was to meet, the protagonists set to work to publicise their positions. What had initially been a question of education soon became a campaign in support of the principles that should inform the peace and the link was firmly established between suffrage and pacifism.

From the outset Fawcett resisted the claim that there was a necessary connection between suffrage and peace. Instead, she opposed the pacifists with all the weight of her great prestige. Her opposition was based on patriotism and expediency. Much as she

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<sup>32</sup>K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 24 November 1914, D/Mar/3/37; C. E. Marshall to M. G. Fawcett, 28 November 1914 (draft), CEMP D/Mar/3/39.

supported the Prime Minister's statement at Dublin, she did not consider the time opportune for a campaign for its implementation. Victory must precede all talk of peace. The patriots believed that any premature discussion of peace would both weaken the war effort and make a mockery of the sacrifices of the men in the trenches. In proclaiming these sentiments Fawcett was at one with the feeling in the country and she had no intention of permitting the NUWSS to embark on a policy that ran counter to the national mood. Any suspicion that the NUWSS was embracing the programme of the unpopular UDC would make them political outcasts. And Fawcett was not prepared to forfeit the goodwill that had been built up over the years and strengthened by the recent relief work. As Ray Strachey later observed to Marshall, even if Asquith himself were to undertake a campaign to win support for his principles, he would be opposing the national mood.<sup>33</sup>

Thus at a stroke, Fawcett combined both her patriotism and her determination to preserve the Union as a political weapon for suffrage. There had been no moral dilemma for the President for she was not sympathetic in principle to the claims of the pacifists. She never attempted to make any distinction between the various varieties, believing all pacifism to be "far-fetched and visionary."<sup>34</sup> Like many others in the country, she greatly misrepresented the pacifist viewpoint. They were not, as they were repeatedly claimed, advocates

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<sup>33</sup>R. Strachey to C. E. Marshall, 9 January 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/1.

<sup>34</sup>Strachey, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 286.

of "stop the war" or "peace at any price." They spoke only of the peace after the conclusion of hostilities.

The pacifists rejected their opponents contention that a united war effort and planning for peace were incompatible. Swarwick later claimed that all she had wanted to do "was to get past the censorship, past the propoganda, past partisanship and war lies, to find the facts and help myself and others to reasonable conclusions from those facts and from an honest endeavour to understand how other nations felt."<sup>35</sup> At the outset, even before the material and psychological resources of the country were fully mobilised, the pacifists were not prepared to admit that sacrifices of traditional freedoms were in any way justified. They regarded any such encroachment as an assault on the very democratic principles they were pledged to uphold. Already they were critical of incursions made into individual rights by the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) and its first amendments. Yet, this was neither the first nor would it be the last occasion when truth became the first casualty of war. However, it was the first occasion that liberal values had come into direct conflict with the exigencies created by a national emergency of an unprecedented scale. It was only in the spring of 1916 when it became apparent that peace would be later rather than sooner, that the pacifists turned their attention to convincing their fellow countrymen that peace could be made if the terms were right. In undertaking this campaign they found themselves

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<sup>35</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 264.

facing the dilemma for the loyal subject of the "ethical and political propriety" of opposing the Government in wartime.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, they believed they had a duty to uphold their principles. Both patriots and pacifists were agreed that the terrible sacrifices had to be justified. Whereas the former would only feel vindicated by a victory of the forces of democracy, the latter were to insist on the triumph of reason through a negotiated peace. In spite of the magnitude of the task of propagating an alternative view to the official version of the conflict, the pacifists did not shirk what they considered to be their responsibility. Yet, were they right to believe that national opinion could influence the terms of peace? Or were they being realistic in their conviction that these terms would determine the future of peace in Europe? For these were the premises on which their actions were to be based.

The speculation and tension mounted in the NUWSS as the campaign was waged in the lecture hall, in the columns of Common Cause and Jus Suffragii and by "unusual questions and circulars."<sup>37</sup> The radical Manchester and Newcastle Societies organised their own conferences on the Union's attitude to the war. Marshall and Courtney were invited to speak at Manchester where the former reiterated the sentiments she expressed at Wallasey. In January, Swarwick spoke at Newcastle where Marshall was also scheduled to speak at the end of the

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<sup>36</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 273.

<sup>37</sup>M. Ashton election address, MPL M50/2/9/14.

month.<sup>38</sup> The theme of all the pacifist entreaties was that women should assume their responsibilities. It was their "sacred duty" to ensure that the sacrifices of the war should not have been in vain. Swanwick urged her audience to seize the present opportunities, which had been denied women when she was young, to help shape the future. They need no longer "sew and be submissive" in deference to the Victorian belief that "men must work and women must weep." Although admittedly, she confessed, this was a role she had rejected because "I wanted to work too - weeping didn't seem much of an occupation."<sup>39</sup>

Nor did the patriots lag behind in their efforts to influence the NUWSS. Mrs Fawcett entered the lists with articles in Common Cause and a circular to the societies in which she presented the issue in a patriotic light and announced that she was "heart and soul for the cause of Great Britain in the present war."<sup>40</sup> A more insidious approach was that of Ray Strachey of the London Society who circulated her "unusual questions" to all candidates for the forthcoming election of new officers at the General Council. "Mrs Strachey's catechism," as Marshall dubbed the questionnaire, was couched in such a way that it was, as Marshall complained, "as incapable of an answer by a 'plain yes

<sup>38</sup>C. E. Marshall, "Notes for Newcastle" 25 January 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/43. E. Williams to C. E. Marshall, 8 January 1915; Marshall to Williams, 11 January 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/1.

<sup>39</sup>Common Cause, 2 October 1914.

<sup>40</sup>M. G. Fawcett, circular to the societies, MPL M50/2/9/11.

or no' as the proverbial poser: 'when did you stop beating your wife?'" No response could avoid the damaging admission that an educational campaign would lessen the efficacy of the Union in its suffrage work. But Strachey had long been an opponent of the democrats in the Union and had privately declared her intention of destroying the pacifists.<sup>41</sup> In an attempt to calm the agitation and clarify the issues candidates were asked to draw up an election address based on the resolutions on the agenda for the General Council.

Synoptic and entirely characteristic of their authors, the election addresses brought into sharp relief the antagonisms within the executive. The controversy centred on those resolutions calling upon the NUWSS to work actively for the Dublin principles: to promote mutual understanding and goodwill between nations, to combat the spirit of hatred and revenge; and, finally, to organise an educational campaign to promote discussion on the causes of war and the prevention of its outbreak in the future.<sup>42</sup> Impatient at the prevarication and probably realising that there was nothing to lose, Swanwick issued a typically individualistic document redolent of that high principle and moral certainty that had traditionally characterised English

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<sup>41</sup>See Vellacott, "Feminist Consciousness," 3. "Questions to be addressed to candidates" from R. Strachey to C. E. Marshall, 31 December 1914; C. E. Marshall to R. Strachey, 5 January 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/44.

<sup>42</sup>Agenda for Council Meeting 4-6 February 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/44.

dissent.<sup>43</sup> Ignoring the agenda, she argued that there was a parallel between the subjection of women by men and the conquest of small nations by superior states. She urged the Union, "if it has any basic principle at all, to declare and to work for the direction of physical force by moral force in international as in national affairs." Attempting no pretence at impartiality, she declared that for the society to achieve this end it must declare a willingness to support arbitration and conciliation and must also be ready to educate itself in matters bearing upon such a policy. Addressing the future and looking toward the reshaping political alliances, she rejected the idea currently circulating of the creation of a women's party. Instead, she stressed the need for a party of both sexes which would be dedicated to working for the substitution of moral for physical force in all relations. Within such an organisation, the NUWSS "if it has the will", she believed, could play a vital role.<sup>44</sup>

Catherine Marshall's address was more restrained. Methodically, she directed her analysis to a careful elucidation of the proposed agenda. The items she believed to be the most important were: the resolution emphasising the substitution of arbitration for war; the call to build up opinion to facilitate peace negotiations; and the encouragement of women to form responsible opinions on these matters.

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<sup>43</sup>Taylor, Troublemakers, 13.

<sup>44</sup>H. M. Swarwick election address, CEMP D/Mar/3/44.

Others of the executive, notably, Ashton, Ford and Royden, endorsed her sentiments. Courtney, suspecting the likely outcome of the meeting, warned against relying on the rhetoric of good intentions. She emphasised the need to act on any resolution passed by the General Council. She insisted that she would "regard the expression of pious opinion about the war on the part of the NU as not only useless but demoralising." She also offered the opinion that Britain was not blameless and refused to accept that this was a battle to preserve democracy. In general, she believed war was wrong; and although not yet a member, she sympathised with the objects of the UDC.<sup>45</sup>

The outcome of the General Council was of critical importance both for Fawcett and the pacifists. For the President it was a question of preserving the work of fifty years; for the pacifists it represented the future direction of the women's movement. Although their claim was of comparatively recent origin, those democratic suffragists who had embraced pacifism had been responsible over the last years of pre-war Britain for widening the NUWSS's range of activity that had brought it into line with other democratic women's organisations, notably the East London Federation and the Women's Freedom League. These women were popular and they wielded great influence in the suffrage society. Yet, for all their professions of willingness to make concessions, the democrats had their hopes fixed on

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<sup>45</sup>Election addresses: C. E. Marshall, CEMP D/Mar/3/44; K. D. Courtney *et al*, MPL M50/2/9/12.

the acceptance of all items on the agenda concerning the war. Their disappointment was acute and bitter when the meeting, having endorsed the Dublin principles, then declined to advocate a policy for their implementation. The early closure of the debate on the resolution calling for the Union to work for the "building up of public opinion" on the lines of the Dublin statement, robbed Marshall of the opportunity to exercise her persuasive talents. According to her mother, neither she nor Kathleen Courtney "put up the fight for your life."<sup>46</sup> Even the provision for an educational drive was rendered "a kind of educational campaign better adapted to the WEA" by the substitution of "courses" for "campaigns" in the wording of the motion.<sup>47</sup> The only positive achievement was the call to members "to do all in their power to promote mutual understanding and goodwill among nations" and the hope was expressed that the IWSA would soon meet in a neutral country. Unjustly but understandably, Marshall bitterly denounced the attitude of the meeting as: "They're idealists. Clap but don't vote."<sup>48</sup>

The sense of bitterness quickly turned to outrage when Fawcett addressed the public meeting in the Kingsway hall on the evening of 5

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<sup>46</sup>C. Marshall to C. E. Marshall, n.d., (probably February 1915) CEMP D/Mar/3/44.

<sup>47</sup>Common Cause, 30 April 1915.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 26 February 1915. C. E. Marshall to G. Armstrong, 19 February 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/44.

February. In spite of an earlier decision that officers of the NU should not express private opinions when speaking publicly on behalf of the society, the President launched into what was described as "the stereotyped front bench view both of the war and of what led up to it and of what must succeed it."<sup>49</sup> The pacifists sitting alongside her on the platform were visibly stunned by this turn of events. They felt betrayed. Not only had Fawcett, in her desperation, acted unconstitutionally, but she had misrepresented the position of her colleagues. The impression she had created, despite the parenthetical "in my opinion", was that she was speaking on behalf of the society. Her declaration that, "it is akin to treason to talk of peace" until Germany was driven out of Belgium, was tantamount to a public accusation of want of patriotism. Although this was an accusation with which they were familiar from executive meetings, the pacifists had hardly expected a public denunciation that so misrepresented their cause.

Mrs Fawcett's declaration was a deliberate attempt to scotch "unfortunate rumours" circulating in the press that the NUWSS executive was contemplating "active peace propaganda." The rumour also had it, as Fawcett later claimed, that this propaganda was to be on terms very different from those advocated by Asquith.<sup>50</sup> She was able to adopt

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<sup>49</sup>G. Armstrong to M. G. Fawcett, 12 February 1915, FL Box 89/100.

<sup>50</sup>Strachey, Fawcett, 288.

her position because there had been a genuine confusion at the Council meeting as to the pacifists' intentions and as to the issues at stake.<sup>51</sup> What had started as a campaign to set the facts of war before women so that they could make up their own minds had quickly become an appeal to them to take a hand in moulding public opinion. Although it was claimed to be non-partisan, the pacifists sought to direct this opinion along specific lines which they believed to embody both truth and sanity in wartime. The principles they were propagating were those of the UDC. Thus, by the time of the February council, for the pacifists, "education" had insensibly come to mean propaganda. When later defending the decisions of the General Council, Fawcett noted the very real difficulty of attempting to "translate the general into the particular." When it comes to implementing principles, she observed, "there is room for any amount of disintegrating differences of opinion." She obviously felt no blame for ensuring the triumph of the "disintegrating differences."<sup>52</sup>

After the next executive meeting on 18 February when it became clear that there was no intention of implementing the Council's resolutions, Courtney and Marshall resigned. The reason they gave when

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<sup>51</sup>F. Marshall to C. E. Marshall, 5 March 1915, CEMP D/Mar/2/33. Editorial in Common Cause, 11 November 1914.

<sup>52</sup>M. G. Fawcett, "The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and the Hague Congress" Englishwoman, June 1915.

they handed in their resignations to the executive on 4 March was that only by resigning their onerous offices would they be able to devote sufficient time to peace work. Other determining factors had been the "irresponsible" and "flippant" attitude of the executive towards the implementation of any decision of the council and, not least, Fawcett's public denunciation. The President, however, simply attributed their resignations to the fact that the NU had declined to work for peace - which in a sense was correct.<sup>53</sup>

Both secretaries were reluctant to sever their connection and offered to continue in the service of the society. This unwillingness was particularly true of Marshall, who feared that the Labour policy would be abandoned by the conservatives in the NUWSS. Her convictions concerning the future importance of the Labour connection had been strengthened through her work with the EFF.<sup>54</sup> On her decision to devote herself to peace work, much encouragement and support came from Marshall's parents and from her old suffrage ally, Brailsford. Her parents believed that at the present time peace was the most urgent issue and that she could return later to suffrage work. Brailsford was also certain that the secretaries were right to resign, for it would have been a waste for them to have continued at the NUWSS "treadmill."

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<sup>53</sup>C. E. Marshall to M. G. Fawcett (copy), 3 March 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/45. To the societies from Courtney, 9 March 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/1. M. G. Fawcett to Atkinson, 19 February 1916, FL Box 89/117.

<sup>54</sup>C. E. Marshall to G. Armstrong, 19 February 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/44.

Acknowledging their contribution, he expressed his fear that the society would fall to pieces without them. After all, he had known the Union "before Miss Courtney came to London and it really did not exist as an effective national organisation at all."<sup>55</sup>

The loss of the two secretaries had been an acute disappointment to the membership of the suffrage society, but the resignation in April of almost half the executive caused widespread consternation.<sup>56</sup> The occasion for this exodus was the refusal by the executive on 18 March to send delegates to the forthcoming congress in neutral Holland. The proposed Dutch meeting, according to Fawcett who led the opposition, was "virtually a peace congress." The resigning members of the executive claimed that the General Council had expressed a desire to promote goodwill amongst women of the world and had authorised support for an international meeting. The President, however, insisted that the Council had only declared its support for a meeting of the IWSA. The ten resigning members construed this decision as a deliberate rejection of the Council's wishes.<sup>57</sup> This bitter

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<sup>55</sup>H. N. Brailsford to C. E. Marshall, 9 March 1915, CEMP D/Mar/2/33.

<sup>56</sup>Out of an executive of twenty-one the following resigned in April 1915: H. M. Swarwick, I. O. Ford, M. Ashton, A. M. Royden, E. Leaf, C. Schuster, Mrs. Stanbury, Mrs. Harley, S. J. Tanner, A. Clark. Of the four officers Courtney and Marshall had resigned by the end of March.

<sup>57</sup>NUWSS executive meeting 18 March 1915, FL. Resignations: 15 April, Royden and Swarwick; 16 April Clark, CEMP D/Mar/3/45. See H. M. Swarwick's letter "Sufficient Cause" Common Cause, 30 April 1915.

wrangling over the spirit and intentions of the February assembly dragged on until June when a Special Council finally resolved the issue.

Amongst those resigning in April was Helena Swanwick. As she saw the situation, the contraction of the purpose and ideals of the NUWSS had killed her interest "in a machine from which the spirit had fled." In correspondence with Marshall, she attacked the attitude of the President. The mind of Mrs Fawcett, Swanwick claimed, was "quite closed and "that so long as she dictates to the NU there is no place for me within it." The only reason she had stayed so long was "out of regard to your opinion and Kathleen's." Offering comfort and affection but also trying to stiffen the resolve of her equivocating friend, Swanwick urged her to cut all ties with the Union. Staying on, she argued, would only result in "futile and bitter wranglings." Had not events of the past months shown that "'our lot' are not capable of making good on that committee." Marshall was enjoined to "get out and make your own conditions! EFF is dead anyway and a Labour policy will have to be on different lines. Don't you see that? Can you see working a Labour Party with Mrs. F. ???" Her exhortations notwithstanding, Swanwick understood the unpalatable prospect facing her friend of being "once more an individual and not an officer speaking for thousands." Yet, it was not a tragedy. Rather, it was the opportunity to construct a "more mobile and vital (if smaller) combination of forces." Despite this sound advice, for as yet she saw

no alternative employment for her formidable organising abilities, Marshall still clung to the NU through her work for the EEF, until her position on that committee, too, became untenable.<sup>58</sup>

Why was it that the Radicals and not Mrs Fawcett resigned, for after all they held a majority in the executive? Ray Strachey, Fawcett's admirer and biographer, attributed this curious fact to her resolve and influence in the Union. The President would not admit the argument that the pacifists' ideals were, as they claimed "the very truth and substance of the women's movement." She stood against the majority "like a rock in their path, opposing herself with all the great weight of her personal popularity and prestige...and they could in no way get the better of her." She could, and did, make personal pronouncements that appeared to have the authority of the society, an unconstitutional practice that she deemed justified if it would save the Union. Perhaps most importantly, Fawcett was at one with the sentiments of the membership at large. Although a number of big suffrage societies such as Manchester and Newcastle were ranged against her, the strength of her support lay in the country societies. Whilst England was at war, their members believed that the first duty was to rally behind the government and "no other aim or ideal, however generous or fine, could stand in the way of the determination to win

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<sup>58</sup>H. M. Swanwick to C. E. Marshall, 22 March 1915 and 24 March 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/45.

the war."<sup>59</sup> Yet, by her resistance, Fawcett became the unwitting agent of the creation of a new pacifist and feminist internationalism. Although at the time not all the democrats recognised it as such, their secession was, in reality, liberation from the narrow objectives and new conservatism of the NUWSS. They were now free to grapple with the age-old problems of war and peace to which the present conflict had given a new meaning. Whilst suffrage was a national question, peace was a global issue. It is perhaps fitting that on 6 February 1915 as the Council ended its deliberations, the two secretaries were asked by Chrystal Macmillan to attend a meeting in Amsterdam to discuss a conference of women.<sup>60</sup> Thus, as one chapter ended, another was opened up. This small meeting of representatives from several countries which met in Holland was destined to launch the international pacifist-feminist movement.

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<sup>59</sup>Strachey, Fawcett, 291, 295.

<sup>60</sup>Courtney's reply to M. Lowndes in Common Cause, 21 May 1915.

### CHAPTER III

#### TOWARDS A PERMANENT PEACE: JANUARY 1915-OCTOBER 1915

Even as they endeavoured to persuade the NUWSS to widen its programme beyond the relief of material distress, Courtney and Marshall were casting about for other ways in which they might contribute to a future peace.<sup>1</sup> There were three choices before them: they could join existing "dissenting" organisations; form their own party; or build on the connections afforded by the IWSA. As the tensions within the NUWSS grew, the thoughts of the pacifists focussed on a new organisation. However, it was only with the meeting in April in Holland organised by the Dutch suffragists that a concrete alternative was suggested. The organisation that soon emerged from their gathering at The Hague had the advantage of combining the national and international objectives of women and peace. Thus the invitation to the meeting in Holland precipitated the final breach within the NU and led to the formation of a new women's international organisation.

The outbreak of war had disrupted plans to hold the 1915 meeting of the IWSA in Berlin. When approached by the President of the IWSA, the American, Carrie Chapman Catt, as to the wisdom of holding

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<sup>1</sup>K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 24 November 1914. CEMP D/Mar/3/37.

an international conference in war-time, Fawcett had been resolute in her opposition. She feared the repetition of violent incidents such as those that had occurred at the meeting that had taken place shortly after Norway had received its independence from Sweden; there the delegates had literally come to blows. Any repetition of such incidents, she believed, would jeopardise future congresses. Courtney and Swarwick regarded this attitude as a confession of failure.<sup>2</sup> As an alternative to holding a general meeting, the NUWSS recommended that the IWSA summon a business session.<sup>3</sup> This cautious move coincided with the news from the German women that they would be unable to host the projected IWSA congress in Berlin. Aletta Jacobs and the Dutch suffragists responded immediately in the same issue of 1 December of Jus Suffragii with an invitation to a meeting in Holland.<sup>4</sup>

The democrats' reaction to this initiative was enthusiastic. The keen desire of many prominent women to maintain the lines of communication with the enemy countries led to their signing a Christmas message published in the Labour Leader extending their good wishes to the women of Germany and Austria. Seizing upon the Dutch suffragist's suggestion, Chrystal Macmillan wrote to Dr Jacobs suggesting that a

<sup>2</sup>K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 26 November 1914. CEMP D/Mar/3/37. H. M. Swarwick, Common Cause, 15 January 1915.

<sup>3</sup>NUWSS executive meeting, 3 December 1914, reported in Jus Suffragii, 1 January 1915, 222.

<sup>4</sup>Jus Suffragii, 1 December 1914.

pilot group meet to discuss the organisation of a congress.<sup>5</sup> But Fawcett was adamant in her opposition to an international meeting. The effect of the President's opposition was to exacerbate the existing divisions within the Union as Macmillan and Swanwick took action to rouse their fellow suffragists to accept the challenge. They argued that only by meeting face to face could women overcome the barriers of censorship and attempt that exchange of points of view that was fundamental to international understanding. Swanwick never, in the long course of her search for peace, relinquished her conviction expressed in 1915 that international goodwill was the key to enduring peace. The quality of the peace, she urged, did not just depend on British public opinion but on attitudes in all the belligerent countries. This meeting would provide one of the few avenues open to women to influence issues of war and peace. "If we had votes," she declared, "we could use them. Since we have only our share of influence let us use that." For she believed that "this war is such an assay of our suffragist creed as we may not evade and live." Turning to her own account Mrs Fawcett's message of September to the IWSA, she quoted: "We have to show that what unites us is stronger than what separates us."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Report of the International Congress of Women The Hague April 28-1 May 1915 (Amsterdam, 1915). Labour Leader, 24 December 1914.

<sup>6</sup>Common Cause, 15 January 1915.

The Annual Council meeting of the NUWSS held in February 1915 endorsed the request made by the December executive meeting that the President of the IWSA summon a conference at a suitable time in 1915. Furthermore, the Council called upon the societies "to take every means open to them for promoting international understanding and good-will between nations." It was on the basis of this last resolution that the pacifists believed they had the authority to engage in discussions to promote a women's congress. Foiled in their efforts to commit the resources of the NUWSS to the active support of the Dublin principles, yet believing that the Union had endorsed an international gathering, five women departed for Amsterdam for preliminary talks with representatives from Holland and Germany on 12 and 13 February. The five were Marshall, Courtney, Emily Leaf, Theodora Wilson-Wilson and Chrystal Macmillan. The women returned armed with an agenda and eager to set about organising support and raising funds for the congress of women to be held at The Hague from 28 April to 1 May 1915.<sup>7</sup>

Almost immediately after their return, they summoned a meeting at the Caxton Hall on 26 February to explain the proposed agenda. In numbers and enthusiasm the gathering exceeded all their expectations. It was agreed to establish a committee to raise funds and to organise

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<sup>7</sup>Theodora Wilson-Wilson was an absolute pacifist and member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. She was also a writer, primarily of children's literature. Chrystal Macmillan, educated at St. Leonard's School and University of Edinburgh. Hon. Sec. ICWPP. Officer of IWSA. Member of executive NUWSS.

British delegates to the conference. To this purpose £270 was promised that very evening. Remarking upon the success of the gathering, Margaret Bondfield, organiser of the Shop Assistants Union, observed that ten years ago she would never have thought women capable of this level of political activity.<sup>8</sup> In a particularly well-received speech Marshall outlined a new role for women. As non-combatants, she believed that they had an opportunity denied to men in promoting the mutual understanding that was necessary to an enduring peace. She urged her audience to act immediately, for the time was propitious. The relative lull in the fighting during the winter months led many civilians, Marshall included, to believe that the war would soon be over. Because the military situation still appeared fluid, the time to talk of peace was now and not when one side held the advantage. Few in the country realised that this lull was only a breathing space as the combatants renewed their efforts in search of a total victory.

The officers of the British section of the International Conference of Women (ICW) were announced on 18 March 1915. Kathleen Courtney was named Chairman, Chrystal Macmillan became Honorary Secretary and Mrs Hubbard-Ellis acted as Honorary Treasurer. The executive included, amongst others, Mrs C. R. Buxton, Lady Courtney, Isabella Ford, Lillian Harris of the Women's Co-operative Guild, Margaret Hills, Maude Royden, Ada Salter of the IIP and Mary Sheepshanks editor of Jus Suffragii. The list of supporters included

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<sup>8</sup>Labour Leader, 22 April 1915.

many formidable women who had won prominence through their work with suffrage agitation, labour politics, philanthropic organisations, industry relations and peace activities. Local English committees were soon formed in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle, while Scottish and Irish groups were set up in Edinburgh and in Dublin. Enthusiastic meetings were held throughout the country. At Manchester on 19 April, around 1200 gathered in support of the Congress.<sup>9</sup> Out of all these supporters 180 women put forward their names to attend the meeting in Holland. On 25 March the British committee issued a manifesto in the Labour Leader which stated the aims of the forthcoming gathering at The Hague.

The ICW invitation to the NUWSS to send one or two delegates to The Hague was forcefully opposed by Fawcett at the executive meeting of 18 March 1915. The President was sensitive as always to the possibility of the suffrage society being "contaminated" by charges of pacifism. Moreover, as she wrote to Catt, she feared that failure of the Congress would make the women's movement a laughing stock.<sup>10</sup> In one instance, Fawcett's fears appeared justified, for an item on the proposed agenda for the Congress had received wide adverse publicity. The resolution which caused so much criticism called for "the Governments of belligerent countries to define the terms on which they

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<sup>9</sup>Labour Leader, 22 April 1915.

<sup>10</sup>M. G. Fawcett to C. Chapman Catt, 15 December 1914. FL Auto 1K/7086 and Strachey, Fawcett, 283-4.

would be willing to make peace, and for this purpose immediately call a truce."<sup>11</sup> Aware of the dangers of this statement, the British section planned to have this resolution dropped from the agenda. Although a few sections of the press supported the Congress, most papers seized upon the "truce" resolution as the opportunity to denigrate the effort by charges of anti-nationalism. The officers of the British ICW committee attempted to counteract these accusations by circularising the press with an explanation of the objects of the forthcoming Congress. It was not a "peace at any price" Congress they argued. Nor should it be believed that internationalism meant "anti-nationalism." The object of the Congress was both to promote goodwill and to "consider how far they could agree as to the basis of the peace for which they would work."<sup>12</sup> In order to remove any misunderstanding and to reassure the public, a rally was held in London on 15 April. The damage, however, had already been done.<sup>13</sup> Mrs Fawcett was particularly upset by the critical comments in the New Statesman which had associated the NUWSS with the Congress. The Fabian weekly accused the suffrage society of being out of touch with national sentiment if it believed that a truce was possible as long as Germany occupied Belgium. As a result of this criticism, the President had

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<sup>11</sup>Towards Permanent Peace (London, 1915), 4.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>13</sup>Common Cause, 23 April 1915. ICW statement in Common Cause, Manchester Guardian and Westminster Gazette, 30 April 1915.

felt herself to be "in an almost unbearable position."<sup>14</sup> Although the association of the NUWSS with these views had arisen accidentally, the effect was to confirm all Mrs Fawcett's worst fears for the good name of the Union.

The executive decided not only to refuse to allow any representatives to attend the Congress but it also decreed that none of the local societies of the Union would be free to appoint delegates. Their justification was that the Council had only given its support to the principle of an IWSA gathering. Individual members were, of course, free to act as they chose. Many of the executive believed this decision was a deliberate rejection of the General Council's directive supporting the promotion of international goodwill. Ford and Ashton fought this interpretation but Swanwick supported the logic of Fawcett. She agreed with the President that the General Council had not wished to put itself in opposition to national feeling. Hence she argued, with a certain contempt, the NUWSS was not entitled to send delegates to the Congress as the first requirement was that they should be in sympathy with the resolutions.<sup>15</sup> Any lingering hope of persuading the NUWSS into co-operation with other groups was crushed by the executive's refusal to permit Societies of the Union to join the UDC, or even to send official delegates to the UDC sponsored National

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<sup>14</sup>New Statesman, 13 March 1915. NUWSS Executive Minutes, 18 March 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/45.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

Conference of Women to be held in April. As we have seen, outraged by what they considered to be a deliberate failure to act on the wishes expressed by the February Council's wishes, ten democratic members resigned from the executive.

The doubts voiced by some of the suffragists about the democratic nature of the UDC in regard to its policy concerning women was a serious deterrent in its recruitment from the ranks of the NUWSS.<sup>16</sup> In an attempt to remove this stumbling block, the UDC announced its support for women's suffrage at its Council Meeting on 9 February 1915 and invited the co-operation of women. Yet even before this announcement was made representatives of the various women's organisations, including Courtney and Swarwick, had met with Trevelyan and MacDonald to arrange for a national conference of women to be held on 14 April under the auspices of the UDC. As part of this membership drive a notice appeared in Common Cause on 19 February urging any suffragists looking for a sympathetic organisation working for peace to join the UDC. The primary object of the April conference was to swell support for the organisation by publicising its policies. Most of the 450 delegates were representatives of women's organisations. They included the National Federation of Women Workers, the Women's Trade Union League, the Railway Women's Guild, Women's Labour League and the Women's Co-operative Guild. As well, there were women's groups of

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<sup>16</sup>I. O. Ford to C. E. Marshall, 25 October 1914, CEMP  
D/Mar/4/1. K. D. Courtney to Marshall, 24 November 1914, CEMP  
D/Mar/3/37.

the ILP, branches of the Women's Liberal Federation, women's Adult Schools, the Women's Freedom League and other suffrage societies. This range indicates something of the interest in the growing discussion over the desired terms of peace. Nor were the views expressed exclusively those of the middle-class, or of the NUWSS. The speakers at the meeting under the chairmanship of Mrs Rackham, who had chaired the General Council in February, were Eleanor Barton of the Women's Co-operative Guild, Margaret Bondfield of the Women's Labour League, Kathleen Courtney, Charlotte Despard of the WFL, Isabella Ford, Maude Royden and Helena Swanwick.

The meeting focussed on the role of women in helping to educate public opinion in UDC principles with a view to securing a lasting peace. The only resolution to generate any real discussion was that urging the Government to declare the terms on which the Allies were prepared to make peace. The proposal was introduced and eloquently addressed by Marshall. This demand to know the Government's war aims was a new departure and had featured in a recent ILP manifesto. Hitherto the emphasis had been on education to provide backing for the Government for a peace based on the Dublin principles. From this point the pacifists put increasing pressure on the administration to state specifically the terms on which it would be prepared to conclude peace. This test of the Government's intentions marked a retreat from the belief expressed at the outset of the war that Britain could do no

other than go to the aid of Belgium. The campaign for an early peace, however, did not gain momentum until 1916.

The public meeting held that evening was addressed by Brailsford, Ethel Snowden, Swarwick and C. P. Trevelyan. The meeting marked Swarwick's emergence into the public arena where for the duration of the war she devoted her considerable talents to the service of peace. She worked first through the agency of the UDC and later through the Women's International League and after July 1916, for the ILP when she joined the party. Her first substantial contribution to the UDC campaign to enlist women's support was with her popular pamphlet published in May 1915 for the organisation entitled Women and War. This publication contained the clearest exposition of her case for the opposition to war.<sup>17</sup>

For some time the possibility of forming an alternative organisation had been under discussion. Ethel Williams had first broached the subject in November 1914 as a response to her dissatisfaction with what seemed to be the only alternative, the UDC.<sup>18</sup> Courtney and Marshall had also been searching for some programme that would provide the basis for peace work. Both were attracted by the programme of the Dutch Anti-Oorlog Raad and at one point they had even hoped to frame a resolution for the General

<sup>17</sup>Labour Leader, 22 April 1915. "National Conference of Women," FL Box 364. H. M. Swarwick, Women and War (London, 1915).

<sup>18</sup>K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 24 November 1914, CEMP D/Mar/3/37.

Council proposing that the NUWSS work along these lines.<sup>19</sup> The Anti-Oorlog Raad proposals bore a striking resemblance to those of the UDC in that they emphasised democratic control of foreign policy, self-determination and the formation of a league of states. With the failure of the NUWSS to endorse work for the dissemination of the Dublin principles, the pacifists no longer felt constrained by their loyalty to the suffrage society. Consequently, in February Swanwick and Marshall became members of the UDC; but it was not until the summer that Courtney joined them. Although many of the women who became members of the UDC were active participants, they were not entirely satisfied by it. Commenting on the looseness of this organisation, Margaret Ashton declared that there was "little democracy and no sort of control." The larger problem for many of the women, although probably not for Swanwick, was that they wished to combine work for suffrage and for peace and no existing organisation met these needs. Nor did the UDC have a broad enough perspective on the international question. The organisation was really only concerned with national policy and the democrats wanted a "wider standpoint if Democratic control is to be really useful in preserving peace."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>C. E. Marshall to E. Williams, 11 January 1915 (copy), CEMP D/Mar/4/1.

<sup>20</sup>M. Ashton to C. E. Marshall, 25 July 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/47. C. E. Marshall to E. Williams, 2 February 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/44. Informal meeting of the ex-members of the NU executive at the Sesame Club, 9 May 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/46. See also letter from Marshall in Common Cause, 4 June 1915. E. Leaf to C. E. Marshall, 5 April 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/45.

As she found the Union becoming increasingly hostile and inadequate to her growing vision, Marshall had turned to the organisational forms that she knew best. By the beginning of February she was writing about the creation of a sort of "Liberty-Equality-Fraternity League that will combine real feminism (our kind) real democracy and real internationalism." By the end of March, frustrated by NUWSS intransigence, she had worked out a more detailed plan for a "Women's Independent Party".<sup>21</sup> The objects of the party were to promote women's interests municipally and nationally and to cultivate an interest in international affairs. As a numerically small group, it would have to operate by attaching itself to a major party on certain issues. This was a tactic which had already been successfully employed by the Irish Nationalists, the Labour party and its component the ILP. There were obvious difficulties inherent in this plan. The first problem was financial. It would be necessary to raise the funds to run candidates and to operate a newspaper. In addition, drawing on the recent unhappy experiences in the NUWSS, it was uncertain how far unity could be maintained on a programme that embraced a number of discordant issues. To keep shifting support from party to party, her father warned, rather

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<sup>21</sup>C. E. Marshall to E. Williams, 2 February 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/44.

than strengthening the hand of the new organisation, could earn it a reputation for unreliability.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, Marshall was not alone in dreaming of a new political future. Rejecting the idea of a party composed of and devoted primarily to women, Swarwick, in her response to her friend's proposals, enlarged on the idea of a democratic party that she had already referred to in her election address. She replied that she would like to see "a great humanist party rise, keen on equal suffrage, proportional representation, devolution, a reformed House of Commons and an abolished House of Lords, Free Trade and reformed Diplomacy, and tremendous economic changes." The UDC, she hoped, might grow into such a party and for this reason she wanted to involve women in the organisation. Already Swarwick had travelled some distance from suffrage as her primary concern. She expressed the fear that each group of reformers in the proposed party would have its "first object to which it wishes to subordinate the others and I fear women will have to put the vote first till they get it. It is such a boring prospect!" Unlike Marshall she did not see the Labour as the basis of a new party. For she feared "the narrowness of its outlook and jealousy of education and of the 'bourgeois' which will keep them ineffective." These were limitations that the party itself was to recognise when in 1918 under the new constitution it would open up membership to individuals as well as to organisations. These new terms

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<sup>22</sup>F. Marshall to C. E. Marshall, 7 May 1915, CEMP D/Mar/2/33.

would broaden the basis of support by making possible the migration of a number of Liberal intellectuals to the Labour party.<sup>23</sup>

The women had always understood that the campaign for peace had to be fought on two fronts - at home and abroad. International gatherings had become rare because communications were difficult and restrictions on travel were all too frequent. In spite of these problems a small group of about thirty socialist women, which had included British representatives, had managed to meet at Berne in March 1915. And at the beginning of April a conference organised by the Anti-Oorlog Raad met in Holland. Only two British delegates managed to attend, Macmillan and Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, the Cambridge classicist. This lost opportunity to meet continental counterparts, which annoyed Courtney intensely, was due entirely to the UDC's failure to alert interested individuals to the meeting.<sup>24</sup> Groups like the UDC and its counterparts, the Anti-Oorlog Raad and the, soon-to-be suppressed Vaterland Neues Bund in Germany, were really mainly interested in developing national support for their programmes, not in establishing transnational links. The women believed, therefore, that

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<sup>23</sup>H. M. Swanwick to C. E. Marshall, 5 April 1915, CEMP D Mar/3/45. H. M. Swanwick to C. K. Ogden, 24 March 1915, C. K. Ogden Papers, McMaster University. C. A. Cline, Recruits to Labour: The British Labour Party 1914-31 (Syracuse, 1963).

<sup>24</sup>K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 6 April 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/45. E. Leaf to C. E. Marshall, 5 April 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/45.

the responsibility lay with them to utilise the unique opportunity afforded by the network of the IWSA to transcend national boundaries in the interests of creating international goodwill amongst the women of the neutral and belligerent nations.

By April the organisers of the British ICW, Courtney, Marshall, Macmillan and Margaret Hills had a list of 180 women who were anxious to attend the Congress. These women, amongst whom there were representatives from over thirty organisations, were drawn from all classes and from all parts of the country. Suddenly, on grounds of security, the travel permits granted to these women were rescinded. They were informed that "there is much inconvenience in holding large meetings of a political character so close to the seat of war."<sup>25</sup> Courtney had already sailed for Holland to join Macmillan and attend the Resolutions Committee. She had seized the opportunity to obtain her passport when permission was first granted for the women to attend the Congress. Marshall and Hills worked untiringly to secure the reversal of the decision. Through representation to Reginald McKenna, the Home Secretary, they won an agreement that passports would be issued to twenty-four selected "discreet women" who were representative of "various organisations and sections of thought. By authorising the smaller number, he informed the Commons, he believed that there would

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<sup>25</sup>For a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the Congress see A. Wiltsher, Dangerous Women (London, 1985). Chief permit officer to C. Macmillan, 16 April 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/76.

be less risk of a breach of security.<sup>26</sup> Swanwick was one of the twenty-four. Still recovering from an operation that had prevented her attendance at the General Council of the NUWSS in February, she decided to withdraw rather than be an encumbrance when she learned that Hills had volunteered to look after her in the event of their vessel being torpedoed.<sup>27</sup> Simultaneously with the issue of the passports, the Admiralty closed the North Sea to all shipping, claiming that there was a danger from submarines. This action was not the elaborate subterfuge claimed by some contemporaries and hinted at by some modern historians as a ruse to prevent delegates reaching Holland.<sup>28</sup> Public support for the enterprise, already undermined by the debate over the "truce" resolution, was further compromised by military events. The Congress coincided with what was called at the time "the great battle of the war", the second battle of Ypres. The Daily Express ridiculed the women as "crankettes" and "peacettes" and maliciously drew attention to the plight of the delegates as they waited in vain at Tilbury for transport to cross the Channel.<sup>29</sup> Yet, despite these

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<sup>26</sup>The Woman Citizen, December 1937, 7. Towards Permanent Peace, 5. The Home Secretary claimed he did his best to get the women to The Hague; R. McKenna to C. E. Marshall, 3 December 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/77. Manchester Guardian, 28 April 1915.

<sup>27</sup>Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 258.

<sup>28</sup>B. Russell, "A Notable Gathering" Cambridge Magazine, 22 May 1915. S. Pankhurst, The Home Front (London, 1987), 150-1. S. Oldfield, Spinsters of This Parish (Virago, 1984), 191-2.

<sup>29</sup>Daily Express, 30 April 1915. In this issue the German

misfortunes Britain was represented by three women. Courtney, with her skills in modern languages, was appointed as interpreter into English; Macmillan, who had remained in Holland after the February meeting, became the secretary for English; and Emmeline Pethwick Lawrence arrived at The Hague with the American contingent from New York.

The Hague Congress has been the subject of conflicting claims by feminist historians. There are those who have hailed it both as initiating women's peace activism and, more sweepingly, as pioneering the way for the peace movement of the twentieth century; there are others who have interpreted the gathering primarily in terms of continuation rather than innovation. Those scholars who seek to demonstrate continuity point to the increased activity of women in peace organisations between 1890 and 1914 and even see the women as rescuing and resuscitating the pre-war peace movement which had been submerged by "a flood of militarism" at the outbreak of war.<sup>30</sup> In

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explanation for the stoppage was reported. They claimed it was a deliberate attempt to stop the women bringing home true accounts of the conditions prevailing in the continental countries. Such reports, the Germans said, would have an adverse influence on government propaganda.

<sup>30</sup>Sandi E. Cooper, "Women's Participation in European Peace Movements: The Struggle to Prevent World War One," in R. R. Pierson and S. Brodribb (eds.), Women and War (London, 1987). Cooper argues that there were precedents in the nineteenth century for women's involvement in peace organisations. See also, Iela B. Costin, "Feminism, Pacifism and Internationalism and the 1915 Congress of Women," Women's Studies International Forum, 5, (1982): 301-315, for the view that the Hague Congress inaugurated women's involvement in peace activities. J. Addams, Women at The Hague (New York, London, 1915, 1972 edn.), 57. A. C. F. Beales, The History of Peace (New York, 1931, 1971), 280-1.

reality, it was something different, if not exactly new, that emerged from the Hague Congress. The meeting in April 1915 should be viewed from the perspective of the women's movement rather than that of the peace movement. For in origin, it represented the enlargement of the scope of an increasingly strong and confident feminist movement. While it is true that there was a growth of peace activism in the two decades before 1914, and that in some cases the demand for enfranchisement had been linked to peace, it is not certain that the women who assembled at The Hague had been active in anything other than the suffrage movement. No doubt most educated women had read Bertha von Suttner's popular pacifist work Die Waffen Nieder, just as they had read that great feminist classic by Olive Schreiner, Woman and Labour. But this did not necessarily signify a previous commitment to pacifism. The assembly in Holland was the response of organised, articulate women to the deeply felt tragedy of war. The only way that was available to them to make their protest was through the existing international suffrage organisation. In assessing the significance of the gathering the modest claims of the women themselves should be considered. As Courtney explained in her account of the Congress:

The Women's International Congress does not claim to have invented a new means of preventing war; it does not claim to have put forward any startling or original theory. It does claim to have been a gathering of women of many countries, which proved that, even in time of war, the solidarity of women will hold fast; it does claim to have shown that women of different countries can still hold out the hand of friendship to each other in spite of the hatred and bloodshed under which most international ties seem submerged. It claims, too, to have shown that, while women have a special

point of view on the subject of war, and while its wastefulness of human life must appeal to them with particular emphasis, they can, at the same time make their own contribution to the work and ideals of constructive peace.<sup>31</sup>

Against all contemporary accusations, the women insisted that their meeting was not a peace but an international Congress. The object was to protest against the war and to find a common basis for peace work in their own countries. Nor did they pretend to represent the opinions of all women, for with the exception of an ardent minority, those present at The Hague recognised that more women fervently supported the war than opposed it. Their aim, they asserted, was to unite for co-operative action those of their sex who demanded that international disputes be settled by a means other than war. The fears that dissension might erupt proved baseless. The success was due in no small part to the conditions imposed on those attending the Congress. It was required that all should be in general agreement with the objectives, which were: "That international disputes should be settled by pacific means"; and "that the parliamentary franchise should be granted to women"; and that all discussion of the question of responsibility for the war or its conduct was banned. This requirement eliminated any real disputes and, any opposing views. The scoffers in the popular press questioned the "international" character of the meeting, claiming that the large audiences, estimated at over 1500 for the public sessions, were preponderantly Dutch. Apart from the host

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<sup>31</sup>K. D. Courtney in Towards Permanent Peace, 13.

country's 1,000 strong contingent, the other delegates numbered only 129 women. The largest group was from the United States and was led by the President of the Congress, Jane Addams, who was world renowned for her community work at Hull House, Chicago. Other states represented were, Britain, Austria-Hungary, Canada, Belgium, Italy and the Scandinavian countries. Conspicuous by their absence were any representatives from France. The Frenchwomen boycotted the gathering because they claimed, that the German women had failed to condemn the invasion of France and Belgium. Even so, many shades of opinion were represented at the gathering. This opinion tended to resolve itself into two major divisions: one was along the lines of the "Quaker" point of view which was essentially a "stop the war" party, this was in spite of the fact that the organisers denied this purpose; while the other represented those who did not regard the Congress as a peace gathering. In the end this latter view prevailed. As the meeting had been summoned to deal with principles rather than specifics, any discussion of terms or demand for peace, they declared, was outside the province of the gathering.<sup>32</sup>

The women assembled at The Hague not only to demonstrate their solidarity; they also met for the first time in history during wartime to make the voices of women heard in a sphere that was traditionally the prerogative of men. They gathered to protest against the horror and destruction of which they also were victims. In claiming that

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<sup>32</sup>Towards Permanent Peace, 7.

there were no beneficiaries the women were challenging the myth that war was for the protection of hearth and home. Not only were they rejecting nineteenth century shibboleths but in the process demanding a new role for their sex. They acknowledged their culpability in failing to use their influence to prevent the outbreak of hostilities. But in recognition of past failure they now asserted their right to participate in decisions that so crucially affected their own lives and those of their fellows. Where the "insight of only half of humanity" had failed to find a solution to the problem of international disputes, it was hoped that by a co-operative effort a repetition of the tragedy could be averted. Even though it was admitted that not all women were opposed to war, the general sentiment was that their values and presence were conducive to peace. In her address to the assembled delegates, Aletta Jacobs analysed the divergences of attitude between the sexes. She said:

We women judge war differently from men. Men consider in the first place the economic results, the cost in money, the loss or gain to national commerce and industries, the extension of power....We women consider above all the damage to the race resulting from war, and the grief, the pain and the misery it entails."<sup>33</sup>

However, in order to make their participation a reality they had to have a programme and also the means of making their opinions effective, namely, through possession of the vote.

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<sup>33</sup>Towards Permanent Peace, 10.

Before the Congress assembled some of the participants had doubted the wisdom of including the demand for enfranchisement in a meeting to discuss peace but they were soon persuaded of its necessity. One of the foremost proponents of the link between suffrage and effective work for peace was Kathleen Courtney. Addressing the resolution demanding equal political rights, she declared:

we call upon all women who feel their responsibility for war in the world and are not able to make their influence effective, we call upon all those women to work as they never worked, so that women may obtain their full political enfranchisement, and make their will effective in the world.<sup>34</sup>

A new combination of women based on suffrage and peace was to emerge from the Hague Congress, one that cut across existing feminist groups to create a new internationalism.

The appeal to women to assume their responsibilities had a residue of the Victorian claim for the moral superiority of women which had characterised campaigns for suffrage at the end of the nineteenth century. However, the Congress's resolutions showed a complete grasp and concordance with contemporary progressive thinking on the issues of war and peace. The outbreak of hostilities accelerated the discussion on the ways in which disputes between nations could be settled. And as we have already seen, the democrats of the NUWSS were familiar with the various schemes of the UDC, the Anti-Oorlog Raad and also with the ideas of Lowes Dickinson. The Bryce Group, formed in October 1914 to discuss Dickinson's suggestions, circulated its "Proposals for the Avoidance of

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<sup>34</sup>ICW Report, 82.

War" in February 1915.<sup>35</sup> This familiarity with the current discussion was reflected in the resolutions of the Hague Congress.

The resolutions passed by the meeting have been dismissed by some writers as being merely derivatives of nineteenth century plans.<sup>36</sup> Yet, on the contrary, the assimilation of earlier and current schemes, rather than lessening their significance, placed the women in the mainstream of international thought on the restructuring of international relations. At the time of the drafting of the preliminary agenda in February 1915 the only available plans for comparison were those of the UDC and the Anti-Oorlog Raad. Other programmes by the Bryce Committee and by Leonard Woolf for the Fabian Society were, at this time, in the process of composition. Thus, the women's programme drawn up at The Hague was one of the earliest to be formulated.

The Hague resolutions were in accordance with the Bryce Committee's suggestions and Woolf's proposals for the Fabians in acknowledging that the first step towards improved international relations was to secure an agreement binding states to accept certain conditions and rules for the maintenance of peace. The instrument of the proposed system of international organisation was to be a league of

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<sup>35</sup>James, Viscount Bryce 1838-1922. Regius Professor of Civil Law, Oxford 1870-1895; entered Parliament 1880; President of the Board of Trade 1894; Chief Secretary to Ireland 1905; Ambassador to the United States 1904-1913.

<sup>36</sup>S. Cooper, as above, counter-claims for the originality of the Hague Resolutions.

nations. The condition for membership was that the states would submit all differences to an international tribunal either for arbitration or conciliation, depending on the nature of the dispute. The Hague resolutions proposed that the existing Hague Court of Arbitration, which presently could be summoned as the need arose, should become, in future, a permanent court of justice. This court would deal with justiciable disputes. That is to say its concerns would be problems related to treaty obligations and questions of international law. These were legal disputes that could be adjudicated in a court of law. As for non-justiciable and, in effect, cases of vital national interest, it was suggested that a permanent Council of Conciliation and Investigation be appointed to mediate between the contending powers. This Council, the women proposed, would be appointed by a permanent International Conference. This conference was also to be the agent for increased co-operation amongst the nations and the means to safeguard the principles of peace. Its purpose would be to "formulate and enforce those principles of justice, equity, and goodwill" not only in interests of the established nations but for the benefit of struggling "subject communities" and "weaker countries and primitive peoples." The meetings of this conference were to be regular and would include the participation of women. The Resolutions also recommended that Commissions be set up in each country with meetings at the international level to study the conditions of peace with a view to the development of an international federation. The term "federation" as

used at this time referred to co-operation over a wide range of interests, particularly economic issues.<sup>37</sup>

There were divisions of opinion throughout the pacifist community regarding the nature of compulsion and occasions which would merit its use. Nonetheless, the women were in accord with the Bryce Committee and later, Woolf, in believing that unless compulsion was used to bring states to arbitration the whole structure would collapse. The employment of sanctions, it was agreed, was necessary in the interests of the greater good of the community. All three sets of proposals accepted that sanctions should be invoked against any signatory reneging on its agreement to submit to arbitration before resorting to arms. The women's recommendations pressed for moral, social and economic sanctions. Although never made explicit, it was understood by the Congress that the use of force was not ruled out, even though this was inimical to the spirit of the meeting.<sup>38</sup> The women had no proposals for compelling the acceptance of the court's awards, or forcing submissions to the council for adjudication. In spite of the fact that several individuals disagreed with the use of

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<sup>37</sup>Proposals for the Prevention of War was published in 1917, although the first version circulated of the "Proposals" was 24 February 1915. Martin P. Dubin, "Towards the Concept of Collective Security: The Bryce Group's 'Proposals for the Avoidance of War,' 1914-1917," International Organisation XXIV (1970): 288-318. The Fabian scheme drawn up by Woolf was first published as "Suggestions for the Prevention of War," The New Statesman, 10 and 17 July 1915, as special supplements. A draft of the Fabian scheme was discussed with representatives of the Bryce group in May 1915.

<sup>38</sup>Towards Permanent Peace, 8.

force, at this theoretical stage it did not become a divisive issue for most of the proponents of the league. Only after the League of Nations was established in 1919 did the provision for the use of force divide its adherents.

The women at The Hague were not only anxious to establish the machinery of peace keeping but were equally concerned that the factors that had led to the outbreak of war should be eliminated. They believed that when the peace was concluded it should be based on certain principles. In common with the UDC and the Minimum Programme of the Central Committee for Durable Peace that had been the product of the Anti-Oorlog Raad meeting in Holland, the Hague resolutions insisted that a fair settlement was the necessary precondition for a durable peace. The most important principle at stake was the right to self-determination. To ensure that a just treaty was concluded The Hague Resolutions insisted that no territory be transferred without the consent of the inhabitants; in effect, this demand meant that the right of conquest should not be recognised. Nor should any people be denied the right to self-determination and autonomy and they should be permitted representation through a democratic parliament.

Other grievances that had led in the past to mistrust and jealousy among nations concerned the competition in building up armaments, trade restrictions and overseas investment. The Hague Resolutions, like the plans of the UDC and the Minimum Programme, subscribed to the nationalisation of armaments manufacture and

government control of the trade in arms as the first step towards universal disarmament. This resolution was proposed by the German and British delegates in the belief, held by most radicals, that it was the uncontrolled growth of weaponry that had largely created the climate of fear and hostility that had led to the deterioration in international relations. It was a part of the radical demonology that there was a conspiracy of industrial and governmental interests that kept alive the conflict to the advantage of profit. The protection of markets, particularly by those countries with overseas dependencies, was regarded as a source of potential conflict with the "have not" nations. Acting in obedience to the Cobdenite axiom that free-trade encouraged peace, the Congress recommended that an "open door" policy permitting unimpeded trade to all comers would remove this major source of grievance. In the same vein, the resolutions called upon governments to warn overseas investors that they invested at their own risk without any claim to official protection. These recommendations reflected much of the current popularity of the theories of J. A. Hobson and Brailsford who claimed that the pressure of economic needs and interests was the dominant force behind the conscious motives for war.<sup>39</sup> A note of discord was struck in the discussion concerning commerce when an attempt was made by the American, Emily Balch, to insert a clause proposing disarmament at sea as the corollary to the

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<sup>39</sup>J. A. Hobson, Imperialism (London, 1902). H. N. Brailsford, War of Steel and Gold (London, 1915).

advocacy of disarmament inside the land. British "navalism," which was the illegal assertion of her naval superiority over neutrals, was as great an anathema to the Americans as German "militarism" was to the British. In deference, however, to Courtney's insistence that such a demand would "appear to discriminate against sea Powers", the clause was dropped.<sup>40</sup>

The women recognised that no matter how elaborate a system for preserving peace was established it must inevitably founder unless there was a radical change in national attitudes and values. The promotion of "alternative thinking" was the area in which they could make their greatest contribution to peace. The only way to combat nationalism was by education in the virtues of internationalism. It had long been acknowledged that the methods and materials used in teaching, particularly of history and geography, were responsible for the inculcation of chauvinistic attitudes in each new generation by the glorification of national achievements and the emphasis on wars. Therefore one way in which attitudes could be changed was to reform the school curriculum. Groups of elementary teachers already existed in France and Belgium working to effect such changes.<sup>41</sup> After the formation of the Women's International League in Britain, one of their objects became the reform of the teaching of history. The other

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<sup>40</sup>ICW Report, 160. Towards Permanent Peace, 9.

<sup>41</sup>Cooper, "Women's Participation in European Peace Movements," 62.

equally important force that would contribute to peace, it was believed, would be the inclusion of women in the counsels of their nations.

Despite its congruence with contemporary thinking, the document fashioned in the four days of the women's Congress has long been denied its place in the annals of the League of Nations movement. The Bryce and Fabian Reports which were circulating by May 1915 along with the UDC proposals have all been credited with playing a significant part in influencing governmental and public opinion. Yet, in the task of publicising and popularising the league idea, the Women's International League (WIL) formed after the Hague meeting worked closely with the UDC and ILP in preparing Britain for the acceptance of a new system of international relations. Despite the WIL's contribution, Woolf omitted all reference, let alone discussion, of the Hague Resolutions in his Framework of Government published in 1917. In this work he compared several of the proposals for a postwar settlement. Yet, as we shall see, the Hague Resolutions in the summer of 1915 had the distinction of being laid before the European heads of government. In August 1915 President Wilson of the United States declared them to be "the best formulation he had seen up to that time."<sup>42</sup> No other schemes received a hearing in the chancelleries of both belligerent and neutral. Nor were the Hague resolutions any more utopian than any

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<sup>42</sup>J. Addams, Peace and Bread (New York and London, 1915, 1971 edn.), 59.

other proposals under discussion at this time. So why were they ignored?

The obvious answer is that women were not taken seriously. In principle, as the husband of a famous feminist writer, Woolf was neither unaware nor unsympathetic to the aspirations of women. Rather, his omission is a commentary on their lack of political status. Weighty affairs of state, such as war and peace, were also traditionally the preserve not only of men but of the old *élites*. In a men-made warring world their demand to be heard and to be included in the counsels of their respective countries was regarded at once as both presumptuous and as irrelevant to the European crisis. The only other plausible explanation that can be offered for Woolf's oversight is to note the speed with which the political consciousness of a handful of women had been accelerated and transformed under the impact of war. The whole range of activity of the democratic suffragists had broadened from suffrage to internationalism in a matter of months. Nonetheless, they still remained a minority within the female population. Therefore, it is not surprising that men's conception of the role of women had not kept pace with the development that was taking place in the aspirations of the few. The men continued to be governed and guided by the views of the majority of women. The protracted struggle for enfranchisement had already demonstrated the difficulties of assaulting entrenched attitudes.

The most novel contribution of The Hague Congress, and one which set it apart from all other contemporary discussion, was the proposal to expedite the conclusion of hostilities. A plan for continuous mediation was presented by a member of the American delegation, Julia Grace Wales, a Canadian instructor at the University of Wisconsin. This plan had already been forwarded to the American Congress for its consideration. The assumption on which the scheme was based and, indeed, the whole of the deliberations of the Congress, was that the problem facing the belligerents was largely one of finding acceptable terms. For, by taking the nations at their own justification, the assumption was made that each country believed itself to be fighting a defensive war. If indeed this was the case, then it was only a matter of finding terms acceptable to all the combatants in order to make peace.<sup>43</sup> The neutral countries were called upon to combine in offering continuous mediation to the belligerents without calling a truce. This new proposal had the virtue of removing once and for all the contentious truce clause of the original agenda. It was believed that a clear delineation of the issues would emerge as the terms offered to the belligerents were continuously altered in response to the counter proposals until a solution was arrived at that was acceptable to both sides.

The idea for neutral mediation was not new. Rosika Schwimmer, the Austrian feminist, had urged President Wilson in September 1914 to

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<sup>43</sup>J. Addams, Peace and Bread, 8. Towards Permanent Peace, 7-8.

take up the cause. The President, however, had his own ideas regarding the methods and timing of his intervention. The Wisconsin plan had by April already received fairly wide circulation. In the early planning stages Wales had been in touch with Lowes Dickinson. In the United States the attention of the President and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan had been drawn to Wales' published articles at the beginning of January 1915. Bryan had been responsible for prewar bilateral peace treaties between the United States and fifteen states. At the National Peace Conference held in Chicago in February 1915 the plan was distributed as a pamphlet entitled "Mediation Without Armistice: The Wisconsin Plan." The idea for continuous mediation was not new, nor did it claim to be so. As officials in the Foreign Office in London were quick to point out, Grey had successfully employed the method during the first Balkan war.<sup>44</sup> Now, however, unlike the crisis of 1912-13, the great powers themselves were the chief actors in the drama. The ever deepening involvement of the powers offered no easy solutions and as Jane Addams observed, the longer the war went on "more and more the conduct is modifying its aim." Thus, alert to the importance of early negotiations, the women set in train a remarkable event. The Congress decided to send emissaries to the leaders of Europe bearing their resolutions.

In conception, the idea was the bold development of Schwimmer's deputation to Wilson; it represented the time-honoured tactic of the

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<sup>44</sup>M. Randall, Improper Bostonian (New York, 1964), 164.

suffrage movement of appeal to those at the head of affairs. Not everyone at the Congress had been in agreement. Courtney had opposed an emissary on the grounds that it was a gesture of the heart rather than of the head. She believed it would not help to end the war and did not want "to take steps which look well on paper but which are not practicable."<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless the resolution was accepted and the delegates appointed. Those selected to visit the belligerent countries were drawn mainly from the neutral nations. They were Jane Addams, President of the Congress, Aletta Jacobs and Rosa Genoni who was compelled to withdraw when on 23 May Italy entered the war. Appointed as delegates to the northern neutrals and to Russia were Chrystal Macmillan, Emily Balch of the USA and Rosika Schwimmer, who as a belligerent, was replaced by Baroness Ellen Palmstierna of Sweden for the journey to Petrograd. The whole enterprise evoked a mixed response; while some thought it ridiculous, others believed it to be inspired. One sympathetic observer remarked that Jane Addams reminded him of "St Francis going in the middle of the crusade to convert the Sultan."<sup>46</sup> Whatever the judgement, it was an honest and courageous attempt to convert words into deeds.

Between May and June 1915 the envoys visited fourteen capitals and were received "by twenty-one ministers, presidents of two

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<sup>45</sup>ICW Report, 173.

<sup>46</sup>Ashbee Journal 29 May 1915, C. R. Ashbee Papers, King's College, Cambridge.

republics, a king and the Pope."<sup>47</sup> In London they saw Asquith and Grey; in Berlin they met the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg and the Foreign Minister, von Jagow; and in Petrograd they talked with Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister. Whatever the attitude of governments towards the mission, no attempt was made to frustrate it. Indeed, on occasion official channels were used to prepare the way.<sup>48</sup> The women attributed the apparent frankness of the discussions to the unofficial nature of their mission. By the time of their return the delegates were convinced of the desire for peace amongst the nations' leaders. Sceptics declared that they had been gulled or, at best, that they had misinterpreted what they had heard. The courteous reception accorded the women in all countries, save France, may well have been an exercise in tact. No nation was anxious to shoulder the responsibility for the war, or to appear intransigent by denying a desire for peace. Accordingly, words like those addressed to them by the Austrian Prime Minister, von Sturgkh, when he informed them that theirs were "the

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<sup>47</sup>J. Addams, E. Balch, A. Hamilton, Women at The Hague (New York and London, 1972), 110. They saw Grey 13 May, Asquith 14 May, Von Jagow 21 May, Bethmann-Hollweg 22 May, Sazonov 16 June 1915. Womens' International League for Peace and Freedom (hereafter WILPF) (microfilm) (Sanford, North Carolina, 1983) Reel 110 1038 V:1.

<sup>48</sup>Macmillan, Courtney and Marshall made arrangements with Grey to send letters of introduction to British embassies in the northern capitals and Russia, WILPF Reel 68 III: 692. C. E. Marshall to E. Grey, WILPF Reel 35: 1069. Addams used the unwilling services of the United States Ambassador James W. Gerard in Berlin to secure interviews with Bethmann-Hollweg and von Jagow. Randall, Improper Bostonian, 171; C. Seymour, The Intimate Letters of Colonel House, vol.2 (London, 1926-28), 21.

first sensible words that have been uttered in this room for ten months", raised hopes that could not be fulfilled.<sup>49</sup> The women may have been deluded by the rhetoric and the cordiality but the politicians were also guilty of duplicity.

The "principle" of neutral mediation was viewed guardedly by the powers. No belligerent was prepared to seek mediation for fear that this should be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Nor were the neutrals at ease in their projected role. While expressing a willingness to act as mediators, they feared incurring the hostility of the belligerents. Above all, no neutral was prepared to take the initiative without assurance of American collaboration. The differences were too fundamental to be resolved by mediation. Each side believed in its own rectitude. The belligerents did want peace - but on their own terms. There was, on the part of all participants, an unwillingness to yield "an iota of their aspirations."<sup>50</sup> The women's deputations had been based on the assumption that each country believed it was fighting for its survival. If this premise was invalid, then all attempts at negotiation must fail. With each passing month the belligerents were becoming more deeply embroiled and committed to a fight to the finish. The Entente, and Britain especially, was forced to extend its war aims to accommodate the ambitions of old allies and

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<sup>49</sup>Randall, Improper Bostonian, 172.

<sup>50</sup>A. Link in Randall, Improper Bostonian, 211-12 fn. For a discussion of whether or not the women were mistaken in their views as to the possibility of peace, see Randall.

to secure new friends. Secret treaties were made with Russia in March, and with Italy in April.<sup>51</sup> By May 1915 Germany's initial successes against Russia on the Eastern front buoyed up her determination to reject compromise. Only defeat or exhaustion, it seemed, was likely to terminate hostilities.

What had the Women's International Congress achieved? The most important decision taken was to form a permanent organisation to accommodate the new grouping of opinion assembled at The Hague - the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP). This body was created to work for the resolutions of the Hague Congress in the member countries of the organisation. Its other task was to prepare for a conference to be held at the same time and at the same place as the peace conference that would be summoned at the end of the war. The intent was to monitor the proceedings so as to allow women to make their voices heard. Allegiance was always owed to the founding Congress, though given the wartime restrictions on travel and censorship, the history of the ICWPP became that of its national branches. But from the outset the new organisation was a truly international body. The genuine bond of sympathy, first cemented by the Hague Congress endured through the vicissitudes of war until the next international meeting in 1919.

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<sup>51</sup>David French, British Strategy and War Aims (London, 1986).

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On their return to Britain the delegates' report was eagerly awaited. On 11 May a private meeting of women from all over Britain assembled to hear a first-hand account of the proceedings in Holland. The women were overwhelmingly in favour of forming a permanent committee to carry on the work begun at The Hague. The British Committee headed by Courtney, Marshall and Macmillan, which had organised support for the Congress, was empowered to draft and circulate a constitution for consideration at a forth-coming meeting.<sup>52</sup> Two days later on 13 May, a public meeting was arranged at the Kingsway Hall in London. Some 2000 women gathered to hear a report of the Congress from the British participants and from Addams and Genoni who were in Britain on the first leg of their mission to the belligerents. This meeting was one of a series of public meetings held in every country visited by the envoys - the largest of which were in London, Stockholm and Berne.

In spite of the hostile atmosphere created by the recent sinking of the American ship the Lusitania on 7 May by a German submarine, the Kingsway assembly was most successful both in "numbers and quality." The one or two people bent on disturbing the proceedings soon succumbed to the prevailing intensity of emotion.<sup>53</sup> One of

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<sup>52</sup>Towards Permanent Peace, 17. Common Cause, 21 May 1915.

<sup>53</sup>Lady Kate Courtney, Extracts from a Diary During the War (printed for private circulation, 1927), 46. Towards Permanent Peace, 18. The UDC meeting in Manchester planned for 13 May was cancelled due to anti-German riots.

those present, Bertrand Russell, observed that it was very much a "family party" with the attendance of some of "the progressive members of the old suffrage gang." Amongst those present were traditional Liberals such as Lord and Lady Courtney, the Cobden-Sandersons and the Buxtons and, representing labour the Snowdens and Margaret Llewelyn Davies.<sup>54</sup> In an attempt to counter recent adverse publicity in the press, Kathleen Courtney, in her address to the assembly, reiterated that the Congress had not been a "peace at any price" meeting, for it would be contemptible, she declared, to deny the sacrifices of the soldiers. She emphasised the sense of international responsibility as the tie that united the women at The Hague. Women, she granted, did not claim they had a panacea for war. Nor, did they believe that if they had had the vote, the outbreak of hostilities would not have occurred in 1914. By doing nothing, however, they had failed to prevent the war. By this inaction they must share the blame with men. If this force of "awakened womanhood" was to be a factor for change they must, she urged her audience, have the vote. Without political equality they had no way of making their influence effective.<sup>55</sup>

The Chairman of the Kingsway meeting, Swanwick, "eloquent and noble" as Russell described her, also took up the theme of women

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<sup>54</sup>B. Russell to O. Morrell incorrectly dated 13 April 1915, it should be 13 May 1915, Bertrand Russell Archives, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario (hereafter BRA), 1247.

<sup>55</sup>Common Cause, 21 May 1915, report of the ICW meeting; and in Towards Permanent Peace, 18-19.

awakening to their responsibilities. She warned the assembly that those responsible for making war must be prevented from making peace; for their peace would be one merely of exhaustion. Asserting her liberal belief that human nature was not immutable, she declared that the "old Adam", the instinct to fight, could be subdued. "We can and will change," she vowed. The enthusiasm and sincerity of the meeting moved Russell to observe: "I almost began to think perhaps women had something of value to contribute to politics, some element of compassion in which men are deficient." Although this remark smacked of condescension, he genuinely believed that women could not have led Europe into as great a disaster as the men had done.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, if such a longtime champion of women's suffrage believed that their contribution to politics was primarily on the emotional plane, it is hardly surprising that women's claims were not taken seriously elsewhere. A more constructive assessment of their potential role was made by C.K.Ogden, editor of the Cambridge Magazine. As the author of Militarism versus Feminism, he had already nailed his colours to the mast of the feminist-pacifist movement. In accordance with the subtitle of this work, Ogden had set out to demonstrate that "militarism involves the subjection of women." His pamphlet, which bore a quotation from Swanwick on the cover, reiterated the familiar feminist arguments that in time of war vital social reform was

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<sup>56</sup>B. Russell to O. Morrell, 13 May 1915, BRA 1247; also, "A Notable Gathering," in Cambridge Magazine, 22 May 1915.

ignored and women's rights were swamped by the prevailing military ethos. In the draft of an extended version of Militarism versus Feminism he was to quote extensively from Swanwick's analysis of the psychological causes of war in her Women and War published in May 1915 for the UDC. The editor of the Cambridge Magazine believed that the Hague Congress had inaugurated a policy that "should dwarf and include all the purely national feminist activities of the past." As an international organisation the Congress could mould public opinion to oppose war and militarism. At a time when the young men were silenced by the law and powerless to move against prejudice, Ogden believed that women alone could take up the flame of peace and liberty.<sup>57</sup>

During the summer of 1915 the British Committee of the ICW worked to publicise the Hague Resolutions and enroll supporters. The published account of the Congress, Towards Permanent Peace, was well received and provoked interest in the new organisation. Drafting a constitution, however, proved a more difficult task. There were two possible forms the organisation could take: either a group could be formed specifically to carry out the Hague Resolutions; or it could be linked to the more broadly based democratic, feminist, pacifist organisation which the secessionists from the NUWSS had in mind. Marshall favoured the latter plan, for it had the advantage of

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<sup>57</sup>Towards Permanent Peace, 19-20. H. M. Swanwick to C. K. Ogden, 18 March 1915, Ogden Papers. H. M. Swanwick, Women and War (London, 1915); J. Vellacott and M. Kamester, eds. Militarism versus Feminism (London, 1986).

combining financial and personnel resources. The drawback of affiliation to such an organisation was that the ICWPP would be bound to become involved in controversial national issues which might create enemies for the infant organisation and, in addition, might jeopardise the international programme of the Hague movement. The association of the erstwhile NUWSS officers with the ICWPP, Marshall believed, could incur the enmity of Fawcett. The President's name, she warned Addams, to whom she addressed her queries, carried great weight with influential politicians and the press. Fawcett's reputation, Marshall emphasised, owed much to the fact that, outside the NU, it was not known that all the work which had turned the suffrage society into an effective political weapon "has not been done by her, but by the group of progressive and energetic people (Miss Ashton, Mrs Swarwick, Miss Royden, etc - and especially Miss Courtney) who are now being driven by Mrs Fawcett's attitude to transfer their work elsewhere." To counter Fawcett's influence, Marshall asked for the names of those prominent people Addams had found sympathetic to the cause during her recent visit to Britain. Marshall intended, when the time came, to lobby them for support.<sup>58</sup>

While the radicals were finding new channels through which to work for peace, the question of whether or not the wishes of the

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<sup>58</sup>"Questions for Miss Addams" from Marshall, n.d (probably June 1915), Jane Addams Papers, Swarthmore College, Philadelphia (hereafter JAP) DG1, Ser.1, Box 5.

General Council had been correctly interpreted was still unresolved. Disturbed by the resignations from the executive, the constituent societies of the NUWSS pressed for further discussion. For this purpose a Special and Half-Yearly Council was summoned to meet at Birmingham on 17 and 18 June 1915. In the interval since February, however, the situation had changed. The conservatives within the NUWSS had tightened their grip. In particular, their position had been fortified by Oliver Strachey's counter-attack against the pacifist arguments published in the May number of the Englishwoman. Another factor that was even more crucial in determining the outcome of the debate was the deteriorating military situation. After Neuve Chapelle and Loos in March and April 1915, patriotism hardened in the face of the appalling and unprecedented losses. Not least was the changed pacifist emphasis of the secessionists themselves.

Strachey's writing was the only serious effort to meet the pacifists on their own theoretical ground. He attempted to rebut their contention that the NUWSS should commit itself to peace work. As a pressure group, he argued, all other activities undertaken by the Union were subordinate to the primary purpose of winning the franchise. As a case in point, he observed that the Labour entente of 1912 had been permissible only insofar as it sought to advance the primary objective of the NUWSS. He deplored the developments of the past few years as the interests of the women had expanded. Yet he recognised that having no vote they must perforce use the suffrage organisation, as the only instrument available, to attain their ends.

In her rejoinder to Strachey's attack, Swanwick defended this expansion of interests. She observed that the scale of the moral and financial support donated to the suffrage society in the recent years proved that the vote had become "the symbol of a new human society based on public right."<sup>59</sup> Strachey also disputed the claim that support of women's suffrage implied pacifism. He believed that the abolition of war and the equal treatment of men and women with regard to the vote were two distinct principles. Finally, like Fawcett his concern was to maintain the unity of the society for its primary purpose. The difficulty of translating propaganda aims into action would, he believed, create divisions in the NUWSS. Weighing the likely effects of the suffragists waging a peace campaign, he concluded that "whilst it would make little difference in the destinies of Europe," it would undoubtedly bring disruption to the suffrage movement. As a result "the loss would be certain and the profit small." Dismissive and unwilling to believe that the pacifists' arguments could anything other than an exercise in self-deception, he warned: "We must not confuse our issues and pretend that everything is involved in everything else simply because we find our interests changing." He reminded his readers that organisations were not free to alter their courses; only individuals have the freedom to follow their

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<sup>59</sup>O. Strachey, "The Implications of the Women's Suffrage Movement," Englishwoman, April 1915. H. M. Swanwick, "The Implications of the Women's Suffrage Movement - A Reply," Englishwoman, May 1915.

consciences.<sup>60</sup> The real issue was not so much the expansion of women's interests as the direction of this development. Social concerns were relatively uncontroversial; by contrast, talking of peace in wartime was highly controversial.

The equivocation at the General Council in February had been caused by a genuine sympathy with the pacifists' position. At that time there had still been confidence that the war would soon end. The events of April and May dashed these hopes and seemed to justify much of the anti-German bias of the popular press. Even contemporaries of such opposing views as Fawcett and Russell noted the change and growth of hatred in the population.<sup>61</sup> The worsening situation on the Western Front, where the Germans had begun to use poison gas, and above all, the sinking of the Lusitania on 7 May, provoked a wave of anti-German outrages in Britain against those of German antecedents, however remote. Also in May, the Bryce Report was released. The committee, established under the chairmanship of Lord Bryce, was to investigate the alleged German atrocities in Belgium. The Report was a consummate piece of propaganda for it confirmed, without any real evidence, all the worst rumours about German misdemeanours in

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<sup>60</sup>Strachey, "The Implications."

<sup>61</sup>M. G. Fawcett, "The NUWSS and The Hague Congress" Englishwoman, June 1915. B. Russell to O. Morrell, May n.d. 1915, BRA, 1253.

Belgium.<sup>62</sup> This growing spirit of militancy was symbolised by the capitulation of the Liberals to the war-like Tories when Asquith was obliged on 27 May to form the first coalition government. In this charged atmosphere the delegates of the NUWSS assembled on 17 June 1915 for the Special Council at Birmingham.

Even as the democrats were exploring new channels through which to work for peace, the running battle between the "pacifists" and "patriots" within the Union continued. In response to requests from many of the constituent societies that they should offer themselves for re-election, seven of the resigning members issued a campaign statement clearly laying out the basis of their views. Each reiterated her rejection of force as the arbiter in human relations and her considered opinion that the NUWSS should work for the "realisation of the idea of public right as the governing factor in the relations of States." In a last-ditch effort to win the hearts and minds of the NUWSS the seceders issued an ultimatum to the suffrage society. They declared that unless the council carried the resolution tabled by the Manchester society they would not persevere in their candidacies. Yet it was clear that even as they decided on this course of action, the democrats did not expect their challenge to be taken up.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>See Trevor Wilson, "Lord Bryce's Investigation into Alleged German Atrocities in Belgium 1914-15," Journal of Contemporary History 14 (1979): 369-383.

<sup>63</sup>Sesame Club meeting 9 May 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/46. Common Cause, 24 May 1915.

The Manchester resolution was composed of three parts: there should be "propaganda demanding the enfranchisement of women as essential to the constitution of a democratic State"; there should be "co-operation with other organisations working for these objects"; and there should be discussion with women of other nations "to promote the establishment of a stable system of international law and mutual understanding upheld by the common will of men and women."<sup>64</sup>

Inevitably these demands reinforced all the fears of the President and the current executive who, in response, published their own case. They stated once again their objections to co-operation with any other society on questions of peace and suffrage; and, while expressing enthusiasm for discussions with women of other nations, insisted that such exchanges should be through the IWSA.<sup>65</sup>

Chrystal Macmillan broke ranks with the internationalists when she rebuked the retiring members for insisting on the acceptance of the Manchester resolution as the price of their continuance in the NU. She believed that they should have stayed to uphold their views. Aligning herself with Strachey, she dismissed the secessionists' contention that there was a logical connection between women's suffrage and the promotion of the substitution of reason for force in international relations. She observed that, although it was possible to agree on

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<sup>64</sup>Common Cause, 24 May 1915; Agenda Special and Half-Yearly Council Meeting, 17, 18 June 1915, FL 302.

<sup>65</sup>Common Cause, 4 June 1915.

the objects for which they were working, it was hopeless to attempt to agree on the reasons. Furthermore, to deduce the objects from the reasons which may activate certain groups in the Union was impossible.<sup>66</sup>

The anti-pacifist mood that had settled on the country and the intransigence of the pacifists who were now talking of direct action for peace assured the defeat of the Manchester resolution. By a large majority of the 600 to 700 delegates it was decided that the executive had carried out the resolutions of the Annual Council correctly by not acting on the expressions of principle and goodwill. The compromise proposed by the Newcastle Federation - that societies be allowed to take independent action - was also defeated. The majority declared that the promotion of a "stable system of international law" was not one of the objects of the NUWSS. In accordance with their stated intention, the seceders did not offer themselves for re-election. The removal of all ambiguity by the Council's decision resulted in a certain amount of relief for all concerned. The meeting concluded with a vote of confidence in Fawcett's leadership. A vote of thanks was also made to the retiring members of the executive, with a special mention of Courtney and Marshall for their services to the Union. In this way, the appearance of general unity within the NU was preserved.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Common Cause, 25 June 1915.

<sup>67</sup>M. Lowndes, "Womens' Suffrage in Wartime" Englishwoman, July 1915. Common Cause, 25 July 1915. C. E. Marshall to H. Atkinson 3 July 1915 (copy), CEMP D/Mar/3/47.

By the summer 1915 the only remaining vestige of the prewar policy of the NUWSS was the EFF. Yet, as we have seen, the strains within the suffrage society concerning the relationship with Labour had been evident before the suspension of political activity in August 1914. Throughout the months of dispute Marshall had been, above all else, anxious to preserve the Labour connection. The war had only increased her conviction that the future lay with a new democratic alliance in which women and labour would play their parts. Only through unity could the enormous problems of material and social reconstruction at the end of the war be confronted. In an attempt to find a solution that would avert a split and permit the continued membership in the NU of the dissenters, Marshall had proposed a policy of "isolation." This would entail the division of the NUWSS work into two sections. Those whose only concern was suffrage could concentrate on this goal; the other section would work for the more controversial issues. The advantage would be that the two groups could combine their strength whenever necessary - particularly to fight for suffrage. Marshall believed that the precedent for such action had already been set when the NUWSS established the EFF.<sup>68</sup> But the idea appealed neither to her fellow secessionists nor to the Union.

However, it would only be a matter of time before the alliance with the Labour party was dismantled. Initially, it had been a

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<sup>68</sup>Sesame Club meeting, 9 May 1915. Retiring members' letter in Common Cause, 4 June 1915. C. E. Marshall to J. Addams, (June 1915).

conjunction of democratic women with working men. The composition of the EFF was changed when Swanwick, Hills, Royden and Susan Lawrence resigned in May 1915 and were replaced by conservatives.<sup>69</sup> The two new Secretaries of the NU had automatically assumed membership of the committee. Ray Strachey, in particular, as Parliamentary Secretary and later as Secretary to the EFF, had little understanding or sympathy with its objectives. In May, Marshall had yielded to Fawcett's "urgent entreaty" that she should remain as Secretary of the EFF. However, the decision of 1 July, to exclude the Secretary of the EFF from attending NU executive meetings, finally compelled her to resign from this anomalous position. Marshall felt this action to be a personal affront; and she also believed that it was a conscious attempt to isolate the EFF from the other political work of the Union. Nevertheless, after she had submitted her resignation as EFF Secretary on 15 July 1915 to the NUWSS executive, she consented to remain as a member of the committee.<sup>70</sup>

The new conservatism pervading the NU boded ill for the Labour alliance, especially in the light of changes within the Labour movement itself. Using the excuse that the war altered all previous

<sup>69</sup>The new members were Mrs Coombe-Tennant, Miss Sterling, Mrs Stocks and Mrs Uniacke.

<sup>70</sup>Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 142. C. E. Marshall to M. G. Fawcett, 3 July 1915 (copy), CEMP D/Mar/3/57. NUWSS executive committee 1 July 1915. C. E. Marshall to J. Addams (June 1915). Marshall's letter of resignation was 2 May and on 7 May 1915 Fawcett asked her to reconsider.

arrangements, in August representatives of the NUWSS met with W. C. Anderson, Chairman of the ILP and J. Hodge, Vice-Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour party. On securing agreement from the Labour representatives that the situation was now altered, the EFF committee recommended the suspension of the work being done in the constituencies in preparation for the next General Election.<sup>71</sup> Marshall fiercely opposed this retreat in NU policy. She feared that the hard-won rank-and-file support in the constituencies would be lost. For this withdrawal, she believed, would only confirm working-class animosity and suspicion of the sincerity of the middle classes. Indeed, trouble soon flared up in East Bristol where the NU was called upon to redeem its pledges of support. The EFF's refusal to make exceptions to its ruling roused the remaining democrats on the committee to condemn its actions as "pusillanimous" and above all "dishonest." The suspension merely provided the excuse for those members of the NU who had regarded the arrangement with Labour as a convenient stick with which to beat the Liberals to jettison a policy they had never really liked and only tolerated as long as it was believed to be advantageous.<sup>72</sup> There were others, including the architects of the agreement, for whom the

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<sup>71</sup>Report of Meeting with W. C. Anderson and F. Hodge, 3 August 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/47. The meeting with F. Jowett took place 12 August.

<sup>72</sup>"Interview with representatives from East Bristol re-EFF work, October 25 1915," CEMP D/Mar/3/57. NUWSS Executive Minutes 16 September 1915. M. Ashton to C. E. Marshall, 19 October 1915, CEMP D/Mar/3/57.

entente represented an alliance of progressive forces. For many of this group, what had started out as a policy of expediency, with the exposure to the best of both organisations, had led to the genuine assimilation by these NU women of some of the socialist ideals.

This last battle fought by the radicals in the NU ended in their defeat. The EFF policy was officially suspended at the Annual Council meeting in February 1916. Yet, the radicals won one small victory when it was decided that the NU must honour its commitment to the candidate in East Bristol. Walter Ayles, the ILP candidate, was a conscientious objector who would later be imprisoned for his beliefs. It must have been to Fawcett's chagrin, although to the honour of the NU, that support for Ayles continued. This was the very eventuality against which the President of the NUWSS had sought to guard.<sup>73</sup> The NU executive had effectively taken control of the EFF, and as Margaret Ashton wrote, "without this freedom the middle-class woman attitude of the National Union executive is bound to prevail," thus ensuring the failure of the Labour association. The only course for the remaining members of the old EFF committee was to resign. This they did in March 1916. All hope of making the EFF and Labour relationship the basis of a new democratic alliance had effectively ended.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Letter to the societies' delegates to the Annual General Meeting advising them that the executive had decided to continue support where it had been pledged. n.d. probably February 1916, FL Box 89/96.

<sup>74</sup>M. Ashton to C. E. Marshall, 12 March 1916, CEMP D/Mar/3/58.

On the other hand, by the spring of 1916 the Women's International League which was the product of the Hague Congress was well on the way to success. By drawing on the democratic elements of a number of women's organisations a new configuration was created.<sup>75</sup> For those women who journeyed from the NU, the work for the WIL was soon to combine all those principles of suffrage, internationalism and democracy that they had sought to implement through that organisation. In working for these objectives the democrats were able to assume the responsibilities of citizenship by their claim that every issue was an issue on which the whole population must take a stand.

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<sup>75</sup>Holton, Feminism and Democracy, 138.

## CHAPTER IV

### DEMOCRACY DEFENDED AND EXTENDED: SEPTEMBER 1915 - 1918?

After weeks of intense debate and discussion regarding its purpose and constitution the British section of the International Conference of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP) emerged from its inaugural meeting held at Caxton Hall on 30 September and 1 October 1915 as the Women's International League (WIL). By combining "feminism, pacifism and labourism" this group was the broadly based organisation that Marshall had discussed earlier in the summer with the ICWPP President, Jane Addams. The objects of the new organisation were to secure the establishment of "the principles of right rather than might, and of co-operation rather than conflict, in national and international affairs." To this end, the WIL determined to work for the ideals that underlay modern democracy with a view to their application to a constructive peace. In effect, this was to work for the implementation of the Hague Resolutions by advocacy of democratic control of national foreign policies; the establishment of machinery to facilitate international arbitration and conciliation; the right of self-determination; the abolition of the private manufacture of arms and their export as a step towards disarmament; the promotion of free trade and the refusal of government protection to overseas investors; and the protection of the rights and interests of children and young

people. The strengthening of democracies by the "inclusion of women in the ranks of equal citizenship" necessitated the emancipation of women through admission to the franchise, their inclusion in national and international councils and through the establishment of their economic and legal independence.<sup>1</sup> In combining the goals of the feminist with those of the pacifist movement, this ambitious programme met all the needs of the secessionists. Through the WIL they could continue their suffrage work, while combining with other pacifist organisations to secure a democratically based peace.

The formation of an exclusively women's group permitted and encouraged the development of their political experience. Helena Swanwick argued the need for women "to become fully aware of their own experiences and the reasoning that should follow from that experience." Men, she said, had been organised for such a long time that their experience and reasoning had dominated the conduct of affairs.<sup>2</sup> When she was pressed by Russell in June 1916 to work for the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF), a commitment that would have meant the effective abandonment of work for the WIL, she refused. She informed him that there were specifically women's causes for which no man would work. In an impassioned defence of women's activism she was to remind him that:

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<sup>1</sup>Women's International League Manifesto 1915, CEMP  
D/Mar/4/77.

<sup>2</sup>UDC, January 1916.

Men generally won't trouble to organise women at all, but if they do, it is always to think as men and work, in a one-sided way, for men. I don't consider you as an exception at all. Immensely as I enjoyed your lectures, I was impressed more at each successive one with the fact that you saw the whole world through a man's eyes only. You are cold to women's disabilities. You recognize them, but they do not deeply move you...but as women we have our own special work as well which not one single man of you is going to do. First, you can't and second you don't care enough for our freedom. Our wrongs don't burn you and scald you as they do us.<sup>3</sup>

The Hague Congress had demonstrated that there were certain actions that were possible for women but not for men in wartime. The Congress, Swarwick believed, had also shown women's readiness to take action by their refusal to be "paralysed by the fatalism which had overtaken men." She wrote: "We repudiate that fatalism which stands wringing its hands, in contemplation of a Europe 'rattling into barbarism'." No one, she declared "can turn us into barbarians against our will." The WIL, as Swarwick punned, expressed women's "will to peace." The determination and optimism with which the women embraced their self-appointed task is captured in the document issued by the inaugural conference in October 1916. The manifesto declared:

We believe that peace is no negative thing: it is not only the condition of all fruitful work, but the result of the most strenuous and adventurous effort of mind and spirit. We dedicate our organisation to the task of encouraging in ourselves and others this ceaseless effort, and of helping to mould institutions in accordance with the vital policy laid down by the International Congress of Women at The Hague, April, 1915.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>H. M. Swarwick to B. Russell, 29 June 1916, BRA 710 056 755. She was referring to his lectures "Principles of Social Reconstruction" given January to March 1916.

<sup>4</sup>UDC January 1916. WIL Manifesto 1915.

Although the sentiments were sincere and the rhetoric moving, the WIL was not to lack critics. The socialist Sylvia Pankhurst, admittedly not a sympathetic observer, claimed that the WIL "worked many degrees below the high-keyed enthusiasm of the Hague Conference." This limitation she attributed partly to the difficulties of "labouring under the weight of harsh adversity" which was the lot of all wartime peace organisations. Largely, however, she ascribed it to the innate caution and moderation of the ex-NU members who formed the nucleus of the WIL and who were proud to have been "constitutional" suffragists. This prudence and anxiety to avoid inflaming public opinion unnecessarily was reflected in the conditions laid down for membership. The proposal of Pankhurst's East London Federation (ELF), that women of foreign citizenship be admitted, was rejected. Residents of other nationalities, it was decided, could only be accepted as "fellows."<sup>5</sup> This was a decision that appeared to contradict the spirit of the Hague Congress. The other critics of the WIL were the patriots who now completely controlled the NUWSS. They found this readiness to "educate the nation" in the principles of peace, presumptuous and self-righteous.<sup>6</sup>

By September there were eight local branches of the ICWPP and with the appointment of new officers at the first executive meeting the

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<sup>5</sup>Sylvia Pankhurst, The Home Front (London, 1932, edn.1987), 153.

<sup>6</sup>M. G. Fawcett, "Lift Up Your Hearts," Englishwoman, January 1916.

work began in earnest. In addition to Helena Swanwick as Chairman, and Catherine Marshall as Secretary, Emmeline Pethwick-Lawrence was elected as Treasurer. The three Vice-Chairmen were Margaret Bondfield, Kathleen Courtney and Margaret Ashton. As with every new creation, there were a number of initial organisational difficulties to be surmounted. Yet, apart from the need to have the consent of the executive to establish a branch, in practice there appears to have been considerable autonomy of the constituent branches. The freedom to co-operate with other societies was confirmed at the first Annual Meeting in October 1916. By the end of its first year the WIL had established thirty-five branches with a total of 2458 members. Outside London the largest groups were those in Manchester with 393 members, Birmingham with 117, and in the small town of Street in Somerset, the fiefdom of the Quaker Clark family, which in these early days rivalled the membership of Glasgow. This success can be attributed largely to the existence of the suffrage network, for the unofficial press boycott that had operated against pacifist organisations since the outbreak of war made advertising well nigh impossible. The second year of its existence saw only an increase of 1,000 members for the WIL.<sup>7</sup>

During the war years the history of the ICWPP, because of censorship and restriction upon travel, was necessarily that of its national organisations. The attempts to make the international links

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<sup>7</sup>WIL First Yearly Report October 1915 - October 1916, 4. Second Year membership was 3576; third year membership 3687.

of the organisation a reality were repeatedly frustrated by the postponement of ICWPP committee meetings. However, some communication was possible through the agency of the central office in Amsterdam and through the medium of the organisation's journal Internationaal. On 2 November 1915 a formal application for affiliation was made by the WIL to the ICWPP. The five delegates for the ICWPP committee to represent each member country had been chosen at the executive meeting of 21 October. The five representatives were Margaret Bondfield, Kathleen Courtney, Catherine Marshall, Helena Swarwick and Louie Bennett representing Ireland. The inclusion of Bennett in the British quota was a temporary solution to Ireland's demand, in earnest of the ICWPP's support of the principle of nationality, for separate representation.<sup>8</sup>

The WIL took up the role rejected by the NUWSS of educating women for citizenship and peace. Lectures, debates and study circles covering a wide range of current issues were organised. Not all the topics were immediately connected with peace or internationalism. The subjects discussed ranged from comparative political systems, education, different racial theories and economic problems to the war and its effect upon women. The purpose of these varied offerings was to enlarge the scope of women's interests. A series of weekly drawingroom lectures was started in 1916. So successful was the first

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<sup>8</sup>WIL First Yearly Report October 1915 - October 1916, 21.

series from February until June that another was launched later in the year from October to December. The popularity of these lectures ensured their continuation for the duration of the war and also necessitated their removal from the drawingroom to the larger premises of the Fabian rooms which could accommodate the 100 to 200 strong WIL audiences. By calling upon pacifist and feminist friends and sympathisers such as Lord Courtney, Brailsford, Hobson and many others, as well as by using their own experts, the WIL were able to offer a varied and instructive programme.<sup>9</sup> Although it had become impossible to hold public gatherings in London and in parts of the provinces, many outdoor meetings were successfully organised. The lectures were supported by the issue of pamphlets and leaflets. In April 1916 the first edition of the WIL Monthly News Sheet appeared. In this publication Swarwick was able to continue the policy she had inaugurated with Common Cause of introducing women to serious journalism that dealt with the political issues surrounding the questions of foreign policy and women's rights.

Yet another successful enterprise enlarging the resources available to pacifists was the creation by January 1916 of the International Information Bureau by Marian Ellis, a long-time suffragist and a prominent Friend, Catherine Marshall and another Quaker, Carl Heath of the Peace Society. The purpose was to provide a

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<sup>9</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 9-10; Second Yearly Report October 1916 - October 1917, 11-12 for list of meetings.

central reference facility that would be useful both to speakers preparing lectures as well as for encouraging general interest. The service was to collect and index information on international affairs from the British and colonial newspapers, of which a digest would then be issued weekly in Press Notes.<sup>10</sup> This broadsheet would supplement the highly successful summary of the foreign press compiled by Dorothy Buxton for the Cambridge Magazine. The scale was not large but these activities enabled a nucleus of women to become conversant with the issues of the day and to become skilled in public debate.

Within the first few months of its existence, however, the WIL was to lose some of its most respected and able members. Ethel Williams was compelled by pressure of work to resign almost immediately from the executive; by December, Kathleen Courtney had gone to work for Serbian refugees; and in January, Catherine Marshall was loaned to the NCF, a loss to be followed in February by Emily Leaf who went to do war work in France.<sup>11</sup> For whatever reason, and there are later hints that Kathleen Courtney was not at one with the aspirations of her friends, she declined the secretaryship of the organisation that she had helped to found. Her decision to widen her knowledge of foreign

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<sup>10</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 5. International Information Bureau circular, n.d. CEMP D/Mar/4/89.

<sup>11</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 5-6.

affairs while doing something practical, caused Royden to accuse her later of having taken a "holiday" from constructive thinking.<sup>12</sup>

In December 1915 Courtney departed for Salonika as an employee of the Serbian Relief Fund (SRF). En route for Greece her ship anchored in Mudros harbour on the island of Lemnos. Here she witnessed the appalling aftermath of the Gallipoli campaign as the sick and wounded were evacuated to the waiting hospital ships. The sight of this human misery, not to mention the death toll, proved to be a critical experience. She was strengthened in her determination that war must be outlawed.<sup>13</sup> By the end of January she moved with the Serbian refugees from Salonika to establish a colony at Bastia, Corsica. Here she was the sole representative of the SRF. The inefficiency of the Croix Rouge gave ample scope for the exercise of her formidable organising talents when she set up and ran a small hospital for the Serbs in Bastia. In July she finally left for England, returning to the WIL in September 1916. Evidently Marshall and Swarwick were doubtful about her continued allegiance and what was termed as her "strange ideas" about the WIL. They hoped, however, that the franchise question which had been revived in Courtney's absence

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<sup>12</sup>A. M. Royden to K. D. Courtney, 16 January 1918, FL KDC/HL/1-8 Box 456.

<sup>13</sup>Wilson, "Three Twentieth Century Women of Action," 21-22. After the war Courtney was decorated by the Serbian government. For an account of her relief work see her letters in the Fawcett Library and the Imperial War Museum.

would, in the shape of adult suffrage, "hold her for a bit."

Nevertheless, Swarwick observed, that "I fear we are in for a good many bothers." Her friends regarded Courtney as more of a pragmatist than a theoretician. Marshall observed, that unlike herself and Swarwick, Courtney was not a "believer in the force of ideas as a definitely constructive force in itself: she is not interested in theories except as they express themselves in something concrete and tangible." She believed, therefore, that Courtney's talents would come into their own once the "constructive thinking" about the future and shape of the international organisation had been done.<sup>14</sup>

The first opportunity to translate the Hague programme into practical politics occurred with the mounting campaign in the autumn to introduce military conscription. This occasion enabled the WIL actively to oppose militarism and to resist the extension of the power of the state over the individual. By so doing, the WIL would be combining libertarian, feminist and pacifist ideals. In response to the Allied demand that Britain shoulder a greater share of the military burden the so-called "Derby scheme," named after the prominent Tory militarist Lord Derby, was introduced in October 1915. The campaign was represented by Asquith and Derby as an effort to meet the Allied requirements. Ostensibly, the scheme was a last ditch effort to encourage enlistment, thereby proving the efficacy of the voluntary

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<sup>14</sup>H. M. Swarwick to C. E. Marshall, 4 October 1916, CEMP D/Mar/2/34; C. E. Marshall to H. M. Swarwick, 22 November [1916?], CEMP D/Mar/2/34.

system. In reality, the campaign was designed to demonstrate the failure of voluntarism. The criterion of success - the enlistment of nearly every single man of military age not engaged in work of national importance - was impossible to fulfill.<sup>15</sup> When it came to discussion the Commons showed itself to be little concerned with the ethics of compulsion, more with the question of strategy. Most feared that Britain could not sustain the dual role of paymaster of the coalition while at the same time putting into the field an enlarged army. By taking manpower from industry, it was argued, Britain's industrial productivity, and hence its financial capacity, would be weakened. There were, however, several Members who regarded compulsion as an infringement of human rights. They banded together to form a parliamentary committee to resist the bill.<sup>16</sup>

Even though convinced that consent to compulsory service would not be forthcoming, as a precautionary move the ILP took the lead in attempting to rally the labour movement to oppose a government bill. The minority of socialists, mainly to be found in the ILP, regarded conscription as a class measure ushered in as a national necessity. Indeed, the entire labour movement feared it as the precursor of industrial conscription which at a blow would destroy the hard-won status of the unions. As such, the TUC had condemned its introduction

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<sup>15</sup>Manchester Guardian, 3 November 1915.

<sup>16</sup>The Woman's Dreadnought, 30 October 1915. Officers of the committee were C. E. Hobhouse, Percy Alden and J. Howard Whitehouse.

in September 1915, as had the National Advisory Committee of the ILP (NAC) in October. The Labour Leader in recounting the triumphs of the ILP in stirring up opposition gave the impression of widespread support for the party's campaign. However, it is impossible to gauge the real extent of its success. There were some difficulties in renting halls and a few incidents where meetings had been broken up. When questioned in the Commons by Snowden, H. J. Tennant, the Under Secretary for War, rejected the accusation that these disturbances were part of a plot to prevent discussion.<sup>17</sup> In some cases the increasing difficulty of renting meeting places owed as much to fear for property as to censorship of opinion. In Manchester, however, it was an opinion that the city council sought to suppress. The City Council in January 1916 announced its decision not to rent public halls to the UDC, ILP, Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and the No-Conscription Fellowship. At the same meeting it censured Margaret Ashton and removed her from one of the educational sub-committees on which she had long sat. The pretext for this judgement was a speech made three weeks earlier which was misrepresented as "peace at any price."<sup>18</sup>

One other group with a keen natural interest in the outcome of the conscription debate were those unmarried males between the ages of eighteen and forty-one. In November 1914, anticipating just such a

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<sup>17</sup>House of Commons Debates, H. C. Deb, (5), 76(1915), col. 2053, 15 December 1915.

<sup>18</sup>Manchester Guardian, 6 January 1916.

contingency as was now arising, Fenner Brockway, the young editor of the Labour Leader, had called upon all young men of military age who opposed conscription to band together to provide mutual support and counsel.<sup>19</sup> The response was unexpectedly large and the No-Conscription Fellowship was formed. The announcement of the Derby Scheme impelled the nascent Fellowship to take active steps to organise its members. On 27 November 1915 a National Convention was held to gather together the fifty branches of the Fellowship and to lay plans for common action to resist conscription.<sup>20</sup> Catherine Marshall attended this meeting on behalf of the WIL. The occasion was to mark the beginning of her deep commitment to the principles and work of the NCF. Addressing the assembly, she announced that the WIL had decided that it too must resist conscription. She observed that as "militarism degraded womanhood and conscription was the handmaid of militarism," there was an undoubted harmony of purpose between the work of their two organisations. She praised the NCF for its stand and declared: "We women bless you and your children and your children's children will do you honour."<sup>21</sup>

In earnest of this pledge of support, the WIL entered the anti-conscriptionist fray, presenting the "Women's Case Against Conscription" at a meeting held on 16 December 1915. In her

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<sup>19</sup>Labour Leader, 12 November, 3 December 1914.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 18 November 1915.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 2 December 1915.

introductory speech from the chair Helena Swarwick pointed to the contiguity of ideals that permitted the WIL to embrace the cause of anti-conscription without any inconsistency. The League, she declared, stood for peace, democracy and women's emancipation. Thus, conscription as the embodiment of militarism was a contradiction of the goals of the WIL. She also reminded her audience that the women had assembled at The Hague to protest this appalling waste of life which was the destruction of women's work. Probably the most compelling argument for Swarwick was that conscription represented the extremist form of interference with individual choice.<sup>22</sup> This question of the violation of conscience was also central to Marshall's objection to conscription. In her address she said nothing against recruitment, for she believed that it was up to the individual to act in accordance with his conception of duty. What she did demand, however, was the right for every man to be free to follow his conscience. More particularly, as the issue at stake was "the giving - and taking - of human life." Her position on the individual's right to control this most crucial of decisions echoed that of Clifford Allen, the chairman of the NCF. The refusal to concede that the state may override such a fundamental and personal decision became the principle around which the Fellowship

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<sup>22</sup>Labour Leader, 23 December 1915. H. M. Swarwick, Women in the Socialist State (Manchester and London, 1921), 28.

rallied, although there were some members who rejected the taking of life on ethical grounds.<sup>23</sup>

In turning her attack on the political improprieties of conscription Marshall voiced opinions already current in socialist circles. In the first instance, the prevailing suspicion was that the government had already promised military support to the Allies on a scale that was unobtainable under the voluntary system. The objection of the democrats was that the Government had no right to take such a step without popular consultation. Secondly, there was concern as to the purposes behind this suspected agreement. Marshall noted that there were rumours that the increased fighting strength was necessary for a "fight to the finish," and to influence the terms of peace. "To what finish?" she asked. Undoubtedly, the total defeat of Germany. An overwhelming victory would permit the Allies to exact the territorial rewards that the pacifists believed cemented the alliance. If indeed this was the case, then the possibility of creating a conciliatory and enduring peace was doomed. Marshall urged her audience to meet the demand for conscription by the counter demand for information as to the Government's undertakings to its Allies. For she believed that once conscription was imposed the people would be muzzled. "Trust the people," she urged the Government, for if they deemed its policy just, they would voluntarily lend their support. Otherwise, a nation that

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<sup>23</sup>J. Vellacott, Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War (New York, 1980), 29-30.

ceases to fight willingly becomes a nation of slaves.<sup>24</sup> This demand for public information and democratic decisions became the bed-rock of the pacifist campaign over the next three years, for they never ceased to believe that an informed public would opt for peace.

In conclusion, Marshall reminded her audience that the WIL had an intimate concern with the issue of conscription. The WIL stood for "human brotherhood"; it was pledged to resist militarism; and as a democratic organisation it stood for the "two most fundamental of human liberties - liberty of conscience, and liberty to determine the disposal of one's own life." And as women, they should have some say in the disposal of the lives that they created. The meeting declared its support by passing a resolution that the introduction of industrial or military conscription would be a "grave blow to liberty and social progress" in the country, as well as constituting "the greatest victory of German militarism."<sup>25</sup>

Only the briefest delay elapsed between the final closure of the Derby Scheme on 12 December and the introduction of the Military Service Bill into the Commons on 5 January 1916. Little time was allowed for the formation of coherent opposition, be it by opponents of the Bill or the "whole-hog" conscriptionists. With consummate skill Asquith nullified the opposition. Those of his opponents who had

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<sup>24</sup>Notes of speech for "Anti-conscription meeting held at the Portman Rooms, London on 16 December 1915." CEMP D/Mar/4/77.

<sup>25</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 8-9.

regarded compulsion as an infringement of conscience were either won over or rendered ineffective by the inclusion of a conscience clause that promised exemption "on grounds of conscientious objection to bearing arms." This clause covered both religious and ethical objections. The sixty Irish members who were amongst the 105 who voted against the Bill on the first reading withdrew their opposition when Ireland was exempted from its provisions. Of the 150 abstentions most were Liberals. No doubt many observers wondered what had happened to the 130 members who had earlier pledged that they "would under no circumstances support compulsion."<sup>26</sup> In spite of the ILP belief that the battle would be fought in the country, it had already been won in the Commons with the large majority on the first reading.

All eyes were turned on the Labour and trade unions conference that had been hastily summoned on 6 January 1916. The overwhelming vote against conscription and the announcement at the meeting that the three Labour ministers would resign from the Government appeared to substantiate expectations of working class resistance. Indeed, in the intervening weeks before the Annual Labour Conference was to meet at the end of January in Bristol a massive anti-conscription campaign was mounted throughout the country by the ILP, the NCF and the recently formed National Council Against Conscription (NCAC). Hundreds of thousands of pamphlets were distributed at factory and dock gates, at

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<sup>26</sup>Labour Leader, 18 November 1915. There were 130 Members "who would under no circumstances support compulsion."

churches and at all places where working men gathered.

Anti-conscription meetings took place from Edinburgh in the north to Briton Ferry in South Wales. In Manchester the WIL and other women's organisations were prominent amongst the anti-conscriptionists.

The National Council Against Conscription had originated with a deputation of about fifty representatives from various social, religious and political organisations who had made representation to those MPs who had abstained in the division on the first reading. It was hoped to persuade them to resist the Bill at the next reading. A number of women were amongst those familiar pacifist and radical citizens who presented themselves at Westminster. Especially prominent were Catherine Marshall, Sylvia Pankhurst and Helena Swarwick. The women's views were voiced by Catherine Marshall; those of the COs by Clifford Allen. The permanent organisation created from this joint enterprise was to co-ordinate opposition and agitation to the Military Service Bills (MSB). Catherine Marshall was on the executive and amongst those on the general council were Helena Swarwick, Margaret Ashton and Isabella Ford.<sup>27</sup>

All this agitation proved to be in vain. Asquith mollified the Labour movement by promising that there would be no industrial conscription. The three Labour ministers in the Government were persuaded to withdraw their resignations. On 26 January the Annual Labour Conference endorsed its decision of August 1914 to support the

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<sup>27</sup>For a list of members see Labour Leader, 13 January 1916.

war by refusing to countenance agitation for the repeal of the MSB which was by this time awaiting royal assent before passing into law. The Bill became an Act the next day. Having won its guarantees from the Prime Minister, the Conference accepted conscription while at the same time indulging its collective conscience by the denunciation of the principle of compulsion. In the end, the nation had yielded to the argument that the introduction of compulsory service was a military necessity. Indeed, with the exception of a minority, for most people the issue had been one of strategy, not compulsion or support for the war. For the remainder of the war, however, the pacifists endeavoured to thrust the question of support for the war to the forefront of the national consciousness.

A minority, however, continued to campaign against the Act. Yet, only those men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one deemed fit for military service could actively resist the implementation of the Military Service Act (MSA) and so the burden of resistance was to be born by the NCF members. They mounted their opposition by challenging the operation of the conscience clause. The WIL applauded the COs resolve and in January sent them a message of "warm sympathy and admiration." At the council meeting on 3 February it was decided to add opposition to military conscription to the objectives of the League. A resolution was passed:

That the Women's International League holds that conscription introduces militarism in its most pernicious form, endangers industrial liberty and is the greatest infringement of the

rights of conscience and liberty of the subject... and it resolves to work in every legal way possible for the repeal and against the extension of the Military Service Act.<sup>28</sup>

A more positive and lasting contribution to the NCF campaign, however, was the secondment in January 1916 of Catherine Marshall to the organisation. As membership of the NCF was confined to those who came within the scope of the MSA, Marshall and others who wished to enlist in the cause became "Associates" of the Fellowship. From mid-March 1916 when it was first formed, she became a member along with Russell, Brailsford and J. S. Middleton, Assistant Secretary of the Labour Party, of the Associates' Political Committee. With the imprisonment of most of the officers of the NCF by late August, thereafter, she and Russell bore the brunt of the organisation's work for much of the remainder of the war.<sup>29</sup>

Representatives of the WIL were present amongst the sympathisers who assembled to demonstrate their support for the NCF at the second National Convention hastily summoned early in April. The meeting was a response to the threat posed by the announcement of 23 March that the Government proposed a scheme of alternative civilian service for COs. Since the first Convention the leaders of the Fellowship had been advocating that its members refuse not only combatant service but also non-combatant duties under the military authority. Only by demanding absolute exemption could the NCF

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<sup>28</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 18.

<sup>29</sup>Vellacott, Bertrand Russell, 36.

undermine the Military Service Acts by ensuring the failure of the conscience clause. Therefore, the provision of an alternative to military service under civilian direction could well undermine the solidarity of the NCF's resistance. Ultimately, the NCF was a stop-the-war movement.<sup>30</sup> However, not all the branches favoured an absolutist policy and the very diversity of motive, religious as well as ethical and political, which had led men to join made it impossible to impose absolutism on the organisation. Thus, a rather awkward accommodation was made by the resolution passed at the Saturday session of the Convention which rejected any form of alternative service which might result in the more efficient prosecution of the war, whilst at the same time recognising that every man must choose according to the dictates of his conscience.<sup>31</sup>

The euphoria of the second Convention meeting on Saturday 8 April, with its sense of beleaguered righteousness, affected observers in various ways. Amongst the sharply critical was Beatrice Webb. She disliked the sense of moral superiority and the prevailing desire for martyrdom. Not least was the affront to her statist soul of the anarchical implications of the proposed policy. It was clear to her that the Fellowship stood not for "the right to refuse military service, but the inauguration, first in England and then in the world,

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<sup>30</sup>J. Rae, Conscience and Politics (London, 1970), 86-93. T. Kennedy, The Hound of Conscience (Fayetteville, 1981), 118.

<sup>31</sup>Vellacott, Bertrand Russell, 48. Labour Leader, 13 April 1916.

of a strike against war by the armies - actual and potential - of all warring peoples." Numbered amongst those sympathisers described by Beatrice Webb as "exactly the persons you would expect to find at such a meeting - older pacifists and older rebels", was Helena Swanwick.<sup>32</sup> The warmth of her reception was a personal tribute and an endorsement of the WIL. The speech she made was in harmony with the prevailing atmosphere of high idealism and quasi-religious fervour with its appeal to nobility and sacrifice. Swanwick's appeal to the warriors for peace was not dissimilar from that of Kitchener to his recruits. She declared that in following their consciences they were using their lives in the best way possible, that "making peace on earth" was "life saving work"; and, she added, "we all know that you would do it bravely but you are going to do it beautifully."<sup>33</sup>

The Sunday morning session was devoted to organising the details of "unrelenting agitation" on behalf of the arrested members. The report of the Associates' Political Committee which was responsible for this work was presented by Catherine Marshall. She was already acknowledged to be "probably the ablest woman organiser in the land" and her work over the next two years only confirmed this judgement.<sup>34</sup> Her political expertise and ability to establish

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<sup>32</sup>M. Cole, ed., Beatrice Webb's Diaries (London, 1952), 59-61.

<sup>33</sup>Labour Leader, 13 April 1916.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

communications with government officials were unrivalled in the NCF.

"The respect in which she was held by the most uncompromising members of the Government," as Allen later observed, "enabled her to make the point of view of the objector a very living political issue."<sup>35</sup>

When, in mid-September 1916 on the arrest of the leading officers of the NCF Marshall added the Acting Honorary Secretary to her responsibilities, she henceforth bore much of the organisational burden of the Fellowship.

Catherine Marshall was drawn to the NCF by her adherence to the ideals for which it stood and by her admiration for the spirit of the COs, and not least, by her deep love for its Chairman, Clifford Allen. In devoting herself to the Fellowship she was at once able to combine her humanitarianism with the opposition to militarism which was fundamental to the work of the WIL. Writing in 1936 Allen summarised her attitude thus:

She believed the ideas of liberty and international goodwill for which these men stood demanded the active support of men and women who were not themselves liable to military service....More completely a pacifist than many of the extremists, she made it her business not only to sustain their resistance but to emphasize to them how great was their responsibility to the community, and begged them, whilst resisting firm to the end, so to conduct the movement as to show that they realised the evil of persecution not so much from their own standpoint as from that of the community. Throughout the campaign she emphasized the importance of liberty of conscience amongst all sections of the men, love

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<sup>35</sup>Clifford Allen "Drafts for Manchester Guardian letter on pacifism (in reply)," December 1936, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina.

of the community even when you resist its commands, and unflinching courage in adhering to the most extreme resistance to conscription in any shape or form.<sup>36</sup>

The policy of alleviating the suffering of the COs did not win the unanimous support of the National Committee of the NCF. Certain of the Quaker members believed that no efforts should be made to relieve the condition of the prisoners. For by their sufferings, which would be publicised, they would bear witness to their rejection of war. This criticism struck at the very foundations of Marshall's work for the NCF. She confided despairingly to Russell that, "I can not do unproductive work," and if the Fellowship should opt to work exclusively for peace, she believed that she could be of greater service to the WIL in this cause. The crisis was resolved by a compromise. The National Committee while deciding to accept the primacy of a peace campaign and to co-operate with other organisations in this. It also accepted the need to continue to help the COs.<sup>37</sup> As one problem succeeded another, the temporary loan of Marshall to the NCF lengthened into permanency.

By August 1916 Swarwick was becoming impatient and demanding to know whether Marshall intended returning to the WIL. The serious depletion of organising talent had meant that much of the work of the Secretary had fallen on Helena Swarwick, who already had her own work

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<sup>36</sup>Clifford Allen "Drafts for Manchester Guardian letter on pacifism (in reply)."

<sup>37</sup>C. E. Marshall to B. Russell, 7 July 1916, ERA 710 052 662. Letter from NCF Labour Leader, 20 July 1916.

as Chairman. Not only was this personally no longer endurable but much of the foundation work so necessary in a young organisation was being neglected for want of time and someone to do it. Still believing that the war must soon end, Swanwick was also anxious to begin preparations for the post-war congress of women that was one of the objects of the Hague Congress. Furthermore, there was the necessity of organising the Adult Suffrage campaign, "which is running to seed for want of effort", Swanwick complained.<sup>38</sup>

True to her conviction of the need for a broadly based peace movement, Swanwick thought that work for the NCF too narrow in its scope. A criticism that was echoed by Maude Royden. Regretfully, Royden accepted her friend's decision to stay with the COs. She bemoaned the loss of "the most constructive, the most fruitful, the most essentially pacific mind that I have ever met." Indeed, she ranked the departure of Marshall as more damaging to the pacifist cause than if either Courtney or Swanwick had left. For Royden believed that she had a "greater mind than either Nellie or Kathleen." This judgement may also have owed something to the strained relations between the Chairman of the WIL and Royden. Later, the latter claimed that when early in the war she had been forced to choose between feminism and religion, Swanwick's attitude had led her to decide that there was no place for her in feminism. She likened the Chairman's

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<sup>38</sup>H. M. Swanwick to C. E. Marshall, 5 August 1916, CEMP D/Mar/4/78.

genius to that of the NCF - admirable but destructive. Royden, too, had her doubts about NCF policy. While she lauded the courage and spirit of the Fellowship, she deplored its tactics. The campaign was all too reminiscent of the militancy of the suffragettes who invited persecution by creating impossible situations, "then making an uproar about it." The effect of persecution, she believed, was "destroyed by advertising and demonstrating about it."<sup>39</sup> The inevitable comparison between the sacrifices of the soldiers and the COs, although Royden believed the latter to be the greater sacrifice, did not create a good impression on public opinion.

Although Marshall saw the NCF as part of the larger campaign to secure peace and not exclusively as an organisation created to bear witness, in the long run the critics proved to be right. They believed that, politically, support for the NCF was a "blind alley" bringing the nation no closer to peace.<sup>40</sup> By concentrating on agitation for peace negotiations, the WIL were committing themselves to a more enduring ideal. Defeating militarism might be a step towards this goal but it was believed that a more effective policy would be to put pressure on the Government to enter into peace negotiations.

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<sup>39</sup>A. M. Royden to C. E. Marshall, 10 August 1916, CEMP D/Mar/2/34. A. M. Royden to K. D. Courtney, 16 January 1918, FL KDC/H1/1-8 Box 456. A. M. Royden to C. E. Marshall, 24 April 1916, BRA 710 052 657.

<sup>40</sup>H. N. Brailsford to C. E. Marshall 15 January 1917, CEMP D/Mar/4/15.

During the war years the WIL protested the treatment of the COs and the refusal to grant them absolute exemption, but no active campaign was launched on their behalf.<sup>41</sup> Helena Swarwick never permitted the international objectives of the WIL to become subordinated to purely national questions. More usually the two were combined to forward the cause of international understanding.

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Coincidentally, the suffrage question revived at the very time when the WIL was launching itself as a political organisation at the anti-conscription meeting of 16 December 1915. Although primarily concerned with conscription, the speakers at the meeting took the opportunity to reaffirm their claim that any measure to reform the parliamentary franchise must include women.<sup>42</sup> The impending dissolution of Parliament once more raised questions about the compilation of the register of voters for the next General Election. Notwithstanding the safeguards of servicemen's electoral rights already guaranteed, an election conducted on the basis of the register of 1913 would disenfranchise two-thirds of the electorate.<sup>43</sup> The necessity of compiling a new register was seen by some sections of Parliament as

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<sup>41</sup>WIL Monthly News Sheet June, August 1916.

<sup>42</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 11.

<sup>43</sup>Some safeguard of servicemen's electoral rights had been guaranteed by the Electoral Disabilities (Naval and Military Service) Removal Act of August 1914 which decreed that voters should not be deprived of their rights by absence during the qualifying period on military or naval service.

the opportunity to extend the franchise not only to those newly eligible but to all who were bearing arms. Although in fact there were two questions at issue, that of registration and the extension of the franchise, they had been fused by the claimants of the service vote. Thus, the women feared that, under the cover of registration, the franchise would be extended without consideration of their claims. The Government dissuaded MPs from introducing private bills by assuring them that it would soon be introducing its own measure. Even though the life of Parliament was once more extended by statute in January 1916, the inevitability of a new register hung over the country.

Marshall attempted to alert the NUWSS to the dangers in a letter to Common Cause in November 1915. However, it was the WIL and the radical suffragists who rallied. The establishment of the principle that military service as distinct from any other forms of service should carry with it the right to enfranchisement was regarded by the women as both a retrograde and an undemocratic step. To accept a military franchise would be to capitulate to the anti-suffragist argument that entitlement to vote was based on the capacity to bear arms as a national service. In practical terms, there was also the consideration that if women were excluded now from any measure of electoral reform their chances of enfranchisement in the foreseeable future would be damaged. If, as was likely, a change in the alteration of the basis of the franchise was accompanied by a redistribution of

seats, this would cause a major disturbance that would ensure that the measure endured for at least another generation.

There was a new urgency to the women's claim. Before the war they demanded the vote as a right; now it was regarded as essential to be enfranchised for the next General Election in order to have their voice heard in the problems of reconstruction. Without the vote women had no means of safeguarding their economic position in the coming industrial reorganisation. It was this latter argument that became central to the advocacy of the female franchise. Asquith also recognised that if service was to be established as the criterion, civilian claims could not be ignored. Once this standard was recognised women must receive consideration, for the press and country were loud in their praise of the women munition workers. As the Prime Minister was reminded by the suffragists, he had pledged in November 1911 and again in January 1913 that when a measure for franchise reform came before Parliament there would be a "full and free opportunity" for introducing an amendment for womens' suffrage.<sup>44</sup> In spite of the urgency of the problem, the Government was slow to embark upon what was sure to be a divisive and contentious issue.

One of the obstacles to the entente between the NUWSS and the Labour Party in 1912 had been the party's commitment to adult suffrage. Henderson and MacDonald were both adultists and had to be

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<sup>44</sup>M. G. Fawcett letter to the press in Common Cause, 3 December 1915, 451.

persuaded that support for the inclusion of women was still compatible with their main concern for a universal measure. Many of the women labour leaders were long-time advocates of adult suffrage. Margaret Llewelyn Davies had recognised in 1904 that as long as restrictions were placed on the women's franchise, there could never be any real equality between the sexes. In 1908 Margaret Bondfield had been a founder of the Adult Suffrage Society.<sup>45</sup> The opposition of Lloyd George and Asquith to limited measures such as the Conciliation Bill of 1912, it has been suggested, was because they believed them to have been insufficiently democratic. This explanation is also entirely compatible with the argument that they feared party advantage. The Liberals anticipated that a narrow property based franchise for women would benefit the Unionists.<sup>46</sup>

Alert to the implications of the proposal for a service franchise, representatives from the suffrage societies met in January 1916. The societies, however, failed to find a common basis on which to work for enfranchisement. The NUWSS, which had declared a political truce in August 1914, preferred to wait upon events and rely upon the private assurance from Asquith that when the time came their claims would receive consideration. The WIL, on the other hand, threw in its

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<sup>45</sup>Brian Harrison, "Women's Suffrage at Westminster, 1860-1928," in Michael Bentley and John Stevenson eds., High and Low Politics in Britain (Oxford, 1983), 99. Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us (London, 1978 and 1984), 186-7.

<sup>46</sup>Harrison, "Women's Suffrage at Westminster."

lot with the labour movement. The organisation rejected the "equality" with men basis of the NUWSS's claims in favour of universal adult suffrage.<sup>47</sup>

The adoption of adult suffrage by the WIL was an indication of the distance that the founders of that body had travelled towards a commitment to democracy in all its forms since the breach with the NUWSS. The subsequent co-operation with other adultist organisations did not mean that the WIL abandoned the women's claim for enfranchisement. As women were totally unrepresented, the WIL still considered their claim to be "the most urgent and unanswerable." Adult suffrage combined the virtues of justice and expediency. Not only did the radical women believe this claim to be more democratic, but they were also convinced that by enfranchising every sane adult on the basis of a short residential qualification this would simplify reform by cutting through the anomalies of a property and sex-based franchise.<sup>48</sup> Although adult suffrage was not a new cause, it had hitherto received little support outside the labour movement. An attempt by a Private Members Bill in 1909 to introduce adult suffrage had failed, largely because of Conservative fears of an enlarged working-class electorate.

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<sup>47</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 11. H. H. Asquith to M. G. Fawcett, 7 May 1916, in Common Cause, 20 October 1916, 351.

<sup>48</sup>News Sheet, July 1916.

After its official adoption of adult suffrage in February 1916 the WIL declared its willingness to unite with any other organisation working for this end. Over the next few months the women made every effort to advertise the cause within its own ranks and to draw together the universalists. The mounting pressure in the early summer from the Liberal and Unionist "Ginger Groups" for a military service franchise led the WIL to set about organising counter measures. The resolution passed by the WIL on 13 April affirming the necessity of women having the vote in time for the next General Election was sent to the Prime Minister, suffrage allies, the press and the leaders of the parliamentary opposition.<sup>49</sup> In June and July two conferences were organised with the object of taking joint action with other concerned groups to press for a franchise rather than a registration bill. The representatives from twenty democratic organisations who formed this Suffrage Council agreed to support a measure for adult suffrage. Nevertheless, at a second meeting of the Council there was a division over the question of whether the women would oppose a bill that altered the basis of the franchise without their inclusion. The WIL had already chosen this course of action in March but it now appeared that for tactical reasons the organisation should appear to be less obdurate. At least, this was Swarwick's argument when in November she tried to persuade Chrystal Macmillan to rescind her resignation from

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<sup>49</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 11-12. WIL Special Council 3 February 1916; Executive Committee 2 March 1916.

the WIL executive.<sup>50</sup> A direct result of these meetings, however, was the formation in September of the National Council for Adult Suffrage (NCAS). The temporary secretaries were Kathleen Courtney and J. S. Middleton. A wide variety of organisations and interests were represented on the executive. Catherine Marshall, Maude Royden and Helena Swanwick were from the WIL, while other organisations were represented by such prominent labour people of long-standing adultist commitment as Margaret Bondfield, Mary Macarthur, Margaret Llewellyn Davies, George Lansbury and Robert Smillie. Radical journalists, notably Nevinson, Massingham and Gardiner, also gave their support. Adult suffrage was able to command a wide range of sympathisers and among the sixty signatories of a letter to Asquith in June were the bishops of Hereford and Lincoln, the Webbs and Woolf.<sup>51</sup>

Even as the universalists organised, decisive changes in attitude were announced and the Government confronted the problem of the franchise. Although the life of Parliament was again extended at the beginning of August and the contentious registration issue thereby postponed until the next session, steps were taken to resolve the issue. Parliamentary indecision, combined with the Speaker's ruling that there could be no amendments at the committee stage to a Registration Bill led Walter Long, a powerful Unionist and

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<sup>50</sup>WIL Executive Committee 6 July 1916, CEMP D/Mar/4/78. H. M. Swanwick to C. E. Marshall, 23 November 1916, CEMP D/Mar/4/78.

<sup>51</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 12-13.

anti-suffragist to intervene in this impasse. On 16 August he suggested that the whole question of electoral reform be referred to an all-party conference to be chaired by the Speaker, J. W. Lowther. Expediency dictated Long's proposal. He believed that to grant limited suffrage during the war under the auspices of a coalition Government would be preferable to having to face a more radical measure at its conclusion when women regrouped their forces.<sup>52</sup>

This week in August, as Mrs Fawcett observed, was a week of some note for the suffrage movement. On the Sunday, J. L. Garvin, editor of the Observer and a long-time opponent of women's suffrage, recanted. In a leading article, he confessed that events had proved him wrong when he had opposed the enfranchisement of women on the grounds that they could not share in the national defence. "The State needs their aid," he declared, "and they have proved their capacity to give it."<sup>53</sup> A far more important conversion, however, was that of the Prime Minister. Notwithstanding claims that Asquith's acceptance of the case for enfranchising women predated the outbreak of war, suffragists within and outside the Liberal party still attributed the pre-war failure of women's enfranchisement to his intransigence. Replying to Carson's demand for male suffrage on the basis of military and naval service on Monday 14 August, Asquith admitted that if

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<sup>52</sup>Martin Pugh, Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-18 (London, Henley and Boston, 1978), 146.

<sup>53</sup>M. G. Fawcett, "Nearing Victory," Englishwoman, September 1916. "The Future Basis of the Franchise," Observer, 13 August 1916.

national service was to be the criterion, then the women's claim could not be overlooked. He told the House that they "have rendered as effective service in the prosecution of the war as any other class of the community."<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, he reiterated the very arguments of the women themselves when he declared that not only had they demonstrated their fitness for the vote but that it was necessary for their protection. He observed that there would be a large-scale displacement of labour when the process of industrial reconstruction was set on foot at the end of the war and that it was the women who would have the most need to defend their interests. Regardless of differing political persuasions, this concern about the fate of women workers, presently lauded as the saviours of the nation, became the main plank in the women's suffrage platform. Women, they believed, must have a voice in the process of reconstruction. Therefore it was imperative that they be enfranchised before the next General Election. The supporters of enfranchisement disdained the crude notion that the vote might be a reward; rather, they would interpret it as recognition of their proven fitness for citizenship. The arguments for admitting women to citizenship were, therefore, based on recognition and reconstruction - arguments that had more force than the abstract pre-war claims to equality, or even Swarwick's assertion of the common humanity of men and women. Ironically, on this basis, it was mainly

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<sup>54</sup>Fawcett, "Nearing Victory".

the working-class women, not the middle-class activists, who were to be the saviours of the franchise. The injustice was that few working women were to be the beneficiaries of the new measure.

During the deliberations of the Speaker's conference the anti-suffragists made a last ditch effort to "dish" the suffragists. The physical force arguments having been swept aside by the women's war contribution, they now mounted an attack "under the thin plea of constitutional legalism."<sup>55</sup> The assertion that Parliament had no moral right to deal with the question because it had not been elected on the issue was swept aside by their critics. Nonetheless, it was clear that the continued opposition would compel the women to modify their demands. A meeting was summoned in December of representatives from suffrage groups by the former Home Secretary, Sir John Simon. The parliamentarians Simon and W. H. Dickinson were of the opinion that the Conference would not recommend adult suffrage and that to press for this could endanger a general recommendation for women's suffrage. The meeting agreed that rather than lose the principle of women's suffrage they would be prepared to accept an age restriction to alleviate fears of creating a preponderance of women voters. Courtney's suggestion that the aged be debarred from voting was not taken seriously. The meeting's decision was to be conveyed to the Conference through the

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<sup>55</sup>Manchester Guardian, 18 November 1916.

offices of Lady Selborne of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association.<sup>56</sup>

Accordingly, when on 30 January 1917 the Report of the Speaker's Conference was published there ought not have been surprise in suffrage circles at the recommendations. Agreement had been unanimous on all points save that of women's suffrage. Adult suffrage for men on a residential qualification was recommended. The proposals for women were a compromise that reflected the divisions within the Conference that persisted even after the resignation in December of four of the most intransigent anti-suffragists.<sup>57</sup> The franchise for women was to be restricted by age and property. The only women eligible to vote would be those on the local government register who had attained a specific age, thirty or thirty-five was suggested, or wives of men on the register. Ironically, these terms shut out the very class of women who had allegedly inspired the nation's change of heart and for whom protective legislation had been urged. Single women who were not occupiers were barred from voting. The age limit excluded the younger generation, who by virtue of their admission to compulsory education were better fitted than the older woman for exercising the

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<sup>56</sup>M. G. Fawcett, Memorandum 15 December 1916, FL Box 89/128. Sandra Holton, Feminism and Democracy (Cambridge, 1986), 147.

<sup>57</sup>The anti-suffragists were - Sir Frederick Banbury, Sir Robert Finlay, Sir James Craig and Lord Salisbury, the eldest brother of the suffragist Lord Robert Cecil.

franchise.<sup>58</sup> There was, in addition, the anomaly of having two registers, local and parliamentary. It was calculated that these proposals would admit six million women to the franchise. By contrast, the manhood suffrage advocated by the Conference would expand the male electorate by ten to eleven million voters. In this way men would maintain their numerical superiority. The crux of the problem had always been the fear that women would swamp the male vote in the next election, although these apprehensions were couched as concerns about their political inexperience.

There was widespread condemnation of the Conference's recommendations. In the press there was general rejoicing at the recommendation for manhood suffrage; but there was disapproval of the injustice of the limitations on women, which even Asquith did not hesitate to decry as illogical and unjust. As the Daily News observed the barriers were artificial and "seem almost erected deliberately to invite attack."<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, the press and many of the supporters of women's suffrage recognised that with the acceptance of the principle the sex-barrier had been breached and that it was only a matter of time before all women were admitted to full rights.

The women who had laboured so hard and long were acutely disappointed. For although they had been willing in 1912 to accept a measure that would only have enfranchised one million of their sex, by

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<sup>58</sup>Nation (London), 3 February 1917.

<sup>59</sup>Daily News, 31 January 1917.

1917 their expectations and priorities had changed. Indeed, their altered demands were in tune with the climate of opinion in the country at large. It had not been unreasonable to suppose that the newly forged bonds of national unity and praise for their war efforts would improve their chances of enfranchisement. Or, as Brailsford cynically observed, "in war the enhancement of the tribal instinct tells in favour of all the less considered sections of the clan....At fever heat every nation is inclined to be generous."<sup>60</sup> It was not generous enough, the women argued.

The Speaker's Report contained no guarantee of legislation. Thus it was necessary for the suffragists to set aside their disappointment and muster their forces for unity and compromise. Initially, it seemed that the adultists might oppose the recommendations of the Conference. The day after the publication of the Report the WIL sent a resolution to Lloyd George, the new Prime Minister, several MPs and the press. The organisation reaffirmed its contention that adult suffrage was the only solution and deplored the omission of the young industrial and professional worker from the proposals.<sup>61</sup> Mrs Fawcett, not surprisingly, interpreted the Report as a great advance for the movement. The opportunity should not be lost, she urged, to put six million women on the electoral role;

<sup>60</sup>H. N. Brailsford, New Republic, 24 February 1917.

<sup>61</sup>WIL Second Yearly Report October 1916-October 1917, 22.

meanwhile, the NU would continue to work for equal rights.<sup>62</sup> She feared, however, that by their criticism of the Report and their determination to continue work for adult suffrage, those such as Courtney and Llewelyn Davies and particularly Sylvia Pankhurst, would provide their opponents with an excuse to override even the limited provision for women.<sup>63</sup> In the end the counsel of the milder spirits prevailed. Addressing the the NCAS meeting on the 10 February 1917, Sir John Simon cautioned the organisation. He warned the NCAS against rash actions and expression of so much dissatisfaction that the Government would have the excuse to do nothing on the grounds that the suffragists were disunited. His pleas were based on his knowledge of the Committee. He explained that the terms represented the maximum that could be wrung from the anti-suffragists. The priority was to get a bill introduced and this meant that the suffrage groups must act in unison.<sup>64</sup> Although the Chairman Margaret Ashton voiced the universal bitterness at the age limitations and the retrograde nature of the household suffrage, the meeting heeded Simon's warning and did not degenerate into protest.

In the weeks after the Report the suffrage societies sank their differences and organised their forces and their friends to press for

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<sup>62</sup>M. G. Fawcett, "A Step Forward," Common Cause, 9 February 1917.

<sup>63</sup>Holton, Feminism and Democracy, 149.

<sup>64</sup>Manchester Guardian, 12 February 1917.

the inclusion of the Speaker's recommendations in a franchise bill. It was essential that women be included in the first draft of a bill, for experience had shown the impossibility of inclusion by amendment. Support also came from an unexpected quarter. On 13 February 1917 the anti-suffragist Walter Long capitulated and laid before the Cabinet the proposition that if women were prepared to compromise, then their opponents should also be willing to accept these limited concessions. He admitted "that the sense of Parliament and of the country would be in this direction."<sup>65</sup>

In her seventieth year, Fawcett once again assumed the leadership of the suffrage campaign. The NUWSS, abandoning its self-imposed political truce, held its first suffrage meeting since the outbreak of war on 20 February. This was the first of several mass meetings around the country over which Mrs Fawcett presided in an effort to "fan local enthusiasm" for the enfranchisement of women. The WIL, also, mounted demonstrations in support of the Speaker's Report. On 27 March, the day before Asquith was to call for a Government bill on the general lines of the Report of the Speaker's Conference, a mass meeting of several suffrage societies was organised by the WIL and addressed by Helena Swanwick, Ethel Snowden, Isabella Ford and Maude Royden. The speakers seized upon recent events in Russia where the Charter of Freedom issued by the Provisional Government promised civil

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<sup>65</sup>Cabinet Papers, Public Record Office, CAB 24/6/1 13 February 1917.

rights, including the enfranchisement of women, that had long been denied the Russian people. As a response to these momentous changes, the WIL expressed the hope that England could at least give effect to the recommendations of the Speaker's Conference.<sup>66</sup>

In June 1917 the suffrage clauses of the Representation of the People Bill passed the Committee stage in the Commons with a large majority. Lloyd George and Asquith were united in their determination to see the bill pass the Commons. The latter's eloquent plea for women to be permitted a voice in the recasting of the nation at the conclusion of the war was well received. The opposition offered no strong leadership and vain efforts were made to rescue the situation by the anti-suffragists who attempted to impugn the fitness of women to vote by asserting that it would be a pacifist vote.<sup>67</sup> It now only remained for the whole Representation of the People Bill to pass the Committee stage in the next session and then go before the House of Lords, where it was expected that the Bill would be passed, albeit with reluctance. Confident of success the WIL arranged a conference for the 13 July 1917 to discuss co-operation between the suffrage societies and ways in which they would put the vote to use.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>WIL Second Yearly Report, 23.

<sup>67</sup>David H. Close, "The Collapse of Resistance to Democracy: Conservatism, Adult Suffrage and Second Chamber Reform 1911-1928" Historical Journal 20, 4 (1977): 893-918.

<sup>68</sup>WIL Second Yearly Report, 24.

According to that shrewd contemporary, Brailsford, the circumstances that had favoured the introduction of women's suffrage were the "recent conversions, the national atmosphere of fraternity, the general readiness to face big reconstructions, the oblivion which has now covered up the irritation caused by militancy."<sup>69</sup> Not least was the fact, according to Asquith, that the women had "worked out their own salvation." Once it had been determined to grant universal manhood suffrage, the democratic floodgates had been opened and the acceptance of the principle of women's suffrage could not be long delayed. The war had played havoc with the case for physical force and there remained no other even faintly plausible argument against enfranchisement.

The disintegration of the militant WSPU as a political force permitted politicians to beat a voluntary strategic retreat from their anti-suffragism. Also, the absence of the Pankhursts enabled the suffragists and the universalists to compromise and solder a unity that had not existed in the pre-war years of the movement. However, it should be noted that the other Pankhurst, Sylvia, maintained a lone crusade for adult suffrage. It was perhaps fortunate that the NUWSS having retained its identity as a pressure group assumed the leadership of the campaign, thereby avoiding the taint of pacifism associated with the WIL.

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<sup>69</sup>Brailsford, "Women and Votes in England" New Republic, 24 February 1917.

The adultists of the WIL, in spite of their acute disappointment, did not divide the suffrage forces. They joined with the more conservative societies in accepting the Report of the Speaker's Conference. Indeed, rather than acting as a suffrage society, the WIL had merged with the labour movement in its call for the extension of democracy. This signalled not only a shift in belief; for some of the members, notably Swarwick, it probably marked a desire to remove suffrage from the WIL agenda in order to focus the organisation's efforts on what was now regarded as the more important issue - peace. For Courtney, however, suffrage always retained its importance. The debt owed by the women's movement in Britain to the leadership of the NUWSS President was handsomely acknowledged by the secessionists. In a conciliatory and moving tribute to Mrs Fawcett, the President of the WIL admitted that even though their language had been different their objectives had always been the same. Fawcett was less magnanimous in her hour of victory. She rebuffed Courtney against whom she felt a particular grudge and reminded herself to "remember to forget" the pain of the split of 1915.<sup>70</sup>

The radicals did not dwell on the irony of having won the vote at the hands of a grateful nation. Swarwick was caustic about the belief that by donning a bus conductress's uniform a woman was thereby

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<sup>70</sup>H. M. Swarwick to M. G. Fawcett, 19 December 1917 FL. K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 5 March 1918, CEMP D/Mar/3/52. M. G. Fawcett to H. Atkinson, 19 February 1916, FL Box 89/117. Strachey, Fawcett, 296.

transformed into a heroine.<sup>71</sup> It would appear that the model of Victorian virtue had merely stepped out from the parlour into the high street and on to the factory floor. However much she might deplore the thinking behind the franchise, as far as the radicals were concerned the principle had been conceded. This victory for the women's movement was another step along the road to real political participation. The ends were of greater importance than the means. The work to secure peace negotiations which had been in progress simultaneously with the campaign for enfranchisement, only confirmed the necessity for women to secure their political rights.

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<sup>71</sup>H. M. Swanwick, The War and Its Effect Upon Women (New York and London, 1971), 5.

## CHAPTER V

### "PATRIOTISM IS NOT ENOUGH": 1915-1917

"This I would say, standing as I do in view of God and Eternity. Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone." E. Cavell.

"The most significant memorial the British people could erect," Swanwick wrote, "would be to bring to new birth and to foster the faith in which she [Cavell] died."<sup>1</sup> The British nurse, who was shot by the Germans for aiding Allied prisoners to escape, became for the pacifist women a symbol of humanitarianism. For the vast majority of the patriotic British, by contrast, Cavell became the epitome of the kind of heroism that she herself rejected. Her words were confirmation of the sentiments that emanated from the Hague Congress - the desire to secure the common bonds of humanity against submergence and destruction by the hatreds of war. It was this belief in the international spirit that inspired the WIL and the other pacifist groups to embark upon a campaign to promote a negotiated settlement.<sup>2</sup> They were convinced

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Swanwick, Manchester Guardian, 3 November 1915.

<sup>2</sup>H. Weinroth, "Peace by Negotiation and the British Anti-War Movement, 1914-1918" Canadian Journal of History 10, 3 (1975), 369-392.

that outright victory would probably be succeeded by a Carthaginian peace. A harsh settlement would not be conducive to the establishment of the "real European partnership" that was necessary if peace was to endure. The Government, on the other hand, never had any intention of entering into negotiations with the enemy. The reasons that had led Britain to declare war made any compromise impossible. In the first instance, the Government blamed German aggression for the outbreak of hostilities; secondly, it believed that future security was only obtainable by the destruction of Prussian militarism. Furthermore, the Administration feared that any attempt to promote the pacifist objectives would undermine the prosecution of an all-out war effort. Acting on accordance with these convictions, the Government intensified the policy initiated in the first days of the war to buttress the unity of the nation by a sustained and aggressive propaganda campaign. The pacifists in setting out to combat this propaganda soon found themselves mired in government restrictions and confronted by the unofficial censorship of the mob. Hence, the right to speak out freely became as much an issue of civil liberty as opposition to the Government's foreign policy.

For the first eighteen months of the war there was no concerted effort by the dissenters to exert pressure on the Government. In part

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In this article Weinroth contends that ideology was at the root of pacifist activity not propaganda as suggested by M. Swartz, The Union of Democratic Control (Oxford, 1971).

this was a result of lack of co-ordination but also it was because there was no one broad issue around which the pacifists could organise. There were isolated gestures in response to declarations from pacifists within Germany. The temporary committee of the ICW was one of the organisations that was quick to respond to the Social Democratic Party's (SDP) manifesto in June 1915 which rejected the annexation of conquered territory. The ICW committee also forwarded to Grey a copy of the appeal to Bethmann-Hollweg from the radical German women urging him not to reject any overture for peace.<sup>3</sup> In the autumn there were a few weeks of lively discussion in the Nation sparked off by a letter from J. A. Hobson entitled "Approaches to Peace." Anxious to use the occasion to bring the policies of the newly formed WIL to a wider audience, Swarwick pressed Marshall to write to the weekly drawing attention to the WILPF manifesto of October 1915 which had taken up these very issues. But if the letter was sent, it was never published.<sup>4</sup> For the most part, however, these early months were devoted to setting up the WIL organisation. It was not until December when the question of conscription was raised that the women found an issue to which they could rally.

The occasion for the creation of a pacifist alliance was the "peace debate" in the Commons on 23 February 1916. For several weeks

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<sup>3</sup>Labour Leader, 1 July 1915. C. Macmillan to E. Grey, 17 August 1915, WILPF Reel 68 0685; extract from Referee, 19 September 1915, *ibid.*, 0924-5.

<sup>4</sup>H. M. Swarwick to C. E. Marshall, 31 October 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/77.

the pacifists had been encouraged by what they believed to be signs favourable to the discussion of peace. They considered that a body of opinion existed in both Germany and Britain desirous of peace talks. Even the German Chancellor's rather belligerent response to the SDP's request for a statement of German war aims in December 1915 was interpreted as indicating a willingness to entertain any Allied offer. The conviction was also growing that a decisive military victory was no longer possible for either side. The debate was introduced in the Commons by the ILP member for Blackburn, Philip Snowden. In an eloquent speech he asked whether, in the interests of a stable peace, it was not possible to bring the war to a close on conditions that would realise the Allied objectives. However, this question was not as innocent as it might seem. For despite Asquith's protestations that he had declared the terms on which Britain would agree to peace, namely, the restoration of Belgium and northern France, and the destruction of German militarism, the pacifists in the House rightly suspected that Britain had entered into other commitments to her Allies.<sup>5</sup> In effect, therefore, the pacifists were asking the Government to admit that the country had been deceived into fighting for unspecified objectives the fulfillment of which necessitated outright victory. If

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<sup>5</sup>Philip, Viscount Snowden, An Autobiography, 2 vols. (London, 1934), 1:430-5. A. Evans, "Rumoured Secret Agreement," Manchester Guardian, 13 May 1915 and "The Abandonment of Montenegro," ibid., 17 February 1916, 7. UDC, April 1916, 59. E. J. Dillon, "Some of Russia's Difficulties" Contemporary Review 109 (February 1916): 165-179.

indeed this was the case, then only the weight of public opinion could force a change of direction in national policy. The pacifists' suspicions were well founded. The Pact of London made in August 1914 by the Allies had done more than secure agreement that no member of the Entente could make peace without the others. And increasingly, the need to keep her Allies in this partnership was forcing Britain to make concessions.

There were of course those who believed that the Government had stated its war aims - but that they were at the moment impossible to achieve. Referring to the current controversy regarding the timing of peace initiatives, the Manchester Guardian observed:

If we talk peace, we must reject the terms of the Dublin speech, which are definitely inconsistent with peace now or at any time which can at present be definitely estimated. If, on the other hand, we accept these terms not as an ideal merely but as something to be attained, then we had better get on with the war of suffering, slaughter, poverty and all."<sup>6</sup>

This was a dilemma that the pacifists did not acknowledge. If indeed they subscribed to the moral imperative of the Dublin speech to effect the establishment of public right, and if Germany was not ready to restore the invaded territories or to renounce her militaristic philosophy, then the pacifists must admit that Britain was in a situation that brooked no compromise. The war must be continued to achieve these ends and the pacifists must support this if they believed in Dublin. The pacifists evaded the necessity of choosing between

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<sup>6</sup>Manchester Guardian, 24 February 1916.

these alternatives by contending that Germany was engaged in a defensive war and that it was the belligerence of the Allies that was preventing a change in German policy. The reality was that, with the hope of military victory in the forthcoming campaign, none of the belligerents was anxious to extricate itself.

Although the "great peace debate" of February 1916 had little impact outside radical circles, the discussion proved to be of decisive importance for the peace movement. The issues were crystallised. The debate provided a much-needed focus that would enable the peace groups to confound those critics who charged them with lack of co-ordination. However, the ineffectiveness hitherto of the pacifists was not judged to be entirely due to an inability to integrate their activities. Rather, it arose from a failure to clarify, even separate, their objectives. Writing anonymously, John Maynard Keynes defined the problem facing the peace groups. In order to win public support for their views, he believed that first they must show that a military deadlock existed; and second, that an early peace could be durable.<sup>7</sup> In regard to the first proposal, it was clear that as long as the nation believed that peace could be obtained by victory it would continue to fight. The second proposal must confront the fear, which was the basis of much of the opposition, that a peace might only be a device to secure a breathing space for Germany before the renewal of

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<sup>7</sup>Manchester Guardian. Patrick Devlin, Too Proud to Fight: Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality (Oxford, 1974), 460. Devlin identifies "Politicus" as J. M. Keynes. Politicus, "Face the Facts," War and Peace, April 1916, 101-2.

hostilities. Keynes was of the opinion that the weakness lay in the pacifist attempt to combine the two objectives. His conclusion was that the pacifists should concentrate their efforts on winning support for a durable early peace.

The WIL signified its entry into the lists by despatching on 7 March 1916 a strongly worded criticism to the Prime Minister of his reply to Snowden.<sup>8</sup> While the document contained a plea for the consideration of the woman's viewpoint, it was largely devoted to questioning the gloss put upon Asquith's speech by the Commons. The Prime Minister, they complained, had not refuted the House's interpretation that the intention was to crush Germany. If this was the case, in view of the widely held opinion that victory was impossible, there were consequences attendant on such a policy. In particular, the WIL warned, the already intolerable suffering would be prolonged; doubts would be raised in the minds of Britain's Allies as to the disinterestedness of her policy; and above all, after dictated terms it would be more difficult to establish that "real European partnership" necessary to the lasting peace that the Prime Minister spoke of at Dublin. The WIL proposed that, in order to strengthen the "reasonable party" among the Germans, the Government should let it be known that Britain intended no annexations and no permanent ruin of Germany after the war. In addition, the Allies should announce that they would agree to an armistice for discussion of peace terms. In

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<sup>8</sup>WIL First Yearly Report, 14.

spite of their censure the members of the WIL were completely at one with their countrymen in insisting that any terms must include the evacuation of Belgium and Northern France.

The dissenters persisted in their belief that if only moderate opinion in *Germany* could be reassured as to the Allies' intentions, then they would bring pressure to bear upon their Government to negotiate. Yet, the pacifists knew that the German accusations that the Allies plotted her economic ruin were far from baseless. Since the autumn of 1915 a protectionist campaign, mounted by the Morning Post and supported by The Times and other tariff reform newspapers, had been gathering momentum. Resistance to the growing clamour for tariffs on the part of the WIL was consistent both with its commitment to work for the Hague Resolutions and with the Cobdenite inheritance of most of the members. Fearful for the long-term consequences for peace, Catherine Marshall, with her customary zeal and energy, took the lead in gathering together a nucleus of influential people to inaugurate a campaign to counter the influence of the protectionists.<sup>9</sup>

The objects of the proposed campaign were two-fold. One was to combat the current attack on free trade; the other was to organise opinion in support of the inclusion of free trade proposals in the peace settlement - a policy that had been recommended in the Hague Resolutions. Marshall herself wondered whether two separate

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<sup>9</sup>C. E. Marshall to J. A. Hobson, 29 December 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/1. (Notes) M. Lambert and Mr Sussmann, December 1915, D/Mar/4/1.

organisations might not be necessary to accommodate the different goals. She was attracted by the idea of Henri Lambert, the Belgian free trader, who advocated the formation of a League of the Open Door. This body would combine a "strenuous advocacy" for the inclusion of international free trade in the peace terms and a campaign for the maintenance of the pre-war fiscal system at home.<sup>10</sup> But by the time the informal conference of free traders met at the WIL offices on 17 March 1916 the greater urgency of fighting conscription necessitated the laying aside of plans for forming a society. This decision was made despite the fact that there were some who believed that in the long run free trade was the bigger issue.<sup>11</sup> However, individuals and organisations were free to wage their own campaigns against protection. The WIL joined the UDC and the ILP in the fight against the "retaliatory tariff." The WIL Monthly News Sheet carried articles opposing tariffs and its own literature, as well as that of the Cobden Club, was circulated to the branches.<sup>12</sup> The intensification of the protectionist campaign prompted the UDC to add another to its four cardinal points in May. This new point urged that British policy should be directed towards "the preservation and extension of the

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<sup>10</sup>Enclosure with C. E. Marshall to L. Courtney, 30 December 1915, enclosure dated 24 December 1915, CEMP D/Mar/4/1.

<sup>11</sup>H. N. Brailsford to C. E. Marshall, 2 February 1916, CEMP D/Mar/4/2. C. E. Marshall to F. J. Shaw 8 March 1916 D/Mar/4/1.

<sup>12</sup>Resolution WIL Council 13 April 1916, WIL First Yearly Report, 17.

principle of the open door." However, with the loss of Marshall to the NCF there was no one to organise the campaign and the isolated efforts of the different organisations were destined to be ineffective.<sup>13</sup>

A fillip was given to the cause of peace negotiations when, in mid-March, Colonel House, confidant and aide to President Wilson, published the terms on which he believed Germany was willing to negotiate.<sup>14</sup> As both Britain and Germany were anxious for American support their leaders had concealed from the President's envoy their real commitment to the continuation of the war. Thus, in ignorance of the true sentiments of the belligerents, House believed that he had within his grasp the possibility of a solution to the conflict. The WIL were as encouraged as House by the apparent willingness of Germany to discuss terms. Therefore, seizing the opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of its own views, which were in accord with those of the Colonel's declaration, the WIL organised a conference for 10 to 12 April 1916. The terms published in The Times were to provide the basis of a discussion on the "Terms of a European Settlement." Several eminent speakers, including old friends such as Brailsford, C. R. Buxton, Russell, and new ones like Hobson and Woolf, contributed to the sessions. The questions of nationality, the colonies and free trade were among the issues discussed as necessary to a reasonable

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<sup>13</sup>UDC Emergency Meeting 2 May 1916, UDC DDC 1/3.

<sup>14</sup>The Times, 14 March 1916. News Sheet, April 1916.

settlement. The conference was united in its agreement that in order to preserve the peace a supranational authority must be established. However, the House statement was not taken seriously elsewhere and received little publicity in the press.<sup>15</sup>

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In its public role the WIL took a leading part in the establishment of the Peace Negotiations Committee which was to become the vehicle for the co-operative effort of the peace groups. The suggestion for a mass peace petition to be presented to the Government was first mooted at the UDC executive meeting on 28 March 1916. This group was already promoting discussion on the conditions for negotiation. Three days later on 31 March a meeting was summoned at the WIL offices which was attended by representatives from various peace groups. They discussed co-operation and the organisation of a peace memorial. The petition was to be the rallying point for a united and concentrated effort to bring pressure to bear on the Government. By early May a Peace Negotiations Committee (PNC) was set up to co-ordinate the work. Helena Swanwick was its Chairman, Herbert Dunnico, President of the Peace Society, was the Honorary Secretary and C. R. Buxton the Honorary Treasurer.<sup>16</sup> At the WIL council meeting on 13 April approval was

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<sup>15</sup>News Sheet, May 1916. Internationaal, May-June-July 1916, WILPF Reel 110 1160. WIL First Yearly Report, 9.

<sup>16</sup>WIL Special Meeting of groups interested in peace negotiations on 28 April 1916, UDC DDC 1/4. WIL: First Yearly Report, 15-16.

granted for co-operation with other societies and the council pledged the WIL to "organising the will of the people in this country to a negotiated peace based on public equality and freedom." In this they joined the ILP, UDC, FOR, NCF, Peace Society, Society of Friends, Women's Freedom League and all those others which comprised the eighteen groups that joined together to promote the Memorial. At last there was a definite job of work that could be undertaken by the peace movement. This was a task the Labour Leader described as "the biggest work to which we have put our hands since the outbreak of war."<sup>17</sup>

By the end of May preparations were complete. The PNC believed that many factors had contributed to a growth of pacifist feeling during the last few weeks. Amongst the civilian population there appeared to be a growing unease with the prolongation of the war. The City was becoming nervous, and weekly the Economist sounded the tocsin warning of the impending exhaustion of the nation's financial resources. Reflecting their own concern rather than that of the general public, the pacifists also complained that civil liberties were being eroded with every extension of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA). The latest amendment to the Act which restricted the possession and distribution of all literature that could be interpreted as spreading false statements or likely to cause disaffection gave the Government powers to stifle what the dissenters regarded as legitimate

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<sup>17</sup>Labour Leader, 11 May 1916.

criticism.<sup>18</sup> The growing list of public concerns encouraged the pacifists to believe the time was ripe for launching a vigorous campaign for peace negotiations. As if in confirmation of the timeliness of the moment, the recent speeches of Asquith, Grey and Bethmann-Hollweg encouraged the pacifists to believe that these contained the formula for negotiation.<sup>19</sup>

Thus persuaded, they set on foot their campaign. The text of the Memorial was brief: "The undersigned urge His Majesty's Government to take the earliest opportunity of promoting negotiations with a view to securing a just and lasting peace." An accompanying leaflet listed the names of prominent signatories - the "old stage army" of the pacifist movement, as their critics labelled them.<sup>20</sup> The list contained such leading pacifist names as the Courtneys and Snowdens, Margaret Ashton, Margaret Bondfield, G. L. Dickinson, Hobson, MacDonald, Catherine Marshall, Pethwick Lawrence, the Cambridge economist A. C. Pigou, Ponsonby, Russell and many more. Another leaflet outlined in greater detail the objectives of the organisation and quoted from the speeches of the statesmen purporting to show the similarity of their aims and their stated willingness to enter into discussion.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Notes marked "Private" 29 May 1916, CEMP D/Mar/4/2.

<sup>19</sup>News Sheet, May 1916.

<sup>20</sup>C. Chesterton Daily Express, 3 June 1916.

<sup>21</sup>"Peace by Negotiation" and "Why Not Negotiate?" Home Office Papers, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), HO/45/10742/263275/180,

The launching of the Memorial in May inaugurated a campaign for the mass publicising of the objects of the PNC. In the ensuing eight months nearly 600 public meetings were held, and all, according to the National Administrative Council of the ILP, were well attended. In all, eighty local committees were formed, and three million leaflets distributed. The first conference of representatives from sympathetic organisations was held in Bradford on 3 June 1916 and addressed by Snowden and Jowett.<sup>22</sup> But the names on the Memorials were hard-won. One canvasser estimated that for every signature collected there had been six refusals. In spite of the PNC's optimism, public opinion had not yet shifted noticeably towards considering peace as an alternative to the continuation of hostilities. The reasons for this failure to change public opinion the same canvasser attributed to the fact that "we are literally in a Reign of Terror. The weight of fear as well as hate and muddle-headedness is extremely heavy. It is the era of catchwords with few to counteract or contradict." By August the flow of signatures was slowing down, partly, it was believed, because most sympathisers had been reached, but also because the military situation was making people suspend any expression of opinion. As yet, there were hopes that the Somme push, initiated on 1 July, would bring the

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<sup>22</sup>Labour Leader, 1 June 1916. Report of the National Administrative Council, Leeds 1917. The Archives of the British Independent Labour Party. Series I: Pamphlets and Leaflets (Harvester Press, Brighton, 1979), 1917/46.

much desired victory.<sup>23</sup> Originally it was intended that the PNC campaign should end in March 1917. However, the exchange of Notes among Germany, the Allies and the United States in December 1916 and January 1917 gave an added urgency to the PNC campaign. Fearing that for want of determined action the opportunity for peace negotiations could be lost the pacifists renewed their efforts. Thus it was not until August 1917 that the Memorial, with its 221,000 signatures and endorsement by various labour organisations representing 900,000 members, was presented to the Prime Minister.<sup>24</sup> There is no record of his response.

In the summer of 1916, a specifically women's contribution was made to the peace negotiations campaign with the setting up of the Women's Peace Crusade. The crusade originated in Glasgow, a city noted for the strength of its industrial and socialist organisations. The links between the WIL and labour were strong. Helen Crawford, the Secretary of the Glasgow WIL, was a member of the ILP and a well-known socialist activist. Here, more than any other city, there was considerable working class support for peace and the crusade aimed to tap this reservoir of popular sentiment. A preliminary conference on 10 June summoned by Crawford was attended by over 200 delegates from the various pacifist, women's and socialist organisations. The main speakers at the meeting were Swarwick, who represented the PNC and

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<sup>23</sup>F. Marshall to C.E. Marshall, 13 July 1916, CEMP D/Mar/3/34. News Sheet, August 1916.

<sup>24</sup>Labour Leader, 4 January 1917.

Crawfurd. Addressing the war weariness and the horror at the continuation of the senseless slaughter, Crawfurd appealed to her audience to be modern crusaders "fighting with weapons of the spirit for the living spirit of Christ." The delegates agreed to appoint a committee to organise a specifically women's crusade for peace negotiations. The committee of women working in conjunction with the ILP organised a series of twenty three open-air meetings extending over a fortnight. This campaign culminated on 23 July in a monster meeting attended by about 5,000 on Glasgow Green. The enormous success of the gathering was not marred by the attempts at disruption. There were two platforms: one, chaired by Agnes Hardie, sister of the late Keir Hardie, on which the speakers were Muriel Matters and Helena Normanton (loaned by the WIL to help organise); the other, chaired by Agnes Dollan, a well-known Glasgow socialist, had as speakers Margaret Ashton, Theodora Wilson-Wilson, Helena Swanwick and Helen Crawfurd. The resolutions supported peace by negotiation. The opportunity was also taken to reaffirm the WIL commitment to adult suffrage, for which the organisation was currently campaigning. More meetings were planned and the next year other cities followed the lead of Glasgow in setting up permanent peace crusades.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>News Sheet, July and August, 1916. Forward, 10 June, 15, 23, 30 July, 5 August 1916. Labour Leader, 8 and 15 June 1916; Dreadnought, 17 June, 22 July 1916. Crawfurd helped organise the rent strike in Glasgow in 1915. See Gill Thomas, Life On All Fronts: Women in the First World War (Cambridge, 1989), 22-3.

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The spirit of optimism in which the PNC was launched was boosted by the endorsement by President Wilson of the programme of the American League to Enforce Peace (LEP). The President aligned himself with Asquith when, in his address on 27 May 1916 to the League, he outlined the principles on which any enduring peace settlement must be based. They were: self-determination, a guarantee of the territorial integrity of small nations and the right of the world to be free from aggression. This LEP programme supported by Wilson was virtually identical with the Bryce proposals. Both favoured a league empowered to use force to compel members to arbitration. All the pacifists loudly applauded the President's intervention in the debate. The pacifists felt vindicated now that the leader of the most powerful nation in the world had thrown his weight behind a campaign for the establishment of a league that would inaugurate the "new diplomacy."<sup>26</sup> Their enthusiasm was slightly marred, however, by Wilson's approval of the use of force.

While all the protagonists were in agreement about the necessity of a league, opinion was divided over the place of force in a system of international government. Thus, the LEP programme became the topic of discussion among the pacifists. In preparation for the WIL's October General Meeting when it would be proposed that the WIL support the LEP, Catherine Marshall solicited the opinions of Lowes Dickinson

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<sup>26</sup>For an account of the new diplomacy see A. J. Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy (Yale, 1959, ed.1969).

and Russell. At a conference organised by the Society of Friends on 11 and 12 October 1916, Russell had spoken against Lowes Dickinson on the use of force. Russell's objection was based not so much on principle, as the fact that under the prevailing circumstance he believed it "would give a dangerous opportunity for disguised militarism." However, replying to Marshall's query, he observed that international affairs had not yet developed to the stage where coercion could be abandoned, even though, ultimately this should be the goal. This private admission of the need to employ force until all states were, of their own accord, dedicated to preserving the peace drew a reproach from Marshall. "I think your reasoning thoroughly unsound," she replied.<sup>27</sup> Lowes Dickinson also responded to Marshall's enquiries. But he was an advocate of the employment of force. Indeed, it was widely accepted that his visit to America in the spring had inspired the LEP programme. Both he and Woolf believed, that in the absence of universal disarmament, the only alternative to European ruin was to accept the lesser evil and use collective force. Alert to the dangers of divided counsels, Woolf warned that disagreement on this issue "might dissipate the nucleus of pacifist public opinion." As for the pacifists themselves, he feared that in the particularism of their

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<sup>27</sup>C. E. Marshall to B. Russell, 23 October 1916; B. Russell to C. E. Marshall, 25 October 1916, BRA RA 85(a).

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. B. Russell, "Two Ideals of Pacifism"; L. Woolf, "Shall the Nations Enforce Peace?"; G. L. Dickinson, "The League to Enforce Peace," War and Peace, January 1917.

debate they might lose sight of what he considered to be the "bigger idea" of international co-operation.<sup>28</sup>

Much to Catherine Marshall's satisfaction, the WIL General Meeting on 26 and 27 October 1916 contented itself with supporting the general principles of the IEP without endorsing or condemning the use of force. The meeting welcomed Wilson's May message. The women recognised that America's readiness to participate in "any feasible association of nations" was a historic departure from its traditional policy of isolationism. And the acceptance of the principle of public right over the interests of individual nations, the WIL believed, marked an "epoch in the history of internationalism." The women resolved to work in strengthening the goodwill in Britain towards Wilson's proposals. They could not contain their hope now that the Hague Resolutions and all their work had received the stamp of official approval.<sup>29</sup>

However, the optimism of the summer months of 1916 generated by the PNC campaign and Wilson's IEP speech was dampened in September 1916 by the pronouncement of the Secretary of War. Lloyd George reaffirmed Britain's determination to fight to the finish and deliver a "knock-out" blow. He not only rejected all the recent peace initiatives but warned against neutral attempts to "butt in."<sup>30</sup> No

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<sup>29</sup>WIL: Second Yearly Report, 14.

<sup>30</sup>Labour Leader, 5 October 1916. Manchester Guardian, 29 September 1916.

doubt Lloyd George was reflecting popular sentiment, but this unofficial declaration of policy caused anger in many quarters. The Radicals correctly interpreted this pronouncement as calculated to arrest any moves towards peace by the American President; whereas at home, its purpose was to tighten the national resolve for victory. The announcement was also an indication of the divisions within the Cabinet over war aims. In this fundamental conflict between the conceptions of a negotiated and a dictated peace, Asquith and Grey were seen as representing the former position and Lloyd George the latter.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted, however, that although the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary advocated the establishment of a league, they always insisted that victory must come first. When the Asquith Coalition collapsed in December 1916, The Times confidently announced that "the spirit of 'pacifism' has been effectively exorcised....We shall have no more German suggestions that English statesmen are listening to peace whispers."<sup>32</sup> By contrast, Swarwick was confident that the change would provide the opportunity to embark upon effective opposition. The men released from office, she believed, would form the "party of reason" that would lead the country out of the war.<sup>33</sup> Now that the principle of the league had won wide acceptance, albeit outside

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<sup>31</sup>H. N. Brailsford "The New British Government", New Republic, 3 February 1917 (dated 30 December 1916).

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. The Times, 9 December 1916.

<sup>33</sup>Merthyr Pioneer, 16 December 1916.

government circles, it now remained to persuade the country of the necessity of bringing the war to an end by negotiation.

The pacifists later claimed that between December 1916 and March 1918 there had been nine opportunities to enter into negotiations and that all were rejected by the Lloyd George coalition. But even if the Government would not negotiate, it was compelled, in some measure, to define its war aims. The peace campaign was opened by a Note to the Allies on 12 December 1916 from Bethmann-Hollweg intimating Germany's willingness to commence talks. The German initiative was closely followed on 18 December by a Note to the belligerents from Wilson. Opinion was, and still is divided as to the genuineness of the German offer.<sup>34</sup> At the time the British Government thought it a manoeuvre to create dissension among the Allies and win the support of America. And even some of the pacifists were taken aback by the arrogance of the wording. But the British Government had already decided that any overtures must be rejected. Thus Britain declined talks until Germany was prepared to state its terms.<sup>35</sup>

The carefully worded response to Wilson on 10 January 1917 reflected Britain's vulnerability as a result of her dependence on

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<sup>34</sup>The genuineness of the offer is discussed in P. Devlin, Too Proud to Fight: Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality (Oxford, 1974), 569-75.

<sup>35</sup>Lowe and Dockrill, The Mirage of Power, 347-8.

American aid.<sup>36</sup> After protesting that the President had drawn no distinction between the belligerents, the War Cabinet conceded some statement of aims. Allied war aims were defined in a general sense as much the same as at Dublin, namely, the establishment of the principle of nationality, and the right to be secure from aggression. The phrasing of the British reply was sufficiently ambiguous to disarm most moderate criticism. Swanwick's response was cautious. She approved the laying down of two fundamental conditions necessary for securing a permanent peace: the right of all people to security and economic development, and the establishment of a league of nations to assure peace and justice. She was, however, concerned that the complicated questions of nationality should be decided by an international commission which would ascertain the wishes of the peoples, rather than by the interested parties. Only a just peace, she believed, could provide stability. In spite of her misgivings about some of the statements and disagreement with some of the proposals, she welcomed the fact that at last the peace movement had something on which to base its work.<sup>37</sup>

For the pessimistic amongst the Radicals this long-demanded declaration confirmed their apprehensions. They regarded talk about the liberation of Italians, Slavs, Rumanians, Czechs and Slovaks from

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<sup>36</sup>S. Kernek, "The British Government's Reactions to President Wilson's "Peace" Note of December 1916" Historical Journal 13, 4 (1970): 721-765.

<sup>37</sup>News Sheet, February 1917.

foreign domination as indicating an expansion of war aims. These were not the purposes for which the British people had gone to war but were the bribes necessary to win the support of Italy and Rumania.<sup>38</sup> As the liberation of several of these nationalities would be primarily at the expense of Germany's allies, it was unlikely that these terms would be acceptable to her. Therefore, the alternative continued to be war a outrance. Later in 1917, the failure to consider the German offer of December 1916 was to be criticised by the WIL as the first of several lost opportunities to state clearly Britain's war aims. Nonetheless, this partial statement of war aims, however unwelcome to the pacifists, did provide the focus for more effective criticism.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding these doubts and fears, the pacifists were sanguine in their belief that the exchange of Notes had materially altered the situation. For three weeks Europe had talked peace. Brailsford, who articulated shrewd, informed, English radical opinion for the American liberal public, ventured a cautious optimism in an article for the New Republic. He observed that there was a discernible change in public opinion, for he saw evidence of less hostility to the idea of peace in Britain. The problem, according to his analysis, was that the people had been exposed only to the one idea, that of peace through victory. With the public's increased suggestibility, now was

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<sup>38</sup>Snowden, An Autobiography, 438-9.

<sup>39</sup>WIL Second Yearly Report, 15.

the time to expose them to the alternatives of negotiated peace and a league of nations. Wilson's intervention, he believed, had provided the necessary publicity for these ideals.<sup>40</sup>

As expected, the pacifists hastened to demonstrate their approval of the President's initiative. The ILP spoke for all the pacifists in their letter to Wilson of 6 January 1917. They declared their gratitude for his efforts to obtain a statement of terms which, they assured him, were "gratefully received by the sober and responsible sections of the British people." The letter also expressed the hope that the President would continue in his efforts by which, they were confident "you will earn the undying gratitude of this and succeeding generations."<sup>41</sup> It was messages like these and the skilfull radical propoganda that had led Wilson into overestimating the strength of public support for a peace initiative. The President had no doubt come to believe, according to one British official, that "there is a very large pacifist party in these islands, but that the expression of its opinions is suppressed by the police."<sup>42</sup> Thwarted

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<sup>40</sup>H. N. Brailsford, "The Peace Note in London," New Republic, 13 January 1917.

<sup>41</sup>ILP National Administrative Council, Leeds 1917, 1917/46.

<sup>42</sup>Norman Angell, After All: The Autobiography of Norman Angell (London, 1952), 203. P. H. Kerr to Mr. Harris nd. probably January 1917. PRO HO 45/10834/328752; Laurence W. Martin, "Woodrow Wilson's Appeal to the People of Europe" Political Science Quarterly 74, 4 (1959): 498-516.

by governments and doubtless encouraged by the popular response, Wilson decided to appeal to the peoples over the heads of their leaders. In a crucial speech to the Senate on 22 January 1917 he outlined the conditions under which America would take part in a league of peace at the end of the war.<sup>43</sup> Fundamental to the preservation of any agreement, he argued, was that it should be a peace between equals - a "peace without victory." He also stressed the need for a concert of the powers and the limitation of armaments. In making this statement Wilson believed that he was speaking for the "silent mass of mankind." As "members of the sex still forcibly silenced in the Councils of the Nations," the women of the WIL considered themselves to be part of this "mass". The importance for the pacifists was that their ideas had, at last, been given respectability with their public espousal by the leader of the most powerful nation. This speech to the Senate was the "point at which Liberal ideas had arrived" and marked "the divide in historical thinking on international relations."<sup>44</sup>

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Wilson's Note and speech encouraged the WIL to launch a policy inaugurated the previous November. A joint by-election committee had been set up with the PNC. The opportunity to put up candidates running

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<sup>43</sup>The support of the Senate was crucial for all foreign policy decisions. All treaties had to be approved by a two-thirds majority in the Senate.

<sup>44</sup>Manchester Guardian, 23 January 1917. News Sheet, March 1917. Gerda Crosby, Disarmament and Peace in British Politics (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), 40.

on a peace by negotiations platform came with the by-elections in February and March in Rossendale, Stockton and South Aberdeen. The election campaigns were to be in support of Wilson's policies. The by-elections would also provide an opportunity for the free advocacy of peace negotiations unmuzzled by DORA. Of the three, Rossendale was the most successful. This was partly due to the timing, the excellent local organisation and the fact that the candidate, Albert Taylor, was a local union man. The WIL was the only organisation officially to back the candidate and Helen Crawford was appointed as its organiser. The campaign was run with the help of the local ILP. The absence of the candidate who as a CO was being detained by the army at Abergele in North Wales, as a government observer noted uneasily, far from impairing the campaign, won it a certain sympathy.<sup>45</sup> The Manchester branch of the WIL sent organisers and speakers, one of whom was Margaret Ashton. Indeed, one side-effect of this campaign (whose meetings were so well supported by the local women), was the formation of a Rossendale branch of the WIL. The ILP also enlisted the aid of some of its best known members to speak in the campaign. The opposing candidate, "independent" Liberal Sir John Maden, a man of great local popularity, had at his disposal the combined services of the local Liberal and Unionist organisations. Accusations were made by the WIL that his political agent, who was also the recruiting officer for the

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<sup>45</sup>News Sheet, March 1917. Milner Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford,. M/S Milner, Dep. 377.

district, was intimidating voters by the fear of conscription. However, the advocacy of the PNC case had to some degree been undermined by the breach of diplomatic relations in early February between the United States and Germany. Nonetheless, the election was regarded as a success in that the WIL and PNC had captured 20% of the vote. The result was sufficient to cause an increasingly nervous Government to register some alarm. In the Commons the pacifist members jubilantly interpreted Rossendale as the evidence of the support for peace negotiations spirit that Asquith, a year earlier, had denied existed in the country. They concluded that Rossendale had proved that it was the issue not the candidate that was of paramount importance. In the history of the war, this by-election, they believed, would be seen as "the turning-point in public opinion"; it was the "writing on the wall."<sup>46</sup>

The other two by-elections were less successful. Believing that international events were favourable to peace negotiation, it was decided to contest Stockton and South Aberdeen in March and April respectively. After the revolution in March, Russia's continuation in the war was uncertain and the Central Powers were making peace overtures to her. At Stockton the Society of Friends' candidate, Edward Backhouse, was well supported by members prominent in the

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<sup>46</sup>Maden 6019 votes, Taylor 1804 votes. Labour Leader, 8 and 15 February 1917; Monthly, March 1917; Manchester Guardian, 13 February 1917. H. C. Deb. (5) 90 (1917) cols 1214,1239,1273 20 February 1917.

pacifist movement. He had even received endorsement from Lords Courtney and Loreburn. But Stockton's prosperity was linked to a continued war effort and there was little support for a peace by negotiation. Hence, he polled only 596 votes to the 7641 of his opponent. The other campaign, organised by Helen Crawford on behalf of the WIL, was for Frederick Pethwick Lawrence at South Aberdeen. His platform advocated not only negotiated peace but free-trade, adult suffrage, a league of nations and the nationalisation of the mines and railways. His wife, who addressed women's groups, described it as a "difficult and unpleasant four weeks contest." She found the women to be more embittered than the men. In a three-cornered contest Pethwick Lawrence won only 333 out of the 5123 votes polled. It appeared that, as yet, peace by negotiations did not have a large following in the country and that Rossendale had been a false dawn.<sup>47</sup>

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Throughout the first year of its existence the WIL worked, in so far as the Government allowed, to convert public opinion to its principles. Like the other groups with which it co-operated the WIL had to face the moral problems raised by the national crisis. The dilemma for the loyal subject, as Swarwick observed, was the "ethical and political propriety" of opposing the Government in a time of

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<sup>47</sup>E. Pethwick Lawrence, My Part in a Changing World (London 1938), 317. News Sheet, April 1917.

national emergency.<sup>48</sup> Yet it was only by embarking on a course of criticism that the tensions between the limits of individual right and the exigencies of national security were demonstrated and clarified. The pacifists insisted that it was their duty to defend democracy against erosion by a Government mustering the nation in its first "total war." They believed that, in resisting government regulation, they were upholding the right to express contrary opinions. Above all, they were fighting for the people's right to information - which was the basis of any democratic society. For the pacifists were convinced that once the people knew the facts, shorn of all propaganda, they would opt for an early peace on conditions that would prevent the return of war. Thus, an essential part of the pacifist campaign became the defence of free speech at home. This stand brought them into conflict with the Government over libertarian issues.

The crisis over civil liberties became acute by 1916. In order, however, to understand the situation one must look at the piecemeal process that had begun at the onset of war. The first challenge to the official version of events that had preceded the commencement of hostilities was mounted in September 1914 by the UDC. As other groups became organised they too questioned the Government's actions. The purpose of the White Paper issued in August was to allay

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<sup>48</sup>Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 273.

any doubts about the rightness of Britain's cause by laying the blame for war at Germany's door. In the task of rallying the nation, government propaganda was reinforced by the press and the private enterprise of those writers and scholars who enlisted for "the Fleet Street Front." The most influential of these was the popular writer H. G. Wells. He proved to be the consummate propagandist able to "capture the holy phrase which crystallises public aspiration."<sup>49</sup> Wells not only coined early in the conflict the catch-phrase, "the war to end all war," which was seized upon by friend and foe alike, but he also salved the liberal conscience by prescribing the paradox of the "sword of peace," where "every sword that is drawn against Germany now is a sword drawn for peace."<sup>50</sup>

Scholars also enlisted and men of high reputation for integrity put their imprimatur on the war by lending their pens and names to give it the seal of morality and righteousness. While Cambridge for the most part remained aloof, many Oxford scholars contributed to the Oxford War Pamphlets sponsored by the privately run Central Committee for National Patriotic Organisations. This series served for the intelligentsia the same purpose that the Northcliffe and Pearson press served for the lower classes. Gilbert Murray's The Foreign Policy of Sir Edward Grey was a response to the "harmful propaganda" of the ILP

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<sup>49</sup>Harold D. Lasswell, Propaganda Techniques in the World War (New York, 1972), 66.

<sup>50</sup>Daily Chronicle, 7 August 1914.

and, specifically, a repudiation of two UDC pamphlets by Brailsford and Russell.<sup>51</sup> It was against this formidable array of talent and resources that the pacifists were determined to pit their puny efforts.

For Swarwick the free availability of information and "the value of difference (and variety) in character and conduct" were the essence of liberalism. From the outset she challenged the attempts to regiment the public mind. In December 1914 she had attacked the appeal from the Central Committee for National Patriotic Organisations for writers who would assist in harnessing "the great driving power of public opinion." Government attempts to shape and control opinion by giving out selected information, she declared, was a spiritual form of militarism that was even more destructive than the regimentation of the body. This monopoly by the official point of view was preventing access to any other opinion. She feared that when the time came for peace, the people would have no basis on which to judge government policy. This was a justifiable concern, for the Central Committee's appeal had referred to the necessity of avoiding a "patched up truce" that would permit the revival of the German menace.<sup>52</sup>

The difficulties of publicising an alternative view soon became apparent. In terms of what was happening in Germany and France the

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<sup>51</sup>J. Headlam-Morley to G. Murray, 22 March 1915; C. Schuster to G. Murray, 31 May 1915, Murray Papers, Bodleian Library, 27. B. Russell, "War the Offspring of Fear"; H. N. Brailsford, "The Origins of the Great War."

<sup>52</sup>Common Cause, 11 December 1914. The Times, 21 November 1914.

British Government was not unduly repressive; but in terms of what were held to be traditional liberties, the executive appeared to be becoming despotic. Before 1917 there were only a few official raids such as those on the National Labour Press and the NCAC. In later years Fenner Brockway, editor of the Labour Leader which had been raided, admitted that there had been little real interference with freedom of speech and writing; although this was not the perception at the time. The raid on the NCAC offices in the summer of 1916 impelled the group to widen its scope and change its name to the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL).<sup>53</sup> The mandate of the NCCL was to fight for the maintenance of freedom of conscience, resistance to industrial conscription and the right to free speech and assembly - all of which they now believed to be in jeopardy. The NCCL was not a specifically pacifist organisation but its membership, which included Marshall and Swanwick, was largely drawn from those individuals already committed to radical and pacifist causes. However, it was true that the opportunities to hold meetings had become severely circumscribed. This situation was the result of mob intimidation organised by patriotic organisations rather than government policy - although it received the tacit consent of the authorities. These incursions into traditional entitlements was kept alive as a parliamentary issue by the radical Members who linked them to the prolongation of the war.

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<sup>53</sup>A. F. Brockway, Inside the Left (London, 1942), 61. News Sheet, August 1916.

By the end of 1916 it had become impossible to hold public meetings in London and parts of the provinces. Several meetings in 1915 and early 1916 had been broken up by the mob amidst scenes of violence and disorder. This unofficial censorship was largely the work of colonial troops urged on by the Daily Mail and Daily Express and the Anti-German Union. As a result, much of the pacifist activity was transferred to the provinces, particularly to the Scottish Lowlands, the North and to South Wales. This last area was especially important as the mines there provided the coal which fuelled the navy.

Swanwick was only one of the small band of intrepid men and women, who at no small personal cost, journeyed around the country speaking on behalf of peace negotiations and a league to preserve the peace. They showed great courage in not only facing the brickbats of patriotic opinion but in confronting the potential physical dangers of dissent. By the end of 1916 she was travelling widely speaking for the UDC, sometimes for the WIL and after March, when she became a member of the organisation, for the ILP. In the course of her travels, undertaken despite her fragile health in the difficult conditions of wartime, she shared the meagre comforts of many working-class homes. It was this experience and admiration for the people with whom she came into contact that was largely responsible to converting her to

socialism. Initially, however, it was her enthusiasm for the ILP's stance on war and peace that drew her to the party.<sup>54</sup>

Swanwick's touring as a speaker took her to South Wales. The meeting scheduled for 11 November 1916 at Cardiff was the fourth and the biggest organised by the NCCL in that region. The speakers billed to talk on civil liberties, peace negotiations and conscription were Helena Swanwick, MacDonald and J. H. Thomas, MP for Coventry. Local patriots, having failed to prevent the meeting by official methods, decided to take the law into their own hands. With the connivance of Sir Ivor Herbert, Lord Lieutenant of the County and MP for Monmouth, C. B. Stanton, MP for Merthyr and several mine and ship owners, it was decided to break up the NCCL gathering the next day. On Saturday afternoon, a mob from a rival patriotic meeting, under the leadership of the MP for Merthyr, burst into the hall and broke up the assembly. The local ILP newspaper the Merthyr Pioneer claimed that the police were also a party to the disturbance. Having failed to clear the hall of the rowdies on the grounds that it was a public meeting, they allowed sections of the unruly procession which had arrived at the doors to enter with the words "that's sufficient to break up the meeting."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>H. M. Swanwick to H. Bryan, 11 December 1915, BLPES, Bryan ILP Papers Coll. Misc. 314 Vb.

<sup>55</sup>Merthyr Pioneer, 18 November 1916.

Questions concerning the Cardiff "riot" were introduced in the Commons by J. H. Thomas. In the course of discussion Stanton was praised by Sir Ivor Herbert for his part in breaking up the "pro-German" gathering. Once more Herbert levelled the now familiar accusations against Swanwick, when he asked if it was true that a German woman was to have moved one of the resolutions at the meeting. These charges of pro-Germanism were based on the fact that she was born in Munich and that her father was a Dane from German-ruled Schleswig. MacDonald assured the House that the woman in question, Helena Swanwick, was not German although she had been born in Germany.<sup>56</sup> Nor was this to be the only occasion when Swanwick, by the accident of her place of birth, would be accused of German sympathies. Amongst the pacifists, she was second only to Morel in the frequency with which the press endeavoured to smear their names and work by casting aspersions on their patriotism through their national origins. The egregious Horatio Bottomley attacked her in John Bull shortly after the Cardiff incident. In an article entitled "In the Barber's Chair," he wrote:

"Been reading about you in the papers lately ....No I never  
sed you was German. Praps that's yore guilty conscience  
Ma'am - trying to arouse sympathy fur our enemy's winnin folk  
wot are as bad as their fathers, brothers an 'usban's.

He noted, also, that her father was a Dane and that Denmark had sat on the fence in the war. Although she had left her birthplace of Munich as a child, he declared that "you breathed German air for four years an

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<sup>56</sup>H. C. Deb., (5), 87 (1916), cols. 711-50, 14 November 1916.

you can't touch pitch without bein' defiled."<sup>57</sup> Swarwick bore the calumnies of Bottomley with pride, as a badge of defiance. She even referred to them in her entry in Labour Who's Who in 1924. In his address to the Commons, Thomas expressed the concern of all libertarians that the Home Secretary during the recital of these outrages, by expressing no regrets, had appeared to condone the events. Nor had the House been shocked, he observed, by the violent actions of one of its members against another. The repeated failure to protect the right of free speech continued to be a grievance frequently aired by the Radicals in the House.

The November meeting was rescheduled with the same speakers for 4 December at Merthyr. Taking the optimistic view Helena Swarwick pronounced the "row at Cardiff" a "most stupendous advertisement", adding that "I hear the Government is seriously concerned about South Wales."<sup>58</sup> The Merthyr meeting promised to be bigger than Cardiff, with over 3,000 people including twice as many delegates. In order to forestall any trouble, the miners of South Wales threatened a one day strike if the meeting was disrupted. Before the Merthyr gathering, Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary, warned Stanton not to interfere. For as Samuel wrote

I am wholly opposed to the views expressed by the leaders of that body and regard its propaganda as detrimental to the country's cause, I am unwilling to use powers invested in me

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<sup>57</sup>Labour Who's Who 1924; John Bull, 2 December 1916.

<sup>58</sup>H. M. Swarwick to C. E. Marshall, 23 November 1916 CEMP D/Mar/4/78.

to suppress its meetings...because right of free speech and of free criticism of the policy of the Government of the day is of great importance even in time of war and because I do not want the world to be misled into thinking that there is a pacific movement in this country of so formidable a nature that the Government finds it necessary to suppress it.

Samuel urged Stanton to use his influence in preventing disorder, as he did not consider it necessary for Merthyr Tydfil to give any further demonstration of its patriotism; Stanton's own election a year ago had been "sufficient proof of loyalty."<sup>59</sup> However, the origins of the Home Secretary's policy lay not so much in his libertarian principles, as many Liberals claimed, but in a desire to undercut the peace movement.

Home Office records show a considerable ambivalence towards pacifist activity. The problem was to define the boundaries between the advocacy of peace, which was not unlawful, and actions that constituted sedition. In this task it was necessary to distinguish between the cranks and those agitators who could disrupt the status quo. Fears were expressed that public insistence on peace negotiations might endanger the commitment made in early September 1914, by the Pact of London, not to conclude a separate peace from Britain's allies. The real danger posed by the pacifists, however, was their potential to estrange labour from the national war effort. If it had not been for this capacity, the pacifists could have been dismissed merely as cranks by the Government and ignored. Indeed, until 1917 this was largely the policy pursued - although a wary eye was always maintained on their

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<sup>59</sup>Merthyr Pioneer, 9 December 1916.

activities. The expansion of police powers that had been taking place since the industrial confrontations of 1910 and now further strengthened by additions to DORA was aimed primarily at controlling labour.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, it was their latent power to spread disaffection amongst sections of industry vital to the war effort that caused the Government to be concerned about the pacifists.

The dissenters were equally aware of the threat they posed. The reason for official concern was amply illustrated by Swarwick's speech at Merthyr. In her address she pursued the related themes of peace negotiations and civil liberty. Swarwick denounced the secret commitments to the Allies as the reason for the prolongation of the war. The corollary to a war of attrition and the exhaustion of the country, she warned, would be the exploitation of all resources, including labour. Her speech was designed to play upon fears concerning the extension of military conscription to the protected industries. Speculation had been sharpened by recent discussions between the Government and certain unions. Although the suggestion had been scotched by the unions, rumours persisted that black labour imported from South Africa was to be used to "free" men in reserved occupations for the army. Helena Swarwick's invocation of this spectre in a part of the country susceptible to industrial unrest could only

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<sup>60</sup>Jane Morgan, Conflict and Order: The Police and Labour Disputes in England and Wales 1900-1939 (Oxford 1987), 276-7.

alarm the administration. It had only been in the last couple of weeks that the Government had averted a strike by offering the miners a pay increase of 15% and bringing the mines under temporary state control. Playing on these heightened fears, she warned that Samuel's letter to Stanton indicated that as soon as the pacifists were considered to be strong, then they would be suppressed.<sup>61</sup>

The Government's attitude to the Cardiff disturbances was in accordance with their general policy since the outbreak of war. Neither the speakers nor the rioters were prosecuted. While the authorities were not prepared to defend the pacifists, neither were they prepared to give the more prominent of their number publicity by the martyrdom of prosecution. Swarwick's performance at Merthyr was described as "undoubtedly a mischievous speech." Yet after consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, it was decided that proceedings against her were not warranted.<sup>62</sup> Amongst the thirty-five out of thirty-six cases that were not proceeded against in 1916-1917 were public figures like the Snowdens, Jowett, Russell as well as Swarwick. Another reason, no doubt, for reluctance to take strong measures in South Wales was the relative strength of the pacifists and the potential for industrial unrest. If the estimate of

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<sup>61</sup>Merthyr Pioneer, 16 December 1916. Manchester Guardian, 6 and 7 December 1916 on black labour.

<sup>62</sup>PRO, HO 45/10743/263275/284.

around 29,000 pacifists is correct, this was certainly a number large enough to cause the Government concern.<sup>63</sup>

Yet for all their crusading zeal, it was clear that by the beginning of 1917 the pacifists had not made serious inroads on public opinion with their peace negotiations campaign. Nonetheless, they had by this date a highly organised network of dissent at their disposal. It was, however, the repercussions of the Russian Revolution acting on the growing disenchantment with the war that provided the WIL and its allies with the means to force the Government to take pacifist activity more seriously and to consider alternatives to current policies.

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<sup>63</sup>PRO, HO 45/10743/263275/284. A. Mor-O'Brien, "Patriotism on Trial: The Striking South Wales Miners, July 1915" Welsh History Review 12 (1984): 76-104.

## CHAPTER VI

### REVISING PUBLIC ATTITUDES: 1917-1918

"A pacifist is one who is open to discuss terms of peace before the Allies shall have entered Vienna, Constantinople and Berlin."

"Give me the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience above all other liberties." <sup>1</sup>

Peace negotiations and the protection of civil liberties - these continued to be themes of the WIL and pacifist activity during the last eighteen months of the war. An impetus was given to both causes by one of the most important events of 1917 - the March revolution in Russia. The revolution appeared to embody all that the pacifists in Britain were struggling to achieve. However, what was an inspiration to the pacifists and socialists and even old-fashioned Liberals was regarded as a warning by the Government. On the domestic front, therefore, the last eighteen months of the war saw the forces of order and the forces of change in serious contention.<sup>2</sup>

The Revolution of March 1917 was accorded a mixed reception in Britain. A burst of popular spontaneous enthusiasm greeted the news of

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in News Sheet, January 1917, 2. John Milton quoted in Nation, 24 November 1917.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the new diplomacy see Arno J. Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy (Yale, 1959, 1969).

the overthrow of the corrupt and despotic rule of the Czar. The feeling of "liberation and exhilaration" was experienced by all who believed that this marked a turning point in the struggle for liberty and justice.<sup>3</sup> For others, the flagging moral purpose of the war was injected with new life. The Asquithian Liberals could now in good conscience describe the war as one of democracy against autocracy. This enthusiasm, however, was not universal. The news of the Russian Revolution was welcomed "by the muffled bells in the London press and the Government's response was ambiguous."<sup>4</sup> The pacifists and the socialists alone were unequivocal. It is now difficult to catch the enthusiasm, astonishment and excitement at the boldness of the Russian coup. The WIL, in common with other libertarian groups, applauded the Charter of Freedom issued in mid-March by the Provisional Government. This guarantee of civil and political liberties afforded a sombre contrast with the contraction of liberties that was occurring in Britain. The WIL currently in the throes of its own campaign for enfranchisement was particularly impressed by the promise of universal suffrage and the women sent a congratulatory message to the President of the Provisional Government.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again (London, 1964), 209.

<sup>4</sup>Manchester Guardian, 2 April 1917.

<sup>5</sup>WIL Second Yearly Report, 17.

On 18 March, the day after the Russian Democratic Charter was published in the British press, Marshall drafted a British Charter of Freedom modelled on that of Russia.<sup>6</sup> The stimulus to action came from the Russian declaration that all political and religious prisoners would be released. It was generally believed amongst the pacifists and radicals that if Russia could proclaim full civil liberties in war-time then there was no reason why Britain could not do the same. Therefore, under the aegis of the Anglo-Russian Co-operation Committee (a title of convenience), she and Russell launched a campaign to secure support for the Charter.<sup>7</sup> They hoped that the various disaffected elements represented by Labour, the Irish and the civil libertarians would combine and lend their support to the cause. A long list of public figures, including Members of Parliament, peers, journalists and leaders of labour and pacifist opinion, were approached by Marshall and Russell. Some of those whose support was solicited were cautious. Swanwick, in her capacity as Chairman of the WIL and the PNC, felt unable to make a judgement without more information. Lord Bryce, whilst willing to act for the COs, believed that "there was nothing to

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<sup>6</sup>Draft Charter of Freedom, 18 March 1917. D/Mar/4/38.

<sup>7</sup>Jo Vellacott, Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War (New York, 1980), 153. Vellacott suggests that the Anglo-Russian Co-operation Committee may have been the same as the Anglo-Russian Democratic Alliance of Lansbury. However, in his biography of Lansbury, R. Postgate said that the object of the ARDA was to emphasise the unity of interest among the workers of the world; whereas, the ARCC were concerned with the extension of civil liberties.

be gained by associating the question of British civil liberties with the Russian Charter." Nor was the NCCL willing to take up the burden of the campaign from the ARCC as Marshall had hoped.<sup>8</sup>

The speed with which the operation was mounted suggests that the libertarians planned to use a debate in Parliament on the revolution in Russia as a stalking horse for their own concerns about the restriction of liberties in Britain. However this opportunity was denied them as the Government confined its sympathies, or lack of them, to a message to the Duma, even though this body was not in control in Russia. The culmination of the Charter of Freedom campaign, therefore, proved to be the meeting held on 31 March 1917 at the Albert Hall, organised primarily by George Lansbury of the Labour Herald in association with the NCF. The successful organisation of the meeting was publicly attributed to Marshall by the Labour Leader. She denied responsibility but the attribution was indicative of the high esteem in which she was held in pacifist circles.<sup>9</sup>

The meeting was summoned to demonstrate the solidarity between Russian and British labour but, as Kathleen Courtney observed, it had assumed the form of a protest against the curtailment of liberties in Britain. The huge success of this meeting, no doubt, encouraged many to agree with Lansbury in believing that it was "a portent" and "a

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<sup>8</sup>Draft Charter. D/Mar/4/38. C. E. Marshall to A. M. Royden, 21 March 1917, CEMP D/Mar/4/38.

<sup>9</sup>Labour Leader, 5, 12 April 1916.

prophecy" that would "mark a turning point in the mood and spirit of our country - the first flush of returning liberty."<sup>10</sup> In the long term, the greater contribution to the peace movement proved not to be the Charter but the repudiation of the czarist foreign policy by the Russian Provisional Government in its April manifesto.

The Russian Revolution also encouraged a group of like-minded men and women to form the 1917 Club at the end of April. There appears to be some uncertainty as to the source of the idea but Woolf believed that the idea originated in a conversation between himself and Oliver Strachey. The aim of the club was to provide a congenial meeting place for Liberal and Labour people who held the same views on the war. According to Swanwick, the club had a "distinguished membership of unpopular people," and indeed, MacDonald was its first President. This coterie of left-wingers included not only politicians but also journalists, writers, intellectuals and artists. Swanwick claimed to have played a part in its inception and with Marshall was one of the original members. Courtney also joined during the first year of the club's existence.<sup>11</sup>

Taking up the appeal of the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates to socialists of all countries to press their governments for

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<sup>10</sup>Vellacott, Bertrand Russell, 157, and note 499, K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 6 April 1917. Herald, 7 April 1916.

<sup>11</sup>Woolf, Beginning Again, 216. Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 322. Labour Who's Who (1926). 1917 Club First Annual General Meeting, March 1918, CEMP D/Mar/8/22.

a declaration of war aims and for a non-annexationist peace, Snowden initiated a peace debate on 16 May in the Commons. The victory of the non-annexationists in the Provisional Government, signalled by the resignation on 16 May of the Foreign Minister Miliukov, was regarded as an indication that the new Russian government wanted a revision of the peace treaties.<sup>12</sup> These developments in Russia provided a significant boost to pacifist activity in Britain. At last, the "people's peace", the topic of so many WIL, ILP and UDC lectures, seemed a real possibility. The belief in the "pacifist spirit of democracy" which underpinned the call for democratic control of foreign policy appeared to have triumphed. Thus with renewed purpose the pacifists re-embarked on their campaign to wring a statement of war aims from their own Government in conformity with the Russian non-annexationist declaration. The pacifists believed that in the new circumstances the old Allied treaties were no longer binding upon the coalition. Therefore, they argued, there could be no obstacle to the conclusion of a diplomatic or negotiated peace.

The pacifists, however, combined prescience with their own concerns when they repeatedly warned throughout the summer of 1917 that events in Russia itself might menace the possibility of a negotiated peace. They predicted that the power and authority of the new liberal regime would be endangered unless the Allies acceded to Russian

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<sup>12</sup>Manchester Guardian, 16 May, M. Farbman, ibid., 21 May 1917.

requests for a joint statement of war aims.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the initial denials of a desire for a separate peace, the pacifists came to believe that unless the people of Russia were reassured that the war was for limited objectives a separate peace would be made. Such a peace would be disastrous for Russia and Europe alike. Not only would it be a triumph for German militarism but would preclude the agreement of all the combatants that was necessary to secure a just and lasting peace.<sup>14</sup>

It was in this atmosphere of hope tempered by anxiety that the Leeds Convention was summoned on 3 June 1917 by a committee of representatives from the ILP and the British Socialist Party. The summons "to follow Russia" was not, as subsequently represented, a call to revolution. It was a summons to "follow Russia in her demand for the repudiation of all materialistic war aims and the establishment of a peace without annexation or indemnities."<sup>15</sup> In such a mixed gathering, there were, inevitably, some revolutionaries and some wild speeches, but in the main it was a meeting of pacifists, socialists and COs. The conference also called upon the Government to carry into effect a charter of liberties "establishing complete political rights for all men and women, unrestricted freedom of the press, freedom of

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<sup>13</sup>Farbman, *ibid.*, 24 May 1916.

<sup>14</sup>*News Sheet*, June 1917.

<sup>15</sup>Circular of United Socialist Council, 11 May 1917 in Snowden, *An Autobiography*, 450-2.

speech, a general amnesty for all political and religious prisoners, full rights of industrial and political association, and the release of labour from all forms of compulsion and restraint." The most controversial resolution, and the one that alerted the alarmists, was the call for the establishment on the Soviet model of Councils of Workmen's and Soldiers' delegates. Moderates, such as Snowden, regarded this as a harmless measure.<sup>16</sup> Some observers, however, interpreted Leeds as the harbinger of revolution.

The WIL was well represented at Leeds claiming to have sixteen members of the executive out of a total of fifty-four women delegates, as well as several branch representatives. The other women came from the Women's Co-operative Guild and the Women's Labour League.<sup>17</sup> In all there were around 1150 delegates representing pacifist, labour and women's organisations. While the conference at Leeds did not have the importance its friends claimed - nor was its influence negligible, as some of the daily press would have believe.<sup>18</sup> The Government remained calm in spite of the agitated report of one of its "spies" who claimed that the meeting was revolutionary in intent. This source noted the presence of many "well-known rebels and pro-Germans," amongst whom was Helena Swanwick. However, a more moderate observer assessed

<sup>16</sup>Snowden, An Autobiography., 455-6.

<sup>17</sup>WIL Second Yearly Report, 17.

<sup>18</sup>New Statesman, 9 June 1917.

it as a "political 'cave of Adullam' and in no sense competent to voice the demands of labour."<sup>19</sup> The Chairman of the WIL shared this lack of confidence in the conference's effectiveness as a democratic force. She was unable to echo the euphoria of many of the other participants. Swanwick wrote to Catherine Marshall, who had also been present, that the Leeds conference depressed her and that "the cry of triumph raised over it depresses me still further. If that is success!" One outcome of the Leeds conference was the formation of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. In the hope that this was the beginning of a grass roots democracy Swanwick urged WIL branches to respond to the invitation to send delegates to the forth-coming conferences. She recognised that soldiers and workers could wield more power than women and that the opportunity should not be lost to exert indirect influence by an association with the workers and soldiers.<sup>20</sup>

Swanwick's pessimism after Leeds was deepened by the report in the press on 11 June of Wilson's most recent speech. America's entry into the war in April as an Associate of the Allies was hailed as the other momentous event of 1917. At the time there was speculation among the pacifists as to whether he would endorse a "knock-out blow" or stand by his January speech to the Senate by insisting on a "peace without victory." Wilson's most recent claim that America had entered

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<sup>19</sup>Cabinet Papers, CAB 24/16 GT 1049, 12 June 1917. CAB 24/16 GT 1034 Report on the Labour Situation, week ending 6 June 1917.

<sup>20</sup>H. M. Swanwick to C. E. Marshall, 10 June 1917, CEMP D/Mar/4/79. News Sheet, August 1917.

the war to see "wrongs righted and safeguards arranged" awakened echoes of other crusading speeches. And Swanwick observed that if the fighting was to continue until the whole world was set to right who knew when the war would end.<sup>21</sup> Yet, whatever her personal discouragement Helena Swanwick accepted that the struggle must go on and every means must be utilised to bring the war to a conclusion.

The Soviet's appeal to the peoples of each country to mount a demand for peace without annexation was answered by the revival of the Women's Peace Crusade. Once again the lead came from Glasgow. As we have seen there were strong links between the women and the labour movement in this city. And not surprisingly, there was more support on the strife-ridden "Red Clydeside" for following the Russian example than was to be found anywhere else in the country. The organiser of the Crusade, Helen Crawford, explained that there was also a secondary consideration in this revival. This other purpose was to give voice to the sentiments ignored by the country's leaders of a large number of British women. As part of its campaign to persuade Russia to maintain her war effort, the Government was sending representatives of various sections of the community to demonstrate the wholehearted support of the British people for the war. Mrs Pankhurst, leader of the suffragettes, now converted from implacable opposition to total support of the Government, was to be despatched to Russia in June

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<sup>21</sup>News Sheet., dated 11 June 1917. Wilson's speech was reported in The Times, 11 June 1917.

to speak for the women of Britain. The leaders of the WIL were outraged. They protested and applied for passports for four women of their choice selected to represent organised women's interests in labour, the co-operative movement, suffrage and internationalism. Although they did not expect to be successful, as Helena Swarwick confided in June to Catherine Marshall, a rejection would at least provide the opportunity to make political capital. While she did not think that "for some time" the Russians "were going to be formidable as enemies or helpful as friends," Swarwick believed that the important thing was to demonstrate sympathy and solidarity with Russia.<sup>22</sup>

The WIL had to be content with meeting the four delegates sent by the Petrograd Soviet to attend the Allied Socialist Conference in London. At a meeting on 24 August 1917 arranged by Marshall there was a friendly exchange between the Russians and the WIL representatives Mrs Despard, Mrs. Pethwick Lawrence, Margaret Bondfield and Helena Swarwick. The Chairman of the WIL presented them with a letter outlining the objectives of the WIL and sending greetings to the women of Russia. The Russian delegates reassured the WIL representatives that they realised that Mrs Pankhurst did not represent British women. They also explained that there was no feminist movement in Russia. Swarwick thought that this was incorrect and really meant that, as elsewhere,

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<sup>22</sup>Labour Leader, 21 June 1917. H. M. Swarwick to C. E. Marshall, 10 June 1917, CEMP D/Mar/4/79.

the movement was confined to the middle classes.<sup>23</sup> The WIL hoped that this demonstration of international solidarity would be taken a step further by the realisation of the plan to hold a women's conference concurrently with the socialist one planned for Stockholm. However, like the men's conference this plan did not materialise.

The new Women's Peace Crusade was inaugurated at a meeting on 10 June 1917 in Glasgow. The highlight of the campaign was the 20,000 strong rally at Glasgow on 8 July which demonstrated the enthusiasm amongst women on the Clyde for the Russian revolution. The eloquent speeches of Helena Swanwick, Helen Crawford and others were supported by the resolution urging the Allies to meet to discuss a revision of the agreements into which they had entered. Warm sympathy and congratulations were sent to the Provisional Government and the hope expressed that it would be "able to maintain itself against all enemies." But like many other successful meetings held by the pacifists the one at Glasgow was reported only in the labour press.<sup>24</sup> Other cities soon followed Glasgow's example and by the end of July Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle had formed their own crusades. The new WPC was at once similar and yet different to the movement of the previous year. The faces of some of the organisers and the participants were familiar but there was a new spontaneity about the formation of the different groups. No one organisation took

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<sup>23</sup>H. M. Swanwick to C. E. Marshall, 26 August 1917, CEMP D/Mar/4/23. The text of the letter WIL Second Yearly Report, 19-21.

<sup>24</sup>Labour Leader, 12 July 1917. Forward, 14 July 1917.

overall responsibility. In some areas it was the ILP that took the lead, in others the WIL - or more frequently the creation of a branch was the result of the co-operative effort of several organisations. By the end of the summer many peace crusades had been started up and down the country.<sup>25</sup>

From the first the WPC was to be a grass-roots movement cutting across class and political party to demonstrate the specifically women's support for peace by negotiation. In the organisations in which the women co-operated with men they organised themselves around general principles. However, in women's groups they appealed to the traditional nurturing role to win support among women for peace. They believed also that as non-combatant wives and mothers they could make an appeal for peace denied to men. The WPC, Swanwick claimed, was an international organisation. Not only were its objectives international but the women also saw themselves as a part of the Europe-wide movement of peoples attempting to compell their governments to make democracy a reality by acceding to their demands. The pacifists in Britain were further encouraged in this belief by developments in Germany. On 19 July 1917 the SDP persuaded the Reichstag to pass a resolution in support of a non-annexationist peace. Seemingly, as further confirmation of the people's readiness to intervene, the opposition

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<sup>25</sup>E. Snowden, UDC, September 1917. Swanwick, Tribunal, 23, August 1917.

from the Reichstag to the appointment of Hertling as Chancellor forced the German government to make concessions as the price of his acceptance.

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Although the Government was not thrown into a panic by the Leeds Convention, the day after the Cabinet did come to the conclusion that it must undertake an active campaign to counteract the pacifist movement. The main fear was that agitators might attempt to link the prevailing industrial discontent to pacifist or even revolutionary activity. Therefore on 4 August the National War Aims Committee (WAC) was launched. The objects were to under cut pacifist propaganda while at the same bolstering flagging popular support for the war. The WAC took its campaign wherever large numbers of people were gathered - holiday resorts, major cities and factory gates. The demonstrations in the large cities were carefully orchestrated and often addressed by members of the Cabinet. Prominent women were secured to address special women's meetings for it was believed that women, in particular, were suffering from war-weariness. Local participation was encouraged and by the beginning of October WACs had been formed in 200 constituencies. The proliferation of committees of various descriptions, prompted an official to remark that the people were in greater danger of becoming meeting-weary than war-weary. Yet, despite the Government's contention that it had succeeded in routing the pacifists, all the evidence suggests that it failed to enlist

working-class support. It was reported that in nearly every constituency labour declined to co-operate in the formation of WACs on the grounds that the war aims had not been defined. From September 1917 to January 1918 there was a growing anxiety over the war weariness and spread of pacifism as the authors of Cabinet and WAC reports emphasised the urgent necessity of defining war aims.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the ultimate irony of this campaign was the enlistment of Woodrow Wilson. America's entry into the war in April 1917 was represented "as the complete and final justification of the Allied cause from a democratic point of view."<sup>27</sup> By this time the President had become something of a tarnished hero for the pacifists. The fears expressed by several pacifists that participation in the war would corrupt the President's ideals appeared to have been born out by several of his statements. By October, Swanwick was convinced that the President had, indeed, succumbed to Allied designs. In his speeches during the summer and his reply to the Papal Note of 1 August 1917 he demonstrated that he had absorbed and made his own the Allied claims regarding the culpability of Germany and the necessity of fighting until objectives were attained.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>PRO CAB 23/3 WC154, 5 June 1917. CAB 24/40 GT3453 25 December 1917; GT 3410, 3412 21 January 1918. Treasury Papers, Treas. 102/16 131904 25 September, 10 October 1917. Date 4 August 1917 for the formation of WAC in L. S. Jaffe, The Decision to Disarm Germany (Boston, London and Sidney, 1985), 18.

<sup>27</sup>Treas. 102/16 131904 25 September 1917.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

The War Aims Committee's campaign coincided with government legislation to curtail active criticism. The opportunity for the Government to further circumscribe pacifist influence was provided by the Bolo Pasha affair. At the beginning of October revelations of treasonable activity in France of one, Bolo Pasha, led to a man-hunt started by the Daily Mail to root out "the British Bolo." Virulently denouncing the pacifists, the Daily Mail abetted by the Daily Express demanded that the Bolos be apprehended and punished. As the Frenchman had been accused of receiving German gold, the jingoist papers demanded that as a first step the sources of pacifist income should be investigated. At the same time Sir Edward Carson was urging the same policy in the Cabinet.<sup>29</sup>

The effects of the ensuing outcry and panic were two fold. The exploits of the anti-pacifist mob activity were aggravated and continued to be unofficially condoned; also the Government took the opportunity to restrict further civil liberties. In recent months the most violent episode of anti-pacifist behaviour had taken place on 28 July 1917 at the Brotherhood Church, Southgate. The occasion, attended by representatives from various pacifist and socialist societies, including Helena Swanwick and Irene Cooper Willis, was the London regional conference of the Council of Soldiers' and Workmen's Delegates established at Leeds. A publicity campaign mounted by the Daily Express at the instigation of Basil Thomson, Head of the Special

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<sup>29</sup>Daily Mail, 8 October 1917. CAB 24/4 G157 3 October 1917.

Branch, brought out the rabble. Thomson wrote: "They will have a rude awakening to-morrow, as I have arranged for the 'Daily Express' to publish the place of the meeting and strong opposition may be expected."<sup>30</sup> The free beer available in the local public houses worked on the patriotism of the assembled soldiers and members of the Anti-German League to ensure a riot. The damage to person and property sustained in the ensuing free-for-all gives some indication of the courage needed to face this orchestrated violence. Swanwick's disgusted comparison of this officially countenanced terrorism with the "Black Hundreds" of imperial Russia was even echoed in the weekly labour report to the Cabinet. The Minister of Labour, Shackleton, condemned the events of Southgate as "organised hooliganism redolent of the worst days of Tsarism inspired from a source that scorns to have contact with the blackguards it employs."<sup>31</sup> There were no arrests and the Government continued to shrug off any responsibility for containing the disorder.

The hardening of public opinion against the pacifists at the height of the Bolo affair made it difficult to carry on the usual activities of their organisations. In the atmosphere of suspicion and fear engendered by the Bolo campaign, the WIL deemed it prudent not to

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<sup>30</sup>Quoted in Ken Weller, "Don't Be A Soldier!" The Radical Anti-War Movement in North London 1914-1918 (London and New York, 1985), 87-8.

<sup>31</sup>David Shackleton, Minister of Labour, was a former Lancashire weaver. CAB 24/28 GT 2139 27 September 1917. News Sheet, August 1917.

advertise their Annual Meeting on 16 and 17 October 1917. Members were warned not to let information get into the hands of the press or "any person likely to organise an attack on the meeting." However, information did leak out that a WPC meeting was scheduled for 15 October. In the preceeding week the Daily Express and Daily Mail were inciting their readers to rout all pacifist gatherings. Although the threat that a hundred-strong band would wreck the meeting did not materialise, the proprietors of the Memorial Hall were warned not to let the premises again to the WIL or WPC.<sup>32</sup> This hysteria was fuelled by the Prime Minister himself. In an episode of cheap demagoguery at the Albert Hall on 22 October, he alerted his audience "to look out for Boloism in all shapes and forms" warning that it was "the latest and most formidable German weapon." Not without humour the pacifists retaliated by suggesting that as ultra-patriotism was the Bolo's facade then surely the Daily Express must be the culprit!<sup>33</sup> Such mockery was of no avail. By November, what had hitherto been "sporadic acts of violence," had according to the Nation, "grown into a system for the repression of discussion on any topic on which these self-appointed arbiters placed their ban."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>CEMP D/Mar/4/79.

<sup>33</sup>The Times, 23 October 1917. Daily Express, 30 October 1917. P. Snowden question in the Commons 29 October 1917. Herbert Morrison published a "Special Bolo Number" in which he accused Northcliffe, CAB 24/34 GT 2809 24 November 1917.

<sup>34</sup>Nation, 24 November 1917, "The Assassination of Opinion."

By the second week in November fourteen organisations including the WIL, WPC and PNC as well as private houses had been raided. At the WIL offices samples of most of its literature were taken as well as the complete stock of the leaflet "Democracy and Peace." When, a week later the WIL requested the return of its account books, the official of the department concerned was uncertain as to when this could be arranged as they had been so overworked recently!<sup>35</sup> But when the report was made to the Cabinet, the police were forced to admit that there was no evidence of German aid and that "Boloism is home grown." The investigation showed that income was derived from subscriptions and, in some of the wealthier organisations, from the Society of Friends or individual Quakers. In many cases the investigation revealed the poverty of funding. The PNC was shown to be "in continual straits for money" and the WIL had only a £523 balance. Organisations such as the WIL and WPC were dismissively described as being run by "feminist peace cranks of the type of Mrs. Swanwick, a woman of German origin, and Mrs Pethwick Lawrence."<sup>36</sup> Many, including the NCCL which was not a pacifist organisation, were convinced that the Bolo accusations were a dishonest attempt to discredit legitimate political

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<sup>35</sup>News Sheet, December 1917.

<sup>36</sup>CAB 24/34 GT 2809 24 November 1917, B. Thomson, "Pacifism." CAB 24/35 GT 2980 13 December 1917, Thomson, "Pacifism." CAB 24/4 G 173 November 1917, Pacifist propaganda.

bodies who opposed Lloyd George's policies. Charges such as these were commonplace in libertarian circles where it was believed that the Prime Minister was bent on establishing a "dictatorship."<sup>37</sup>

In reality the Government was concerned about the growing propaganda for a negotiated peace. Sir George Cave, the Home Secretary noted that with the assistance of the "loyalists," pacifist meetings had been brought under control. But he recognised that in order to deal effectively with the literature further legislation was necessary.<sup>38</sup> Two measures were passed in November with the intention of extending the Government's powers over public opinion. The first, on 13 November, was the agreement by the House to a token vote of £1,000 for the work of the WAC. This decision, in effect, sanctioned the unlimited and uncontrolled use of public funds for the creation of public opinion favourable to the Government. Only thirty-three Members, led by Snowden, protested against this vote. The WIL was one of several organisations that questioned the appropriation of public funds for the deception of the same public. Its leaflet "Is This Fair Play?" enjoyed great success and in four days over 99,000 copies were circulated.

Hard on the heels of this vote came a further curtailment of freedom of expression. On 15 November, the Home Secretary introduced into the Commons proposals for the extension of Regulation 27 of DORA.

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<sup>37</sup>NCCL November 1917. News Sheet, December 1917.

<sup>38</sup>CAB 24/4 G 173 13 November 1917.

The proposed regulation would make it necessary to submit to the Press Bureau before publication all leaflets and pamphlets "relating to the present war or the conclusion of peace". In addition, all such literature would have to bear the name of the author and printer. It was the first provision rather than the second that roused widespread opposition. Taken together these two measures would ensure that the Government had the field to itself in the issue of propaganda literature and the funds with which to carry out the campaign. This was indeed the "assassination of opinion" claimed by the Nation. Massingham, the paper's editor, observed that the Government "dips its hands into the public purse for secret funds to subsidise its own War Aims campaign, while it chokes the throat of criticism with the other." The new provision aimed at the censorship of opinion, although the Government termed it "propaganda."<sup>39</sup> However, it was not only a question of the freedom of expression that was at issue but also of the relationship of the executive to the law. And on this issue critics were to be found within the Government. Hitherto, anyone publishing literature in contravention of the regulations did so at his own risk; but his rights were also safeguarded by a public prosecution. Now, as Samuel wrote to Sir George Cave, censorship by the Press Bureau "would oust the jurisdiction of the courts and for the first time confer upon

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<sup>39</sup>CAB 24/4 G 173. Nation, 24 November 1917. Defence of the Realm Manual (London, 1918), 128.

the executive powers of censorship in political matters which cannot be questioned by law."<sup>40</sup>

The censorship proposal aroused an unexpectedly strong protest across the political spectrum from Labour to the editor of the Daily Express. In view of this outcry the Government announced in December a modification of Regulation 27C. It would no longer be necessary to receive the approval of the censor but merely to lodge the signed literature with him. The effect however, as Swanwick observed, would be the same.<sup>41</sup> By invoking Regulation 51 the police or Competent Military Authority, if notified by the censor, could seize stocks of pamphlets before distribution. In this way the prevention of the circulation of material would still be achieved. The vital objection to Regulation 51 was that the individual was denied access to the due process of law for the establishment of his innocence and the protection of his property.<sup>42</sup>

Faced with this new assault the WIL on 6 December held a special Council Meeting to consider their policy in the light of the regulation. There was some division of opinion. Isabella Ford wished, like the Society of Friends, to defy the ruling. By contrast, Swanwick and her followers were anxious to keep within the law. Although the

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<sup>40</sup>H. B. Samuel to G. Cave CAB 24/34 T 2820 27 November 1917.

<sup>41</sup>News Sheet, January 1918.

<sup>42</sup>Labour Leader, 24 January 1918.

WIL leaflet criticising the regulation was not censored, the meeting decided to withdraw nine publications that did not conform to the regulations or were out of date.<sup>43</sup> Mrs. Despard's "Appeal to Women" which had proved so popular with the WPC was rejected by the censor. The final blow to the pacifists and libertarians was the retroactive amendment of 21 November 1917 to the Representation of the People Bill. This amendment disenfranchised COs for five years after the war. In fact this provision was not to take effect until 1921 and even then it was not to be universally enforced. Thus, it appeared at the end of 1917 that in a few days an "all pervading system for the forcible suppression of opinion unfavourable to the government in regard to the conduct of war" had been established.<sup>44</sup>

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Just when it seemed that this repressive legislation must stifle all opposition an unforeseen event occurred that was to mark the end of one period and the beginning of another in the formation of public opinion. On 29 November 1917 the Daily Telegraph published a letter from Lord Lansdowne. At the time this event was viewed as "politically one of the momentous pronouncements of the war." The letter proposed the limitation of war aims "to what was rational,

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<sup>43</sup>CAB 24/40 GT 3424 22 January 1918. WIL Third Yearly Report.

<sup>44</sup>Nation, 24 November 1917.

attainable and in harmony with the original objects of the Allies."<sup>45</sup> The subsequent furore was caused not by the contents of the letter, which had long been advocated by pacifist organisations, but by the influence of the author. Lord Lansdowne was popularly regarded as one of the elder statesmen of Europe. As Foreign Secretary, he had been responsible for the Entente with France in 1904 and, as Unionist leader in the Lords, Lansdowne had also thrown his authority behind the decision to go to war in 1914. The popular press might question his mental competence but they could not impugn his patriotism.

The letter gave a tremendous boost to the peace movement. After the set backs of the previous few weeks the pacifists were elated and Swanwick declared it "thrilling" and an encouragement after "the dust up about the Regulations." Liberals in the Lords and in the press were amongst those who rallied to support Lansdowne's appeal. And Francis Hirst, editor of Common Sense, mounted a campaign to obtain the signatures of the intellectuals for a memorial thanking Lansdowne for articulating the moderate opinion that it was believed had been growing over the past few months. It was also hoped that this display of

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<sup>45</sup>The usual forum for such public statements was the Times but the editor refused to print Lansdowne's letter. Marquess of Lansdowne, "The Peace Letter of 1917" Nineteenth Century 115 (March 1934), 370-384 and Lord Newton, Lord Lansdowne: A Biography (London, 1929). Both claim that the Daily Telegraph misrepresented the communication as a peace letter but that it was entitled "Co-ordination of Allied War Aims."

support would serve to put pressure on the Government to implement his Lordship's suggestions.<sup>46</sup> However, even some of those who adhered to the sentiments of the letter expressed doubts about the timing.<sup>47</sup> In November 1917 Allied fortunes were at their nadir and no government would willingly negotiate from a position of military weakness. Yet, a Treasury survey of the press conducted by the Government revealed that, whatever the reservations about Lansdowne, the country seemed to be looking both for a definition and a limitation of war aims and was showing an unwillingness to continue fighting until the demands of every ally were satisfied.<sup>48</sup>

The Lansdowne appeal to moderate opinion was strengthened by the publication of the secret correspondence and secret treaties between the Allies. The Bolsheviki began releasing these documents shortly after they seized power and they first appeared in the British press in the Manchester Guardian on 12 December 1917. The long suspected perfidy of the Government was shown in all its territorial implications. The "fight for right" and justice was revealed as just

<sup>46</sup>Loreburn had appealed to Lansdowne to lead a movement for peace in a letter to the Economist, 10 June 1916. The Memorandum was presented to the Cabinet on 13 November 1916. In the Daily Telegraph on 30 November 1917 Buckmaster applauded Lansdowne's initiative. Swarwick to Marshall 29 November 1917 CEMP D/Mar/4/26.

<sup>47</sup>Lansdowne, "The Peace Letter of 1917" Manchester Guardian, 1 December 1917. "Why Lord Lansdowne is Right" Nation, 8 December 1917.

<sup>48</sup>Treasury 102/16 131904 "Public Opinion and Lord Lansdowne's Letter."

another imperialist war. The WIL News Sheet and the Labour Leader circulated the details of the treaties as they were made public. Since the conservative and popular press made little or no allusion to the news from Russia, it was some time before the country as a whole learned about the treaties. The revelations detailed Russia's designs on Poland, Turkey and Persia to which the Government consented in return for "a benevolent attitude" towards the "political aspirations of England in other parts"; the mutual "freedom" to which Russia and France agreed to alter Germany's boundaries which would permit France to annex the left bank of the Rhine and the coal district of the Saar, as well as regaining Alsace and Lorraine.<sup>49</sup> These were all territories that could only be won by a "knock-out" blow.

Finally, on 5 January 1918 the Prime Minister made the long-demanded and long-awaited declaration of war aims. The occasion was the meeting of the Trade Union delegates to consider the Government's Manpower Bill. Lloyd George opened his speech on 5 January by a repudiation of the Note of 10 January 1917 which had been the last pronouncement on war aims. He renounced any desire on the part of the British Government to destroy Germany, to dismember Austria or to deprive Turkey of her capital or territory peopled by the Turkish

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<sup>49</sup>The first installment of the treaties was published by Trotsky in Izvestia, 23 November 1917 and continued thereafter for several months. They appeared in the Manchester Guardian, 12 December 1917, 15 January, 19 January and 22 February 1918. WIL News Sheet, January and February 1918. Labour Leader, 24 January 1918.

race. What Britain did want, however, was the independence of Belgium and freedom for those territories occupied by the forces of the Central powers. In addition, she wanted the establishment of a league of nations to preserve the peace. The contentious issue of Alsace-Lorraine was skirted by a commitment to stand by France in a "reconsideration of the great wrong of 1871."<sup>50</sup>

Swanwick and the labour leaders, Snowden and Henderson, were agreed that this declaration was prompted by the Government's need to win support for its Manpower Bill. This measure would permit the "comb out" of an additional half a million men for the army from the exempted industries. The Labour Memorandum on War Aims of 28 December had laid down, in effect, the conditions for which Labour was prepared to countenance the continuation of the war. The Memorandum was concerned with post-war reconstruction, particularly with "making the world safe for democracy." But whereas the Labour leaders received the speech with cautious approval, Swanwick was less satisfied. She suspected that this statement bore the mark of other people's influence and reflected a "change of tone" rather than changed intent.<sup>51</sup> The truth, with regard to the latter suspicion, was born out by Lloyd George's reversion to the "knock-out" blow in a speech to the trade unionists on 18 January 1918. As to other people's influence, this too

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<sup>50</sup>Manchester Guardian, 7 January 1918.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid. News Sheet, February 1918.

has been substantiated. Lord Robert Cecil and General Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, were influential in drafting the war aims.<sup>52</sup> The divide between contemporary pacifist opinion and present scholarship concerns the motive behind the speech. Was it primarily a diplomatic response to the Austrian foreign minister's peace overtures in December, or, was it simply an attempt to mollify labour and continue the war until American aid could be effective?<sup>53</sup> In practice the speech satisfied both conditions.

Some pacifists claimed to see the influence of the recent Bolshevik revolution in Russia behind the appeal to labour. Yet, the upsurge in pacifism and talk of the Russian revolution as being a model for imitation, came after the war aims speech, not before.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, Swanwick was correct in believing that the possibilities opened up by the events in Russia could not be ignored. In these early days, the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks represented a people's victory. And now the people (as the pacifists always claimed they would) were making peace. She was convinced that the fear of

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<sup>52</sup>CAB 24/37 GT 3145 29 December 1917, Robertson, "Present Military Situation with Reference to the Peace Proposals of the Central Powers." GT 3180 3 January 1918, Smuts, "Draft of War Aims"; GT 3181 3 January 1918, R. Cecil, "Draft of War Aims."

<sup>53</sup>David R. Woodward, "The Origins and Intent of David Lloyd George's January 5 War Aims Speech" The Historian 34 (Nov 1971), 22-39. Woodward states that the speech was not just to placate opinion but it was a genuine effort to make a compromise peace possible. Lowe and Dockrill, The Mirage of Power, 68-72, see it as a reply to the Austrian foreign minister, Count Czernin.

<sup>54</sup>CAB 34/40 GT 3424 B. Thomson to G. Cave, 22 January 1918.

revolution would compel governments everywhere to accede to the reasonable demands of their citizens. Swanwick suggested that Britain should follow the example but not the methods of the Russians. In Britain the democratic movement was more orderly and quiet but she did see it gathering momentum under the guidance of the reconstructed Labour Party within the constitutional framework.<sup>55</sup>

The withdrawal of Russia from the war in November was regarded as a disaster by the Government. And in order to evade demands that Britain follow the Russian example, the publication of Trotsky's invitation of 23 December 1917 to the Allies to join in the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk was delayed by the censor. It was not until 4 January 1918, the day of the expiry of the moratorium declared to permit Allied attendance at the Russo-German conference, that this news appeared in the press. Thwarted by this strategy and unable to bring pressure to bear upon the Government to enter the peace negotiations the WIL cabled its support for the Russian policy of public diplomacy at Brest-Litovsk; the women also promised to urge the British Government to "make peace universal." On 15 January the Labour Party, which had hitherto supported a military victory, announced in a telegram to the Bolsheviks its adherence to a non-annexationist peace.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>WIL News Sheet, February 1918.

<sup>56</sup>WIL Third Yearly Report, 19. Herald, 12 January 1918. Annual Report of the Labour Party Conference January 1918.

Lloyd George's failure to respond to the Bolshevik appeal was rectified, according to the pacifists, by the President's celebrated address to Congress of 8 January 1918. Wilson's announcement of the Fourteen Points on which any peace must be based was widely regarded as a response to Trotsky's declaration of peace principles.<sup>57</sup> The statement reassured the pacifists that the American President had not cast aside the mantle of defender of the faith. Swanwick did, however, cavil at his praise of Lloyd George's "admirable candour" and the declaration "that there was no uncertainty of principle, no vagueness of detail. The only secrecy of counsel and lack of fearless frankness, the only failure to make definite statements of the objects of the war lies with Germany and her Allies." She later observed that it was "charitable to suppose that he had not then read the secret treaties."<sup>58</sup> Yet, despite these statements it was still not clear as to what would constitute victory. The pacifists feared that to secure Wilson's principles "in all detail" could lead to the protraction of the conflict. An additional disappointment for the pacifists was that the President, in contrast to his attitude of a year earlier, had now adopted the tone of the Allies which assumed the "disinterested and exalted motives of the one side and the depravity of the other."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Nation, 12 January 1918. Labour Leader, 10 January 1918. Manchester Guardian, 10 January 1918.

<sup>58</sup>H. M. Swanwick, Builders of Peace (London, 1924, 1973), 108.

<sup>59</sup>Herald, 12 January 1918.

Notwithstanding their reservations, the pacifists had to look to the President to provide the moral leadership so conspicuously lacking in their own head of government.

A potential leader for the domestic peace negotiations movement was, however, close by. The publication of Lansdowne's second letter on 5 March 1918 persuaded a number of people that here was the man to head the movement and to unseat Lloyd George. The second letter was published in response to the Allied rejection on 4 February of offers from the Central powers to enter into discussions. Lansdowne read into the January speech of Hertling, the German Chancellor, a willingness to accept Wilson's four principles as well as the acceptance of a suggestion made by Walter Runciman in December 1917 for an informal meeting of delegates from the powers. The next day after the letter was published, the Lansdowne Committee was formed.<sup>60</sup>

The conclusion reached by the WIL and other pacifists was that the only way to change the objects of the war was by changing the Government. For some time there had been talk among pacifists of the removal of Lloyd George. They were critical of his populist style and his policies. The Government's suppression of criticism led to charges that the Prime Minister was ignoring the will of the people and establishing a "dictatorship." There appears to have been some

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<sup>60</sup>Wilson's Four Principles: general justice, self-determination, the benefit of the local populations, the reasonable claims of nationality, "The Case for a Conference" Nation, 9 March 1918. Labour Leader, 6 April 1918.

confusion as what constituted the "will of the people." On the one hand the pacifists interpreted the adherence to the War Aims Memorandum as such an expression; yet, on the other hand, Swanwick and Irene Cooper Willis writing in the News Sheet, bemoaned the indifference of the people to the "filching" of their rights, and for their preference for victory over civil liberties.<sup>61</sup> The support of the bulk of the population for the war was evidence, they believed, of the herd instinct that was being exploited by government propaganda. Therefore, with the means apparently available to remove Lloyd George from office, early in March the WIL became part of the Lansdowne movement.

Privately, Helena Swanwick expressed something of her despair mingled with hope at the present situation. She wrote to Catherine Marshall: "I pin my hopes to nothing and no-one. One just has to go on; do what one can till one dies." Yet, she believed that

The whole world is going to be different. I feel as if I were living at a time of cosmic upheaval and floating on a stream of tendencies so huge that individuals cannot be counted. And yet how prodigiously a few individuals are counting just now!<sup>62</sup>

Whatever her reservations about the suitability of his lordship, and many people had expressed reservations at the aristocratic connection, Swanwick was prepared to lend her support to the Lansdowne movement.

<sup>61</sup>"A New Government Wanted" Labour Leader, 28 February 1918. News Sheet, October, December 1917; January, March 1918.

<sup>62</sup>H. M. Swanwick to C. E. Marshall, 4 March 1918, CEMP D/Mar/4/80.

The executive of the WIL did not officially commit the rank and file, but it reminded members that they were bound to support any individual or group who embraced the organisation's policy. To this end, the membership was urged to organise meetings to "help bring Lord Lansdowne out." However, the WIL was warned that if the movement was to be successful, it must attract a wider audience. Therefore members were warned, care should be taken to avoid giving the impression that the appeal was pacifist inspired. The announcement at the beginning of April by MacDonald and Snowden of their support for a Lansdowne-Labour Committee cemented this curious alliance between the right and the left.<sup>63</sup>

In the event, military events suddenly forced a postponement of the campaign to oust Lloyd George. The launching of the massive German offensive on the Western Front on 21 March 1918 transformed the situation in Britain. With its back to the wall the country was in no mood to tolerate pacifist propaganda. The timely appearance in The Times in March of the Memorandum written by Lichnowsky, the former German Ambassador in London, caused a loss of faith amongst some of the ILP. This document by attributing the entire responsibility for the war to Germany prompted the verdict from The Times that "now there can be no pacifists."<sup>64</sup> In response to the military situation and the

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<sup>63</sup>WIL circular 12 March 1918. CEMP D/Mar/4/80. As early as March Swarwick claimed that the WIL was working for the Lansdowne-Labour movement.

<sup>64</sup>WIL News Sheet, April 1918. Labour Leader, 11 April 1918.

country's mood, the UDC instructed its members not to agitate for peace. Nor did the ILP and British Socialist Party hold any public meetings for fear of them being broken up. Private meetings, however, continued to be held and Swanwick embarked on a tour of North Country towns at the end of March. She might well ask Catherine Marshall "do you know your alphabet?" as she enumerated the societies for which she would be speaking - the ILP, UDC, WIL and WPC.<sup>65</sup> Yet, with the exception of the WPC, systematic pacifist activity virtually ceased until the German offensive was stemmed. The German drive was not finally halted until 17 July 1918 when it was stopped by the Second Battle of the Marne.

At the end of May the WPC announced that they were promoting a Memorial to Lansdowne, for which they aimed to get the names of 100,000 of the new voters added to the electorate by the Representation of the People Act. The Memorial thanked his lordship for his intervention and entreated him to place himself at the head of a movement to obtain peace by negotiation, which they claimed was supported by all classes. Work to secure names progressed throughout the summer and by the end of August 20,000 signatures had been collected.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, the

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The Times, 15, 27, 28 March 1918 "My London Mission 1912-1914" by Lichnowsky. CAB 24/47 GF 4199 10 April 1918. Snowden, Autobiography, 484.

<sup>65</sup>H. M. Swanwick to C. E. Marshall, 4 March 1918, CEMP D/Mar/4/80.

<sup>66</sup>E. Snowden to C. E. Marshall, 29 May 1918, CEMP D/Mar/4/29. Labour Leader, 30 May and 1 August 1918.

Lansdowne-Labour Committee had organised the London Working Men's Memorial. The expectation of a General Election in the autumn intensified discussion of a possible Lansdowne-Labour coalition party. This combination with the enemy was, however, deplored by socialists of the stamp of Sylvia Pankhurst. She regarded the Memorial and support for the coalition as a betrayal of socialist solidarity by a return to the politics of deference, even if, as rumoured, Lansdowne was dropped once peace was won.<sup>67</sup>

By the end of May pacifist activity was renewed. Support for Lansdowne went hand in hand with a renewed peace by negotiations campaign. The events of the previous few months had given the dissenters ample ammunition for their campaign to enlighten public opinion as to the dishonesty and dereliction of duty by the Government. The pacifists believed that if the people knew the truth, they would add their voice to the demand for a diplomatic initiative. Accordingly, the WIL, WPC and other organisations set out to expose and publicise the secret treaties which demonstrated the discrepancy between the Government's professions and its secret activities. They also ran a campaign to demonstrate the lost or neglected opportunities for concluding an early peace. Several leaflets and pamphlets were produced to support this campaign. The most irritating to the Government was that of Ponsonby and Morel, Peace Overtures and Their Rejection. This pamphlet summarised the opportunities, between

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<sup>67</sup>Workers' Dreadnought, 15 June, 27 July, 10 August 1918.

December 1916 and March 1918, rejected by the Government to enter into negotiations to end the war. An abbreviated version of this work was produced for the WPC by C. R. Buxton, entitled Lost Opportunities.<sup>68</sup> Other pamphlets explained the terms of the treaties and the geographical and political implications of the provisions. WIL members were encouraged to read UDC literature such as S. Cocks's The Secret Treaties and C. R. Buxton's The Secret Agreements, as well as that of the WIL and WPC by Ethel Snowden and Swarwick.

Outdoor meetings also revived in the summer. On 30 June 1918 Glasgow once again held another successful WPC demonstration. The WPC had maintained its activities through the winter and was regarded by the Government as a threat to morale, and Crawford as a "mischievous" speaker.<sup>69</sup> At Glasgow, Helena Swarwick and Helen Crawford reiterated the call for the repudiation of the secret treaties and demanded that the Government enter into negotiations. The showpiece of the WPC's summer campaign was to have been a meeting, planned in conjunction with the WIL, for 14 July in Hyde Park. The day before, the meeting was cancelled by the authorities; once again the "Black Hundreds" had done their work. Efforts to stop the meeting were made by the British Workers' League which made its own application for a permit to hold a meeting in the park on the same day. Questions were asked in the House

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<sup>68</sup>Foreign Office, FO 371 3443/116603 and 116711.

<sup>69</sup>CAB 34/40 GT 3424 B. Thomson to G. Cave, 22 January 1918.

as to the advisability of permitting the assembly to take place. Once again Swarwick's loyalty was questioned as one who was "only British by marriage." And in addition to the usual accusations, claims were made that the WIL had incited women not to work for the war. Although inured to these attacks, Swarwick was nonetheless bitter that the Home Secretary, by not immediately denying the allegations, permitted the free circulation of these damaging lies. The Daily Express which had published this misinformation did eventually print Swarwick's letter of denial.<sup>70</sup> The Home Secretary explained to the House that the presence of colonial troops at the BWL demonstration of sympathy with France would only lead to disorder if they encountered a pacifist demonstration nearby. To have allowed the peace meeting, Cave explained, would have been an affront to public sentiment and a "stigma on France" on this their national day.<sup>71</sup>

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The political potential of six million new women voters was not lost on either the WIL or the Labour party. In March 1918 the Labour party embarked on a policy of attracting and organising the working-women's vote. In the enforced lull in pacifist activity the WIL turned its attention to the most effective means of using the new

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<sup>70</sup>News Sheet, August 1918. On 11 July Brigadier-General Henry Page Croft insinuated that Swarwick was only "British by marriage." H. C. Deb. (5) 108 (1918) cols 486-7 11 July 1918. HO 45 /10744/263275/379-80, 385.

<sup>71</sup>HO 45/10744/263275/379.

power vested in women. At a Special Council meeting on 2 May 1918 the WIL took the decision to engage in political work for the forthcoming election as a means of realising its objectives. The aim was to obtain a House of Commons of new men favourable to new policies, specifically, one of negotiation. Election committees were to be established by the branches. These committees were to organise the vote locally for the WIL policy. Primarily, they were to win the women's vote. Equally important, their efforts were to be directed at securing the adoption of the candidate most likely to support WIL policy. This stipulation of support for the individual candidate did not tie the WIL to any one party, nor, should one stand, to support a woman candidate. They did state a preference for a woman but, the WIL insisted, this was to be acted upon only if her ideas were acceptable and if there was a strong probability of her election. The WIL always insisted that the best candidate be chosen for the job, regardless of sex or party. Neither now, nor in the future when representation on League of Nation's committees was at issue, did they sanction tokenism.

Tactically, the proposed campaign was reminiscent of the old EFF days; it was to be based on lobbying, canvassing and organising meetings. The main problem confronting organisers was to reach the woman voter, almost all of whom were over thirty and in the home. The Manchester WIL took a lead in mobilising the new voters by advising women how to register under the new Act.<sup>72</sup> Programmes were drawn up

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<sup>72</sup>A. Robinson, "Organisation for Election Work." 27 June 1918  
CEMP D/Mar/4/80.

presenting the minimum points to which candidates would be expected to subscribe and circulated in the constituencies. Provision was made for the contingencies of an election held during the war, or, one conducted in peace-time. Should the election take place during the war on the new register, the primary consideration was that the candidate should endorse a negotiated peace. It was also desirable, and to be urged, that he or she should also accept certain principles relating to open negotiation, democratic representation at the peace conference, the publication of secret treaties and agreements and the establishment of a league of peoples. If, however, the war had ended by the time of the election, then the principles which had been secondary to peace negotiations would become the primary objectives. Not only were there to be open negotiations subject to parliamentary scrutiny and ratification, the establishment of a league of peoples with provision for universal disarmament and the abolition of military and industrial conscription, in addition, there must be support for an open-door economic policy. Concerning domestic issues, the candidate had also to agree to support the "emancipation of women and the protection of their interests." These interests included the extension of the parliamentary franchise to all women, their "admission to national and international councils, the establishment of their economic independence and legal freedom, the recognition of the equal moral standard, and, lastly, the reform of laws relating to marriage, divorce and the custody of children." In addition to these criteria, the

candidate should support "freedom of speech and publication." As libertarian socialists, the WIL demanded a "greater share in the control of the product of labour by the workers."<sup>73</sup>

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By mid-July many influential people, including Lord Lansdowne, were persuaded that an outright victory by either side was impossible. In yet another letter on 31 July, his lordship stated his continuing and increased concern about the heavy casualties of the war; losses were now estimated at thirty million, including seven million dead. To these figures he added the recent estimates of the Registrar-General of a further loss by the decline in the birth rate of twelve million "potential lives." By this time, however, hopes that Lansdowne would place himself at the head of a peace negotiations movement were fast fading. By the end of July, MacDonald, who had earlier discussed the possibility of a Lansdowne-Labour coalition government, had come to believe that no alternative to the present Government was to be found. Asquith was out of the question, Grey was ill, Lansdowne "rests on his letters" and Labour was not yet ready for office.<sup>74</sup> This impasse, however, was soon overtaken by events in Germany.

The successful Allied offensive of August and September persuaded Ludendorff, assistant to the Chief of Staff, Hindenburg, that Germany must sue for an armistice. Notes were passed between America

<sup>73</sup>WIL Third Yearly Report.

<sup>74</sup>Socialist Review, July 1918.

and Germany in an attempt to secure an agreement. Finally, on 9 November the new German government announced the abdication of the House of Hohenzollern and Germany's acceptance of the Allies' armistice terms based on Wilson's Fourteen Points. The sudden conclusion of the war caught the pacifists unprepared. Events, it appeared, had proved Lloyd George right; a military victory had been possible. Only subsequently were they to be vindicated in their contention that a harsh peace could not be an enduring peace. In the weeks following the Armistice of 11 November 1918 all eyes were focussed on the forthcoming General Election and the peace conference.

As the Allies had "obtained the conditions that they held to be a preliminary to a lasting peace," the WIL now questioned how this peace was going to be used. All the signs indicated that the British Government was declaring its support for a league of victors. To avert this catastrophe the WIL set about alerting opinion as to the importance of democratic representation at the peace conference in order to obtain a people's peace. Yet, even such internationalists as Woolf, Hobson and Ponsonby, speaking at a special conference organised by the WIL on 6 November, were not agreed as to the best policy to pursue. In a letter to the Prime Minister, the WIL urged that one Labour representative in the delegation to Paris was insufficient. Moreover, failing the direct parliamentary election of representatives to the congress, facilities should be provided for a popular conference to be held at the same time and place as the congress of the powers to

examine the daily proceedings of the peace conference. They also emphasised the need to have the terms of any treaties ratified by Parliament. Bonar Law, speaking for the Government, declined to give the House the names of proposed delegates; and the Coalition announced that there would be no popular international conferences sitting concurrently with that of the representatives of the powers. Whilst this decision was no doubt to avoid any unnecessary complication of a situation that would be fraught with difficulties, it also had the effect of nullifying the WILPF plans laid in 1915 to hold an international conference at the same time and place as the peace congress.<sup>75</sup>

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The announcement of the results of the General Election on 30 December 1918 confirmed the worst fears of the WIL. Lloyd George's Coalition had won a landslide victory ensuring the return of a Parliament described as "the most one-sided and least representative of modern times."<sup>76</sup> The electorate, it would appear, had been swayed by gratitude and, to an even greater extent, goaded by the desire for revenge. The Times interpreted the results as a vindication of the war policy and a repudiation of pacifism and "all that that doctrine would involve if perpetuated in peace." Most of those Liberals, former

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<sup>75</sup>News Sheet, December 1918. Bonar Law's announcement in the Commons on 19 November 1918.

<sup>76</sup>Manchester Guardian, 30 December 1918.

Liberals and Socialists who were tainted by pacifism, however faintly, were rejected at the polls. The election results had confounded the forecasts. This upset the Guardian's London Correspondent attributed to the unknown quantity of the women's vote.<sup>77</sup> All the signs had indicated that the newly enfranchised women were apathetic and would probably not vote. Although Pugh counts the women along with the active servicemen as the non-voters, and he claims that, in a low turn-out, only 40% of those women on the register voted; this was not the contemporary perception. In some areas it seemed that women turned out in greater numbers than men.<sup>78</sup> MacDonald, for one, believed that in his constituency the women had been instrumental in his defeat. He observed bitterly that

It seems the effect of the women's vote has been to swell the majorities of the most extravagant candidates. In my own case the women from the middle artisan quarters gave me support; those from the villa and poorer end of the constituency were most bloodlusty and most credulous, and in solid masses voted against me. The election came before the triumphant emotions of the peace died down, and they carried the bulk of the women to the polling booths. Woman as a psychological problem was in evidence; women as citizens had not appeared.<sup>79</sup>

This desire for vengeance on the part of many women was also the experience of Mrs Pethwick Lawrence. In December she stood, at the invitation of the Rusholme (Manchester) Labour Party, for that

<sup>77</sup>Manchester Guardian. The Times, 30 December 1918.

<sup>78</sup>Manchester Guardian, 30 December 1918. Martin Pugh, Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18 (London, 1978), 173.

<sup>79</sup>J. R. MacDonald, Manchester Guardian, 30 December 1918.

constituency in the General Election. A Bill was passed in November making women eligible for Parliament. She campaigned with the help of the WIL and she and her supporters, Helena Swanwick, Margaret Ashton and C. R. Buxton, were the targets for much abuse from the women of the constituency. It was the soldiers, not the women, who canvassed and spoke for Mrs Pethwick Lawrence's platform of a just peace. Swanwick also campaigned for her friend Brailsford in the Montrose Burghs and at Accrington for C. R. Buxton. But neither of them were returned.<sup>80</sup>

In so far as women voted as women in this election, they voted as bereaved wives and mothers. This and subsequent elections demonstrated that there was no such thing as the "woman's vote"; the clear manifestations were those of class or interest group or family political loyalty. Nor did women show much inclination to support their own sex as parliamentary candidates. Of the seventeen women who stood for Parliament, only Constance Markiewicz, the Sinn Feiner, was returned. The two most closely fought elections were those of Christabel Pankhurst at Smethwick and Mary MacArthur (Mrs W. A. Anderson) at Stourbridge. These results were not unusual. They merely reflected the experiences of newly enfranchised women in other countries in their efforts to enter Parliament. Commenting on Lloyd

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<sup>80</sup>E. Pethwick Lawrence, My Part in a Changing World (London, 1938), 322. Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 313.

George's success, even Swarwick was forced to conclude: "Millions believed that he had 'won the war,' and in a sense he had."<sup>81</sup>

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What had the WIL achieved by the end of 1918? Hindsight and memoirs have shown that the peace negotiations campaign was doomed to failure from the outset. The whole campaign was based on the assumption that the German peace offers were genuine. Although this might now be a subject of debate among historians, at the time, however, those in power rejected the overtures as feigned. It was believed that Ludendorff had no intention of relinquishing Belgium which was the sine qua non of British policy.<sup>82</sup> The refusal to negotiate from weakness and the secret treaties necessitated the continuation of hostilities to victory. Undeniably there was a tendency by the pacifists to paint their own Government in the blackest of colours and to attribute to it almost the entire blame for failing to bring the war to an early conclusion. Much of the criticism was rooted in a philosophic attachment to liberal principles. The conduct of the war, more than ever before, marked the flight of Liberal party politicians from those principles. Indeed, the pacifist campaign was an attempt to recall the country to the beliefs of liberalism as the basis for better international understanding. Yet even as they called

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<sup>81</sup>Fulford, Votes for Women, 16. Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 312.

<sup>82</sup>Newton, Lord Lansdowne, 480-1.

for peace negotiations, the pacifists knew that any discussion of terms would undermine national morale and thereby weaken the war effort. In her autobiography Swarwick admitted that at bottom peace negotiations was for her a stop-the-war campaign.<sup>83</sup> The pacifist exhibited a peculiar cast of mind in which rationalism was conjoined with idealism. In attempting to promote their beliefs they were at odds with the spirit of the times and the Realpolitik of governments.

If they were unsuccessful in converting the nation to peace negotiations, they could at least claim a part in preparing the nation for the acceptance of the idea of a League of Nations. In this achievement the women's efforts cannot be separated from those of the men with whom they laboured to promote this ideal. A great deal of the impetus to finding an alternative to force as a means of settling international disputes came from war weariness and the determination that this carnage should never be repeated. Another important factor in winning popular acceptance of the idea of a league was the leadership given by the President of the United States. But it was the pacifists who gave Wilson the reassurance that he was speaking for the people of the world.

There were also benefits derived from this campaign. Many women of all classes gained experience and confidence through this new political activism. Women who had never before joined in any activity outside the home took part in the popular peace crusades. For the

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<sup>83</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 274.

mainly middle-class women of the WIL this political experience afforded by the outbreak of war liberated them from traditional roles. The peace movement continued the process of education and political involvement that had begun with suffrage. The WIL had deliberately attempted to educate a section of women in political affairs so that they could exercise responsible citizenship and provide political leadership for their sex. Many prominent women owed their later success to the experience gained in these campaigns.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the peace movement, even if it was unsuccessful in achieving its object, opened careers for some women and afforded a glimpse of the potential power of organised women. If the mental and social barriers to women's involvement in politics were not yet broken down, they had at least received a blow. Although many more blows would be necessary to substantially improve the position and condition of women. Nonetheless, the WIL had performed and was to continue to fulfill a useful function in the struggle of women to achieve political maturity and social justice.

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<sup>84</sup>Lady Rhondda, This Was My World (London, 1933).

## CHAPTER VII

### A NEW WORLD ORDER FOR OLD?: 1918-1939

The conclusion of hostilities enabled the ICWPP to call its long-planned Congress. Yet it was only at the last minute, after the refusal to permit delegates from the Central Powers to enter France, that neutral Switzerland was chosen as the venue for the Congress.

Delegates representing sixteen nations assembled in Zurich between 12 and 17 May 1919 and amongst these representatives of the world-wide women's peace movement was a twenty-six strong contingent from Britain which included Courtney, Marshall and Swanwick. The meeting had been convened to carry out the resolution passed in 1915 at The Hague that the women should meet at the same time and in the same place as the conference summoned to draw up the terms of peace. The original intention had been that they would monitor the proceedings and present their own proposals to the peacemakers. But it was only by coincidence that they met at the time when the Allied peace terms had just been made public. As a result the planned programme was jettisoned in favour of a discussion of the draft. The ensuing criticism of the terms, which was echoed by many pacifist, radical and socialist organisations, was to provide the basis for the formation of a permanent women's international organisation. /

The war had at least had the effect of bringing foreign affairs into the arena of public discussion. And to this change in Britain the WIL had made no small contribution. The maintenance of the peace was no longer regarded as solely the concern of governments but also of peoples. For the next twenty years as the politicians manoeuvred to maintain the balance of power in Europe, certain representatives of the people who had been acutely disappointed by the treaties, laboured to give effect to the principles and spirit of the Fourteen Points through the medium of the League of Nations. This was the task to which the WIL was to commit itself in the postwar years. /

/ An observer recording events at Zurich in Towards Peace and Freedom noted the change in public attitudes that had come about since the meeting at The Hague. The easy acceptance in 1919 of the idea of a women's congress she attributed partly to the changes in opinion that had resulted from the war, partly to the political emancipation of women and also to the acceptance of pacifist ideals. Many of the delegates, particularly those from the defeated nations, had overcome great difficulties to be present at Zurich. Here, the prevailing atmosphere was one of international goodwill, symbolised by the embrace of a German and a French woman. However, the universal relief and joy at the ending of hostilities was tempered by the terms of the treaties. It became evident that the women's work for peace far from being over was about to enter a new phase. For, the women in common with many other critics, were convinced that the peace

settlement by failing to implement fully the principles of the Fourteen Points was "scattering Dragon's teeth across the soil of Europe."<sup>1</sup>

Their criticism focussed mainly on the treatment of Germany. In the first instance, the women believed that the Germans, who had only accepted the armistice on the condition that the peace would be based on Wilson's Fourteen Points, had been betrayed by the settlement. Also, contrary to traditional practice, the defeated Powers had not been invited to the conference table. Therefore the acceptance of the settlement, made under the pressure of the continuing Allied blockade, was, as the Germans were later to claim, nothing less than a "Diktat." The delegates at Zurich were convinced that the harsh economic clauses and denial of self-determination by the territorial arrangements which in redrawing frontiers had "bartered" millions of Germans "like chattels and pawns" could only instill a desire in Germans to overthrow the settlement at the earliest opportunity. The lesson that Versailles taught Germany, observed Swarwick, was not that war was wrong but that defeat was wrong.<sup>2</sup> The pacifists were also critical of the unilateral disarmament of Germany. Theoretically this was to be the first step towards universal disarmament but the critics regarded it as yet another instance of Germany's victimisation. As they believed that there could be no peace until all member states had

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<sup>1</sup>"Peace and Dragon's Teeth," J. L. Garvin, Observer, 11 May 1919. Towards Peace and Freedom (London, 1919), 6.

<sup>2</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 371.

reduced arms to the same level, disarmament became the priority of WILPF activity in the inter-war years. Thus, the women, who had been so passionate in their advocacy of a negotiated peace in which there would be neither victor nor vanquished, could only regard the Versailles treaty as a repudiation of all they had laboured to achieve. Nor, believing as they did that it was the international anarchy that had led to the outbreak of war, could they accept the attribution of war guilt to Germany alone.

The League, in which so much hope had been invested, was also judged to be flawed. Indeed, the draft of the proposed League of Nations which became available in February 1919 was at that time heavily criticised by the WIL. The executive of the WIL drew up "suggestions on the Draft Agreement" copies of which were sent to President Wilson and the British peace delegation in Paris. The "suggestions" were then published as a pamphlet entitled "League of Nations or Holy Alliance?" The League was condemned as undemocratic. There was no provision for the democratic choice of members of the Council, Assembly or Commissions. Also, the Central Powers and Russia were to be excluded from membership in the League. The effect, therefore, would be the concentration of all power in the hands of the victors. The pacifists drew a parallel between the formation of the League in 1919 with that of the Holy Alliance in 1815 which they erroneously identified with the repressive policies of Russia, Prussia and Austria. They feared that unless the League was amended it would

become an instrument to perpetuate "the domination of the weak by the strong" and not, as originally intended, to further world co-operation.<sup>3</sup> The critics of the settlement were so attached to their ideal that at no point did they take into consideration the enormous difficulties facing the peacemakers in a Europe ravaged by revolution and starvation. And so the perception took root in the early 1920s in certain circles in Britain that this was a "league for the exploitation and oppression of Germany." The lingering sense of having committed an injustice against Germany was never completely eradicated from the national consciousness. The result was that in the 1930s the nation was divided and slow to mobilise its resources in response to Nazi aggression.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>There were, however, some constructive aspects to the settlement. The proposal to establish machinery to facilitate arbitration and conciliation was regarded as a step in the direction of international harmony. However, the provision made by Article 16 for the use of collective economic, military and naval force against any member state who broke the Covenant was greatly regretted as being at variance with the spirit of co-operation and conciliation. Another heartening gesture for feminists was the declaration of the eligibility of women for all positions in the League, whether of the Assembly,

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<sup>3</sup>H. M. Swarwick, League of Nations or Holy Alliance? (London, 1919), 1. WIL Fourth Yearly Report, 4.

<sup>4</sup>H. M. Swarwick, "Democracy and the League of Nations" Towards Peace and Freedom (London, 1919), 15.

Executive Council or the Commissions. This had been a demand included in the Resolutions framed at The Hague in 1915. Swift to avail itself of the new opportunity, the WIL promptly organised a committee dedicated to making this provision a reality. In consultation with women from professional and political organisations, lists of suitably qualified women were drawn up. In practice, however, few women were admitted to the workings of the League. The opportunity was also lost by the peacemakers to take a humanitarian step by ameliorating the position of women. The women at Zurich in resolutions presented to the Powers recommended the inclusion of a Women's Charter in the peace treaty that would recognise women's equal social, political and economic status.<sup>5</sup> However, the time was not yet ripe for the admission that society should be based on the interdependence and co-operation of men and women. The submission of the Zurich resolutions to the statesmen at the Peace Conference came at a time when the conference itself was rent by discord over the failure of the peace terms to incorporate the spirit of the Fourteen Points. Unlike 1915, the delegates from the women's Congress did not meet any of the real arbiters of peace and only President Wilson acknowledged their proposals.<sup>6</sup> /

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<sup>5</sup>Towards Peace and Freedom, 17-18. WILPF. Extract from the forthcoming Report of the International Congress of Women 1919 (London, 1919), 12-14.

<sup>6</sup>Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, Pioneers for Peace: WILPF 1915-1965 (London, 1980), 33.

The acute disappointment over the peace terms convinced the Congress that there was still work to be done. Amid scenes of emotion the like of which Swarwick admitted she had never before witnessed, the meeting pledged itself to continue the work for peace.<sup>7</sup> This decision launched the organisation into a new phase of activity. A permanent organisation with a constitution and elected officers was formed. Jane Addams was elected President, with Gustava Lida Heymann, the German feminist, and Helena Swarwick as Vice-Presidents. Emily Balch, recently dismissed from her professorship at Wellesley College for her pacifism, became Secretary. It was decided that headquarters were to be set up in the same place as the seat of the League to facilitate the work for peace. At Catherine Marshall's suggestion, the new organisation took as its title the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) with the dual objects of striving to bring real peace and continuing to work for the equality of women throughout the world. As an affiliate of the WILPF, the WIL took as its first object the organisation of support for the Zurich Resolutions. The work, it was decided, should concentrate on propaganda for the instant revision of the peace treaties.<sup>8</sup>

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Released from wartime constraints, the WIL was free to be a truly international organisation as part of the ICWPP. After 1919 it

<sup>7</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 318.

<sup>8</sup>Bussey, Pioneers for Peace, 32-3. Swarwick was asked to

took pride in claiming to be the only women's group devoted to promoting internationalism.<sup>9</sup> The various strands of activity that had combined during the war were now separated. Much of the WIL's former domestic work was either subordinated to what was now regarded as its new priority, or was continued by other groups. In particular, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), which arose from the ashes of the NUWSS under the leadership of Eleanor Rathbone, became one of the main proponents of the "new feminism." This movement, by concentrating on securing social and economic recognition for women, took up the policy towards which the NUWSS had been moving in the immediate pre-war years. Meanwhile the WIL as part of the WILPF pursued the emancipation of women on a world scale.<sup>10</sup> /

/ The wartime work for peace formed the basis for a lifetime's commitment to internationalism among those women prominent in the formation of the WIL. With the rise of a new generation of internationalists, the membership and personnel of the WIL changed in the 1920s and 1930s. Nonetheless, continuity and leadership were provided by Helena Swarwick who was Chairman of the organisation until 1923 and thereafter by Kathleen Courtney until her resignation from the

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take the position of Secretary, see Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 323.

<sup>9</sup> WIL News Sheet, November 1920.

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of new feminism and NUSEC see Jane Lewis, "Beyond Suffrage: English Feminism in the 1920's" Maryland Historian, 6 (Spring 1975), 1-7.

Chairmanship in 1933. Until 1924 Catherine Marshall held office both in the WIL and in the WILPF where she was active on various commissions and as its referant to the League of Nations. She represented the WILPF on Dr Nansen's International Committee for the Relief of Famine in Russia, an organisation which she had helped to found.<sup>11</sup> From its inception and between the wars the peace movement undoubtedly bore the impress of the passions and ideals of these women. Although they went their sometimes different ways in pursuit of their internationalist ideals, the WIL remained the common point of reference in the post-war period for Helena Swanwick, Kathleen Courtney and Catherine Marshall. /

After the war, Swanwick, in common with Marshall and several others of the coalition government's critics, found a home in the Labour party. For most of the new recruits drawn mainly from the UDC, the appeal lay in the contiguity of Labour's attitude to foreign affairs with their own. The women, however, combined this perspective with a commitment to socialism. Unlike Margaret Bondfield and Ethel Snowden, whose political careers started in the labour movement, Marshall's attraction to this creed probably dated from her close involvement with Labour through the EFF. On the other hand, Swanwick by her own admission only joined the ILP because of its attitude to the war. Earlier, she had applauded Labour as the only democratic party because of its attitude to the enfranchisement of women. Nevertheless, it was her contact with the working-classes during the war that

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<sup>11</sup>WILPF Reel 31, a biographical sketch of Marshall in 1926.

enlarged her sense of the inequality and injustice practised against her sex to encompass social injustice. /

/' The Labour Party's anxiety to widen its constituency coincided with Swarwick's desire to encourage women to become members of the party. For Labour appeared to fill the role in which she had attempted to cast the UDC during the war. As the only party to subscribe to sex-equality (at least in theory), Labour could lay some claim to women's support. Under the guidance of its UDC members the reconstructed party was now "sound" on foreign policy, and the guild socialism being propagated by G. D. H. Cole and others incorporated liberal tenets whilst satisfying the demand for social justice. The recruitment of middle-class women, however, was not to the taste of everyone, especially to those such as Mary Macarthur and Marion Phillips who were already ensconced in the upper reaches of the party.<sup>12</sup> / Nonetheless, at Philip Snowden's suggestion, in 1921 Swarwick published Women and the Socialist State. In this work she set out to win the "progressive" middle-class woman to Labour by the advocacy of guild socialism. The previous year at Cole's request Swarwick had organised for the WIL a symposium on this very subject. Guild socialism had an enormous appeal for all those who had fought during the war to maintain liberal and democratic principles against

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<sup>12</sup>C. E. Marshall to J. S. M [Middleton] copy, 6 May 1920, CEMP D/Mar/5/2.

the encroachment of the state.<sup>13</sup> Essentially, as Michael Freedon says of R. H. Tawney's socialism, guild socialism was "conceived as an extension of liberalism. Its object was to apply principles recognised in the civilian and political spheres to economic and social organisation."<sup>14</sup> By rejecting state socialism and by emphasising decentralisation and self government this scheme was, in effect, democratising industrial organisation. This democratic socialism, therefore, was attractive to the feminists on two counts. It met their demand for democratic control of public affairs and, equally important, it emphasised the organisation of society to permit each individual, man and woman, "the full exercise of function." The aim of self-development and the opportunity to contribute actively to society were well-established liberal ideals; the difference was that under democratic socialism society would be organised to remove the inequalities and create the economic and social conditions that would encourage this freedom. Thus the socialist state, Swarwick argued, would at a blow meet the needs of feminism and democracy, as well as encouraging the brotherhood of man that would keep the peace. /

As a member of Labour's Advisory Committee on International Questions, Swarwick found herself in the company of Morel, Ponsonby, Trevelyan and Brailsford. This group of "ex-Liberal doctrinaires"

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<sup>13</sup>Women's Conference on Guild Socialism, 4 May 1920; H. M. Swarwick to C. E. Marshall, 20 February 1920, CEMP D/Mar/4/82.

<sup>14</sup>Freedon, Liberalism Divided, 313-20.

brought to the Labour party a collective knowledge and expertise in foreign affairs that was probably unequalled outside the Foreign Office. In the early post-war years this committee was responsible for the formulation of a foreign policy that reflected the nineteenth century liberalism that was the basis of UDC ideology. One should not underestimate the influence of the UDC during the interwar years. Not only were its members prominent in the Labour party and in the peace movement generally, but they were writing the history of the war for future generations.<sup>15</sup> The ascendancy of the UDC ideologues on the Advisory Committee has led to the charge that "their chief influence in the half-decade or so after the war was to crystallise and to verbalise the widespread pacifism which was perhaps the most important single factor bearing upon foreign-policy attitudes in Great Britain."<sup>16</sup> While the counsels of Henderson combined with the responsibilities of power did much to moderate this doctrinaire position within the Labour party, nonetheless the legacy of the UDC was felt throughout the peace movement.

Unlike her friends Swanwick, having no private income, always felt the need to earn her living. She appears to have acted on her belief that it was important for "the completeness of marriage" that

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<sup>15</sup>Taylor, Troublemakers, 178-9.

<sup>16</sup>H. R. Winkler, "The Emergence of a Labour Foreign Policy in Great Britain, 1918-1929" Journal of Modern History 28 (September, 1956): 247-258.

the wife should be self-supporting. When her name was suggested for an unpaid post in the Labour party, not only did she make it clear that she no longer wanted the responsibility for initiating and organising policy but she emphasised that she needed paid employment.<sup>17</sup> The opportunity to return to serious journalism was offered by Morel's death in December 1924 when she replaced him as editor of Foreign Affairs (formerly the UDC) until 1927. During these busy years she raised the paper to an exceptionally high standard. As editor, she gathered much of her copy for Foreign Affairs first-hand by attending the Assemblies in Geneva. This policy had the merit of providing material not only for the paper but also for the opportunity afforded to relay League news fresh from Geneva to her League of Nations Union (LNU) audiences. After having abandoned this organisation in protest at its endorsement of a league that excluded the vanquished powers, she only felt able to withdraw her opposition when Labour pledged itself in 1924 to work through the League of Nations.<sup>18</sup> In 1925 she rejoined the LNU, lectured widely on its behalf and became a Vice-President.

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<sup>17</sup>Notes headed "Work at Labour Office" (Vellacott c. June 1920?), CEMP D/Mar/5/2. She earned her living by journalism and when she had to undergo a serious operation she was dependant on the free services of the surgeon and money raised by a memorial organised by her friends. Swanwick, I Have Been Young.

<sup>18</sup>The League of Nations Union was founded in 1918 as a result of the amalgamation of the League of Nations Society and the League of Free Nations Association. During the inter-war years the Union worked to promote the League of Nations' aims and to secure popular support for the League.

Her aim in Foreign Affairs was to record and comment on international events from a League point of view. The yardstick by which she measured governments' policies was by their honest adherence to the ideals of the League. The conclusion she reached was that most governments kept separate their League duties and their diplomacy. After she was ousted in 1927 by the UDC committee led by Morel's daughter, she received many letters from distinguished contemporaries praising her tenure as editor for the high standards to which she had raised the paper.<sup>19</sup>

The years spent in opposition, however, had taken their toll on Swarwick. During the war she believed that she had been forced into a role, that of critic, which was fundamentally inimical to her constructive mind. When in 1928 her always fragile health broke down she was compelled to withdraw from her political activities. However, the threat to peace that she perceived in the proposals to arm the League in the name of collective security brought her out of retirement in 1934 to challenge this campaign. By the thirties she was regarded by the younger generation of feminists and pacifists, such as Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby, as an elder statesman of the peace movement.<sup>20</sup> In recognition of her services to suffrage and peace, in 1931 Swarwick had been made a Companion of Honour.

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<sup>19</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 458-62, 428.

<sup>20</sup>Vera Brittain's Personal Letter to Peace Lovers No. 11, December 1939, Vera Brittain Archive, Mills Library, McMaster University, Hamilton.

The convictions honed by her activities during the war years also drew Marshall to the Labour party. The prospect of two by-elections in her home county was an irresistible challenge that would once again put her formidable organising talents at the service of her ideals. In 1920 she set about transforming the small disorganised party in the Mid-Cumberland division into an effective political force. The rumour that she might herself stand as parliamentary candidate for Cockermouth prompted Kathleen Courtney to write from France in April 1921 regretting that her friends could not be there to assist her.<sup>21</sup> Marshall had already declined the suggestion that she take on the secretaryship of Labour's Advisory Committee. A breakdown in 1917, occasioned by strain and overwork, she claimed, had led to a loss of confidence and deprived her of the capacity for "executive action." When faced with the choice between constituency (and possibly national politics) and work to promote internationalism, Marshall heeded her mother's injunction that she should not be "led away by the calls of the lesser duty." Caroline Marshall reminded her daughter that she was one of the "very few international people" who could do this work.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, rejecting the "lesser duty" of conventional politics, Catherine Marshall devoted

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<sup>21</sup>K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 17 April 1921, CEMP D/Mar/5/2.

<sup>22</sup>C. E. Marshall to J. S. M., 6 May 1920. Caroline Marshall to C. E. Marshall, 2 April 1921, D/Mar/2/40.

her energies and expertise to furthering internationalism through the medium of the WILPF and the WIL.

Kathleen Courtney also rejected work for Labour. Although the Secretary of the party was understandably anxious to recruit an outstanding administrative talent, she was not to be won. Unlike her friends, she was not "wholeheartedly in sympathy" with the party's aims. Nor did she believe that women's interests were best served by any political party, for inevitably, they became subordinated to the political issues of the moment.<sup>23</sup> Acting on this belief Courtney, after much soul-searching, returned in 1918 to the executive of the NUWSS and thereafter to the NUSEC where she became Vice-President. True to the imperative that had compelled her to join the suffrage movement, Courtney took part in the crusade for family allowances and became Chairman of the Family Endowment Committee.<sup>24</sup>

Her immediate postwar disenchantment with the existing political organisations once more turned Courtney to practical relief. Between 1919 and 1922 she helped administer the British Fund through the Friends' Mission in Vienna. This work gave her first-hand knowledge of the devastation wrought by war on the civilian population in the newly created states of Austria, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. These experiences combined with the several later

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<sup>23</sup>C. E. Marshall to J. S. M., 6 May 1920; K. D. Courtney to C. E. Marshall, 5 March 1918, CEMP D/Mar/3/52.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.; A. M. Royden to K. D. Courtney, 16 January 1918, FL KDC/H1/1-8. WILPF Reel 31.

visits to South-East Europe as an administrator and observer, only confirmed her determination that war must be rooted out.<sup>25</sup> From 1920 when she joined the League of Nations Union (LNU) she helped promote public acceptance of the League as the arbiter of peace. And as Swarwick's successor in 1923 to the Chairmanship, she made her own distinctive contribution to the WIL. 'During the late twenties this organisation became perhaps the foremost champion of disarmament in Britain.'

Courtney's association with the LNU and its successor the United Nations Association (UNA) lasted until her retirement in 1951. During the Second World War she lent her support to the Government by undertaking two speaking tours of the United States on behalf of the Ministry of Information. She was present in San Francisco in April 1945 when delegates from fifty Allied nations met to draw up the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter affirmed the belief in the necessity of saving mankind from the scourge of war; it also reaffirmed its faith in fundamental human rights and in the equal rights of men and women. For her services to her country Courtney was awarded the CBE in 1946 and the DBE in 1952. On her ninetieth birthday, Dame Kathleen received felicitations from U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations. At his request she was presented with one of his specially struck peace medals because she was "a true servant of peace." In a letter to her friend in 1955, Royden wrote: "I dwell on

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<sup>25</sup>Wilson, "Three Twentieth Century Women of Action."

the thought of how perfectly you always have responded and will respond to every call, and therefore how many many people thank God that you were born."<sup>26</sup>

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Having been loud and constant in their denunciation of the obligations imposed by the Versailles Treaty that were preventing Germany's economic recovery, the WIL and Labour were dismayed but not surprised when on the default of reparation payments the French in 1923 invaded the Ruhr.<sup>27</sup> Swarwick concurred with the view prevalent in the Labour party that the invasion was merely the pretext, under the guise of an expedition to collect dues owed, to secure what France had been denied in 1919, namely the left bank of the Rhine.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, the French quest for security was legitimate, even though as an issue it dominated and soured Anglo-French relations in the immediate post-Versailles years. The WILPF had attempted to oppose, if not forestall, the invasion by hastily summoning a conference at The Hague at the end of December 1922 on the subject of "A New Peace." The assembled representatives of the various peace societies passed resolutions demanding a new and just treaty and forwarded to the Powers the meeting's recommendation for the appointment of an independent

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<sup>26</sup>UN News, September/October 1951. A. M. Royden to K. D. Courtney, 10 February 1955, FL KDC/H1/1-8.

<sup>27</sup>E. Windrich, British Labour's Foreign Policy (Stanford and London, 1952), 28. Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 364.

commission to investigate the reparations question. Swanwick and Marshall were among the band of "messengers" deputed to visit the neutral nations with these recommendations. En route, the delegation stopped in Paris where they saw some British members of the Reparation Committee and where they were received in the Senate. However, they saw no member of the French Government.<sup>28</sup>

The deadlock caused by the passive resistance of the population of the Ruhr, which the WIL applauded, led to international intervention. The response of the Powers was to set up at the end of 1923 an independent committee of experts under the chairmanship of the American banker Charles Dawes. The committee's mandate was to assess the capacity of Germany to pay reparations and suggest the means by which this could be achieved. The resulting Dawes Plan of 1924, which bore some resemblance to the Hague recommendations of December 1922, helped Germany meet her treaty obligations. However, this was only an interim settlement, although reparations did not again become a live issue until 1928-29.

France's acceptance of the Dawes Plan owed something to the firmness of the new Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, and also to the fact that in France a left-wing coalition under Herriot replaced the intransigent Poincaré in June. The improved relations between the two socialist governments also provided an opportunity to settle the

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<sup>28</sup>Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 366-8.

long-standing differences over French security. One of the first acts of the Labour government was to reject the proposals embodied in the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance that had been submitted to its Conservative predecessors for their consideration by the Council of the League. The Draft Treaty was the outcome of the deliberations of a committee established to prepare a plan for the reduction of armaments in accordance with Article 8 of the Covenant. At the time of the Draft's publication, Swanwick and the left-wing of the Labour Party had been vehement in its condemnation. The Draft only considered the questions of security and disarmament; and this security was to be obtained by separate treaties between the various nations subscribing to the general treaty.<sup>29</sup> The left-wingers regarded this as a perpetuation of the old diplomacy which regarded security as a "legalistic-militarist" problem that could be solved through mutual alliances binding one country to come to the assistance of another. Such an interpretation threatened the very foundation of the League. Swanwick's criticism derived not only from her conception of the League but from hostility to France's very real security concerns. She complained that the Draft Treaty "had been built upon the special need of the victors in the world for security"; whereas the League's aim

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<sup>29</sup>See Swanwick's attacks on the Draft Treaty in "the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance" Foreign Affairs, February 1924, "An Alternative to the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance" Foreign Affairs, March 1924. Windrich, British Labour's Foreign Policy, 36.

should be to provide a system of universal security. Labour's alternative to the use of force was the institution of an all inclusive system of arbitration. This alternative was found in the Geneva Protocol.

The Protocol on the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes drawn up to replace the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance offered France security based on arbitration not on force. Provision was made for all disputes to be submitted for arbitration. Failure to do this would result in the application of sanctions already provided for in Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant. Believing that peace was secured by the removal of grievances not by the use of force, Labour regarded an agreement on arbitration as a necessary preliminary to disarmament. The inducement that won the reluctant support of Labour's left-wing was the understanding that when the Protocol was ratified by the League Council, then plans could be made to summon a disarmament conference. Swanwick confessed that she had been "dragged shrieking all the way" into concurring in the Protocol. The stumbling block to its acceptance for the pacifists was the retention of Articles 10 and 16 in the agreement. In order to obtain French consent to the extension of arbitration it had been necessary to accept the hypothesis of military sanctions against an aggressor. The choice facing the left-wing was either accept sanctions, hoping that the promised

disarmament talks would render them unnecessary or face up to the degeneration of the League into sectional alliances.<sup>30</sup>

The reality was that at the heart of the dispute were two irreconcilable conceptions of the function of the League. It was either an instrument to enforce the Treaty of Versailles, or it was a means of encouraging the growth of peace through co-operation and the "development in well-doing," a role in which force played no part. Swanwick had always claimed that there was no philosophical basis in ethics for the renunciation of force. Therefore, she resorted to utilitarian arguments. The last war, she believed, had clearly demonstrated the inefficacy of force. And threats without the capacity to back them up, she regarded as both futile and damaging. Even though she admitted the contradiction, once her vote was given to the Protocol she became, thereafter, its staunchest supporter. Later, when Baldwin's Conservative Government repudiated the Protocol, she became a vociferous critic of its replacement by the Locarno Treaties signed in December 1925.<sup>31</sup>

The Fifth Assembly of the League of Nations in 1924 was notable not only for MacDonald's personal triumph in securing consent for the Protocol but it was also the occasion of Swanwick's emergence on to the

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<sup>30</sup>"The Conclusion of the Fifth Assembly" Foreign Affairs, November 1924.

<sup>31</sup>Her support for the Protocol was demonstrated in "The Conclusion of the Fifth Assembly" and in correspondence published in the Manchester Guardian 16 May 1928 and 14 May 1929.

international stage. Having repeatedly declined to stand for Parliament, her appointment as substitute-delegate to the Fifth Assembly was a both a recognition of her loyalty to the Prime Minister and a tribute to her outstanding knowledge of international affairs. This short-lived Labour minority Government marked the apogee of her political influence. As the UDC was the recruiting ground for MacDonald's administration Swarwick could claim personal friendship with no less than nine of his Cabinet and also with a further ten members of the Government.<sup>32</sup> As for the Prime Minister himself, she was bound to him by ties of loyalty and admiration forged during their wartime dissenting campaigns. However, writing later, a jaundiced Norman Angell preferred to characterise the relationship between Swarwick and MacDonald as sycophancy on her part and vanity on his.<sup>33</sup> Her experiences at Geneva were exciting and fulfilling. This satisfaction developed despite her appointment to the Fifth Commission "the rag bag of miseries and forlorn hopes" as rapporteur on refugees. Skilled and informed as she was on disarmament and political questions, she had little knowledge about "Opium, Refugees, Protection of Children, Relief after Earthquakes, Prison Reform, Municipal Co-operation, Alcoholism, Traffic in Women" - all subjects that were considered to be women's concerns. She accepted the appointment to the Fifth Commission but

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<sup>32</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 373.

<sup>33</sup>Angell, After All, 242.

protested against the assumption that humanitarian issues were necessarily the "woman's sphere."<sup>34</sup>

Swanwick did achieve one personal triumph at the Fifth Assembly. In response to the request by the other women delegates that a woman's voice be heard on arbitration and disarmament, she was invited to wind up the debate on the Protocol. However, her speech, which protested against both sanctions and war, was misinterpreted and applauded as a protest against war alone. Nonetheless, her address did much to dispel the notion that women were concerned only with humanitarian not political issues. In 1929 as delegate to the Tenth Assembly she was appointed to the Political Commission and Mary Agnes Hamilton, the other British woman, was placed on the Economic Commission. Yet, in 1929 only fifteen women attended the Assembly as delegates and technical advisers, of whom seven were active members of the WILPF.<sup>35</sup>

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The return to the system of alliances at Locarno was regarded by the WIL and Labour as a retrograde step. The only advantage was that, as the Conservatives had always emphasised that security must precede disarmament, the treaties could be said to have removed the obstacle to the summoning of a world conference on disarmament.

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<sup>34</sup>Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 385.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 404. Bussey, Pioneers of Peace, 74.

The League of Nations' Preparatory Commission on Disarmament, finally established in September 1925 in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant, was to study the problem with a view to summoning a conference. The slowness and clear reluctance of some, like the British members, to take action aroused disappointment.<sup>36</sup> Impatient with the delay, the WIL began to make preparations in January 1926 for a large-scale demonstration to press for the summoning of a world disarmament conference. The other object of the campaign was to persuade the government to commit itself to the compulsory arbitration of all legal disputes by signing the Optional Clause of the statute establishing the International Court of Justice.<sup>37</sup>

The gesture that was to mobilise public opinion was to be a nation-wide women's peace pilgrimage. The precedent for this enterprise was the extremely successful suffrage demonstration of 1913. Acting in conjunction with twelve other women's societies, the WIL staged a Peacemakers Pilgrimage in May and June 1926. Thousands of women from all quarters of the kingdom bearing their blue and white banners converged on London. On their way to the capital they spread their message along their routes. Meetings were held in the towns and villages through which they passed. The campaign culminated on the 19 June with a grand rally in Hyde Park. The resolutions from this gathering urging the British government to take a lead in promoting

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<sup>36</sup>Windrich, British Labour's Foreign Policy, 52.

<sup>37</sup>Bussey, Pioneers of Peace, 50.

disarmament were presented in July to the Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain. The sympathetic reception of the Pilgrimage appeared to indicate a widespread sentiment for peace throughout the country. The creation of a climate of opinion generally favourable to peace owed much to the activities of the many peace societies that flourished in the inter-war years. So successful was this venture, which was largely the inspiration of Courtney that, on her initiative, the more permanent Women's Peace Crusade (WPC) was organised to continue the campaign for disarmament. The WIL under Courtney's leadership made disarmament its main preoccupation. As part of the campaign for peace the WPC campaigned in 1928 for Britain's adherence to the American inspired Kellogg-Briand Pact to outlaw war. The following year the organisation threw its energies into procuring a "Parliament of Peacemakers." The enfranchisement in 1928 of all women on the same terms as men made the WPC women hopeful that they could now make their views effective. / Parliamentary candidates were asked by the various WPC committees to state their positions on support for the Kellogg Pact and the signing of the Optional Clause. Those candidates whose response was satisfactory were assured of WPC support in their constituency. The Labour Party which already adhered to these points promised to support all these causes if returned to power. / When Labour was returned to

office in June 1929 the WIL, believing that it had in some measure contributed to this success, hailed it as a victory for democracy and peace.<sup>38</sup> In its all too brief tenure of power Labour attempted to fulfill its election promises. However the efforts to implement arms reduction were halted by the party's fall from office in August 1931.

The former Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, chaired the long-awaited Disarmament Conference which met in February 1932. At a special session on 6 February the public campaign of the previous two years for a reduction of arms was given recognition when large numbers of organisations were allowed to submit their petitions to the delegates. The WILPF presented a petition bearing over three million signatures, a million and a half of which came from Britain alone. A year earlier at a WIL rally Henderson had declared his belief: "At the Disarmament Conference as elsewhere...the Governments will do what the people want. If the people want disarmament, they can have it."<sup>39</sup> This optimism, unfortunately, was not borne out by events. The work of the conference mainly foundered on the demand of Germany for equality of treatment and France's determination to maintain her military superiority, although all the participants showed a reluctance to make concessions. The conference adjourned in July without having made any progress. Germany left and then was coaxed back to the conference

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<sup>38</sup>Pax International, July 1929. WIL Fourteenth Yearly Report, 6-7.

<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Bussey, Pioneers for Peace, 95. Henderson made this speech at a WIL rally in London in February 1931.

table but the accession of Hitler to the Chancellorship doomed the proceedings. In October 1933 Germany withdrew both from the Disarmament Conference and the League.

As Vice-Chairman of the Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organisations, Courtney threw her energies into the support of Henderson's continuing but futile efforts to bring the Powers back to the conference table. But the failure to persuade Japan to evacuate Manchuria, the disintegration of the Disarmament Conference and the withdrawal of Germany from the League, all pointed to the fragility of the peace. And as the tension in Europe mounted people's attention was turning from disarmament towards collective security under the auspices of the League of Nations. The fundamental flaw of the Covenant was that there was no way by which decisions could be enforced. It had always been assumed by most League adherents that the disapprobation of the world community would be sufficient to bring recalcitrant members to heel. Now the rise of the fascist dictators in Italy and Germany only served to emphasise the vulnerability of a system that had no means of enforcing its sanctions. For in reality, even the application of economic sanctions required the backing of force.

The revival by the French in 1932 of an earlier plan to arm the League with an air force sparked off a fierce divisive debate within the peace movement between those who supported collective security by armed sanctions and those who opposed the use of force under any circumstances. This split over collective security gave birth to the

current connotation of pacifism. The earlier broader meaning that related merely to support for, and the discussion of, the means to secure peace was now replaced by the narrower interpretation of "pacifism" as referring to what was formerly known as "absolutism." In order to distinguish them from the "pacifists," the supporters of the League who were prepared to use force to maintain the peace were usually referred to as "internationalists." At first the INU, the largest of the societies that supported the League, was sharply divided. Some like Angell and Lord Robert Cecil advocated arming the League, while others, amongst whom was Courtney, were resolute in their opposition. As the "hot propaganda" of the militarists circulated, Swarwick was drawn from her four year retirement (imposed by age and ill-health), to give the "reasoned reply" she believed to be absent from the debate.<sup>40</sup>

Her first salvo, published in January 1934 under the auspices of the WIL, was primarily directed at Lord Davies, who had founded the New Commonwealth Society expressly to promote the idea of an air force to act as a policing agent.<sup>41</sup> In New Wars for Old Swarwick voiced her disapproval of arming the League. She believed that far from

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<sup>40</sup>H. M. Swarwick to E. Balch, 13 July 1934, WILPF Reel 70 111 314 1371. In 1933 the INU had 388,255 paid subscribers according to Donald Birn, "A Peace Movement Divided: Pacifism and Internationalism in Interwar Britain." Peace and Change vol.1 no. 2 (Spring, 1973), 20-24. J. A. Thompson, "Lord Cecil and the Pacifists in the League of Nations Union" Historical Journal 20, 4 (1977), 949-959.

<sup>41</sup>The New Commonwealth was founded by David Davies to advocate an international police force to prevent aggression.

solving the problem, the use of force would only exacerbate the situation by substituting "new wars for old." She attributed the failure of the League, not to its conception but to the selfish pursuit of national interests by the governments of the Great Powers. They had failed to inspire the confidence in the League's justice and impartiality that alone would encourage states to abandon the search for alternative forms of security.

In Frankenstein and His Monster which was the sequel to New Wars for Old, Swarwick argued that the existence of any air force, even for policing, created dangers. She expressed the popular fear of the murderous power of the air plane which was regarded as the ultimate weapon of destruction. Instead of creating an international air force, she argued that civil aviation should be placed under international control as "aviation for world service." This demilitarisation of the air, she believed, could well be the first step towards the reduction of other armaments.<sup>42</sup> The last of the trilogy of tracts, Pooled Security: What Does It Mean? was a rejoinders to the critics of New Wars for Old, the most prominent among whom was Angell. They had already crossed words in February in the columns of Time and Tide

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<sup>42</sup>Swarwick, I Have Been Young, 502-3; Frankenstein and His Monster: Aviation for World Service (London, 1934) was a sequel to New Wars for Old: A Reply to the Rt. Hon. Lord Davies and Others (London, 1934). Other works in which she attacked the proposals for collective security were - Pooled Security: What Does it Mean? (London, 1934) which was a reply to some critics of New Wars for Old: Collective Insecurity (London, 1937) and Roots of Peace (London, 1938) which was a sequel to Collective Insecurity.

and any former friendship was now ended. As far as Swanwick was concerned, his championing of military sanctions rendered him an apostate. For his part, Angell later described her as "not only a pacifist but an absolutist of the most unbending kind" - charges that she strenuously denied.<sup>43</sup> In the long run, Swanwick was right in believing that peace could only come through a change in attitude. Nor was she wrong in attributing at least some of the failure of the League to the protection of national interests. If economic sanctions were to be effective every nation had to uphold the embargo on war material and fuels, even if it harmed their own economy. But of course every democratic government is hostage to the electorate. She was also out of touch with the international realities of the 1930s. Her ideal prescriptions did not take into consideration the rise of dictators with a will to war. Although this too, with a fine pre-determinism, she attributed to the injustices of Versailles.

In spite of its deficiencies there was still a consensus for action through the League. The Peace Ballot organised by the INU in 1934-55 demonstrated popular support for the organisation; although there was less enthusiasm for armed sanctions. The Peace Ballot had been a sampling of opinion not a call to action, but it did inspire the American section of WILPF in 1935 to initiate the world-wide "People's Mandate to Governments." The Mandate demanded that governments

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<sup>43</sup>Swanwick's letter, Time and Tide, 10 February; Swanwick et al., 17 February; Angell, 24 February 1934. Angell, After All, 240.

fulfill their obligations as defined under the Covenant and the Kellogg-Briand Pact. In Europe alone it was estimated that by 1937 there were over 14 million signatories.<sup>44</sup>

Yet, even as people were signing the Mandate, Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in defiance of the censure of the League. In an attempt to ward off the Italian invasion, government representatives from Britain, France and Italy had met in Paris in August 1935. Alarmed by the rejection of the British terms, Catherine Marshall emerged from retirement and went to London "to be on the spot for political action." In common with many others in the peace movement she believed it was the unequal dispersal of natural resources that was at the root of Italy's aggression. The solution, she believed, was economic internationalism whereby the League would be responsible for the disposition of raw materials.<sup>45</sup> However, the national self-interest of Britain and France overrode the protection of Ethiopia's territorial integrity. And the failure to make sanctions effective, by excluding oil from the embargo, ensured the success of the Mussolini's venture and the collapse of the League.

Pacifists and internationalists continued to campaign and hold conferences and rallies for peace but there was a perceptible change in attitudes taking place. A number of formerly absolute pacifists, one

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<sup>44</sup>Bussey, Pioneers of Peace, 145-7.

<sup>45</sup>C. E. Marshall to E. Balch, 21 August 1935, WILPF Reel 70 1617-23.

of whom was Clifford Allen, announced their support for armed collective security. The INU, although admittedly not pacifist, after much debate in December 1936 announced its support for national rearmament.<sup>46</sup> By so doing, it drew upon itself an attack from Swarwick in her Collective Insecurity (1937). The distaste and growing unease with the brutality of Nazi policies came to a head in March 1938 with the Anschluss. Even though many Austrians welcomed union with Germany, the violent propaganda and threats which culminated in invasion "shook even the most ardent sympathisers with Germany's just grievances." Far from seeing the invasion as fulfilling a legitimate demand for self-determination, the WILPF was shocked by the breach of the Covenant. The WIL urged the British Government to apply economic sanctions in the event of further aggression, for it rightly feared that this was only the first step in a policy of conquest directed against the smaller states of central and eastern Europe. The German threat during the summer of 1938 to seize the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia led in September to the meeting in Munich of the leaders of Britain, France, Italy and Germany - but not of Czechoslovakia. When Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, returned from this conference claiming to have won "peace for our time," the WIL like the INU, eschewing the popular euphoria, regarded the agreement as a

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<sup>46</sup>Birn, "A Peace Movement Divided"; M. Gilbert ed., Plough My Own Furrow (London, 1965). T. Kennedy, "Clifford Allen" in H. Josephson ed., Biographical Dictionary of Modern Peace Leaders 1800-1975 (Westport and London, 1985).

a surrender. The Sudetenland had been sacrificed and few political observers doubted that this was a preliminary to the seizure of the rest of the state. The British section of the WILPF recorded that they were "overwhelmed with shame" at the part played by their Government in this crime.<sup>47</sup>

Kathleen Courtney, who earlier had stood against the LNU's advocacy of collective security, was one of those who now condemned Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. Her biographer, Francesca Wilson, later commented that even in 1936 "in her heart of hearts" Courtney thought that the League should be willing to employ military if economic sanctions failed. But Wilson added, "she did not stress this."<sup>48</sup> The fact that she continued as a member of the executive of the LNU and was later to become its Chairman, implies an acceptance of its policies. Courtney was an internationalist, rather than a pacifist. The impression that she was opposed to all war had been conveyed by her insistence that there must be a moral basis to the conduct of British foreign policy. She believed that some wars were justified. "I don't see how you can be a pacifist," she said later in life, "unless you are prepared to make it a whole way of life - and I do find many pacifists very unpacific people." In 1933 she resigned as Chairman of the WIL because she was no longer in accord with the views

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<sup>47</sup>Bussey, Pioneers of Peace, 189, 163.

<sup>48</sup>"Happy at Ninety" Manchester Guardian, 11 March 1968.

of the executive of the WILPF which had adopted a pacifist point of view. And in the course of a long friendship, pacifism was the only subject on which she and Maude Royden had been divided.<sup>49</sup>

The WILPF's contribution to helping Czechoslovakia was to offer sanctuary to some of the refugees. Catherine Marshall assisted in this task by working in 1938 for the British Committee of Refugees from Czechoslovakia. She offered her home at Hawes End to the Committee as a hostel for refugees. Marshall renounced her pacifism and withdrew from the WILPF and in 1940 gave up her membership of the National Peace Council which was still advocating non-resistance.<sup>50</sup> Not all the former pacifists changed their minds after Munich. Some like Maude Royden who joined the pacifist Peace Pledge Union, were reinforced in their pacifism. Soon she came to realise her error; although she did not publicly recant until 1940. She then admitted, as many others caught in the same moral dilemma had done in 1938, that there were greater wrongs than war. "I believe now that Nazi-ism is worse than war," she wrote, "it is more hideously cruel, more blind, more evil - and more important."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>A. M. Royden to K. D. Courtney, 4 July 1949, FL KDC H1/1-8. United Nations News, Sept/Oct 1951. New World, April 1968, speech by Lady Violet Bonham-Carter on the occasion of Dame Kathleen's ninetieth birthday. Wilson, "Three twentieth Century Women." Courtney's resignation, 5 May 1933 BLPES WIL 4/15.

<sup>50</sup>Jo Vellacott, "Catherine Marshall" in Josephson ed., Biographical Dictionary.

<sup>51</sup>Sheila Fletcher, Maude Royden (Oxford, 1989), 274.

Of "our gang," only Swanwick, it appears, did not renounce her opposition to war. In common with most UDC dissenters, she had made the Treaty of Versailles the scapegoat for the sins of Nazi Germany and she continued in this conviction. While she did not condone Nazism, by her separation of German domestic from foreign policy, she was able to condemn the one and excuse the other. This was a dichotomy that many of her former friends and colleagues now recognised as untenable. Swanwick persisted in laying the blame for the the rise of Hitler at the door of the Allies. She continued to maintain the distinction between the ruled and their rulers that had been so fundamental to pacifist policy during the war. If the peace settlement had been just, she claimed, the German people would not have supported Hitler's militarism. In spite of evidence of a barbarity that infringed the most basic of human liberties, Swanwick remained true to, or blinkered by, her beliefs of the past twenty years. In part, this was because she was caught in the logical impasse of her pacifism. She was unable, it would seem, to countenance the use of force to defend the peace. Indeed, she had always evaded the vital question posed as early as the 1920s by Arnold Forster - what is to be done in the event of a breach of the common peace?<sup>52</sup> A revolution in international ethics, Swanwick believed, would render this an unnecessary question. Yet, she acknowledged that change was only brought about by education and by

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<sup>52</sup>H. M. Swanwick, Sanctions and the League of Nations Covenant: A debate between Mrs. H. M. Swanwick and Mr. W. Arnold-Foster (1928?)

time; she had no advice on how to combat the immediate problem of a regime bent on aggression. Although Swarwick denied that she was either an absolutist, isolationist or extreme socialist, one modern historian believes that she displayed an "isolationism so extreme and emotional as at times to be indistinguishable, even to herself, from pacifism."<sup>53</sup>

In the months of uncertainty before and after the declaration of war in 1939, Swarwick turned to her old UDC comrade, Ponsonby. In 1938 he had defended the German seizure of the Sudetenland and was one of the few to oppose the declaration of war.<sup>54</sup> He, too, believed that Germany was only taking what had been denied her by the Allies' refusal to revise the peace treaties. Shortly after the outbreak of war Swarwick wrote to Ponsonby: "It really is uncomfortable to feel how desperately right we have been all along." She added: "France and Britain have not known how to make peace and now it looks as if they wouldn't know how to make war.....the un-necessity of this tomfoolery is what makes one want to catch an understanding eye."<sup>55</sup> In spite of her stated unbelief in the necessity of the war, she nonetheless augured that it would lead to far-reaching changes. A month before her death she wrote to Ponsonby:

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<sup>53</sup>Ceadel, Pacifism in Britain, 157.

<sup>54</sup>The Times, 24 September 1938.

<sup>55</sup>H. M. Swarwick to A. Ponsonby, 7 September 1939, APP c681/153.

I think we are at the beginning of a tremendous shuffle of principalities and powers, of which the little game of Spillikins in 1919 was only a preliminary shake....I think this disturbance deeper and more far reaching than any of our insular thinkers realise....The neutrals will not affect the issue of the war. I do think some sort of Federal Union in Europe will emerge - but not as a rechauffe of the League.<sup>56</sup>

In November 1939, wearied by continual pain and ill-health and saddened beyond measure by the failure of her life's work, Helena Swarwick committed suicide. In her biography written in 1935 she had said that she did not like growing old and stupid. Nor did she like being ill so often. She believed that too much admiration had been expressed for "dying in harness." Thus, true to the beliefs and principles by which she had always lived, so she died. She was remembered by her friends and associates for her "high courage and independence of spirit," her idealism and her enthusiasm.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>H. M. Swarwick to A. Ponsonby, 19 September 1939, APP c681/155.

<sup>57</sup>Vera Brittain, Testament of Experience (Glasgow, 1980), 226. Brittain quotes a note left by Swarwick saying that she thought "the best thing to do was to remove myself from the world." There is also an entry in Brittain's diary referring to her death on 25.11.39. Brittain Archives, D22. Swarwick, I have Been Young, 508. "An Appreciation from a Correspondent" Manchester Guardian, 18 November 1939.

## CONCLUSION

By the late 1930s how far had British women progressed towards the WIL's goal of "peace and freedom"? After a generation of political and social activity they could claim moderate success in achieving legal equality and admission to the public service. As a corollary of enfranchisement, by the end of 1919 women were eligible to stand for Parliament, hold any civil or judicial post, or carry on any civil profession or vocation. Prejudice, however, had not vanished along with the removal of the legal barriers. And in 1937 Virginia Woolf bitterly lamented in her Three Guineas the continuing familial, social, educational and professional inequalities inflicted upon women. Many of the younger generation sought to establish themselves in the professions, while their elders, who had been raised in the suffrage campaign, for the most part continued to work for the women's movement. Only a few women attempted to enter politics. The most successful of these were either party workers or those who had risen through the ranks of the Trade Unions, or, as in the case of the first two women MPs, the beneficiaries of party nepotism. Lady Astor and Mrs Wintringham claimed seats formerly held by their Tory husbands. As in most trades, as newcomers to party politics women were required to serve their apprenticeship. They contested the marginal or, as was more usual, the hopeless constituency. Yet, if changes in legal and political rights had occurred quickly, in those social and economic

areas which depended on "changes in hearts and habits" the amelioration was much slower.<sup>1</sup> It was to the removal of these injustices by attention to the special needs of women that the new feminists continued to address their efforts.

The women who have been the focus of this work had a wider vision of freedom than that of just ameliorating the condition of their sex, although they believed that this was essential to the creation of a just society. If J. S. Mill provided them with the raison d'être to combat political discrimination, by extension, this meant a defence of fundamental democratic rights. Having absorbed the teaching of the "new" Liberals, the democratic suffragists did not resist all government intervention and, indeed, believed it to be necessary to remedy social wrongs. Nonetheless, they were unable to reconcile their principles when as the corollary to the already burgeoning interference of the state, the Government during the war assumed ever increasing control over the nation. The pacifists and libertarians never accepted, or even acknowledged, that the security of the state might override individual freedoms. They conceived their duty as would-be citizens to resist the encroachments of the state on the freedom of

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<sup>1</sup>E. Rathbone, "Changes in Public Life" in R. Strachey, ed. Our Freedom (London, 1936).

speech, assembly and the right to information. By their opposition they believed that they were resisting the growth of militarism in a nation ostensibly committed to the destruction of this evil in Germany. Their campaign was built on a faith in public opinion that originated with nineteenth-century liberal thought.<sup>2</sup> They believed that the public would make the right judgements if presented with all the facts. "Believe in the people" had been their watchword and they had judged it to be their responsibility to put these facts before the public. Their arguments presupposed a popular wisdom of which there was little evidence. Nor, in practice can all the facts be available on which to base democratic control.

Peace and freedom were inseparable in the pacifist mind. And just as the freedom of women was only partial, so the advances in peace work were limited. For all the women's efforts, the campaign for a negotiated peace failed to redirect the country's patriotism. The specific attempt to mobilise women for peace had also failed. Women had not responded to the appeal which the WIL made to their instincts as wives and mothers. Women proved not to be inherently pacific. And the relationship between feminism and pacifism that had been posited by the secessionists in 1915 was shown to be wrong by the support for the war of feminists within the NUWSS itself, as well as in other feminist

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<sup>2</sup>E. H. Carr, The Twenty Years Crisis 1919-1935 (London, 1962).

organisations. The minority feminist-pacifist position was firmly rooted in liberal ideology, not in biology.<sup>3</sup>

'Yet, if the pacifists were unsuccessful in the short-term, they could at least claim to have achieved some success in helping to propagate the ideal of the League of Nations. It is always difficult to assess the impact of ideas and the effectiveness of those individuals and organisations who seek to promote change, for this is the result of the interaction of many influences. It could be argued that for the most part the women preached to the converted, although the WPC did reach a wider constituency. Even if the converts were few, the WIL and other pacifist organisations at least kept alive the hope of future change and, ironically, this was a significant contribution to the war effort when in the last years the country was looking to a better future. As the nation became more disillusioned, discussion of the future assumed a paramount importance. War weariness, the public appeal by Wilson and the endorsement of the League by the Labour Party all played their part in winning public sympathy for the League. That the ground was prepared owed at least something to the unsparing efforts of the pacifists.'

Several critics have considered the creation of the League as the victory of an ideal over the reality of international politics.

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<sup>3</sup>R. Evans in Comrades and Sisters, 151, suggests as an explanation of the failure to win wider support, that the historical links created in the nineteenth century between nationalism and feminism were still strong at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The error, these critics have claimed, lay in imagining that a League aiming to act on the principles of the Fourteen Points could succeed. It was this belief that was the great pacifist illusion. According to one historian it was "the central myth of twentieth century liberal internationalist ideology."<sup>4</sup> The promoters of the League believed that relations between states could be conducted on the same ethical basis as individual human relationships. Swarwick was one of those who confused ethics and politics. Her frustration and antagonism arose from her inability to reconcile her ideal with the reality of the League as established in 1919. This ambiguity arising from support for a League without support for military sanctions bedevilled the peace movement in the 1930s. As Russell observed in 1936: "If the method of sanctions is to be used effectively, the sentiment behind it must be respect for law, not love of peace."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the moral simplicity of the vision did not match the realities and complexities of inter-state relations. Nonetheless, even those critics who have argued that there can never be a conjunction between "right values and practical politics" have recognised the importance, even the necessity, of the emotional appeal to mankind of a moral goal.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>George W. Egerton, "Great Britain and the League of Nations: Collective Security as Myth and History" in Z. Steiner, ed. The League of Nations in Retrospect: Proceedings of the Symposium (Berlin and New York, 1983).

<sup>5</sup>Bertrand Russell, Which Way to Peace?, (London, 1936), 75-6.

<sup>6</sup>Carr, The Twenty Years Crisis; F. H. Hinsley, Power and the Pursuit of Peace (Cambridge, 1963).

The WIL could reasonably claim to have made a modest contribution to changing the climate of opinion during the war and to sustaining such changes afterwards. By their efforts the WIL and INU and other groups fostered a popular interest in foreign affairs that had been unknown in the prewar years. The large membership of the INU and to a lesser extent, that of the WIL, testified to the metamorphosis in public attitudes. A great deal of the support for the internationalist organisations came from women. The Peace Ballot of 1935, for instance, was made possible largely owing to the efforts of the women canvassers.<sup>7</sup> The mass demonstrations during the 1930s testified to the public awareness and desire for peace. Even if, as some critics claim, the ideal they laboured to promote was flawed, even impracticable, it had taken hold. The proof of this was the creation in 1945 of the United Nations.

The women's suffrage movement had provided many of the ideas that had in one way or another led to change. The movement had also been a training ground for feminist and pacifist leaders. Courtney, Marshall and Swarwick were more than a part of the continuum of women's progress towards equal and responsible citizenship. They successfully directed the attention of women to the larger problems of world citizenship. They were pioneers in feminism and internationalism. Moreover, as Swarwick observed, unlike men, they had no models, or

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<sup>7</sup>Rathbone, "Changes in Public Life."

mentors. They found their way by trial and error.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the "true progress in civilisation in our twentieth century" as measured by the liberation of women and by the attempt to outlaw war, as Philip Noel-Baker observed in 1975, was in large part due to the efforts of women such as Kathleen Courtney, Catherine Marshall and Helena Swanwick.

<sup>8</sup>Swanwick, I Have Been Young, 437.

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