LOVE AND WORK: FEMINISM, FAMILY AND IDEAS OF EQUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP, BRITAIN 1900-1939.

The question which lies behind this inquiry is one which was first posed in 1911 by the Fabian Society Women's Group: *which social arrangements would permit women both to work and to mother children and also share fully, as individuals, in the social wealth of the community?* [1] This is not only one of the most persistent aims of feminist practice in Britain in the 20th century but one which has proven to be the most intractable. The reason for this lies in a gender knot [2] between public life, workplace and family responsibilities, and women's and men's participation in each. While this has been challenged and deconstructed in private and public life, the challenge has been most successful in terms of women's access to public life and the labour market. A continuing gendered division of labour and responsibility in the private sphere shapes the relationship between family responsibilities and access to public life, employment and resources. In 1995 the main barrier to equal opportunity identified by a study commissioned by the EOC was expressed in a contemporary rephrasing of the 'Fabian question': "[T]he practical problem is how to combine the fact that as social beings most people live in families and are interdependent with equality of opportunity for each individual". It remains a problem, they argue, because the British economy is locked into a gender order which is reinforced through interactions between labour market processes, household decisions and state policies. This means that "[G]iven the sexual division of labour in the family, competitive market processes exacerbate inequality between men and women in the labour market, which then feeds back to rationalise family members' behaviour. From the point of view of equal opportunities, this is a vicious circle, though not inescapable". <Humphries and Rubery 1995 p 27 and p16> [3]

---

[1] This is a summary of the task the Fabian Women's Group set themselves in *Three Years Work*. <Dyhouse 1989 p 57> The pamphlet is not dated and was published in 1911 or 1912. It is reprinted in Alexander 1988.

[2] I prefer this term to the more usual gender order' for two reasons: that the sense of regularity contained in the idea of order is false and the idea of a knot or tangle of inter-connecting issues which is connected in turn to other issues and questions is an appropriate metaphor. My use was, I thought, original; however I later read an account of Latin American feminist use of the idea of "knots" to characterise tensions that have arisen for feminism: "[K]nots are not only tangles; they are the circles on tree trunks. They thus indicate points of intimacy and intersections that can be vulnerable. They do not just need cutting or untangling, but provide *nodular clues for making new connections and reorienting thinking*." <Rowbotham 1992 p285, my ital>

[3] To argue that this challenge has not been met is not my purpose. Although there has been provision which has allowed a minority of women "both to work and to mother children" without economic and other penalties, a number of recent studies and reports demonstrate that this has not been the case for the majority of women with dependent children in Britain who, although combining paid work with their family work, have a very unequal share of "social wealth". For example: *Mothers in Employment*, report of the Parliamentary Employment Committee, HMSO 1995; *The Economics of Equal Opportunities*, EOC 1995; Robert Lindley ed *Labour Market Structures and Prospects for Women*, The Institute of Employment Research, University of Warwick/EOC 1994 ; Julia Brannen, George Meszaros, Peter Moss and Gill Poland *Employment and Family Life: A Review of*

Why has no satisfactory answer to this question been found?[4] It is a question which is only superficially simple. More than eighty years separate the two formulations of this problem and although a number of attempts have been made in this time to address it, none have been successful in doing so for more than a small proportion of women. Nor can I claim to answer it. My intention is an inquiry which will create a basis for going on to think more clearly and productively about the issues which the 'Fabian question' raises, the interconnection of care (primarily but not exclusively associated with maternity) and inequality and exclusion in twentieth century Britain. This means looking at some of the conceptual problems which surround a political approach to questions about the family and gendered roles in it through an examination of "successive strata" of women's movement history as it has approached questions of family and maternity and related issues. [5]

The thesis is therefore not directly addressing but framed by an unanswered question which, I argue, is as pertinent today as it was in 1911. It addresses two main areas of interest: the construction of the family in political discourse, and the history of the women's movement. These are not subjects which are commonly discussed in association but, as Foucault has argued, the categories and separations we take as self-evident are often part of the problem. Women's equality or liberation [6] and family interests are more usually presented in opposition. Examples are the argument (which has both conservative and feminist variants) that it is because of women's responsibilities as mothers that they do not have an equal share of

---

Research in the UK, Employment Department, HMSO 1994; Susan Harkness, Stephen Machin and Jane Waldfogel *Women's Pay and Family Income Inequality*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, October 1994; Anne Harrop and Peter Moss 'Working Parents: Trends in the 1980s', *Employment Gazette* October 1994; *Scottish Women's Report to Beijing*, Co-ordinating Group on Representation, 1995; Jane Waldfogel *Women Working for Less*, LSE 1993; WW Daniel *Maternity Rights: The Experience of Women* London, Policy Studies Institute 1980; Susan McRae 'Returning to work after childbirth: opportunities and inequalities' *European Sociological Review* 1993; Susan McRae *Maternity Rights in Britain* London, Policy Studies Institute 1991; Heather Joshi 'The Cost of Caring' <Joshi 1992>; Innes <1995 chapters two and six>.

[4] I see 'satisfactory' as making it possible for more than a minority of women with dependent children or other time-consuming caring responsibilities to carry out those responsibilities without long-term loss of opportunity or income in employment, and/or in public position and influence, and with access to forms of support that meets their needs (which would include the choice of supported full-time care at home). The EOC research quoted from highlights (as I do, in *Making it Work*) how equality policies which have been introduced to equalise opportunities between men and women may selectively benefit women who are in a position to take advantage of them often because they do not have caring responsibilities, or are in a position to pay others to assist them, while leaving others worse off, both relatively and in real terms. <Innes 1995 85-90, 277-279

[5] The idea of family which interests me is centred on function rather than formation; problems of definition are discussed later in this section. I include extended kinship groups and single and two-parent headed families with dependent children. However any discussion of the family must pay attention to the interplay between family diversity and the normative view of the family based on the latter form, and on a view of the proper division of breadwinning and caring responsibilities within the family. The gendered roles I am particularly interested in are the mother's principle responsibility for caring for dependent family members (and frequently non-reciprocally for non-dependent members such as husbands and other adult men) but I recognise that these roles have been extended to other female family members irrespective of whether they have children themselves.

decision-making, promoted and high-status employment or of income and resources; and the argument that "the crisis in the family" is due to women's move into employment and greater autonomy. This opposition is a function of a discursive formation with deep roots. It needs to be critically examined and to do so it is necessary to map some of the connections between these areas of interest. Thinking about ideas is best carried out step by step on the basis of reflection on given situations, Foucault argues, and "this will necessarily be historical in some of its aspects". <1980 p 145> The history of the women's movement is a rich source for making visible and understanding these questions.

My approach is through first thinking about the concepts which structure a separation of the (modern, Western) categories 'family' and 'state' and how conceiving them as separated serves to both to obscure and reproduce a gender order that still shapes most of women's and men's lives in Britain. I argue that we need to make more explicit within social and political theory the recognition that some of the fundamental categories we have constructed to understand society are part of the problem, especially the separation of the familial and the political, and that these categories "do not describe aspects of human existence that are necessarily distinct... but which have been made distinct at specific historical moments". <Nicholson 1986 p 12> This calls for attention to how we conceive of and discuss the political. Both recent feminist political theory and feminist historiography have led to questioning of conceptual boundaries and how knowledge is shaped and suppressed. Political theorists who began by questioning the limited role of women in public life then asked why: their explanations brought into question the categories which shape public life and the accepted boundaries of the political, including the way the family has been defined as outside the scope of the political. <Coole 1986 pp 129-131; Pateman 1989 pp 3-4> This questioning has for some theorists found common ground with the ideas of post-structuralism, though for others this is a worrying development. Women's and feminist history has shown a similar pattern: beginning with the *recovery* of women's history, the idea that you can simply 'write women in' was then scrutinised: again the absence of women raises questions which direct attention to the nature of history and historical categories. [7] <Scott 1988 p 29; Hall 1992 p 5> Feminist history has emphasised that making women visible "was not just a matter of unearthing new facts, it was a matter of advancing new

---

[6] The varied aims of the women's movement are discussed later in this section.

[7] For example: "We wanted not just to put the women back into a history from which they had been left out, but to rewrite that history so that proper recognition would be given to the ways in which gender, as a key axis of power in society, provides a crucial understanding of how any society is structured and organised." <*Gender & History* editorial vol 1, no 1> "We are learning that the writing of women into history necessarily involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of historical significance, to encompass personal, subjective experience as well as public and political activities." <Ann D Gordon et al, p 89, cited in Scott 1988 p 29>

interpretations which not only offered new readings of politics, but of the changing significance of families and sexuality". <Scott 1996 p 3> Social and political theory does not only seek to understand 'what is the case' but shapes appropriate subjects for its inquiry. History is not only a record of changes in ideas of gender in public and private life but also a participant in the processes of power/knowledge which allow some questions and not others to make sense.

The thesis is a political history and a history of ideas. This reflects the nature of feminism, that it is a social and political movement *and* a complex of ideas. <Delmar 1986 pp 12-13 and p 18> This is not an approach to political history which is useful only with respect to the women's movement but it is perhaps more evidently necessary because of the close relationship between cultural views of women's nature and role, women's self-perception, and possibilities of equality. The concept of discourse as developed by Foucault offers a theoretical language, a way of re-framing *words and things*, the relationship of language and ideas to subjectivity and social, economic, cultural and historical contexts. It is a way of talking about statements, texts and practices as bound up with the construction of social reality. This is (contrary to some criticisms) not to deny that reality but it is to say that we know it through processes of knowing, through the ways in which the world is "rendered thinkable". As an approach to political history it offers a theoretical framework which allows for complexity and contradiction and is alert to exclusion and which emphasises an integral connection between the formal, the cultural and the personal, between meaning and opportunity structures (an idea partly captured by the concept of a "discursive shift"). I discuss this approach in chapter one, and also look at the ideas of public and private and equality and difference.

How has the women's movement in Britain approached women's role in the family in its history? Feminism in Britain has repeatedly been identified with only one of its variants, equality feminism, and seen as wholly or predominantly about making it possible for women to join the (male world of) the public. This is true of the second wave view of the first wave <Dyhouse 1989; Nicholson 1986>, and of the early 20th century view of mid-Victorian feminism. <Strachey 1928; Atkinson 1914; Gollancz 1917> This has made necessary a repeated rediscovery of 'difference' feminism <Atkinson 1914; Gollancz 1917; Bacchi 1990; Bock and James 1992> and it is this aspect of feminism which is most congenial to a feminist discussion of women's position in the family (although it also raises problems). My interest in women's family position in relation to rather than in opposition to women's movement goals is part of a contemporary re-assessment of arguments from difference. Looking at how the women's movement in history addressed questions of women's position in the family means first of all arguing that, contrary to many

historical accounts, women's work as mothers and position in the family has always raised questions seen as crucial for the women's movement; the identification of equality with access to public roles defined in opposition to family roles has served to obscure this history. This change of focus reveals repeated attempts to address women's position in the family both as a source of oppression and of strength, and to renegotiate the boundary between the public and private which structures women's position in the family. These have included attempts to re-value the private and to include women's role in the private within definitions and tasks of citizenship. Repeatedly feminist thinkers and activists have sought to refuse the terms of a debate which offered a false choice between equality and difference, which, stripped of rhetorical disguise, said to women, do you want to have what men have or do you want to be mothers? The organised women's movement has rarely taken citizenship on the male model as self-evident and it has repeatedly seen its aims as other than, or not confined to, women's access to the public world. This is true of the idea of citizenship in Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, of the mid-Victorian liberal feminist critique of women's position in the family and the campaigns for legal reforms, and the ideas of maternal feminism in the late 19th century. Alongside the discussion of sexual relations in the late-Victorian period, the legal campaigns and changes had the effect of extending a conception of rights associated with citizenship to women within the family. These issues are discussed in chapter two which is a preamble to the more extensive discussion of these questions in the early twentieth century. In chapter three I argue that the women's movement, especially insofar as it was influenced by working-class women's experience, continued to explore and respond to questions raised by women's position in the family. This included the analysis of women's position as mothers in Fabian socialist-feminism which was part of a wider feminist critique of marriage; this led to the idea of maternal endowments which was the most important feminist family policy proposal in the period. Much of this argument looks forward to ideas expressed in 'new' feminism after 1917 and to the welfare agenda which women's organisations developed in relation to the local state after 1918. Feminist discussion of maternity, women's family role, work and class was influenced by and contributed to a new view of the value of state intervention in relation to family responsibilities which was part of the growing debate on the state role in welfare. Women's welfare, as work and as recipient, is closely tied to her role in the family; it now had a more public dimension, politically and professionally, and women's work as mothers could be presented as a service to the state. An exploration of difference again came to the fore in the post-war, post-suffrage period as equality arguments were seen as limiting, and was part of the attempt to find new feminist directions appropriate to new political and social circumstances. In the 1920s this took a variety of forms; this is illustrated

by the ideas of the writer Willa Muir and in the dispute between 'new' or social feminism and 'old' or equality feminism which I discuss in chapter four. Most recent accounts of this period and dispute take polarised positions, which brings into focus the continuing opposition between equality and difference and between emancipation and women's role in the family.

The argument of this thesis is cumulative. Although the chapters follow different paths they converge on the idea that understanding the feminist engagement with women's family roles and questions of social welfare demands a less narrowly-focussed history of the women's movement and draws attention to the loss of complexity which can result from rigid political categories. Feminist writers and organisations concerned with women's position in the family were not interested in and active only in that area, and the breadth and context of their ideas is important. Part of the interest of twentieth century feminist history is also its difficulty: that the ideas and priorities of organisations and influential individuals do not fit into neat groupings; one individual or group may bring together infant mortality, opposition to marriage bars, eugenics and socialism, for example; another give priority to equal pay, access to the professions, improved training for midwives and think women with young children should not be in paid work. Nor are the boundaries between women's voluntary associations and women's political organisations clear cut, or even the boundaries between activities within them: the same organisation may run sessions on embroidery, amendments to a current piece of legislation and on the League of Nations in the same week and with the same sense of seriousness. Women's movement history includes a number of attempts to address problems associated with maternity and in caring roles in the family, in relation to legal change, equal political citizenship and in terms of social citizenship. Feminist concern with women's role as mothers and in the family led to a view of a social, primarily state, role in relation to these questions, suggesting that organised women's advocacy may have played a greater part in the creation of a political consensus for state welfare provision in the interwar period than has been recognised. Attention to this dimension of women's movement history also demonstrates that attempts to renegotiate the gender settlement as it affects private and family life are a great deal more difficult to carry through than is creating a greater role for women in the public sphere, hard though that also may be. It is an argument for and suggests an approach to refusing an opposition between equality and difference, and for forwarding in mainstream political fora a feminist 'politics of the family'[8] and in conclusion I comment on how the tension between

---

[8] The phrase 'the politics of the family' originates in the anti-psychology arguments of RD Laing and others in the late 1960s and depends for its impact on the contrast of the terms 'politics' and 'family' as positioned separately by a division between public and private Before that period it would have seemed improbable to talk of a 'politics of the family'. In *The Politics of the Family and Other Essays* based on a series of radio talks

family responsibilities and gender equality remains an issue today and make some suggestions about how this argument could be taken forward.

I discuss the contested meanings of the term 'social feminism' below, but emphasise that I see it as a (in Foucauldian terms) 'provisional unity', a categorisation which is useful to enable a focus on feminist approaches to welfare issues, social reform and women's family roles (both in personal terms and in relation to social policy and equality). While asserting this as a dimension of early twentieth century British feminism which has been overlooked or misread I do not however imply a definition of feminism or body of policies to which the historical actors and associations adhered, rather a group of ideas, policy and campaigning priorities and a feminist philosophy of difference and of social responsibility which were shared and overlapping between different groups and individuals but in which there were also significant divergences and differences of emphasis. It is through retrospective identification and in writing history that we create such unities and continuities and they are a subject for interrogation rather than to be taken for granted <Scott 1997 p 37>; an interrogation which (as discussed on pages 3-4, above, and in the conclusion) makes reference to how contemporary preoccupations and perceptions shape the questions we ask.

My approach to these questions draws on an analysis of primary texts: *The Economic Foundations of the Women's Movement* (1914) and (to a lesser extent) *Life-Saving in War-Time: A Campaign Handbook for the Infant Welfare Propaganda Committee* (1916) by Mabel Atkinson in chapter three, and *Women: An Inquiry* (1925) by Willa Muir in chapter four. Atkinson was one of the first women students to graduate from Glasgow University and an active member of the Fabian Women's Group: her little-known 1914 tract is important in raising a number of arguments which are central to feminist debate in this period and in marking a shift in feminist thinking about independence, sexual relationships and motherhood, and because it looks forward to the ideas of new feminism and the welfare agenda which women's organisations would develop. Her 1916 work on infant mortality, published under her married name Mabel Palmer, is important both for its arguments and as evidence of the link between feminism and campaigning for better provision for infant and maternal welfare. Muir's essay, which was out of print until 1996,[9] is a problematic text but very interesting as an

---

broadcast in 1968 Laing describes a politics of the family as creating the "tentative outlines... of a theory that does not yet exist" and as bringing ideas from sociology and anthropology to the study of the "psychosocial interior" of families "in our own society". <London, Tavistock 1971 p 66>

[9] The essay has now been reprinted in a collected edition of the published work of Willa Muir, *Imagined Selves*; in introduction the editor Kirsty Allen describes this edition as "the first real recognition of her qualities as a writer and an intellectual". <Canongate 1996 p xii>

attempt to develop a feminist account of gender difference using psychoanalytic ideas, and a rare example of feminist ideology from a Scottish author in the interwar period.[10] In support of my argument I also suggest new readings of much better-known and classic feminist arguments, Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (in chapter two) and Eleanor Rathbone's case for family endowments (in chapter three). Additionally, I draw extensively on secondary sources, mainly from recent feminist scholarship. Chapters two and three and look at feminist thinking about maternity and women's family roles in relation to ideas of citizenship and the growing perception of a necessary state role in family welfare. Chapter four looks at equality and difference and the ideas of social feminism in the period after 1918. The discussion of social feminism in chapters three and four and the relevance of ideas of state welfare to this view of feminism provides the context for the social-liberal conception of women's citizenship in the inter-war period which I discuss in chapters five and six. My discussion of the interwar women's movement is based on the papers of the EWCA and the SCWCA held in the Scottish Record Office and on the smaller collection of EWCA papers in Edinburgh Central Library. This archive has not previously been analysed. I draw on these primary sources for two main reasons: firstly, they are Scottish or, in Atkinson's case, have a significant Scottish connection; and secondly because I am interested as much in divergence of approaches and ideas as in the continuities which can also be traced. My view of the significance of divergence is theoretically-based, but it is equally emphasised by the nature of these sources. In order to understand the range of concerns of social feminism and ideas of citizenship in the interwar period I found it useful not only to look at the pre-war period but also to pay some attention (if limited by time and word-length) to the antecedents of many arguments and approaches in the 19th and late 18th centuries. Further, as the history of the women's movement in Scotland has been the subject of very little research, known sources are very limited. This is true of the inter-war period in general although it has begun to change for English women's movement history over the period of my research. I found therefore that in order to begin to understand the Scottish women's movement in this period it was necessary to read more widely in English feminism, both primary and secondary texts.

My interest in the history of the interwar years and in the intersection of political, social and cultural history, was initially aroused by the fiction of three Scottish women writers, Willa Muir <1931, 1933>, Catherine Carswell <1920,1922> and Nan Shepherd <1928,1930> (each of

---

[10] The work of a number of other writers in the period would also be relevant and most have been neglected. Among Scottish writers Rebecca West and the non-fiction work of Naomi Mitchison come particularly to mind, but in English feminism the ideas of Winifred Holtby and Dora Russell deserve far greater attention then they

whom was little known at the time). I became increasingly interested in their social and cultural context and in the link between how they saw women's lives and feminism. This interest led me to Muir's essay *Women: An Inquiry*. Alison Light's querying of the way the inter-war years are seen "as a kind of hiatus in history" and that feminist history of the period, with a perspective shaped by the battles for suffrage has tended to confirm this view stimulated further interest, since this view is hard to reconcile with the exploration and sense of opening-up to be found within women's fiction and with the personal and cultural opportunities many women remember: tennis clubs and 'the pictures' on Saturday night, fashionable clothes worn for formal family photographs, lipstick and powder compacts no longer confined to the rich and morally questionable. Light comments that for women it was a time of realignment of public and private behaviours and values, norms and expectations and that we need a history which can encompass this kind of narrative as well as the more conventional and self-consciously political forms of emancipation. <Light 1991 p 9>

Feminism in history and politics

From a position of extremely limited knowledge of the history of the women's movement at the beginning of second-wave feminism[11] in Western Europe and North America in the late 1960s there has been an intensive reclamation of that history. Much of the historical exploration has been marked by second-wave preoccupations, and this is particularly so in relation to women's position in the family. Thane and Bock comment that the historiography of women, in the course of considerable expansion over the past two decades, has dealt less with questions of maternity and caring roles than with the history of female suffrage, women's employment and issues of sexuality. Although maternity has been included in women's history as part of women's historical experience "this has been an area in which interpretation has had the stamp of present-day ideas strongly projected onto the past. Today, stressing motherhood as an important feature of many women's lives is often seen as 'traditional', 'conservative' or even 'reactionary'... The situation of women is often analysed in terms of the sexual division of labour and true feminism is often seen as necessarily aiming for its abolition, as the escape from motherhood and as the abolition of gender roles. This was not usually the earlier women's movement's view of liberation". <Bock and Thane 1991 p 7> Because of this it is necessary to

---

have thus far been paid, and, in an earlier period, the remarkable and remarkably active feminist Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy.

[11] The description of the women's movement in Britain and North America after 1968 as 'second wave' originates with Firestone <1971> and depends on a sense that the 'first wave' is both very different in style and preoccupation and that it came to an end. Feminist history has since questioned both those assumptions, and that

argue that first-wave feminism *was* engaged with questions of women's role in the family, as I do in chapter two, and to reassess discussion of maternity and the family, as I argue in the conclusion to chapter four, taking a critical position on the assumption that it accepted a necessarily conservative view of the family.

Integral to the approach of this thesis is that it draws on a number of diverse and extensive areas of literature and discusses that literature, where appropriate, at different stages of the argument; because of the diversity of these secondary sources none is however analysed in depth. Certain work has been a starting point for my thinking and informs the overall thesis. Carol Dyhouse <1989> raises the question of how the family was seen and understood in the history of the women's movement. Her account of the main issues of concern and areas of argument in the period 1890-1914 is very useful; the interwar period is not as thoroughly explored. Linda Nicholson <1986> develops a similar argument in relation to the first-wave women's movement in the USA, which has been criticised for its failure to challenge women's place within the family, a criticism which she argues is ahistorical. A close conceptualisation of work in the family and the work of welfare and social reform, she emphasises, underlay many of women's political priorities. Her broad argument is insightful although it suffers by seeking to over-inclusively explain feminist history through a view of the shifting boundary of the public and private.

Analyses of the campaign for family endowments by Hilary Land <1979, 1990>, Jane Lewis <1991> and Susan Pedersen <1993> reclaim an important story within women's movement and welfare history and raise questions as to how this can best be understood. Jane Lewis's work on women's roles at home and in the family between 1870 and 1950 is relevant although women's movement views and activism in relation to this are not the focus of this work <1984>; her account of *The Politics of Motherhood* raises important questions especially in relation to the divergence in views between the working-class women's movement and those of welfare-minded officialdom. Pat Thane's work on women in the Labour Party and welfare in the pre-1914 and interwar period <1990, 1991> gives weight to my argument that women's organisations contributed significantly to building the consensus for a major state role in welfare. There has not been a study of the social-liberal feminist contribution, although Beaumont's study of the English women's movement after 1928 suggests that it was significant. <1996> The broad perspective of Thane and Bock's comparative study of gender,

---

the first wave was really the first. However a shorthand distinction between the movement after 1968 and the period 1850-1928 is convenient.

maternity and welfare policies <1991> has been valuable. Accounts by Jeffreys <1985> and Vicinus <1985> of how women created lives which were an explicit alternative to family roles as conceived by Victorian domestic ideology are illuminating.

The main focus of the history of British feminism in the early and mid-twentieth century has been on suffrage, education and employment and, to a lesser extent, women in the labour movement. Accounts by Pugh <1992>, Banks <1993>, Bolt <1995> Caine <1997> and Rowbotham <1992, 1997> have been a helpful background to my inquiry, particularly so for Banks' and Pugh's analysis of the NUSEC agenda, Banks' account of the labour movement and feminism in the interwar period, and Pugh's analysis of the impact of the women's movement on parliamentary politics. Bolt and Rowbotham's comparisons with the women's movement in the USA add perspective particularly in relation to social feminism. Women's movement engagement with questions of family and welfare is not central to these accounts however and must be gleaned to some extent by reading 'between the lines'. Banks and Pugh give an account of the demise of feminism after 1928 which presents social feminism as a damaging direction and relies on an opposition between equality and women's family interests; I query this. I strongly disagree with Jeffreys' account of this decline and the reasons for it, but find her work insightful nonetheless. <1985> None of these accounts includes the Scottish women's movement[12] though only Caine is accurate in describing her subject as English as opposed to British feminism. Scottish women's movement history has suffered from neglect; aspects are invaluably covered in the collections edited by Breitenbach and Gordon <1990, 1992>, though these focus on an earlier period and different areas of concern from my own; Burness' accounts of Scottish women in party and parliamentary politics are a partial exception. <1992, 1997> Cree's study of the social work agency 'Family Care' and its origin in the vigilance movement explores the historic relationship of social work and feminism in Scotland. <1995> There is room for a great deal more research.

Despite the social importance of the family and its salience for political discourse it has been paid relatively little attention within the study of politics. Although the family is a major topic of political attention, both neo-conservative and within 'New Labour' and there has been a renewed focus on families as a subject of policy and legal change, very little explicit attention is paid it within political science and theory. <Okin 1989 pp 7-10; Nelson 1997 pp 2-3> This means that the uses of 'family' within political discourse and assumptions made about it in political theory remain relatively untheorised; again, more research is called for. Elshtain comments that

in political science the family "remained invisible or was seen as part of that vast consensus-making machinery necessary to a stable, well-run political society" <1982 pp 1-4>; and that this has meant an absence of "conceptual clarity and something approaching coherence in most thinking on the contemporary family and its relationship to a larger social and political framework". <Elshtain 1982 p 5> An important exception to this is *Gender, Justice and the Family* by Susan Moller Okin. <1989> Although the context and primary focus of her analysis is different from my own in that she situates her discussion in relation to contemporary liberal theories of justice, there are parallels in the conclusions we reach, although I disagree with the value she places on gender neutrality. I argue that we need to think more clearly about the family as it is assumed and used in political discourse, and to review gendered assumptions about family roles which are elided by a superficial gender neutrality. The area of political theory which has most to contribute to this process has been, in recent years (and with some exceptions) strangely silent on questions of the family. A view of the family as the main site of the oppression of women has been taken as a defining characteristic of second-wave feminism <Nicholson 1986 p 42>, but while there was extensive discussion of the family within feminism in the early 1970s the family has been neglected as a subject more recently; as Nelson comments, it is "as if there were white spaces on the page just at the places where careful thinking about families is needed". <Nelson 1997 p 2> Much feminist writing is also marked by an opposition between women's equality and family interests and that because of this there has been a premature closure in this debate. Edited collections by Yalom and Thorne <1982> and Segal <1983> are important in re-opening this debate, as is Elshtain's 1982 collection and Stacey's argument.<1986> Nelson's edited collection opens up a range of issues about the relationship of feminism and the family although, with the exception of Midgley and Hughes' contribution these address issues of greater pertinence in the USA and with the exception of Nicholson's paper, are not historically-minded. <Nelson 1997> While there is extensive discussion of the family in sociology this does not address the political and historical questions which interest me; it has however been relevant as a background and for accounts of family formation and organisation especially in relation to policy.

Accounts of the history of the family have also been important to this thesis. Although family history has been one of the main growth areas in social history since 1970 there has been a relative absence of feminist input. <Hall 1992 pp 15-16, Davidoff 1995 p 229> Gittins' work is an exception <1982, 1985, 1986>, as is *Family Fortunes* by Davidoff and Hall <1987>, although family formation and ideology is the context rather than focus of their study of gender.

---

[12] Pugh includes some references to Scotland but no overview.

Although not feminist in impetus or theoretical approach, recent work in family history has been theoretically and politically significant because of its emphasis on the historically specific and diverse forms which families take (although there is no consensus on this). The recognition that there is no single Western family system <Anderson 1980/1995 p 2> has led to new ways of thinking about the family. Arguments which have emphasised sentiment and privacy as defining characteristics of the modern family have also been significant <Nicholson 1986 p 109> especially as this has included an emphasis on how the family has lost functions of production, some health care and welfare, education and social control as part of its withdrawal into privacy. <Hareven 1994 p 35> Family history raises important questions about the role of cultural factors as explanations for family change and appropriate ways of studying them.

Questions of definition

The changing language with which "organised women" (in the EWCA's usefully unspecific phrase) have named their political purposes, and indeed the extent to which they have seen their purposes *as* political rather than as a form of social organisation alternative to politics, creates particular problems for the historian (and could in itself form a subject for a thesis). I briefly discuss definitions of feminism and associated terms below; an approach to questions of meaning more generally is the preoccupation of chapter one.

The term *feminism* is generally held to have been introduced into English from France in the 1880s. It had dictionary recognition in Britain in the 1890s and was in common use by the early twentieth century. For Atkinson and other Fabian feminist writers it is clearly a familiar term which they assume their readers need no explanation of. Strachey sees as her subject in *The Cause* the "organised women's movement" and defines its membership via a discussion of whether Florence Nightingale can be considered a feminist: she concludes she was "a feminist of sorts", somewhat contradicting her attempt to confine feminism to those whose central concern is with the position of women, are active in the women's movement, and (in the case of women) identify with other women. <1928 pp 23-25>The EWCA do not use the term feminism in any of their committee papers but use the terms 'woman movement' or 'women's movement' in ways which are similar to Strachey, and also, commonly, describe themselves as 'women citizens' and 'organised women'. The term 'citizenship' is extensively used by them and more generally in the interwar period; it links to ideas of liberal citizenship as a defence of democracy but is also used as a partial synonym for feminism. Holtby saw the term feminism as having fallen out of favour by the 1930s <Holtby 1935 p 6, cited by Pugh 1992 p 235>; Beaumont

argues that citizenship was a euphemism for feminism used by organisations eager not to be identified with the negative stereotyping of feminists, and that many interwar women's organisations saw themselves as non-political and identified feminism with political pressure groups. <Beaumont 1996> The EWCA's use of citizenship does not seem to me a euphemism but used to name a status which is an achievement of the women's movement and the responsibilities which come with that status. However they may also have wanted to evade stereotyping. They shared NUSEC's aim of "real equality" and saw themselves as part of a historical women's movement <EWCA 1939>, but conceived of both within a wide view of social reform.<see chapters 5 and 6>

There was a need in the late-19thc for a more user-friendly term: there were a number of unwieldy designations of 'the Cause' of which that was the most convenient. Writers and activists also referred to 'Womanism' (a term which has been used again more recently in the Black women's movement), 'The Woman Question' and 'Women's Mission' (bringing womanly values into public life); the term 'emancipatress' was also used. In its earliest use the term feminism seems to have been confined to the difference strand of feminist thinking <Rowbotham 1992 p 9>, although Strachey, describing the NUSEC discussions on its future direction makes a clear distinction between its "feminist" objects, by which she means "the plain equality line" and broader objectives which came to be associated with difference. <1928, 1978 pp 369-70> By the 1920s when a distinction was drawn between old or equality feminism and new feminism, the term is generic with appropriate prefixes. Atkinson seems to use it generically (although her inclination to 'difference' makes it hard to be certain); she also uses 'the feminist movement' interchangeably with 'the women's movement'. <1910, 1914> The way the Fabian Women's Group use 'feminist' alongside 'socialist' reflects the increased use of the latter in the period, which is likely to have played a role in bringing into usage a parallel term for those who gave priority to women's emancipation. Rathbone saw feminism and the women's movement as equivalent, but not with egalitarianism: "the women's movement comprises a large number of reforms, all of which are 'feminism', but only some of them 'equality'".[13] She saw the aim of feminism even more widely as "enabling women to be and do their best" but did not believe that "will have been accomplished even when every sex barrier has fallen". <Time and Tide, 12 March 1926 p 254, cited in Alberti 1996 p 69> Women in the labour movement however commonly used feminism to distinguish what were seen as middle-class, liberal-influenced aims from their own socialist emphasis on the needs of working women and as such identified it with equality feminism. The early second-wave women's liberation movement saw feminism similarly and

positioned itself in contrast to what it saw as the narrowly egalitarian approach of the early twentieth-century movement: one anthology was entitled *From Feminism to Liberation.* <Altbach 1971> The term feminism was rediscovered along with the with arguments from difference although it rapidly came to be used generically as part of yet another attempt to distinguish between types of feminism: this time as liberal, radical (further subdivided as revolutionary and cultural) and Marxist feminisms, a typology which has also caused problems.

Feminism was defined in dictionaries in the interwar period as "[A]dvocacy of the claims of women" <Shorter Oxford 1933>; it is now defined as "the advocacy of the rights of women (based on the theory of equality of the sexes)" <OED 1989>, aligning it with equal rights.[14] The term is difficult to define more meaningfully, as West <1913>, Banks <1981 p3> Rowbotham <1992 pp 6-7> and Delmar <1986 p 8> have said. West famously commented that feminism was often an unspecific term of accusation: "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute". <West 1913; Marcus1983 p 219> Banks, one of the first British historians of feminism in the second-wave, describes it broadly as: "[A]ny groups that have tried to change the position of women, or ideas about women" <Banks 1981 p 3>, but this both ties feminism to organisation and could include anti-feminist groups seeking a change in the position of women. Banks makes a distinction in the 19th and early 20th centuries between evangelical ('women's mission'), equal rights and socialist feminism. <1981 pp 7-8> More recent definitions have attempted to overcome this problem: Lovenduski and Randall describe as feminist "all ideologies, activities, and policies whose goal it is to remove discrimination against women and to break down male domination of society". <Lovenduski and Randall 1993 p 2, citing Dahlerup 1986 p 6> This definition is also slightly too broad: equal pay, for example, is a policy which would remove a form of discrimination against women and break down male domination of society but many of its advocates could not be described as feminist (Michael Portillo for example). Recent discussion of this difficulty of definition has included the argument that we need to think in terms of *feminisms* <Delmar 1986 pp 8-9; Burton 1992>; others have resisted this idea as diminishing the central argument that women are oppressed *as women.* <Daly 1994 p.c.> The difficulties of definition are not accidental but are closely-related to the question of what can be included in a feminist programme.

---

[13] This distinction reflects a distinction made in contemporaneous debate in France and Italy <Bock 1994 p 415>

[14] The definition of feminism in the *Penguin Dictionary of Politics* is, similarly, as equal political and social rights with men <1993 pp 186-7>, overlooking all of radical, cultural, eco, black and most of socialist feminism.

The term feminist is sometimes used to designate ideas and activities earlier than the period in which it was used by the historical actors themselves; this is defensible with terms of political analysis but best avoided. Rowbotham cautions against the danger of "approaching the past as colonisers, bearing the superior wisdom of our present day women's studies departments, as we arbitrarily label all and sundry as feminist" <1992 p 12>, and there is a need for finer distinctions. There is an equivalent danger however in refusing the label feminist to women's political actions and opinions which do not fit present day ideas of feminism. Delmar argues that making a distinction between 'the women's movement' and 'feminism' will resolve some of the problems of definition and is a reminder that "feminism can make no claim to an exclusive interest in or copyright over problems affecting women". <1986 pp 12-13> While I appreciate that a distinction should be drawn between 'women's issues' generally and feminist arguments about them I do not think a clear-cut distinction between feminism and the women's movement can be sustained: it is possible to take an anti-feminist position on any number of women's issues, but the idea of an anti-feminist organisation as part of the women's movement would make sense according to Delmar's argument and this would not be consistent with how 'women's movement' is understood, in the past or at present. There is a parallel problem in Beaumont's designation of non-feminist/non-political groups within a women's movement; as she says, they shared with feminist groups an agenda which was political in the sense of seeking to influence policy and put pressure on local and national government and also to alter power relations between women and men. <Beaumont 1996> Andrews faces the same problem in relation to the NFWI and concludes that despite its "jam and Jerusalem" reputation it was a feminist movement because it attempted to challenge the boundaries of the socially-constructed role for women in a number of ways, politically, economically and in cultural terms. <Andrews 1997 p 15> Yet many of its members might have been unhappy with the designation feminist. Delmar is right to say that feminism's identification with the women's movement has led to a focus on feminism as organised activity which has underplayed its nature as a complex of ideas (which may play a role in other organisations which are not part of the women's movement, the Fabian Society or the Labour Party, for example), and the extent to which there was a general debate about women's roles and circumstances at different points in the 19th and early 20th centuries and how far feminists were involved in setting its terms. <1986 pp 23-24>

The use of the term *social feminism* has been the subject of intense discussion in the USA, again very much about what can be legitimately included as feminism. The term is mainly used to designate feminist welfare politics of the US Progressive era. Offen's argument for an inclusive definition of feminism which would go beyond the general association with equal

rights as both more historical accurate and politically useful, and the distinction she draws between *individual* and *relational* feminism which is equivalent to the distinction more commonly made between equality and difference feminisms, <1988 p 122-134> has been contested by Cott as "too broad... vague" and a "pseudo-concept" <1989 p 825>, and by Dubois as dualist and assuming a monolithic female experience of difference. <1989 p 195> The distinction Offen makes between individual and relational feminism is primarily in terms of ways of thinking about social organisation: she argues that relational feminism was the dominant line of argument prior to 1900 in Europe but that liberal individualist arguments have become increasingly dominant in Anglo-American feminism since Mill introduced them to it <1988 p 136>: recent focus on individualist feminism has meant missing "the rich historical complexity of protest concerning women's subordination" <1988 p 138> and ignores feminist concern for broad social goals. <1988 p 156> Cott argues that the term feminism should not be used for all the ways women in history have protested male domination but reserved for the "more individualistic, more recent approach". <1989 p 203> She also argues that the term social feminism was introduced by American historians O'Neill <1969> and Lemons <1973> in an unhelpful opposition to (and caricature of) what O'Neill called 'hard-core feminism', seen as an extreme egalitarianism, and that in bringing together too wide a range of political activity it collapses important political distinctions among women and "leaches out meaning from the word feminism" which "should designate something more specific than women's entrance into public life or efforts at social reform". <1989b pp 819-20> Instead she proposes "civic maternalism" (Koven's term) or "municipal housekeeping" for the latter. <1989b p 829>[15] I would argue against this narrowing. The term social feminism was used in Europe at the turn of the century <Bock 1994 p 415> and is useful precisely because it links a recognition of the problem of male dominance with a wide concern with social reform: to refuse to name it as feminism leaches out the *feminism* from women's social reform concerns (and also the possibility of distinguishing women's social reform informed by feminist ideas from other women's social reform). As I discuss in chapter four, in history of the interwar period in Britain this term is useful as an alternative to new or difference feminism because of its allusion to questions of social reform but also the more collective approach to social organisation which Offen highlights. Black has problems with the term social feminism but retains it as usefully naming the feminist integration of the social and political and as encapsulating both the wide variety and underlying unity of women's groups and activities, and as meeting the need to make a distinction between a social reform emphasis and equality arguments. <Black 1989 p 26-27> One of her problems with it, the suggestion of a link to

---

[15] The related idea of maternal feminism is discussed in chapters three and four.

socialism and collectivism which she says is inaccurate <1989 p 26> seems to me valuable because British social feminism both in the WCG (which she studied) and social-liberal feminism was, on the contrary, influenced by socialism. Rowbotham's use of the term social feminism (although she does not define it) is primarily in association with the British social-liberal tradition of reform and for women who while not denying the importance of equal political and civil rights see social and economic reform as more urgent. <1992 p 121> Again, bearing in mind that it is through retrospective identification and in writing history that many categories and continuities come to have meaning is salutory.

The central difficulty in definition is whether feminism is held to mean only women's struggles against gender inequality (and only *women's* struggles, as the exclusion of men from the designation feminist which has been usual in second-wave feminism was not the case in the early 20th century) or whether it encompasses women's action against other and associated relations of inequality and for a better society generally.[16] This is a political question and how you answer it depends on whether you believe gender inequalities can be significantly separated from other social relations of inequality and how they are structured, and addressed separately. Since this is a genuinely political divergence it offers no easy answer, yet there is a demonstrable need for a term with which to designate 'advocacy of the claims of women' to equality or liberation, and associated activities and political philosophy. The difficulties of definition and in practice wide meaning of women's movement, and generic uses of feminism (though as I argue it is repeatedly identified with a narrower definition as egalitarianism) may be strategic. The history of feminism and particularly how it has recognised and addressed social differences among women offers a way of understanding feminism not as a clearly definable set of beliefs but as a site where differences and common interests coalesce and are articulated but also come into conflict. <Scott 1996 p 10 and 13> This suggests that as well as taking care in using feminism as an analytic category in history, we also, to paraphrase E.P. Thompson, think of feminism as defined by women as they live their own political history.[17]

Equality is, if anything, an even more slippery concept. Although it demands specification as equality *with* or *to*, in practice it has slipped its grammatical status to be used commonly much more loosely as an aim of feminism which gives no clear answer to the question 'equality with whom?' Ray and Oliver Strachey, in the 1917 NUSEC discussion referred to above, argued

---

[16] Questions about how far definitions assume a location within a Western tradition of women's emancipation need also to be addressed, but are outwith my purpose here.

[17] "Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition" E.P. Thompson *The Making of the English Working Class* 1963 p 11

for "political, social and economic equality *with men*" and the NUSEC and EWCA objective called for "such reforms as are necessary to secure a real equality of liberties, status and opportunity *between men and women*" (the term "real equality" alluding to a distinction between economic and social equality and legal and civic equality) <my itals>, but Rathbone came to refuse equality as an approach which depended on an unquestioned male and public standard. Atkinson also seems not to find the idea of equality particularly meaningful. Although equality has been seen as the aim of feminist activity, many women who are active in pursuit of gender equality may refuse the label feminist and it is not seen as contradictory for them to do so. <Lovenduski and Randall 1993 p 2> Again the *aim of feminism* has proved elusive of definition but falls into two main groups: participation; and freedom (both freedom *from* and freedom *to*). The former includes equality, equal opportunity and equal outcomes, equal access; the latter emancipation (literally 'setting free from slavery' and a reminder of the women's movement's link to the anti-slavery campaigns), liberation, an end to male domination, and independence or autonomy. The latter has been used specifically to distance feminism from idea that equality with men is the aim. Rathbone made this distinction in 1929 when she called for "not equality but self-determination" <1929 p 33, cited Alberti 1996 p 147>; Breitenbach, assessing the progress of the Scottish second-wave women's movement, makes a distinction between the aims of equality and autonomy. <Breitenbach 1989 p 175> The meanings of equality and autonomy are discussed further in chapter one, part two. The overlapping nature of these aims is illustrated not only by the more inclusive position of new feminism but also in the liberal feminism of Millicent Fawcett who repeatedly put an emphasis on equality but defined emancipation as *freedom from*, "the successive removal of intolerable grievances" .<Fawcett 1898>

Although Marshall has been criticised for an absence of attention to issues of gender in his account of *citizenship*, and the timing in his account does not fit women's citizenship <Walby 1997 p 172> his now classic distinction between civil, political and social citizenship is sufficient for my purpose. This presents *civil* citizenship as the rights necessary to individual freedom (liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to property and to conclude valid contracts, the right to justice); *political* citizenship as the right to participate in the exercise of political power; and *social* citizenship as the right to a minimum level of economic security and to social welfare provision. <Marshall 1950> The main problem with Marshall's definition is that it is a concept of citizenship which depends on the public sphere and has no significant meaning in private life <Walby 1997 p 176>, and that it assumes the right of property in the person which is still at issue for women, but in this Marshall's view

represents how citizenship is now seen even though there have been feminist attempts, discussed below, to define it otherwise.

The term *family* is yet more difficult of definition. Flandrin quotes changing definitions of the world 'family' in dictionaries, which not until the late 18th and early 19th centuries, he says, stress the conjugal couple and their children, as opposed to definitions stressing either the whole household, including servants, or the whole kinship group. <Flandrin 1979 p 9> There is no room for a full discussion here but I would emphasise that my use of 'family' is inclusive and task-based <see footnote 5>, while taking cognisance of the normative view of the family as politically significant. Because the term family is far from being a neutral, descriptive label this has led to the use of the term *familialism* meaning family ideology. <Donzelot 1980, Barrett and McIntosh 1982> The qualities which characterise family groups in terms of the questions which interest me are legal, economic and caring responsibilities which are associated with a sense of obligation which is differentiated from responsibilities outwith the family. Midgley and Hughes comment that perhaps attempts to define or redefine the family founder "because 'the family' was never a simple, functional concept in the first place. What we mean by the family has always varied, not just in different cultures or different periods of history, but according to what we want from it - to the different needs felt in the various contexts in which we use the idea". <1997 p 60> Perhaps the best approach to a definition of 'family' is that it includes a number of social groupings which can be categorised together because they bear a "family resemblance". Wittgenstein's term works because it describes the relationship between a set of meanings as connected in the same difficult to pin down but recognisable way that members of a family commonly resemble each other. Perhaps the simile can be turned round as a reminder that even although the term family is hard to define with precision, there are nonetheless resemblances which make sense (and which need not be to a single form) between the groups we name as families.

In the following chapter I discuss questions of meaning and approach with specific reference to cultural theory and the idea of *discourse* (I return to Foucault's early work as the basis of this discussion), and to the ideas of *equality, difference, public* and *private* as they are used in feminist theory and history. If theory is a toolkit <Foucault 1980 p 145> then the tools need to be sharp and well-polished.

CHAPTER ONE: Conceptual questions: part one: *Discourse, Power and 'Reality'*

My approach is influenced by the engagement between post-structuralism and other types of radical social theory, and by aspects of cultural theory especially the idea of discourse in the work of Michel Foucault. The convergence between feminist and post-structuralist reappraisals of politics and theory, accounts of power and subjectivity, and distrust of universalising and "grand narratives", has been both productive and hotly debated. Feminist uses of post-modernist ideas have not been without reservations, as discussed below, but many theorists have found the crossover between feminist theory and post-structuralism close and vibrant. <McNay 1992 p 2; Coole 1993 p 190; Simons 1995 pp 105-9> In this chapter I outline what this approach means in this context and explore concepts I use. The idea of *discourse* particularly demands definition because it is used in several ways and often loosely. In addition, the conceptual pairs *equality and difference* and *public and private* are drawn on widely in feminist theory and history and again require scrutiny.

Introduction

The role of theory, Foucault suggests, is "not to formulate the global systematic theory which holds everything in place, but to analyse the specificity of mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions, to build little by little a strategic knowledge". <1980 p 145> The approach which I draw from Foucault is perhaps more important in opening up the role of theory to scrutiny than in offering a new structure on which to hang the aspects of women's political history which most interest me. The demand for systematic theory insists on a coherence which historical and social evidence does not always offer; women's political history particularly has suffered from, and been excluded because of, a demand that it fit pre-existing notions of what is properly historical or properly theoretical. Theory is a means to explanation and when explanations are elaborated into grand systems this can get in the way of rather than assisting understanding. At the same time, the assumptions and philosophical stances with which we approach a subject must be scrutinised. To do so presumes a theoretical stance: scepticism of theory is itself theoretically based. And if scrutiny of the categories and conditions which structure "[T]he limits and forms of the sayable" is important, no inquiry can go forward without also making distinctions and constructing categories.

Theory as "toolkit" or as an "instrument" suggests a way in which theory can be worn lightly. We have Foucault's permission to pick and choose. His books, he said, should be treated "as a pair of glasses directed to the outside; if they don't suit you, find another pair..." <1977 p 208> While as a general approach I appreciate the radical questioning of foundations, boundaries and hierarchies within post-modernism and find an approach that

concerns itself with "provisional truths" highly congenial, my own use of these ideas is specific and my reading of Foucault selective. I find his work first of all valuable in offering a theoretical language which frames actions, ideas and representations together with social, economic and cultural constraints and possibilities. The idea of discourse, as I understand it, offers an inclusive way of drawing together approaches and subject areas which categorical distinctions hold apart and of articulating their inter-relationship without depending on a separation or causal argument to express it.[1] Secondly, the articulation of power as constitutive of knowledge and knowledge as constitutive of power is useful in conceptualising feminist politics in relation to concepts of gender, social structure and practices: feminism's struggle has been as much with what is known (that women lose their capacity to mother as a result of higher education, for example) as with the structures and practices based in such knowledge (the creation of male-only universities; the autonomous male citizen as implicit standard). Such knowledge has embedded male power over women and that power has in turn shaped what is known about sex and gender; it has drawn on a view of some truths as outside human invention and as therefore legitimising power relations beyond question.[2] The focus on *how* we know raises questions about the excluded aspects of any discourse and encourages attention to silenced dimensions of it: as Willa Muir commented, the emotional quality of a denial can tell us a great deal. <Muir 1925>

Understanding the social construction of women's position in the family and society calls for attention to material and cultural subordination alongside its representation and the "conditions of possibility" of its conception, including the subjective understandings of individual women, and therefore an approach which frames as a "provisional unity" a series of heterogenous elements: for example texts, social groups, practices, conceptual distinctions... This is particularly valuable in relation to a politics of the family as it is for political discussion of sexuality, race and identity politics generally, because questions and arguments which cross familiar conceptual boundaries face particular problems, not least the assumption that they are beyond the remit of political inquiry. In those areas which cut across the division between public and private we need an approach to theorising which does not depend on that division, particularly because the distance between the private world of home and family and the public world of the market and the political arena has defined the division. Davidoff describes how pertinent an approach of this kind seemed as she pursued interests which did not fit with what had been defined as of historical and sociological interest. "It was in trying to bridge the particulars of historical

---

[1] One way to illustrate this is to think about the relationship between language and society. Language is part of society and not external to it but socio-linguistic textbooks commonly include sections on the relationship *between* language and society as if they just happened to come into contact from time to time. <Fairclough 1989 p 23> We need better ways to convey such integrated relationships - in this example so close that it is not possible to conceive of a language which is non-social and scarcely possible to think of a non-linguistic society. (Would it be language? Would it be a society?)

[2] For example, at the conclusion of their inquiry into the "natural disabilities" associated with maternity the Fabian Women's Group said it had not been possible to get as full an assessment as they has hoped for since

material with received concepts of hierarchy, knowledge and institutional practice that I became increasingly aware that existing models of social analysis were no longer sufficient. The words and actions of historical actors constantly broke the bonds and slipped through the meshes of all existing prototypes." The example she gives is of the permeable boundaries between family, home and workplace, between kinship and the economic. As she developed this work, "post-modern and deconstructionist ideas, especially those initiated by feminists, had begun to tug at the edges of even the most basic traditional conceptual boundaries. Their radical contestation of foundations exposed the exclusion of certain voices, arguing that such narrowing was precisely the precondition making possible an agreed political and intellectual agenda accompanying the notion of agency..." We have begun to realise, she argues, that it is *"classification systems themselves* which determine what will be understood as 'significant relationships'." <1995 pp 11-13>

Scott sees post-structuralism as directing thinking to how the hierarchy of gender is constructed and legitimised. In this there is a focus on processes rather than origins, on multiple rather than single causes, and on the political nature of the construction of meaning. It is "because it... relativises the status of all knowledge, links knowledge and power, and theorises these in terms of the operations of difference... [that] post-structuralism can offer feminism a powerful analytic perspective". <1988 pp 4-5> Foucault's work in particular, she argues, offers a way of thinking more creatively about the politics of the contextual construction of social meanings. <1990 p 136> Similarly Nicholson finds this a productive approach because it moves beyond historicist claims about the "'situatedness' of human thought within culture" to focus on the criteria by which claims to knowledge are legitimized: "the more radical move in the postmodern turn was to claim that the very criteria demarcating the true and the false... were internal to traditions of modernity and could not be legitimized outside of those traditions. Moreover, it was argued that the very development and use of such criteria, as well as their extension to ever wider domains, had to be described as representing the growth and development of specific 'regimes of power'." <Nicholson, 1990 pp 3-4>

Archaeology and Genealogy: discourse theory in Foucault

The idea of discourse as it is now widely used within cultural and media theory <Macdonald 1995 pp 46-47; Fairclough pp 2-3>, and increasingly in political and social theory <see for example Gane and Johnson 1993, Nicholson and Seidman 1995; Barry et al 1996> is drawn primarily from Foucault. To explore the ideas of discourse theory at all fully is not possible in this context. But to use the concepts at all requires, as I have said, at least initial discussion. This is particularly so because discourse is used loosely and in several ways, including a common confusion between discourse and *ideology* (for an interesting discussion of this

most knowledge was the product of a male medical profession with an interest in outcomes which privileged their sex.

see Purvis and Hunt 1993). The term discourse is used in social and political theory in technical and philosophical senses and it continues to be used also in its dictionary sense; it cannot be said to have an uncontested meaning.[3]

Discourse theory in Foucault theorises 'words and things' in a way which does not depend on the idea of words standing for things, or, alternatively, things obscured by a focus on signification. An approach through Foucaultian discourse theory is therefore especially useful to the study of aspects of politics and political history in which meaning and representation are as important as social and economic conditions and where an emphasis on subject positions is particularly important. It offers an approach which avoids fixed category distinctions and allows a new, if provisional, unity which includes historical and social evidence and actors often marginalised or excluded by more conventional theoretical approaches, and hence the possibility of description and analysis which is more inclusive and multi-faceted. It is an approach which opens up the 'space' for new questions and "new domains": we are freed to "ask of politics a whole series of questions not traditionally considered part of its domain". <Haber 1994 p 110> A useful definition of discourse which emphasises the first of these points is given by Frazer and Lacey; it is a definition which makes evident how the concept advances understanding by refusing a simple boundary between 'the world out there' and perception/meaning. Discourse is more than just another word for 'set of ideas' or 'ideology' but includes the sense that these are "bound up with the construction of social reality. The use of the term 'discourse'... distances us from the position that there is a given social or political reality which is just named or described by language users and theorists". Discourse theory therefore "emphasises the fusion of mental phenomena such as beliefs, logical items such as concepts and categories, linguistic entities like descriptions and explanations, and social phenomena like institutions and... practices". For feminists it is particularly useful because we have learnt "we must not privilege either the purely material aspects of women's oppression (as some varieties of Marxist feminism have), or the purely symbolic (as some varieties of cultural theory have). The theoretical use of discourse emphasises the fusion of these two levels." <Frazer and Lacey 1993 pp 15-17> It also emphasises discourse as contained and expressed in practices, institutions, organisations and social relationships. <Scott 1990 p134>

The idea of discourse is modelled on and develops from disciplines of knowledge: Foucault calls for, instead of "a universal history which sweeps along all the sciences in a single common trajectory" the careful description and histories of different discourses, giving as an example that "the history of mathematics does not follow the same model as the history of biology, which itself does not share the same model as psychopathology". This would include recognising the "respective siting of different sorts of threshold" and the

---

[3] Discourse theory in its wider sense should be distinguished from the use of discourse theory to mean only the study of texts and speech: for example, discourse analysis as it has been developed in linguistics, psychology and other disciplines and which is highly technical.

chronologies of specific discourses. <1968/1991 pp 54-55> Foucault defined genealogy as a form of history "which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc" without implying a subject which is "transcendental in relation to the field of events". <1980 p 117> He also described it as a history of "the 'objectification' of those elements" that are considered as objectively given. <1991 p 116> It is such elements within the social or human sciences characteristic of the "humanist episteme" (see discussion below) that are his central concern.

As Frazer and Lacey add, to talk of discourse is not to imply any discourse is invariably coherent: "even internally contradictory discourses can still be socially viable, which is to say they can endure over time and play a constructive role in the maintenance and reproduction of a society." < Frazer 1993 p 15> Indeed, we might argue that many significant discourses are internally contradictory, and part of analysing them is to explore their contradictions and the force that sometimes comes from them, despite or perhaps even because of that.

Foucault's first development of these ideas is in *The Order of Things* <1966/1973> and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* <1969/1972>. In this period Foucault developed the idea of an archaeological analysis of questions of truth and power which was taken forward as genealogy particularly in *Discipline and Punish* <1979> and *The History of Sexuality* Vol 1. <1984> In his later work he continued to use the concept of discourse and discourse formation as developed in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, but in ways which involve some re-definition but also a clarification of the earlier ideas. Both are concerned with the analysis of forms of knowledge/frameworks of thought and to challenge a history of ideas which relies on a sense (often implicit) of an evolutionary progress in the history of ideas; rather, Foucault emphasises discontinuities and that "modes of thought and forms of knowledge are specific to time and place and are logically incommensurable with each other".<Hutchings p.c. 18.11.96> Archaeology and genealogy are highly significant metaphors: this project is an uncovering of successive levels and strata which underlie, or are ancestral to, present-day thinking/ways of seeing; "the uncovering of deep-level structures constitutive of all thought".[4] This analysis has the aim of undermining powerful notions of universal truth which are seen as transcendent but which need to be understood as not external to discourse. Foucault's archaeology is an attempt "to unpack the notion of an atemporal, universally valid form of rationality by revealing its dependence on a deep-seated set of discursive regularities which, in any era, determine what it is possible to think, say and experience." <McNay, 1994 p48> The distinction between archaeology and the extension of these ideas as genealogy lies in terms of what is explicitly included. It marks the development of Foucault's theory of power, which although perhaps implicit in the earlier work is first developed in *Discipline*

---

[4] The sense of archaeology as uncovering the hidden history which precedes and lies below meaning is present in Foucault's much-cited declaration defining his purpose in *Folie et Deraison*: "I have not tried to write the history of that language, but rather the archaeology of that silence". <1965 pp ix -xi>

and Punish. The "genealogical understanding of ourselves, our social institutions, and our practices reveals how the mechanisms of power come to be effectively incorporated into the social whole". <Haber 1994 p 81>

Part of this theory is the concept of the *episteme* and the epistemic break. This is not dissimilar as an idea to Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts <Kuhn 1970>, but is posited for a rather different purpose and the length and influence of an episteme is considerable: the examples he gives align the idea more closely with that of an epoch. In *The Order of Things* Foucault describes as epistemes the Renaissance and the classical and modern periods, as well as the discontinuous shifts between them. The modern episteme, beginning at the end of the eighteenth century and perhaps disintegrating by the 1950s, is characterised by the study of and centrality of "Man". <Simons, 1995 p 24> The episteme is conceived in terms of its contribution to meaning: it is "the condition of possibility of discourse in a given period; it is an *a priori* set of rules of formation that allow discourses to function, that allow different objects and different themes to be spoken at one time but not at another". <McNay 1994 p 48> If this idea comes close to that of a historical epoch it is not within a progressive or evolutionary view of the history of ideas: *"The episteme is not a general developmental stage of reason, it is a complex relationship of successive displacements"*. <1968/1991 pp 54-55; original ital > His interest, he later made clear was mainly the shift or break itself: "How is it that at certain moments and in certain orders of knowledge, there are these sudden take-offs, these hastenings of evolution, these transformations...?" <1980 p 112> This is an interesting question to pose of gender history.

In the lecture 'Politics and the Study of Discourse' <1968/1991> Foucault summarised his previous ten years work, emphasising its function as a *history of the present* as a specific episteme governed by certain conditions of possibility, and of the role of the "human sciences" in it. He seeks to understand how discourses "and particularly... scientific discourses" were formed and functioned in Europe in the first years of the modern period so that "that the knowledge which is ours today could come to exist, and more particularly that knowledge which has taken as its domain this curious object which is man." <1968/1991 p 70> For Foucault this entails two integrally linked moves: insisting on the contingency of discourse: "discourse has not only a meaning or a truth, but a history, and a specific history" <1972 p 127>; and "dethroning" the subject. The sense of a transcendent form of knowledge is displaced, and with it the central role of he (most of the time it *was* he) who is uniquely in a position to uncover it: that "someone has said" matters more than who is speaking. <1968/1991 p72> It opens up an analysis which, moving behind the idea of the author, examines the discursive structures and constraints that shape what is said. <McNay 1994 p55> "Foucault argues that Man, the subject or the author cannot be considered as the foundation, origin or condition of possibility of discourse. Rather, the subject, and especially the author, can be defined as an element within a discursive field, a particular space from which it is possible to speak or write..." <Simons 1995 pp 25-26> Although Foucault states that not only authored utterances are in

question, the paradigmatic examples he uses are of speech/text. He describes and overturns the dominant (albeit not the only, which Foucault perhaps ignores) way of thinking about thinking of the period since the Enlightenment. "What is important to me is to show that there are not on the one hand inert discourses, which are already more than half dead, and on the other hand, an all-powerful subject which manipulates them, overturns them, renews them; but that discoursing subjects form a part of the discursive field... Discourse is not a place into which the subjectivity irrupts; it is a space of differentiated subject-positions and subject-functions."<1968/1991 p 58> Great men thinking great thoughts are of less importance than the "conditions of possibility" of those thoughts and the power and exclusion which are part of the story.[5]

Famously, this was the 'death of the subject'. An end to the sovereignity of the subject is, I would argue, a more accurate if not as dramatic a way to put it. It is a "decentring that leaves no privilege to any centre" <1969 p205>; "... discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject... <1969 pp 54-5> Foucault's thinking on this has, I think, been misunderstood and exaggerated (see, for example, Judith Evans, 1995, discussed below). To deconstruct the subject is not the same as saying the concept has no meaning. <Butler 1992 p 15> Rather, it is to call it into question, to open it up to scrutiny. It is also to refuse the subject and individual-focussed and psychological accounts and explanations the central importance they have been given. It is the decentreing of a subject capable of a transcendent rationality which Foucault insists on. He argues that the sovereignity of the subject has been preserved by "the search for an original foundation that would make rationality the *telos* of mankind, and link the whole history of thought to the preservation of this rationality". <1969 pp 12-13> This dual move is particularly important as it evades the common objection to post-structuralism's critique, that by dethroning the idea of a vantage point external to discourse from which truth-claims can be validated, only a free-for-all of radical relativism remains. Foucault's argument suggests the alternative to 'reason' identified as "God's eye view", with its association with universality, detachment and dispassion, is not either subjective preference or a relativism which leaves us without any bases for value statements, but a more reliable contextualised and provisional knowledge that recognises the role and position of the knower, of language and of the "conditions of possibility" of knowing.

---

[5] It is ironical that Foucault and his work slip so readily into the subject position of 'great man/great thinker'. His role in the French tradition of intellectual as public figure as well as its patriarchal lineage is exemplified in Claude Mauriac's description of a meeting where "I was present at the first meeting between the old great philosopher and the young great philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault." <Claude Mauriac *Le temps immobile* vol 111 p 291, Paris 1977> Foucault played a public/political role from the 1970s on. <Eribon 1992 chapter 17>

Disconnection/Deconstruction

Foucault's stricture is to accept nothing as self-evident; no conceptual ordering can be an unquestioned starting-point; no knowledge is to be taken at face value, or categorisation as essential. (Whether the "systematic erasure of all given unities" <1969 p 28> is actually *possible* is another question; since it is impossible to start without a starting point.) The question posed is what is it that enables us to identify a certain group of statements as, for example, medicine rather than economics? <McNay 1984 p 66> And why? We must "disconnect the unquestioned continuities by which we organise, in advance, the discourses that we are to analyse..." <1969 p 28> Groupings inherited from past practices must be interrogated, "all these syntheses that are accepted without questions, must remain in suspense". This does not mean wholesale rejection but "the tranquility with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinised..." <1969 pp 25-26> We refocus our gaze also to recognise connections, that an apparently discrete unity (the example he uses is a book <1969 p 23>) is "a node within a network", and can be described in different ways in different contexts. It is not that we need to wholly dispense with such unities as the oeuvre, the book, or medical science or literature, but that: "[W]hat we must do... is to tear away from them their virtual self-evidence, and to free the problems that they pose; to recognise that they are not the tranquil locus on the basis of which other questions (concerning their structure, coherence, systemacity, transformations) may be posed, but that they themselves pose a whole series of questions... that they require a theory..."<1969 p 26> This interrogation of "virtual self-evidence" demands a focus on specificity and formation. Certain practices, for example imprisonment, come to seem "natural, self-evident and indispensable...". Need it be so? "It's a matter of shaking this false self-evidence, of demonstrating its precariousness, of making visible *not its arbitrariness*, but its complex interconnection with a multiplicity of historical processes..." <1980 p 75 my ital> What Foucault calls a breach of self-evidence is "making visible a *singularity* at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness that imposes itself uniformly on all". Its purpose is to show that "things 'weren't as necessary as all that'; it wasn't a matter of course that made people came to be regarded as mentally ill; it wasn't self-evident that the only thing to be done with a criminal was to lock him up, it wasn't self-evident that the causes of illness were to be sought through the individual examination of bodies; and so on". It is a fundamental questioning of the self-evidences "on which our knowledges, acquiescences, and practices rest". As such it is again particularly relevant to a history and politics of gender; gendered natures and roles have been and still are sometimes taken as self-evident, although what was taken as self-evident has differed according to quite specific contexts (in history, of class etc); feminism can be described as responding to and insisting on just such "a breach of self-evidence". The task of the genealogist is the re-examination of evidence and presuppositions, its purpose and connections to systems

of power, to create a "history of the present". It is necessary to do this through deep and multi-layered genealogical analysis because it "problematizes truth; it problematizes the givens of our everyday existence by showing how those familiar, apparently actual or given objects of our experience - the self and our bodies (sexuality) as well as our social institutions (prisons, schools, hospitals, families) and scientific norms (sanity and insanity, health and illness) are objects produced in historically variable relations of power". [6] <1968/1991 pp 76-79>

Together with the theory of power as "capillary" this is to open up political history to a view of it closer to feminist understandings, though in a fully-theorised way. Power is central to this argument in that it is seen as not only juridical, negative and extending from the State, as political theory which has yet to the "cut off the King's head" presents it <1980 p 121>, but as multi-focal and as disciplinary (people internalising 'police'), within and constitutive of discourse, operating in everyday social and cultural practices. It is power which has effect not through constraint and coercion but through consent or at least acquiescence. Foucault want to present power as not only negative; it reconstructs as well as represses, forms a "productive network which runs through the whole social body". <1980 p 119> Power is seen as an omnipresent dimension in human relations but not as a fixed and closed regime so much as an ongoing strategic struggle. It operates less through a series of state (or state plus capital) mechanisms which can be analysed through one main means (e.g. Marxism) so much as a much more complex pattern of actions, policies and agencies within overlapping and sometimes contradictory discourses which are not consistently serving one set of interests only. "I don't want to say that the State isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State." The State operates on the basis of other, already existing power relations. "The State is super-structural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology, and so forth." <1980 p 122> The modern power/knowledge regime is seen as having developed from the 18[th]c through local disciplinary institutions such as asylums, hospitals and schools, because these were among the first to face the problems of management, surveillance and control of large numbers of people with lessened use of force and constraint; the first, that is, to face the problems that would become the constitutive problems of modern government.

In feminist terms this moves away from the idea of patriarchy and a consequent model of the state as serving male interests to one in which competing discourses of gender struggle to be heard. This is not to imply that all discourses compete on an equal footing or that male-dominated state institutions do not privilege discourses which embed male power (although Foucault fails to emphasise this). It supports a view of the family as a

---

[6] Foucault based his theories on quite specific and usually technical discourses and using his ideas in a broader way brings its own problems. The relevant difference between scientific and other discourses is that technical

site of power relations structured through competing and overlapping discourses rather than straightforwardly patriarchal (in both senses). The idea of power as a binary opposition between rulers and ruled is particularly problematic for feminist politics: some feminist understanding of men's power over women leads to an initial substitution on a rulers/ruled model that 'all men have power over all women', which does not account for either women (for example, upper class women, white women in some countries) who have power over certain men (for example servants, black men), or for differential access to power by different groups of women. [7] Nor does the idea of power as extending from the state adequately account for forms of self-discipline which seem against the interests of the individual or group concerned, and how power can effect people at the deepest level of desire and embodiment; again this is central for (particularly second-wave) feminism.

This view of power leads to the ideas of power/knowledge and "the Production of Truth". "If I have studied 'practices' like those of the sequestration of the insane, or clinical medicine, or the organisation of the empirical sciences, or legal punishment, it was in order to study this interplay between a 'code' which rules ways of doing things (how people are to be graded and examined, things and signs classified, individuals trained, etc.) and a production of true discourses which serve to found, justify and provide reasons and principles for these ways of doing things. To put the matter clearly: my problem is to see how men govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth..." The question of "the production of true and false" should, he insists, be resituated "at the heart of our historical analysis and political critique". <1991 p 79> The "production of truth" is about how statements come to be judged or situated as true or false: "the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent". This is clarified through a comparison with the concept of ideology: "the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth, and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false". Truth cannot be understood as outside power, or as lacking in power: "[T]ruth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true." <1980 p 118> Simons comments that

---

discourses try to limit the extent to which meaning is contestable. Scientific discourses can exhibit sharp paradigm shifts whereas normal speech change occurs more gradually.

[7] Black feminist theory has argued for oppression of gender, class, race, sexuality, age and ability to be viewed in terms of "a matrix of domination" because there are "few pure victims or oppressors. Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple system of oppression which frames everyone's lives". <Hill Collins 1990 p 229>

Foucault does not attempt to systematically break down the elements of that mutual constitution, rather his accounts are a "deliberate entanglement of power and truth" and that "[P]ower/knowledge is a knot that is not meant to be unravelled". <1995 p 27> I would say, rather, that it is the entanglement that is seen as important, rather than the specifics of how that entanglement is constituted.

The later discussion of *governmentality* as the construction of reality in ways which are governable links the idea of internalising discipline to political structures, explicit systems of rules and norms, techniques and apparatus of government <Simons 1995 p 30>, but without losing the "mentality" in it: government is "the conduct of conduct". [8] It supports a way of theorising political power as exercised through a multitude of agencies and techniques, some of which are only indirectly associated with formal organisations of the state. <Miller and Rose 1996 p 75; Burchell et al 1991; Barry et al 1996> Coole's discussion of the political implications of post-structuralism points to its political uses in a different way. She sees its strength in terms of novel political practices which occur at the level of, in Kristeva's phrase, "socio-symbolic contact" - a politics of the symbolic, *ecriture feminine*, which Coole calls the politics of *differance*. <1993 p 189> Squires suggests that a new engagement between feminist expressive and aesthetic politics associated with the 'turn to culture' and the more traditional politics of policy formation would be timely. <Squires 1997 p 9>

Both directions are of great interest. However, in terms of my arguments I am concerned with the narrower point that this view of the relationship of discursive formation and power is a productive way to view women's political history and to address certain present-day issues, because of the multi-focal nature both of women's oppression and how it has been seen and resisted, and the importance to it of "self-evident truths" about gender. This view of discourse also supports a recognition that women's movement politics do not always lie in creating a counter-discourse to that of a power-position but draw on and contribute to discourses of their time. The discourses of sex can best be understood, Foucault argued, not via broad explanations in terms of "great Power" but in terms of "multiple and mobile power relations". The questions to pose are: which are "the most local power relations at work? How did they make possible these kinds of discourses, and conversely, how were these discourses used to support power relations?" <1984 pp 97-98> One of the most interesting questions posed by women's political status at the end of a century in which it has moved from one of formal exclusion from state politics

---

[3] Foucault's development of the idea of governmentality was mainly in the annual courses of lectures he delivered between 1970 and 1984 at the College de France, in particular the lectures in 1978 and 1979 entitled 'Security, territory and population' and 'The birth of biopolitics'. <Gordon in Burchill et al 1991 p 1> He also taught and organised research seminars on questions of government on visits to the University of California at Berkeley. Foucault used the term 'governmental rationality' synonymously with 'governmentality' and defined it as "contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self" <in 'Technologies of the Self' in Luther H Martin ed London, 1988>. For Foucault political rationalities are again more than ideologies: "they constitute a part of the fabric of our ways of thinking about and acting upon one another and ourselves." <Gordon *op cit* p 5>

to formal inclusion, is women's inclusion on different terms <Pateman 1992 p 19>, a question which the relationship through discourse between formal structures of political power and "local power relations" addresses, and which has acknowledged links to caring roles and questions of power in the family.

Power and Freedom

The formation and functioning of discourse as Foucault analyses it is easiest to understand in relation to mechanisms of repression and constraint, and Bentham's Panopticon [9] remains its most powerful metaphor and expression. A common and ready criticism therefore, which overlaps with the criticism that these ideas are about only an imprisonment within language, is that this is to describe institutions and mechanisms of power which determine us so completely that no politics of emancipation is possible: the freedom offered by the Enlightenment is thrown away in a critique of its transcendentalism. Marxists and some feminists have seen Foucault's thinking as contributing, if unintentionally, to a right-wing politics; the most forceful exponent of the idea that Foucault, is a conservative in disguise was Habermas, in a 1981 article in which he called him a "Young Conservative".[10] This is the charge which those who perceive Foucault as a theorist of progressive politics must answer.

Feminist arguments against the post-modern 'turn' fall within this broad category; Evans' arguments are representative of this critique and aim to summarise it. <Evans 1995 chapter 9> She argues that post-modernism is "a recipe for stasis, if not indeed paralysis" because "[I]t allows us no "grand narrative" that proposes the equality of women, let alone one that might bring it about. For its relativism would give equal standing to an argument that women should remain oppressed". <Evans 1995 p 125> As I have argued above, it is a common misinterpretation that relativism means 'anything goes' rather than specific attention to the context of knowledge and beliefs, and that to object to "totalising" theory is to propose instead that any account has equal validity. From an emphasis on the contingent and a refusal of universal truths it does not follow that we must allow no one interpretation to be considered better "in any way". <Evans 1995 p 126> Rather it is to say that the basis of interpretation and statements of belief and priority should lie, not in what Marx or Firestone have declared to be generally true, but in historically and socially situated "differentiated analyses" which pay attention to the

---

[9] Rings of back-lit cells encircle a central observation tower so that the inmates do not know whether they are visible or not by guards and so internalise 'le regard'. The technique of 'the gaze' is seen as allowing the management of institutional populations through self-surveillance.

[10] Habermas 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', *New German Critique 22 (Winter 1981) pp 31-14.* Habermas contends that rather than seeking to resolve the problems of modern societies, postmodernity is anti-modern and as such conservative, and also that it is paradoxical in rejecting "totalising" theory but cannot avoid erecting one itself. For discussion of this criticism see Fraser 1989 pp 35-53. The idea that Foucault contributes to a regressive and right-wing politics was an early criticism: *Les Mots et les choses* <1966> was seen by some Marxist critics as "anti-historical" and as "underpinned by a neo-Nietzschean ideology that serves too well, whether he is aware of this or not, the designs of a class whose only interest is to mask the objective choice of a path toward the future". <Jacques Milhau, *Cahiers du Communisme*, 1968, cited in Eribon 1992 p 162>

questions we ask within those analyses, consider which answers support which systems of power, and on what further suppositions the truths we arrive at may depend.[11] Whether the equality of women requires a "grand narrative" is a separate question which demands more thoughtful attention. Alison Assiter, for example, argues that post-modernism is dangerous for feminism because of its rejection of the grand narratives of the Enlightenment and Marxism; since these are theories about emancipation and the overcoming of inequalities so the post-modern rejection of such theories risks a loss of the possibility of emancipation. <1996 p 3> Assiter opposes 'discourse' to 'reality' however and argues that one can and should make universal claims about women and that feminism needs to rework the key concepts of the liberal humanist tradition. Her critique does not take sufficiently seriously post-structuralism as a basis for narratives of freedom of a different kind to the "grand" sort; she suggest universalisable and over-arching theory as always necessary to freedom and justice. I find convincing arguments such as Fraser's: that this radical questioning makes possible "a new form of politically engaged reflection on the emergence and nature of modern societies" and has "opened up new areas of inquiry and problematised new dimensions of modernity; as a result it has made it possible to broach political problems in fruitful new ways". <Fraser 1989 p 17 and p 26>

Evans also argues that the focus on texts suggests "there is within it no room for the real world". This is to misread the relationship of 'words and things' which is, I have argued, about questions of method and meaning and suggests that rather than asserting a "real world" (let alone one which is opposed to the then *unreal* world of representation) we pay attention to what we see *as* real and *why*. Although Foucault in both early and later work <1969 p 26/27 and 1991 pp 113-4> states that his concern is not with language alone, it is a persistent criticism of his work not only that it is anti-progressive but that he has described a world bounded by language and signification with no touchstone of reality, that he describes only entrapment. Possibly with reference to such criticism he later commented that in his early work, without an adequate theory of power, he confused the discursive regime "too much with systemacity, theoretical form, or something like a paradigm". <1980 p 113> As I have said, much of the value of discourse theory seems to me precisely that it theorises 'words and things' in a way which does not depend on the idea of words standing for things. This is not to deny the existence of things but to argue that meaning does not exist separately from forms of life, and constructs them. Nor is it to deny that worlds and meanings change and can be changed. However the habitual separation of the material and the signifying makes it hard for us to define a relationship of fusion without describing it in terms of a separation. Purvis and Hunt's reply to this argument is useful: "[O]f course earthquakes occur, and their occurrence is independent of consciousness; but it is their construction in discourse that determines whether they are 'movements of tectonic plates' or manifestations of 'the wrath of the gods'". <1993 p

---

[11] Perhaps this is easier to accept from a historians' point of view than a political theorist's? History cannot produce unmediated versions of the past and therefore questions of interpretation and which evidence is

490> Which we understand earthquakes as cannot be separated from our seeing them; how we understand them may change. Much argument has been expended on this question and it is complex, but Purvis and Hunt are right to say "we should refuse the slogan 'everything is discursive'; it obscures the much more interesting claim that all knowledge is located within discourse". <1993 p 490>However the emphasis on texts may have led to a theoretical direction which gives priority to reading over the production of texts <Macdonald 1995 p 38>, or which has tended to collapse the social into the textual. <Nicholson and Seidman 1995 p 9> In consequence "[P]ostmodern critique narrowed into a critique of representations or knowledges, leaving relatively unattended their social and historical contexts". Remedying this by bringing together post-modern insights and critical social theory, Nicholson and Steidman argue, creates a "social postmodernism" as a strategy "for imagining a democratic social theory and politics". <Nicholson and Seidman 1995 p 35>

Evans' third criticism is that the view of the subject Foucault proposes means a "fragmentation of the self" which is antithetical to feminism. The "crisis... of the vanishing subject" is at the centre of feminist worries about post-modernism because it seems just as 'woman' has been asserted as a subject she is being deconstructed. This is a continuing debate within feminist theory and one which Butler and Scott have described as a "crisis in feminism". <1992 p xiii> As I have suggested above, the argument developed by Foucault, at least, does not mean that no arguments can be made on behalf of women but calls for more care in specifying which women. It also opens up (alongside other discussion), new conceptions of identity. In summary, where Evans and others see the subject as actor and the possibility of distinguishing between truth and falsity as dismantled in this analysis, I would argue that they are redefined in ways useful rather than antithetical to feminism and other progressive politics. However it is fair to comment that the very complexity of this argument can be a hindrance to political analysis and communication.

Foucault addressed the criticism that his work is anti-progressive several times. In a response to a question, posed as part of a discussion of the issues raised by *Les Mots et les Choses* he insisted his view of progressive politics was "a politics recognising the historical conditions and the stated rules of a practice". <Foucault 1968> The lecture 'Politics and the study of discourse' <1991> is introduced as a reply to the criticism that his work removes all basis for a progressive political intervention, although he does not answer it directly. He gives, however, an account of how, through discourse theory it becomes possible to substitute specific for totalizing analyses and to describe, as the episteme of a period, not the sum of its knowledge, not the idea of the unitary spirit of an age or "a formal structure destined to reign for a time over all the manifestations of thought" but the "divergence, the distances, the oppositions, the differences, the relations of its various scientific discourses"; it replaces grand underlying theory with an open field of

---

available, chosen or rejected, and why, are raised. But this is not equivalent to saying that therefore any

relationships. <1991 pp 54-55> It is about a framework which displaces a focus on explanations which order and unify with a focus on the variable, interconnecting in changing ways, and open patterns which become more visible when that requirement is no longer dominant. Although this can lead to more accurate and inclusive description/understandings, because not limited by "the quest for a sovereign, unique and constraining form" Foucault disregards, as I have suggested, the extent to which form is necessary to meaning. But as a re-emphasis, the insistence that instead of seeking meta-theories we examine "ensembles of discourse" and how they connect, it is valuable. It means instead of general, abstract "first cause and universal effect" explanations, paying attention to discontinuities and to difference, to the evidence which *does not fit* the explanation: "insistently making plain instead all the intensity of difference, establishing a painstaking record of deviation". <1991 pp 55-56> The search for an over-arching hypothesis through which we can understand our times is replaced by the analysis of complex patterns through which we can begin to understand our times.

In his final work Foucault returned to the idea of freedom. His summary clarifies earlier work: "[T]he political and social processes by which Western European societies were put in order are not very apparent, have been forgotten or have become habitual. They are a part of our most familiar landscape, and we don't perceive them anymore... It is one of my targets to show people that a lot of things that are a part of their landscape - that people think are universal - are the result of some very precise historical changes. All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence". Because they show "the arbitrariness of institutions", he argues, this shows "which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made". <1988 pp 10-11> Allowing us to see "our most familiar landscape" as *constructed* is to begin envisaging other ways of being and of creating new political and social structures no longer predicated on inequalities and exclusions. Again gender history is a good illustration: to show that the landscape created by, for example, 'separate spheres' was not a social ordering based on universal and natural differences between women and men but the result of specific historical changes is to suggest that other social orders may be so also; to see this is not straightforwardly to change it, but it is a valuable and indeed *liberating* tool for doing so.

The dominant tenor of Western thought remains one of creating an explanatory framework or set of arguments which seem to offer certainty, which 'tidy up' the world, reduce it to a strong explanation, one which "holds everything in place". But to do so excludes those voices and events which disturb or make less possible a given explanation or which have been ruled out/defined out as not counting. Foucault, on my understanding, suggests firstly breaking down disciplinary and other boundaries so that our thinking about "the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves" <1988 p 17> is not hemmed in by fixed categorisations, and secondly, seeking new sorts of explanations and structures for explanation, and, ultimately,

---

interpretation or evidence will serve as well as any other.

different ways of being. Those spaces, these new perspectives then open up the possibility of radically different interventions in the "very specific 'truth games' related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves" and hence govern themselves and each other. <p 18> This approach is in itself resistant to dominant and powerful forms of social organisation in that it questions their bases and proposes that there are always other ways of seeing things (especially 'from below'), and also because it leads to a "politics of the everyday" which allows us to develop arguments about multiple power relations in social organisation; as such it is "a key resource for rethinking a democratic social theory and politics" <Nicholson and Seidman 1989, introduction> and for the history of women's politics. <Scott 1990 pp 134-136>

CHAPTER ONE. PART TWO

Public and private, equality and difference

Recent feminist history and some political theory has drawn on two distinctions, between the public and private, which is seen as shaping women's association with the family/ private sphere which consequently becomes a cause of and justification of inequality, and between equality and difference which is seen as shaping women's movement response to that inequality and its development as a political movement more generally. Since both distinctions are complex, both in their component concepts and in how they function in structuring a 'thinking in opposites', it is necessary to look at their meaning and use. Both public and private and equality and difference function within the discursive construction of *women and family* and in the related discourse of *women in public*, to form and replicate a dichotomous positioning of family interests/women's interests. In Foucauldian terms they can be described as discursive regularities in that they fix certain oppositions and meanings in ways which then become self-evident.

In the second half of this chapter I examine the public and private distinction as it has been discussed in recent feminist work, in relation to: the family as paradigmatic of the private; the conceptual boundaries between public and private and their role in ordering the political; their relationship to a gendered definition of citizenship; as a historical continuum between first and second-wave feminism and as central to the challenge of second-wave feminism. I then look at the meaning of the distinction between equality and difference and some of the problems with arguments from each, and at recent analysis of this dichotomy as an "intellectual trap". I do not discuss historical examples of the problem of equality versus difference, but do so in chapter three.

Public and private

A conceptual division between public and private life is part of political thinking in present-day Western society and the history of political thought. <Elshtain 1981 p 11> As such it is highly significant for the discursive construction of sexual difference. <Pateman 1983 p 281> It is a distinction at the heart of how we construct and understand public life and citizenship and how, in contrast, we position private and family life.[12] The family has come to be paradigmatic of the private, though it was not always so. One illustration is the politician's euphemism for departure from office, 'spending more time with his family',

---

[12] I should emphasise that I am not arguing that the public and private distinction fully explains women's position in the family. Physiological and social explanations in relation to women's maternity and lactation and the development of social modes of care and confinement in relation to them are relevant and have been much discussed. What such explanations do not, and the distinction between public and private does (at least begin to) explain, is the extension of women's close identification with family roles when circumstances of childbearing and breast-feeding are not or are no longer pertinent, and the subordination associated with women's family roles.

which depends on this assumption for its meaning.[13] While participation in the *polis* is paradigmatic of the public, the family and the household are the private sphere, and the contrast is important to the meaning of each. The centrality of this distinction to the liberal model of citizenship and politics is seen as underlying a situation where women are now formally included but in practice included on differential terms <Pateman 1992 p 10> and in which women's interests appear to be special pleading. Pateman argues that the concept of citizenship and a public/private division predicated on an unacknowledged 'sexual contract' are historically, and remain integrally, linked.[14] Although the public/private division in the sense explored in recent feminist theory is part of political theory generally mainstream political theory is also constructed according to it and sees its subject primarily as the public world of the economy and state. <Okin 1989 pp110-117; Pateman 1989 p 3> The gendered nature of public and private has until recently been outwith the frame of reference of most political theory <Pateman 1988 pp 1-13; Davidoff 1995 p 229>, and analysis of the dichotomy and its use as a tool of social/political analysis remains most extensive within feminist theory and gender history. <Squires -1989[15]> The dichotomy is both something to be observed in political history, political theory and political practice *and* an analytical tool used to think about these areas. This creates some confusion. While it is a dichotomy discussed or alluded to in a great deal of feminist political writing and history, I have drawn mainly on analyses by Carole Pateman <1983, 1988>, Linda Nicholson <1986> and Leonore Davidoff <1995> and to a lesser extent Jean Elshtain <1981>, Joan Tronto <1993>, and Nancy Fraser. <1989; 1992>

Although questioning this division and seeking to bring issues considered private into the public has been an important dimension of feminism in Britain and North America in both its first and second waves, that does not mean it is straightforward or unproblematic to

---

[13] I have not come across this euphemism in relation to a woman politician: if Margaret Thatcher's departure had been described in this way, would we have believed it? Women leaving employment or not seeking promotion for this reason is not seen as unusual or generally understood as a euphemism.

[14] Other distinctions between public and private in general use are the division an economist would make between the public and private sectors (i.e. state and privately-owned organisations); the distinction a stock-broker would make between a public company and a private company, both of which on the former distinction are privately-owned; or the legal concepts of public and private law. The feminist use of public and private would see all of these as 'public'. Tony Fahey has observed that the concept of 'privacy' is remarkably dependent on context <Tony Fahey *Families and the State* colloquium, University of Edinburgh 24 May 1997>.

[15] Squires contends that the most significant contribution to understanding the public and private dichotomy has come from feminist theory, discussing the work of Jean Elshtain as representative of liberal feminist theory, Mary O'Brien as representative of radical feminist theory, and Iris Young as representative of socialist feminist theory. She sees the methodological dualism characterising both mainstream and feminist political theory as itself related to the public and private dichotomy, so unhelpful as a critique of the dichotomy. Despite the differences between these theorists, they are united by the challenge they pose to mainstream theoretical accounts of the public and private and in the basis they lay for developing new conceptions of the public and private. She comments that few values so fundamental to society as privacy have been left so undefined in social theory and emphasises that there is no single concept of privacy. <1989 p 56> She quotes a legislative definition of privacy, noting the implicit definition of the person whose privacy is of concern: privacy is to be "protected from intrusion upon himself, his home, his family, his relationships and communication with others, his property and his business affairs". <1989 p 72>

do so, or to use these terms in analysis. <Squires 1989 p 140> The "Victorian shadow" (Davidoff's phrase) has a role in shaping gendered conceptions of public and private today, but this division cannot be understood only in terms of separate spheres ideology; it is not the case that women are simply excluded from public life; nor that "the private sphere is women's sphere and the public sphere is men's... Rather, feminist analysis shows the political, ideological nature of these categories". <Fraser 1992 p305> That political, ideological nature has its own history. "[T]hese terms are not simply straightforward designations of pre-existing social spheres; rather, they are cultural classifications and rhetorical labels. In political discourse they are frequently deployed to delegitimate some interests, views and topics and to valorise others."<Fraser 1989 p294> Davidoff argues that this distinction is both more complicated and slippery than it may at first seem; in particular, it is used to both explain women's subordinate position and as constituting an ideology which constructed and justified that position. Public and private are not and never have been "conceptual absolutes"; nevertheless, "[D]espite their instability and mutability, public and private are concepts which also have had powerful material and experiential consequences in terms of formal institutions, organisational forms, financial systems, familial and kinship patterns, as well as in language. In short, they have become a basic part of the way our whole social and psychic worlds are ordered, but an order that is constantly shifting, being made and remade. " <1995 pp 227 - 230>

Though both public and private gain their meaning in relation to each other, private is more closely defined through a sense of *not public* and is identified with both secrecy and with home and family life. In liberal discourse it is family privacy that is the antithesis of the public, though we also draw from liberal theory the main formal definition of privacy as the right to be free from unwanted intrusion and to determine what information is given to others. Privacy of the individual in most accounts overlaps with family privacy: the European Convention on Human Rights as it is to be incorporated into British law, for example, guarantees "respect for private and family life". Many uses of private occlude individual privacy and privacy understood as family/domestic life.[16] The public is most commonly identified with two main areas: employment/the market, and the political/public life. Fraser defines public as including: state-related; accessible to everyone; of concern to everyone; pertaining to a common good or shared interest. She suggests that each has a corresponding sense of privacy, which additionally however includes senses pertaining to private property; and pertaining to intimate domestic or personal life, including sexual life. <1989 p 294>

---

[16] This occlusion hides the difference between intimate group privacy and individual privacy and that it is not only not the same thing as individual privacy but may actually preclude it. For women whose place of work it is the notion of the *privacy* of the home is contradictory, ironically, especially so when the professional duties of wife, mother and mistress of a family were being promulgated in ideas of separate spheres. The idea that 'Home is the sacred refuge of our life', the opening line of an 1838 poem by John Player, raises the question refuge *from what?*

Feminist discussion of the public and private distinction has emphasised three main points: that there are no natural or *a priori* boundaries between the public and private spheres; that these categories are highly gendered; and that this dichotomy plays a major role in ordering what is seen as of appropriate concern as political. Elshtain emphasises that "boundary shifts" in our understanding of the political and what is public and private have taken place throughout western political life. <1981 p 201> The moving line between the public and private is at the centre of Nicholson's argument (which is discussed below); she argues that the contested and shifting boundary between the public and private has created contradictions to which organised feminism (both first and second-wave) has been the response. <Nicholson 1986> Although women and men operate across such boundaries in a variety of ways, the gendered association of these spheres[17] is still meaningful: for example, in a description of a senior woman lawyer as "a woman well used to operating in a man's world" <Radio 4 7 May 1997> and the magazine title *Woman's Realm* which focuses on family and domestic life. While most writers would agree in seeing this as a highly gendered dichotomy, there are different views on the extent to which it is the case, with the division seen as wholly gendered, so that the public and private distinction corresponds to male and female so exactly that if an activity is undertaken by a woman it is categorised as private, and, conversely, if the same activity is undertaken by a man, it becomes public; others see a significant overlap in these categories, and the degree of overlap, the role of this dichotomy in structuring gender divisions, and vice versa, as the interesting discussion. This dichotomy has been mapped onto a further set of ideas and corresponding gendered dichotomies: the autonomous and the relational, independence and dependence, reason and emotion, culture and nature. <Pateman 1983 p 287> The most fundamental and general of these oppositions associates women with nature and men with culture. <Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974> Davidoff sees gendered ideas of rationality, individuality and property as the groundwork upon which conceptions of public and private were built. <1995 p 237>[18] The sexual component to meanings of privacy has meant that women have been seen as potentially subversive of the public interest and the common good, as a source of sexual disorder. <Okin 1990 p 145> The sexual meanings of what otherwise might be neutral terms connoting public behaviour, 'street walker' and 'public woman', are significant.

Tronto sees the public/private distinction as one of the major boundaries which structure moral and political thought, and she emphasises the power that theories and frameworks have over how we think and what we think about. Such boundaries are part of "the process by which we make some questions central and others peripheral or marginal

---

[17] And the habit of referring to them as 'spheres' of life is a linguistic trace.

[18] Davidoff also makes an important link between the nature/female identification and women's association with polluting aspects of birth and death and role in managing dirt, disintegration and lack of order. <1995 p 5> This is particularly important in relation to women's role in the family, but also influences how women's public roles are seen (for example, in offices women also clean and do the 'emotional housekeeping', the latter now dignified within new management theory).

[which] is not simply a benign process of thought. Theorists' exclusions operate forcefully to set boundaries between those questions and concerns that are central and those that are peripheral. <Tronto 1993 pp 4-6>

Feminist thinking on the gendered nature of this distinction sees it as creating a definition of citizenship which is also gendered; the distinction between public and private worlds has been used to order the distinction between close, familial relationships and the abstract, ordered structure of authority in society, and citizenship has been primarily understood in relation to the latter. As Wollstonecraft showed, the idea of all citizens as free and equal became very rapidly problematic in relation to women. Formative liberal theory awards citizenship to the independent, propertied, rational and hence male individual; citizenship is associated with reason (and sublimated passion) and a duty of the head of the household. Women, on the other hand, have been seen as representing what citizenship was not: subordinate within the household, unable to transcend their bodily natures, as 'the sex', and as limited to a particular morality. The ideal of citizenship excluded women from the public realm because it was constructed in a universalistic manner that precluded the recognition of difference, including women's differences from that male norm, and which relegated to the private all particularity. The distinction between public and private, central as it was for the assertion of individual liberty, acted as a powerful principle of definition and exclusion. <Mouffe 1995 pp 316-7>

Privacy and the history of family and state

Although a clear distinction between the *polis,* where public, political speech was the preserve of free, male citizens, and the family/household (*oikos* - the household as productive unit*),* most of whose members were excluded from the public, is fundamental to Aristotelian political thought and thus constitutive of our own <Aristotle *Politics,* Elshtain 1981 pp 19-54; Coole 1993 pp41-48>, the dichotomy as it forms present-day political categories is seen as part of the formative narrative of liberalism with these concepts strongly embedded in political thinking by the mid-nineteenth century. <Calhoun 1992 pp 6-7>The origin of the distinction is also seen in the separation of family and state and the concomitant development of the family as private; a change sweepingly summarised by Stone as that life until the 17th century was lived in public, with the dominant family form permeable, other-directed and with only weak boundaries separating it from wider definitions of social space as well as very little physical privacy, which was followed by the development of nuclear family forms whose privacy and introversion was centrally related to the development of "affective individualism". (The extent to which this was the case and for whom has been much questioned.) <1977 p 85> The detail and timing of these explanations is debated, as is the relative role of religion, the growth of capitalism, industrialisation and urbanisation, but in common is that as the private sphere became

more distinct it became more closely associated, practically and theoretically, with the family. The historical arguments give a broad picture of pre-18^{th}c Europe as having no significantly separated spheres of life for work and leisure, political actions and home, no distinction between citizen and individual, no definite boundary between public and family life. Households in the early modern period, at every social level, are seen as *both* public and private in the modern sense: the castle or chateau was a political institution, organised through marital and family relationships and hierarchies; for the peasant family life was integrated into the village or crofting community and personal relationships were of considerable community significance. Stone's argument proposes a shift from the open-lineage family to the patriarchal nuclear family. Others give greater emphasis to economic changes and the separation of production and home and family and that changing material and social conditions - for some - during the 17^{th}c led to the possibility of a private realm. Alice Clark in one of the earlier accounts, sees the separation of work and home among the gentry as leading to the lives of women and men becoming less close, ultimately articulated as separate spheres <Clark 19191982>. Both Shorter <1976 p 205>and Aries <1972 p 390> have seen private domesticity as a defining characteristic of the modern family. Privacy, it is argued, became a desired characteristic of the upper-middle and middle-classes and a class marker, with the family coming to serve rather fewer practical functions but to carry a much greater weight of emotional and sexual commitment. This shift has been associated with a lessening of community controls of marital and family behaviour, diminished street life and community public life, as well as with architectural innovations which made privacy more possible. A rising emphasis on a culture of domesticity reached its zenith, Anderson suggests, in England and North America in the 19^{th}c and had spread to all social groups, as an ideal even if not always possible as practice, by the end of the century with the home seen as a haven and a retreat from the pressures of the market. <Anderson 1995 pp 31-33>

Hall and Davidoff's account of the formation of a distinctive middle-class identity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries sees it as integrally bound up with the separation of public and private, market and home. A moral code based around the domestic world did not mean that women were always confined within the domestic sphere or that men had no part in it, but "the home was strongly associated with a form of femininity which was becoming the hallmark of the middle-class..." <1987 p 25> The public world of business, the professions and growing middle-class political power was equally associated with a code of masculinity. In a period characterised by powerful reformist, religious, commercial and scientific ideologies, all to different degrees served to solidify a gender separation in family and public and private roles. Hall and Davidoff's account shows both the influence and the permeability of this boundary; that even in the period in which the distinction was inscribed and articulated it was never straightforward. The two spheres are linked in terms of belief and purpose: "[T]he goal of all the bustle of the marketplace was to provide a proper moral and religious life for the family"; and in terms of practices, with

many women working in family enterprises as well as at home, and commonly in the early 19thc they were still the same place. <1987 p 25> Enterprise organisations for both business and professional activities grew from the family household <1987 p 200> and kinship and religious and community contacts played a crucial role in business, contacts which women were assiduous in maintaining. <1987 pp 215 - 222> Furthermore those women who *were* wholly within the domestic sphere were supporting men's public life by their work at home, so that the autonomous man of political and religious ideology depended on the work of wife, sisters, daughters and servants. <1987 pp 52-58> If an ideology, expressing and backed by economic and social change, constructed a feminine private sphere, its fit with women's actual lives was inexact. Separate spheres meant a contradiction between women's actual and perceived relation to the economy: work inside the home became moral duty; work outside the home became invisible. Other dimensions to this dissonance were a tension between assertions of women's spiritual equality and social and sexual subordination; "clinging vine" dependence but often a demanding role in the family requiring strength and courage. Hall and Davidoff argue that these contradictions ensured continual shifts both in discourse and practice <1987 p 450>.

The theoretical basis for the liberal public and private distinction is identified with chapter six of Locke's *Second Treatise* in the distinction drawn between conjugal power and political power. Political power is seen as justifiably exercised over free and equal adult individuals only with their consent, but that form of power is distinguished from paternal power over children in the family. <Elshtain 1981 pp 116-127; Nicholson 1986 pp 133-166> This separation of the family and the political is also a gendered division: the natural differences between men and women are seen as entailing the subjection of wives to husbands in the family and a natural subordinate cannot at the same time be free and equal. <Pateman 1983 p 330> In the account of masculinity and femininity constructed by the classic theorists, only masculine beings are endowed with the attributes and capacities needed to enter into contracts, the most important of which is ownership of property in the person, "only men, that is to say, are individuals". <Pateman 1988 p 5> This view of Locke is disputed. The difference is over how far Locke accepted natural relationships of subordination in the private sphere and turns on the contradiction that he is arguing against a natural basis for authority in the political. Elshtain, similarly to Pateman, sees his argument as duplicitous in first denying the idea of a basis in natural law for the subjection of woman to her husband and instead presenting it as the "[P]unishment laid upon Eve". <1981 pp 124-5; pp 209-210> Others see Locke as a proto-feminist, or at least the case as unproven, because he saw mothers as well as fathers as exercising authority over children, suggests a wife can own property in her own right, and sees the possibility of a dissoluble marriage contract. <Butler 1978; Coole 1993>

The genesis of the public and private dichotomy in the social contract and the idea that a social contract *presupposes* a sexual contract is the core of Pateman's influential and very interesting argument in *The Sexual Contract.* <Pateman 1988> The terms of the original pact exclude women from the fraternal conversation and position the private sphere as not politically relevant. Citizenship, employment and marriage are all contractual but since they are seen through a contract theory which hides this crucial dimension they have been systematically misrepresented. She sees the 17[th]c contract theorists as establishing a modern form of patriarchy as political right, replacing patriarchal rule in its original sense of father right. Women are not merely absent, however, but have been subject to the parallel, suppressed contract of subjection. The social/sexual contract brings into being the modern liberal public and private dichotomy through a shift from the (also opposed and mutually dependent) natural and civil to a civil/private distinction. It incorporates women but in the private sphere. Thus in liberal discourse natural subordination stands opposed to free individualism, the male individual is abstracted from the sphere where his wife 'naturally' remains and this abstraction is then generalised as 'public'. In contrast to the family, participation in the public sphere is governed by universal, impersonal and conventional criteria of achievement, interests, rights, equality and property, criteria applicable only, or mainly, to autonomous male individuals. Making visible the hidden sexual contract shows, Pateman argues, how the construction of *sexual difference as political difference* is central to society. <my ital> The public world is thus seen and discussed in abstraction from and in contrast to the private domestic sphere which it is women's role to manage; and ties of dependence become something 'extra', a hindrance to disinterested, autonomous participation in the public sphere rather than a recognised part of public as well as private life.

Nicholson links economics, family formation and political development, arguing that 17[th]c liberalism was a reflection of a new form of social organisation in which the family and the state as we now comprehend them were created out of the older institution of kinship. <1986 p 2> A changing formation of the public and private is seen as having led to political and social change rather than the reverse. She argues that, in succession, liberalism, Marxism and feminism are manifestations of the changing dynamic between private and public: first, the separation which led in the 17thc to liberalism, in which the family and the state are reified as separate institutions superseding kinship as a means of organising society; secondly, theory reifying the economic was generated in concurrence with the emergence of the economic as a separate sphere out of the household, which led in turn to Marxism; and in the 19th and 20th centuries women's changing relationship to the private and to the family, part of a change from the household to the individual as the basic political unit, and the contradictions this generated, was the impetus for feminism. In the 19[th]c this led to calls for women to have a place in the public world symbolised by the vote, which grew from a focus on the individual as citizen rather than the head of household/property owner. A parallel move has led to feminism's resurgence in the last

quarter of the 20th century: "[A]s women have... become more autonomous economically in the course of the 20thc - and this has been particularly true for white, middle class women - older norms defining women by their position within the family have also become less consistent with present reality." [19]<1986 p 4> Nicholson therefore presents a historical continuum between first and second wave feminism marked by an increasing view of women as persons able to exist as individuals outside the family. Suffrage is one of the first attempts taken by women to achieve a self-identity not based on family relationships; later steps are also about "the breaking away of women from a familial identity".[20] She sees the increasing participation of women in the labour force also as a manifestation of the realignment of the familial and non-familial, rather than causing it. Women adjusted to this through the idea of 'dual roles' but tensions and contradictions in women's position in the second-half of the 20[th]c led to the liberal feminist arguments of the mid-1960s which in turn through their limitations led to the emergence of radical feminism and its central concern with the familial and the personal. This marked a new turn in feminism in which the family and personal life became an object of explicit attention by a movement which characterised its concerns as political. <1986 pp 59-66> This is to minimise the politicisation of these issues in the earlier movement, and to over-generalise, but as an overview it is convincing.

A continuing dilemma

If this dichotomy is useful in understanding 19th century women's position and political responses to that position in the development of the Victorian women's movement (which is discussed in the following chapter), equally it suggests, as Nicholson argues, a continuing thread to early 20[th]c and second-wave feminism. The defining slogan of second wave feminism, 'the personal is political', challenges the distinction between public and private and seeks to refuse it as constitutive of women's oppression. The slogan (and the thinking it summarises) is about redefining the political and the private. It explicitly rejects the liberal separation of the private and public and unmasks the gendered character of the assumptions which lie behind it. <Evans 1997 p 24>

---

[19] Other social movements/forms of scholarship she lists as also "manifestations of the contemporary reorganisation of the private and public" include: Freudianism, psychology as academic discipline and also cultural practice; the development of family and social history; attention in the (North American) New Left to 'consciousness' and 'subjectivity'; and new views on the relation between subjective and objective in epistemology <1986 p 5>

[20] The growth of an individualised, non-domestic sphere has implications also for men's 'singleness' and a conception of masculinity conspicuously unrelated to family role, as Ehrenreich has argued.

Again, the meaning of 'the personal is political' cannot be taken for granted, and it has, or has been taken to have, multiple meanings. The definition Millett gives of her title *Sexual Politics* can be taken as classic: that all power is political and that sexual domination is the most fundamental form of power. <1971 p 26>[21] In claiming the personal as political second-wave feminism has emphasised how personal circumstances and possibilities are structured by public factors and that personal problems need solutions through political means. It asserts that the difficulties women experience in their private lives are shared by other women and consequently have societal causes (the theory of consciousness raising). And it challenges how we understand private life - as not about power relations, as a refuge from public life - and how we understand and construct public life, and the practices of public life - as the domain of autonomous individuals without time-consuming private roles. Examples of arguments and campaigns which cross the public/private boundary include making visible and campaigning against domestic violence in Victorian and second-wave feminism, which has insisted that what was seen as a interpersonal and family problem is a public and political problem; and arguments around sexuality including both sexual orientation and sexual violence, of which the view of sexual violence as an abuse of power is central and the recognition of rape in marriage is key. Drawing on Pateman's account of a sexual contract, we can see the persistent refusal to admit any limitation to a husband's access to his wife's body as reflecting the position that woman has no property in her own person.[22] The idea and new legislative concept of sexual harassment centres on an argument that something private between women and men, 'only flirting' , is an expression of and abuse of power with significance for women's access to the public sphere. The feminist deconstruction of the view of the public actor as the autonomous, disinterested individual, so that ties of dependence become something 'extra', also makes visible this boundary. It has meant thinking about the private in ways more usual for the public, in terms of power relations, which is, as I have suggested, an area in which feminist theory has much in common with Foucault's analysis of power. Catherine Hall puts it as follows: "[M]en's power over women is not only at play in the public arenas of education or employment, but in the most private recesses of our experience, in our feelings about ourselves as daughters, mothers, wives and lovers". <Hall 1992 p 15> The central role second-wave feminism has given to questions of power in sexual relations and the family challenges the assumption of most political theory that family and personal life is not a site of power relations. <Okin 1989 pp 127-8; Brownmiller 1977>

---

[21] In the phrase 'sexual politics' Millett brings together what we now separate as 'sex' and 'gender', and seeks to encapsulate both the idea of gendered power relations *and* questions of power in personal sexual relationships between women and men. The radical feminist view that sexual power is the fundamental oppression has of course been a major area of debate.

[22] Rape in marriage was made illegal in 1982 and 1989 in Scotland and 1992 in England and Wales but it remains hard to get a conviction. Demands that it be the subject of legislation were made more than a century before this was achieved, by JS Mill <1869 pp160-1>, and in 1880 Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy raised this in a paper to the Dialectical Society. <Bland 1987 p 149>

The idea that no distinction can or should be drawn between the public and private is highly problematic, however. The slogan 'the personal is political' has been taken to imply this, though whether it need do so is arguable. For Fraser the feminist project is not to collapse the boundaries between public and private but to analyse and make visible the political, ideological nature of these categories. What is also important is "to overcome the gender hierarchy that gives men more power than women to draw the line between public and private". <1992 p 305> Okin argues that the existence of a personal sphere in which outside intrusion and the state's authority is limited is possible only if its members are equals and when those who are not equal in power (children) are protected from abuse, suggesting that the distinction has value particularly for women in the family. <1989 pp 128-133> Tronto also emphasises that the distinction should not be abolished but made visible, arguing that "[W]e would jeopardise the very basis of modern political life, and the possibilities for feminism and for freedom, if we were unable to separate any moral arguments from political ones or if we were unable to separate any aspects of public and private life", and that it should be redrawn "to include the possibilities of women as full participants in public life". <1993 pp 10-11> A further aspect of this discussion is that the definition of a private sphere is a matter for public contestation; that "this question about the limits of the political is precisely a *political* question." <Fraser 1989 p 6> Since it draws the boundaries (through the legal provision of marriage, divorce and child custody, the law on marital rape and law and police practice on domestic violence for example) the issue is not *whether* but *how* the state intervenes. Although it is frequently discussed in those terms, the idea that the state has the option to intervene or not in the family is meaningless as the state is responsible for "the background rules that affect people's domestic behaviours". <Olsen 1985>

The related distinction made between the private and the workplace/market is as important for feminism. Following from (again in Pateman's account) the development of a political distinction between the civil and the familial, was the separation of an economy from the polity. Davidoff has argued that this was gendered in that "the effort to separate 'an economy' as a special domain with its own iron laws from politics and the state was part of the clamouring masculinity of the 18th- and 19th- century bourgeois challenge". Assumptions which lay behind the creation of the idea of the economy and the market made women's work, both productive and reproductive, and its worth to capitalism invisible. "The new science of economics took as its starting point the rational, individual 'economic *man*', operating in a supposedly gender-neutral market; economics itself was defined in terms of the work of men." <1995 pp 242-4>[23]

---

[23] For an interesting discussion of how mainstream economics is still predicated on assumptions about autonomous economic *man* see Julie A Nelson *Feminism, Objectivity and Economics* <1996>. The public and private division has also been influential within sociology, and feminist critique of its sex bias and gender-blindness. The traditional emphases of sociological study, the state, the economy and production, class and public institutions have privileged the public over the private. <Abbott and Wallace 1990 pp 5-6>

The way this division has functioned on a moral level has been important at different times for the women's movement. The idea of a women's morality associated with the private sphere was a key aspect of Victorian feminist ideology and has been given a new formulation in Carol Gilligan's study of moral language <Gilligan 1982> and the extensive discussion it stimulated, and in other recent North American difference feminism, for example Sara Ruddick <1989> and Susan Griffin. <1984> The private sphere is presented as having a distinctive morality equal to (Gilligan) or superior to (Ruddick, Griffin) the ethic of justice. To the Kantian view of morality Gilligan opposes an equally important (though it has been seen as of second order) moral language which privileges specificity and relatedness, care, obligation. This ethic of care is associated with women's maternal/family role; Gilligan suggests that this type of ethical approach is not specific to women as much as to life experience which is typically female, and Ruddick sees "maternal thinking" as a valuable consequences of social practices of care which can be learned by men who take on caring roles. The content of women's morality in this discussion is not precisely set, but the term refers to a collection of ideas: values placed on caring and nurturance, the importance of maternal practices, a stress on the value of sustaining human relationships and, as an extension, the over-riding value of peace. Tronto lists attentiveness, responsibility, nurturance. compassion, meeting others' needs <1993 pp 1-3> Recent discussion of the different qualities women may bring to politics would suggest also co-operation and consensus-building.

As to the desirable relationship between public and private, Pateman is I think right to say that "feminists have posed, but have not yet answered, this fundamental question". <1983 p 344> The major impact of this extensive discussion has been to question definitions of the political and of justice and work/economic activity and to show that these definitions have played a major role in women's lesser public role; and in questioning the definition of the private, thus opening a space for theorising sexual and domestic violence and inequality within families as an abuse of power. It has been therefore to begin to redefine the boundaries of the public and private and so open new questions for inquiry; to break the silence of traditional political thought on questions of the exclusion of women; and to make visible how the apparent egalitarianism of liberalism obscures the inequality between women and men it has played a part in institutionalising.

Equality, difference and the family

Equality and difference [24] is the second conceptual pairing which has been of importance both within feminist history and theory and in structuring public debate on women's social and political roles. Equality and difference play a part in constituting the distinction between public and private, with difference used as an argument for a separated, private sphere, and the qualities seen as characterising women's difference those associated with the private sphere and women's family roles, and equality predominantly understood as a claim on the public world of citizenship and employment. Like public/private the dichotomy of equality and difference functions within political practices and strategies *and* as a term of analysis of arguments and political practices. Again the dichotomy can be observed in the political history of the women's movement and in political practices and is an analytical tool used to think about these areas. Again, unanalysed and unacknowledged ideas of equality and difference commonly pervade political discourse about gender. [25]

As well as the role the opposition of equality and difference has played in feminist discourse and the formulation of gender equality policies, I believe it has been significant in the conception and implementation of family policy throughout the twentieth century and the women's movement's relationship to that, and is salient to understanding the impact of women's politics on the development of the welfare state. This latter point remains to be argued, but there is widespread agreement that the contrast and relationship between ideas of equality and of difference is extremely important in understanding the development of a political women's movement in the 20th century. There is also agreement that the dichotomy remains central and problematic. <Bock and James 1992 pp 1-13> Evans' account of *Feminist Theory Today* returns repeatedly to a cluster of questions around the opposition between equality and difference. She argues that as a result of the development of cultural feminism equality and difference have become crucial factors in second-wave feminist-thought. Though not, because of the various usages of 'difference' and 'equality', the only axis around which feminism can be organised, "they may well form the strongest and most enduring one. From them emerges a train of thought that has run through second-wave' feminism and remains a tension at its heart". <1995 pp 14-18> Mackay sees the tension between equality and difference as contributing to the contradictions in women's role in political elites and as

---

[24] 'Difference' is used in three main ways within feminist theory: in terms of male-female differences; in terms of differences between women especially in relation to ethnicity and class, which has led to the argument that feminism must find ways to reconcile the capacity to speak politically with the need not to invoke a unitary concept of 'woman' ; and in the idea of 'différance' in French and postmodern feminisms. <Coole 1993 p 189> The first use is the meaning of difference in the distinction between equality and difference although the debate on differences among women usefully informs discussion of the equality and difference division.

[25] In discussion of efforts to increase women's political representation for example, and media reporting of those discussions, and in ideas of 'women's interests' and their role in politics at both local and national level.

underlying stances on representation, equal opportunities and women's programmes. However, although the concept has been debated intensively and contentiously within feminist circles it "has been less well rehearsed within political science and political sociology; and within contemporary political culture". For women politicians she believes "it articulates some of their lived contradictions as women in politics". <Mackay 1996 p 13>

Of particular significance to my thesis is the extent to which difference has been defined through women's capacity for childbearing: that women and not men have the capacity to bear and suckle children is an irreducible difference[26]. Although not always explicit in discussion of it, the primary constituents of difference as positioned in the equality and difference debate are sexuality, pregnancy, childbirth and social roles seen as following from women's capacity for childbearing (though this is of course debated): women's role in the family, in childcare and the work of caring; and differences in interests, skills, knowledge and approach to morality seen as following from this role. This is shown in the use of difference as a reason for women's exclusion from the public sphere in the 19[th]c, and the use of an argument from difference in claims to access to public life and full citizenship; and also in the discussion of how to achieve "real equality" in the 1920s. I would strongly emphasise Pateman's summary that: "[C]hildbirth and motherhood have symbolised the natural capacities that set women apart from politics and citizenship" (though I see the point she goes on to make, that "motherhood and citizenship, in this perspective, like difference and equality, are mutually exclusive" as overly reductive). <Pateman, 1992 p 19> This creates an effective opposition between women's family role and gender equality which, although no longer functioning to exclude women from citizenship, shapes a differential form of inclusion.

Unpacking equality and difference

Although both terms have complex (and shifting) meanings, in this debate, in summary, equality is understood as the identical consideration and treatment of women and men, and difference as taking into account distinctive characteristics and activities of women (which may but does not necessarily include a view on the biological basis of gender differences over and above women's capacity for childbearing). Feminism is most commonly understood as the demand for equality with men and as identical treatment, in relation to exclusion and lack of representation, and is commonly seen as denying the significance of gender differences. The view of equality as overlooking the particular and emphasising the universal is inherent in the natural rights argument that all men are created equal. Equality in this sense is not eliminating differences but the suspension of differences for a stated purpose, a perceived absence of *relevant* differences. Thus the context in question needs to be acknowledged. Gender difference is not denied although

some accounts of equality feminism seem to come close to doing so, and in general any differences conceded are argued to be the result of sex stereotyping and socialisation; the question at issue is the *meaning* of gender differences and when and how much they matter. Difference arguments state that some differences are *always relevant* and we need to recognise and deal with that if we are to achieve our ends, contrasting legal or formal equality with "real equality". Thus the distinction between equality and difference turns on questions about the relative significance of similarities as compared to differences; how relevant gender differences are in the context under discussion and how such differences are valued.

Questions of how we respond to gender difference and how we explain it pervade discussions of inequality, in both media discussion and theory. Compare for example the North American Unitarian minister Victoria Safford describing her church and community, "[H]ere no one sees [sexual] orientation or gender... there is a profound equality which is not found in the world at large" <The Independent Magazine 1.2.97> with Patricia Hill Collins, who argues that gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class are some of the most important things about us, "they make us who we are". In the former construction, which has both conservative-assimilationist and radical versions, a truly non-sexist and non-racist society is one in which the race or sex of an individual would not matter, or would matter much as, for example, eye colour does today, and would have no significance for a person's sense of identity or how they are seen by others. But this is to seek to make insignificant difference in a way which would mean individual and cultural denial and loss. "Race, class and gender are interlocking categories of experience that affect all aspects of human life; they simultaneously structure the experiences of all people in this society. Although at times race, class, or gender may feel more salient or meaningful in a given person's life, they are overlapping and cumulative in their effect on people's experience... [and create a] structural pattern that affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges." <Hill Collins 1995> Fraser contends that "[T]o argue that everyone should be treated in the public world as if the facts of sex, class, colour, age and religion do not count is to insist that we should deny the most basic human facts about ourselves."<1992 p 121> Audre Lorde (talking primarily of differences between women) has eloquently argued the creative function of difference in our lives: "[D]ifference must not be merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters". <Lorde 1984/1996 p 159>

---

[26] Shulamith Firestone famously saw women's liberation in a radical androgyny in which both women and men could bear children. <Firestone 1971> This was to take 'equality' arguments to a *reductio ad absurdum* - though I daresay someone is working on it.

The critique of 'equality' arguments can be summarised as: that ideas of equal rights, equal treatment and equal opportunity assimilate women to men and 'fit women into' male-defined norms and practices, and are a kind of "me-too feminism"[27] which ignores the needs of those women less easy to assimilate. Both the 'new feminism' of the 1920s and the Women's Liberation Movement in the late 1960s raised the question whether equality *to men* was not rather a limited goal. The most radical version of this argument asserts that the concept of equality is itself male and rejects it as an aim, and seeks a reassertion of women's values, culture and community as the goal of feminism. This view of equality would create, or pretend to create, a gender-neutral society, raising questions of whether this is either possible or desirable. If gender differences are denied in the name of equality this may occlude and possibly reinforce discriminatory practices. The abstraction within the idea of the equal citizen is based on a repression of difference which presents as a neutral or objective norm what is in fact typically male life experience, but this model may only make it harder to recognise the significance given to differences. Iris Marion Young argues that the Enlightenment ideal of equality inspired movements against dominance and oppression but at a cost of new norms and of a confusing assimilation in the name of equality and justice. "The assimilationist ideal assumes that equal social status for all persons requires treating everyone according to the same principles, rules, and standards. A politics of difference argues, on the other hand, that equality as the participation and inclusion of all groups sometimes requires different treatment for oppressed or disadvantaged groups." <Young 1990 pp157-8> Equality feminism is sometimes seen as the Northern European approach.[28] UK and European Union equality law is premised on equality-as-sameness, which is why it presents as illegal equality measures which depend on differential treatment as a response to gender inequalities.

The critique of the argument from difference (as well as its limited success so far <Tronto 1995 p 2>) is that it can come very close to affirming the values and beliefs which use female-male differences to justify exclusions and inequality. For example Ruth Milkman writing about the 1978 Sears case in the USA argues that "in a period of conservative reaction... feminist scholars must be aware of the real danger that arguments about 'difference' and 'women's culture' will be put to use other than those for which they were originally developed". <Milkman 1986 pp 394-5> It is also criticised for its essentialism, suggesting that female-male differences are fixed and unchanging, and that this leads to

---

[27] a phrase which is attributed to new feminist Mary Stocks and also the Eleanor Rathbone.

[28] Bock and James discuss the national differences in the meaning given to the terms equality and difference in feminist theory and in the degree to which women's movement practice has emphasised one or the other. It has become commonplace, they say, to assume that contrasting positions can be divided along national lines with French and Italian feminisms defined as 'difference', and Anglo-American feminism as 'equality'. This is to over-simplify, as the essays in their collection show, though not wholly unfounded. They comment that "[T]he criticism of difference has been most forcefully expressed in countries where biologism, whether socio-biology or eugenics, has been an important and dangerous social movement, often linked to racism." <1992 p 2> This is particularly interesting in relation to both Atkinson's and Davin's arguments, discussed in chapter three. Pateman suggests that the choice between equality and difference tends to be posed most sharply in individualistic political cultures like the USA <1992 p 17>.

a static political position. More problematic in my view is that it risks emphasising difference where it really does not matter (although 'where it really does not matter' is historically and socially specific and contested). Minow has summarised this as "the difference dilemma". Ignoring difference in the case of subordinated groups "leaves in place a faulty neutrality", but focusing on difference can underscore its stigma: "[B]oth focusing on and ignoring difference risk recreating it". <Minow 1984 p 160>. Strategically, difference arguments are more complex to convey - they require that you both acknowledge difference and refute it as an acceptable explanation for inequality, and in some cases use it as a reason *for* equality.

The dichotomy demands attention also to its *oddness:* public and private function quite straightforwardly as opposites, but the opposite of equality is inequality not difference, and the opposite of difference would generally be taken to be sameness. This false opposition is illuminating however in that it shows that it is because equality is understood as sameness that difference becomes locked in a binary opposition to it, and raises the questions *why* equality has come to be understood as sameness and whether there are other possible understandings which have not been current within mainstream political discourse, or given prominence in relation to gender, for example as participation or inclusion. It is hard, and women's movement history shows much harder in practice than in theory, to say 'different but equal' [29] or 'different *and* equal'. We need to understand, therefore, why difference is read in terms of superiority/inferiority. Most discussion of the equality/difference dichotomy presents it in terms of strategy. For example: "there were two possible routes for women excluded from the world of authority and activity, in the claiming of equality or the assertion of difference." <Rendall 1987 p 2 > Tronto argues that this problem is inherent in feminist theory "because the strategic problem of trying to gain power from the margins necessitates the logic of sameness or difference..." <1993 p 15> Equality and difference function dichotomously because the women's movement's political claims have necessarily been positioned in relation to a pre-existing state and within a discursive context. There is no ahistorical, non-linguistic starting point or level, ungendered playing field. And, equally importantly, equality and difference function dichotomously within *hierarchical* state and social structures. If in a logical sense, positing differences or distinctions is benign, in political context it is not. In a hierarchical society it is difficult to claim difference without implying better or worse, though this is not true of *all* differences which again emphasises that this is about the meaning given to differences. Differences are differences *from* an established social/political norm. The writings of black feminists (for example Audre Lorde, as discussed above, and bell hooks <1984 and 1991> and Patricia Hill Collins <1995>) asserting the importance of difference *within* feminism have been important in making clear how in a hierarchically-structured world equality is understood as sameness, or sameness asserted for specific purposes, and differences have been the vehicles through which inequality has been *enacted and justified.* The question then becomes how gendered discourses, especially through 'foundational'

narratives (for example the social contract as Pateman analyses it) and the institutions and practices which embody them transform male-female difference into female otherness and disadvantage. It is not difference that is *in itself* a problem but how discourse fixes difference antithetically to equality, and does so in ways that are then occluded or denied.

Scott's argument

A major referent in recent discussion of the dichotomy is Joan Scott's analysis of the Sears Case.[30] Central to Scott's argument is the much-cited recognition that "[W]hen equality and difference are paired dichotomously, they structure an impossible choice. If one opts for equality, one is forced to accept the notion that difference is antithetical to it. If one opts for difference, one admits that equality is unattainable". <Scott, 1988 p172 > She suggests that rather than an irresolvable logical tension, the very use of this analytical tool has reinforced the dichotomy and has meant that the formulation of the problem has become that feminism faces a choice between two opposed values and strategies, whereas what is needed instead is to refuse and deconstruct that opposition, to get beyond it in political practices *and* in our analysis of them. For Scott the case is "a sobering lesson" in the operation of a discursive field, providing insight into the manipulation of concepts and definitions and the implementation and justification of institutional and political relationships. The case and final judgement turned on an assertion of social and cultural differences between women and men which led to the differences in recruitment and employment which the EEOC alleged were discriminatory. Thus discrimination was redefined as the *acknowledgement* of difference however historically or culturally produced and difference became the explanation and legitimation of inequality. <1988 pp 169-171> An argument initially developed by feminism that differences between women and men are social and cultural rather than natural was used to argue that different treatment of women and men is not discriminatory, in the same way that biological arguments are. Equality-versus-difference "set the terms within which Sears defended its policies *and* the EEOC challenged them... Instead of framing analyses and strategies as if such binary pairs were timeless and true, we need to ask how the dichotomous pairing of equality and difference itself works. Instead of remaining within the terms of existing political discourse, we need to subject those terms to critical examination."< 1988 p 168> Feminism cannot give up difference as "it has been our most creative analytic tool". Nor can it give up equality, "at least as long as we want to speak to the principles and values of a democratic political system". But it is important for feminists not to let their arguments be forced into pre-existing categories. <1988 pp 172-4> The question which she does not address is *how* you change the terms of a discourse, and

---

[29] This phrase particularly has been shorthand for an argument which women have learnt to be wary of.

[30] The Sears case was the sex discrimination suit brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against the retail firm Sears Roebuck & Company in 1978, which over-turned a basic premise of equal treatment law.

do so without being heard as simply reasserting difference in ways which have been problematic in the past. It is not hard to imagine a circumstance in which feminist theorists and historians are scrupulous in this respect but political arguments and practices continue to be bedevilled by this dichotomy. As Tronto observes, it is less a question of inability than joining a game where the rules - and unwritten rules - have already been drawn up. <1993 p 15> Meaning, and how oppositions function within and structure discourse, cannot be changed by edict. To do so calls for a discursive strategy which has proved elusive in the history of the women's movement this far. Scott suggests however that this is not for want of trying: a history of feminism written as an oscillation between these demands has meant a failure to recognise that the history of feminism "is full of illustrations of refusals of simple dichotomies and attempts instead to demonstrate that equality requires the recognition and inclusion of differences". Fabian socialism before 1914, discussed in chapter three, and social feminism in the 1920s can be seen as such attempts, although new feminism has commonly been seen as only a reassertion of difference at the expense of equality; this is discussed in chapter four. The conception of citizenship after 1918 which can be deduced from the political activities of the EWCA is another such attempt; this is discussed in chapters five and six.

CHAPTER TWO: Wollstonecraft's citizen mothers; Marriage, family and the Victorian women's movement.

Although the assumption that the first wave women's movement did not address issues concerning the family, maternity and sexuality is widely held the discussion of these issues was extensive; the identification of equality with access to public roles defined in opposition to family roles has served to obscure this history. The history of how the 19th and early 20thc women's movement's positioned the family and women's role in and in relation to it has only begun to be written; nevertheless its outlines can be sketched. In this chapter I argue that 'first-wave' feminism, although commonly presented as classic liberal feminism in demanding women's access to the public sphere and privileging equality above difference can be seen as taking a more nuanced position in relation to the public and private division and resulting conceptions of citizenship. To take feminism's 'founding moment'[1] as Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* <1792>, I argue that while this is inspired by emergent liberalism and a belief in the rights of the individual it makes no significant separation between the public and private, and presents women's citizenship as lying in her social role in the family as well as in a basis of natural rights. I argue that Wollstonecraft is commonly misrepresented and that her argument in *A Vindication* is particularly interesting for the view she presents of maternity, female sexuality and women's citizenship. I then look at the Victorian women's movement's relation to Victorian domestic ideology. Drawing on recent reassessment, I argue that the mid-Victorian women's movement began with an analysis of married women's legal status, that a number of the major Victorian feminist demands for reform address married women's position, and that this was allied to discussion of sexual relations focussing on but not confined to the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts, so that their political arguments were centrally concerned with women's position in the family. This included arguments based in sexual difference which called for reformation of private and public life and brought into question the boundary between them. This is an argument which could be developed in much greater detail. My intention is only to highlight that women's family position has been an important and difficult issue for the women's movement throughout its (known) history and that it has raised questions integrally related to questions about the public/private

---

[1] This is not to claim that Wollstonecraft was the first to express ideas about women's position in Britain: see Mary Prior ed *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* 1985; Mary Astell's argument for higher education for women, *Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their Time and Greatest Interests* 1694, like Wollstonecraft presents women's apparent inferiority as a result of education not nature, and argues that education would be a defence against mercenary marriages <Perry 1986>; and further research on women in the Englightenment is likely to be of great interest. Textual references in *A Vindication* suggest the nature of women as a current, contested question. However it has come to be seen, through feminist political history and

division and the meanings given to equality and citizenship. Nineteenth century discussion of these questions was a significant influence on the social feminism of the early 20th century and on interwar social-liberal feminism.

'the family' in the history of the women's movement

Although a radical critique of the family is associated with second-wave feminism, the truism that the first wave women's movement was conservative about the family and that it was not central to feminist politics until the 1970s, is based on inadequate information rather than an accurate assessment. In this I follow Dyhouse, and would emphasise particularly her point that "no simple consensus characterised feminist attitudes to marriage, sexuality, or family life". <1989 p 4> Dyhouse demonstrates that the assumption that the first-wave women's movement was conservative on issues concerning the family and sexuality is widely held; she challenges this and argues that many 19th and early 20[th]c feminists clearly saw feminism as a challenge to contemporary forms of family life and, indeed, that it "was their dissatisfaction with the family that fuelled their feminism" <1989 p 3>; "[I]f pressed to summarise the attitude of most feminists towards the family in late-Victorian and early 20[th]c Britain I would find myself resorting to (or taking refuge in) the concept of ambivalence". This was due to the nature of families as a source both of emotional support *and* of personal frustration. <1989 p 13> The difference from second-wave feminism's dominant discourse on the family is not wholly exaggerated, she suggests, in that much earlier feminist criticism of the family was not rejection of the family as a social institution or as an ideal, but criticism of the family in its Victorian bourgeois form. <1989 p 6> Nicholson makes a similar argument in relation to the women's movement in the USA. She refers to criticism of the first wave women's movement for its focus on the vote and failure to challenge women's place within the family, citing primarily Elshtain's argument that the US suffrage movement was conservative in its acceptance of 'separate spheres'. <Nicholson 1986 p 54; Elshtain 1974> She argues that that there was in fact a critique of marriage and women's family role in the period, in the writings of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman although there was not a large-scale social movement based around those ideas, but more importantly that this criticism is ahistorical because few women in the 19[th]c were economically independent or could expect to be, and because the lines separating domestic from non-domestic activity were in this period being transformed. <Nicholson 1986 p 55>

---

particularly Strachey's account <1928 p 12> as the 'founding moment' and in terms of a feminist political tradition in relation to the development of the modern state, it is so. <Kramnick 1985 p 25; Todd 1993 p xiv>

Wollstonecraft's thinking on mothers and family

Taking Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* as a starting point we can trace differing views on women's family position and see their connection to a politics of sexual difference. Wollstonecraft's views on women's role in the family demand a far more thorough analysis than I am able to give in this context, but her argument in *A Vindication* is particularly interesting in terms of its approach to the public/private distinction and the relationship between motherhood and citizenship in the emerging modern state. [2] Although neither the first to publicly contest women's subordination or the only one to do so at the time, Wollstonecraft forcefully interjected the issue of women's rights into the general debate about civil rights. Her understanding of maternity and family deserves further exploration both in itself and because it is commonly misunderstood; in discussions of 'equality versus difference' Wollstonecraft is commonly presented as arguing for equality-as-sameness. <For example Strachey 1928. Banks 1981 and Hall 1992>However in the *Vindication* woman's role in the family and as what a later generation of feminists would call "sex objects" is integral to her critique of existing conditions and their effect on women, and to her vision of an egalitarian future. The possibility of women's respected and non-compulsory role in the family is central to her argument for women's civil rights and right to an education, but also to the reform of society generally, for without equality in the family and sexual relations there will be no social progress. At a time when the idea of a public sphere in which (middle-class) citizens act was under-going very significant development, she argues for women's equal participation in it, but in a way which recognises no significant division between the public and private (which Todd describes as "revolutionary", although she does not discuss this in any detail <1993 p xvii>) and thus pre-empts the dilemma of equality and difference. Rather than judgements based on private as well as public terms, she believes that a morality which rests in an informed understanding of society is appropriate for all of life and for women and men equally; no distinction is made between the basis of virtue in the private and public realms. Women's maternal and family role is repeatedly described in terms of civic duty. Right conduct in domestic life requires an understanding of society and your position in it, and personal virtue is "one eternal standard" which should be extended to all of life. The distinctions of rank established in society undermine both, but of all the vices of mankind the corrupted relationship between the sexes is the most injurious to social and personal morality. <pp 292-3>

Wollstonecraft understands equality as a shared *humanity,* regardless of the distinction of sex, but humanity is not defined on a male model but in a way which includes women's experience. Wollstonecraft's argument is seen as self-limiting because she does not challenge the gendered division of labour <Coole 1993 p 93>; rather she envisages

---

complementary male and female roles within the family. But, importantly, she draws no distinction between the qualities needed in the private and public worlds and therefore no gendered distinction between them and finds it unproblematic to include maternity in her conception of citizenship.

Although Wollstonecraft has been claimed as the first radical feminist <Lorch 1990>[3] and as a foremother of utopian socialist feminism <Taylor 1983 p 9>, her work, especially the *Vindication*, needs to be understood in the context of the development of liberalism. The *Vindication* is primarily an argument against "the pestiferous purple" - power based on inherited wealth and position which is blocking the progress of civilisation - but this is understood as a system of *gendered* power based on inequalities between women and men as well as of status and property. Wollstonecraft uses the parallel between aristocratic abuses and men's abuse of their power in relation to women to make evident the contradiction in liberal arguments. If aristocratic power and privilege create a society which is damaging for men, it is the more so for women. <p 234> Women's inequality must be ended because women too are rational beings and inherit natural rights, but Wollstonecraft sees no reform for society as sufficient or workable without the equality and inclusion of women. She brings together natural rights arguments and claims for the social benefits of sexual equality; no equal society will be possible if half of society is prevented from participation in it, because excluded women will undermine progress. <p 230; p 273; p 276> Eloquently and with passion she argues that if all individuals are born free and equal then it is "both inconsistent and unjust" to exclude women. <p 11> But the argument goes much further, analysing the "the mistaken notions that enslave my sex" <p 41> and showing that femininity is socially constructed and that it is in men's interests (if not of the *rational* man) to keep women as they are. <p 75; p 137> Women's nature is seen as systematically distorted through an education as playthings: "strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty" at the behest of male sexual passion. Women collude with this, but at great personal cost. <p 146; pp 131-2>

Both civil rights for women and opportunities in work and business are needed. Tentatively, she makes the suggestion that women might have representatives in government. <p 237> However, education is her central concern and remedy: in itself "the grand end of their exertions should be to unfold their faculties, and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue" <p 75; p 97> and because it is necessary for women as mothers. The ideal of rational motherhood is central to Wollstonecraft's sense of women's proper role and is counterposed to the corruption of oligarchy. Her argument on maternity and family falls into four areas: the opposition between maternity and an artificial, decadent sexuality; the need for civil rights for mothers; the need for a rational education for mothers; and the importance of an equal, freely chosen relationship between women and

---

[3] Jennifer Lorch argues that the *Vindication* is not the most cogent representation of Wollstonecraft's feminism and that her personal letters and especially the unfinished novel *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* are "[T]he most sophisticated presentation of her feminist thought." <Lorch 1990>

men in the family. For Wollstonecraft, independence is a central value but its meaning for her is not independence from family roles but independence of mind and means which will permit a woman to carry out those duties well. Independence is to be found in discharging the duties of your station in life, and she is clear about what women's duties are: women's "first duty is to themselves as rational creatures, and the next, in point of importance, as citizens, is that, which includes so many, of a mother". <p 235> Girls have been taught to exaggerate the importance of romantic love but not to respect the duties of motherhood. Women's comfort, respectability and the natural affections of motherhood are blighted by the need to "render themselves pleasing" to men. <p 274> The irrationality created by this focus on their persons rather than their minds, and the absence of a good education, makes most women poor mothers, both over-indulgent and neglectful. "To be a good mother - a woman must have sense, and that independence of mind which few women possess who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands". <p 244> An end to dependence on men and a respected place in society are needed: women will only "fulfil their peculiar duties" by participating in "the inherent rights of mankind. Make them free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous". <p 272> A similar sentiment informs one of the most famous statements in the *Vindication*: "Make women rational creatures and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives and mothers; that is - if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers." <p 276>

Wollstonecraft's vision of citizenship incorporates motherhood, but a non-subordinated motherhood which includes (though it is not clear how it is to be managed) economic independence for mothers. The good society is one in which "man must necessarily fulfil the duties of a citizen, or be despised, and that while he was employed in any of the departments of civil life, his wife, also an active citizen, should be equally intent to manage her family, educate her children, and assist her neighbours". In order to be "virtuous and useful" and to "discharge her civil duties" she must have the protection of law and "she must not be dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life, or support after his death." <p 236> The ideal of equal, companionate relationships between women and men is integral to this vision. For the independent woman love will "occupy its proper sphere in human activities, and a woman would marry out of love made more desirable by judgement". <p 241> Against this she contrasts, in a characteristically vivid passage, how women's dependency "produces a kind of cattish affection which leads a wife to purr about her husband as she would about any man who fed and caressed her". <p272> Wollstonecraft's view of sexual passion is conflicted: it is seen as disruptive and as the very opposite of reason. <p 102>

It is a vision based on the emerging middle class: seen as independent and hard-working, freed alike from the corruption of the aristocracy and the debasing need and drudgery of the working class. The ideal woman pictured in the *Vindication* is vigorous, intellectually active and with a respected role in the community. True merit and happiness are created by a society in which women and men are required to discharge their respective family

and social duties, as against one in which wealth and idleness are the source alike of private and public corruption. Maternal neglect is contrasted with natural affection and maternal solicitude; "insipid grandeur" and "slavish ceremonies" to an orderly domestic life in which women care for their own children (with a little domestic help), the husband returning each evening to "smiling babes and a clean hearth". <p 292> Wollstonecraft's vision is not dissimilar to the Puritan ideal in its emphases on the joys and responsibilities of childrearing, the dismissal of material goods, the equation of virtue with work and contempt for aristocratic frivolousness. Ironically, since it can be argued that much of their influence was related to the late 18thc reaction against fearful freedoms including those represented by Wollstonecraft, and Hannah More is said to have publicly refused to read *A Vindication,* it has much in common with the evangelical vision of the good life. Both the poet of domesticity William Cowper who gave us an apparently indelible vision of "home, sweet home" and Hannah More, the playwright who after her religious conversion in the 1780s wrote didactic tracts, envisage an organic society based on the land in which there is no substantial separation between production, reproduction and consumption and the household is the basic unit with separate but complementary activities within it for women and men. <Davidoff and Hall 1987 p 181> More and the later, quintessentially separate spheres writer Mrs Ellis, shared concerns about the nature of marriage, the importance of motherhood and the need for a better education for women which recognised their rationality. Mrs Ellis's equation of happiness with usefulness reworks a Wollstonecraft theme as does her argument that the care of children needs not "ignorant domestics" but the "skilful hand of the intelligent Christian mother". <1878 p 167>. The difference, and it is of course crucial, is in the idea of women's equal citizenship and in maternity as requiring both civil rights and an independent economic basis. Wollstonecraft believed women should be educated as a right and *also* to make them better wives and mothers, not *only* to make them better wives and mothers.[4]

Differing views of Wollstonecraft's argument is also a reminder of the problem of over-reliance on the dualism of equality and difference. Hall draws a distinction between More and Wollstonecraft in those terms and as "a central and necessarily unresolved question for feminism" <Hall 1992 p9>, but this fails to acknowledge that Wollstonecraft's arguments are not liberal equality arguments only. In *A Vindication* she argues for women's rights both on a basis of equality-as-sameness: like men, women have reason; *and* on a basis of the difference of motherhood. There is no contradiction for her in doing so: the rights of man are not yet written in the image of man. For Wollstonecraft ideas of citizenship are part of a formative discourse with which she is deeply engaged. Whereas Victorian and later feminism would argue for access and influence for women in the public sphere (though, as I argue below, it is not all it did), and this has remained the pre-eminent focus of the British women's movement, for Wollstonecraft this is not a boundary to be

---

[4] Strachey in *The Cause* suggests that despite their differences both Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More need to both be seen as forerunners of mid-Victorian feminism. <1928, 1978 p 12 and p 23> My comparison is a

crossed. Home, community and government are all seen as domains requiring civic virtue and in need of reform, and all have been undermined by the corruption and decadence of the current structures of power. A separation of public and private may have been written into the basis of liberalism and articulated by Rousseau in a way Wollstonecraft vehemently opposed, but it had yet to be consolidated as a gendered boundary. It would be through Victorian market and domestic ideologies which still shape our perception of this distinction.

The mid-Victorian women's movement and the family

"Man assumed the direction of government and war, woman of the domestic and family affairs... It has been so from the beginning, throughout the whole history of man, and it will continue to be so to the end, because it is in conformity with nature and its laws, and is sustained and confirmed by the experience and reason of six thousand years." The appeal to history and nature in this anti-suffrage argument from 1887 <quoted in Elshtain 1981 p 230> is only more categorical rather than essentially different to views of women's role in the family as historically-sanctioned which remain common today (whether used to support a continuing role for women in the family or to present a "modern" alternative). Gender roles in the 19thc are fixed in popular, and some historical and feminist, perception as separate and invariable. So strong is the perception that 'in the past' men and women lived very differently from each other that the Victorian ideal of separate spheres obscures the much more complex nature of gendered roles in British history generally, as well as the more complex position in the 19thc itself. Not only is a prescriptive domestic ideology dominant in our view of women's lives in that period, but it still casts a long shadow.

The Victorian codification of gender difference in an ideology of separate spheres has been widely discussed: see for example, Davidoff and Hall 1987; Caine 1992 and 1997; Levine 1987 and 1990; Gorham 1982; Burstyn 1980; Digny 1992; Branca 1975; Gordon 1990 and forthcoming; Kerber 1997. Gordon's definition of Victorian domestic ideology stresses the extent to which it divided the world into public and private, home and work, and that although the association of women with domesticity was not new, the greater separation of home and work as a result of industrialisation, the increasing significance of waged labour and the prosperity of the new middle-class all extended this association and separation. <Gordon 1990 p 206>. Caine defines separate spheres as a middle-class assumption that the proper location for women was in the home, providing care and nurturance for a family, and emphasises its association with religious belief (especially Evangelicism) and the institution of the pious, affectionate family. <Caine 1997 p 82> The reach of domestic ideology was partial. There were many women for whom confinement to the home was never an option, for economic and family reasons. Others chose work

---

different one, but Strachey's comment is insightful and the question worth further exploration. <see also Caine 1992 p 19>

and fellowship in communities of single women, both religious and secular. [5] Throughout the 19[th]c women did a great deal of paid and productive work, [6] much paid work was still carried on within the home, and much household labour might still be undertaken by women together in public settings. Families were varied in form and in the relative economic contribution of their members. A thriving publishing industry of pamphlets, manuals, magazines and novels developed the theme of women's distinct and private sphere, but it is now not easy to separate the descriptive from the prescriptive and the weight of the prescriptive suggests a suppressed other discourse. Rather than the social control model implicit in some approaches to this period and these ideas, more recent history (for example Davidoff and Hall 1987 and Walkowitz 1992) has led to accounts of the formation and workings of a discourse of gender which tells us how perceptions of women's and men's natures, skills and roles were framed, but leaves open questions of how far individual women's and men's roles were shaped and constrained within that discourse, which was also mediated by class and locality and individual economic and family circumstances. It emphasises that Victorian domesticity was a cultural formation with a complex genesis: in response to changes in the economy and production and as a counterpart to the market/cash nexus; as part of middle class identity and class formation; as a locus of the 'backlash' to Jacobin ideas and a search for stability in a time of social transition and insecurity. Hall and Davidoff present the growth of middle class commercial, professional and political roles as constructed via a system of values which was based on "ordered existence" and as such distinguished from the aristocracy and waged-labourers alike. In that sense it was an "oppositional culture" - a domesticated, financially prudent, self-disciplined way of life with the proper religious life of the family as well as its material security the goal of commercial activity. < 1987 p 21> These ideas in emphasising female dependence, purity and "passionlessness" <Cott 1979> served to both justify and obsfucate a social structure of inequality between the sexes and the increased domination of women by men.

The late 18th and early 19th centuries can be seen as a turning point in terms of gender relations, women's role and possible roles. "The debate on women, the family and the sexual division of labour was... an integral part of the 1790s discussions about the organisation of society" Hall argues. Her account of the development of domestic ideology through the Evangelical revival suggests that the period after 1790 saw a struggle for discursive dominance between the radical ideas of Wollstonecraft and her circle and conservative, religious-based views of women's role <Hall 1992 pp 82-89>; a related view of this period as one in which ideas of women's equality were suppressed

---

[5] That for some women marriage was seen as incompatible with a life of social purpose has been discussed by Martha Vicinus and Sheila Jeffreys <both 1985>; and Banks comments that some Victorian feminists, fearing the effect of marriage on their freedom, avoided it. <1986 p 35>

[6] In 1851 25% of married women had a named occupation and 35% were recorded as in casual employment; since Census figures are unreliable with respect to married women's employment, sweated work and casual employment, this is likely to be an underestimate. Married middle-class women's role in family businesses has also been underestimated in this period. <Gordon 1997> Women overall are recorded as not less than 30% of the labour force between 1841 and 1891. (GB Figures)

within the wider climate of fear and repression is given by Taylor. <1983 pp 9-11> Women's rights were identified with revolution, sexual freedom and, as they have been often since, with the downfall of the family. The Evangelicals were a minority, but their thinking was timely: their capacity to respond to the changing social relations of industrial capitalism and redefine the family form ensured that notions of home and domesticity would be highly influenced by them. Although articulated through religious belief, by the 1830s and 1840s the language used to define separate spheres was increasingly secular and ideas of the natural differences and complementary roles of men and women had become the common sense of the English middle class. <Davidoff and Hall 1987 p 149> Inside this dynamic "the bourgeois ideal of the family became a part of the dominant culture and by the 1830s and 40s was being promoted... as the only proper way to live." <Hall 1992 p 91>

Victorian domestic ideology was at the same time a justification and means of excluding women from employment and influence in the public sphere, and a familial ideology drawing on older ideas of privacy and appropriate gender roles and consolidating them. While middle-class families were a minority in society overall, in terms of economic and political power and influence their ideals and beliefs came to dominate 19[th]c legislation in this area. But if middle-class ideals of family behaviour were also within the means of some of the skilled working-class, the fragile and insecure lives of the poor and especially the many families headed by widowed or single parents had to manage a very different household economy against an increasingly dominant family norm. <Gittins 1993 p 31> The extension of separate spheres to working-class families had major implications for how women at work were seen. However the idea of separate spheres was unstable, for both practical reasons and because these were contested questions not a gospel of gender; fluidity and contradictions within the ideas "prevented closure and ensured continual shifts both in discourse and practice". <Davidoff and Hall 1987 p 450>

Several writers have suggested that the tension between claims for women's moral superiority and their social subordination was as an important a contributory factor in the development of Victorian feminism as was liberal political and economic theory. <Caine 1992 p 21, Cott 1977> The tracts and manuals intended to establish the nature and the true role of women were themselves *part of* 'the woman question'. The very proliferation of discourses on femininity served to problematise it, and "every time the necessary inferiority of women was insisted upon, repressed alternatives were also evident"; arguments about women's moral role went further, Caine suggests, than perhaps intended. <Caine 1992 pp 43-44> If the idea of separate spheres was consolidated by the 1840s and became part of common sense, it also began to unravel then.

Victorian campaigns

"With what labour women have toiled to break down all individual and independent life, in order to fit themselves for this social and domestic existence, thinking it right!" <Strachey 1928, 1978 p 408> Florence Nightingale's anguished account of the constriction of women's lives compares the suffocation of women's ambitions, passion and intellect in the family to the physical stunting of Chinese girls' feet by binding. <Dyhouse 1989 pp 7-8> Although the Victorian middle-class women's movement, dated from the 1850s upsurge in organised campaigning, is seen as classic liberal feminism in that it is about women's right to move into the public sphere, it is at least arguable that the mid-19[th]c women's movement began with an analysis of married women's position in the family. A commonly accepted view of first wave feminism is that it was "a limited, bourgeois and safe movement, bounded by its attachment to liberalism". <Levine 1990 p 1> For example, Kramnick (discussing the lack of continuing influence of Wollstonecraft's ideas [7]) contrasts her demand for comprehensive social and political change with the "limited" and "specific" reforms of education and entry to the professions of the movement from the 1850s, which were aimed not at middle-class married women but at "those who must necessarily make their own way". <1982 p 59/60>[8]

The critique of the private in this period was concerned with much more than women's need not to be confined to it. Specific these reforms may have been, but to call them *limited* is to negate the significance of 'civil death' in married women's lives. Recognition of the limitation and dependence of married women's circumstances was the initial basis for organisation among middle-class feminists in London and Manchester. <Rendall 1985 p229> (It is likely also to have been important in Scotland, but no account is available of any campaigns leading to revision of the married women's property laws in Scotland in 1877, 1881 and 1920.) The social inquiry which developed from the discussion of the related questions of custody, divorce and married women's property rights (and the further revelations of violence and cruelty which followed the introduction of a limited right to divorce) was the impetus for further arguments for reform. Recognition of the centrality of women's sexual oppression in prostitution and marriage to Victorian feminism has brought considerable revision of the idea that the women's movement in this period was concerned primarily with gaining access to public life <Caine 1992 p 102, Kent 1987 passim>.

---

[7] Although it is commonly argued that Wollstonecraft's unconventional personal and sexual life discredited her in the eyes of mid-Victorian feminists, Caine argues that this was not straightforwardly the case and that the mid-Victorian movement was highly ambivalent about Wollstonecraft who was a greater influence than they publicly admitted. This is characteristic of its "respectable surface and underlying rebelliousness". <Caine 1997 pp 93-102>

[8] This view of mid-Victorian feminism is not only recent: Atkinson in 1914 describes Victorian feminism as "a demand of elderly unmarried women for the right to freer activities as an alternative to an impracticable ideal of marriage and motherhood for every woman" <1914 >, and Strachey gives an account of Victorian feminism as primarily 'equal rights' in *The Cause*. <Strachey 1928>

Victorian feminism had many variants <Banks 1981; Caine 1992 and 1997; Taylor 1983>, and, although there has been more research on this period than others in the history of British feminism, it is far from comprehensive. There was a diversity of ideas on the situation of women, the nature of femininity and female sexuality, and on appropriate strategies. Levine sees feminism in this period as a process of awareness which "begins with the marital legislation". < Levine 1987 p 149> Holton's account of the origins of the organised suffrage movement sees it as growing out of the work on Parliamentary reform of the marriage laws. <Holton 1995, pp 278-282> [9] Kent sees Victorian feminism as primarily a struggle for sexual autonomy, an analysis which is supported by Wolstenholme Elmy's comment in 1897: "[I]t is the fear of men that women will cease to be any longer their sexual slaves either in or out of marriage that is at the root of the whole opposition to our just claim [for the vote... No doubt their fear is justified, for that is precisely what we do mean". <letter 21 May 1897, cited in Kent 1987 p 14> The CD Acts embodied the Victorian sexual double-standard in legislation and were a denial of civil rights to prostitutes and women who were suspected of prostitution, but were also seen as a symbol of the encroachment of masculine sexual privilege on the lives of all women; for Butler "as for so many mid-Victorian feminists, the prostitute symbolised women's oppression through her lack of educational and employment opportunities and her absolute dependence upon male sexual desire for her survival". <Caine 1997 p109>

The campaigns for higher education for women and for women's entry to the professions were extremely important to the middle-class Victorian movement, and anti-slavery campaigning was also of great (if indirect in Britain as compared to the USA) influence. <Midgley 1992 *passim*> However the other major Victorian feminist demands for reform all address married women's position and the consequences of her legal status as, effectively, bond-servant of her husband. Mill presents marriage as slavery: there "remain no legal slaves, except the mistress of every house" <1869 p 251>; and argued both for women's emancipation into the public sphere and from the subjection of marriage. Like Wollstonecraft he sees no basis for a just society if the corrupting relationship of unequal marriage remains central to society; the family is the most important institution for inculcating progressive social and political values so must not be based in relationships of "power on one side or obedience on the other". <Mill 1869 p 260; Caine 1997 pp 104-5; Coole

---

[9] Suffrage follows from the concern with the marriage laws both in time - organised feminist agitation for the vote is dated from 1865, when the Manchester Suffrage Society was formed although there had been earlier demands for women's suffrage, by Wollstonecraft and the Chartists - but also in conception, with the vote seen as necessary because if solutions to such problems lie in legislation in a male-dominated Parliament, then women must have a voice in it. This is not an argument I would wish to over-emphasise as the period saw an extraordinary amount of women's campaigning on a number of fronts. However, so dominant has the campaign for the vote been in our perception of first-wave feminism that it is necessary to emphasise that it was not an over-arching or even, until the late 19th century, primary goal. The genesis of the first petition to Parliament on suffrage (in relation to the 1867 Reform Act) is illustrative, growing out of a discussion in the Kensington Society in 1865 which had itself been formed from the married women's property campaign.

1993 p 107> Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy argued that married woman's legal position was one of sexual slavery.[10] <Caine 1997 p 101-2; Bland 1987 p 149-50> Both Mill and Wolstenholme Elmy (as discussed) argued against the legality of rape in marriage. As well as the stimulus to the organised women's movement which followed from Barbara Leigh Smith's pamphlet *A Brief Summary, in plain language, of the most important laws of England concerning Women*, published in 1854, the evidence gathered at this time on the hardship caused by married women having no right to her property and earnings exposed the reality behind Victorian ideals of marriage and family. Because the focus of marital law reform was property its significance has sometimes been dismissed or mid-read. It was about giving married women a *legal existence,* ending coverture and its equivalent in Scotland, the *jus mariti* and *jus administrationis,* and probably of most relevance to employed and self-employed women, or women with small inheritance, as the aristocracy and upper-middle-classes had had more access to trust law to preserve women's inheritance rights. In the same period feminists in England lobbied on the Divorce Bill <1857> which, although not introduced by them (or, arguably, for reasons they would necessarily have supported) they took as an opportunity to argue that the grounds for divorce should be equalised between women and men (without success). The campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864 and 1866 made public the discussion of the sexual double standard, expressed in the fate of prostitutes but not confined to them.[11] The 1870s focus on domestic violence ("wife-torture" in Frances Power Cobbe's 1878 phrase) followed revelations consequent on the widened availability of divorce in England and Wales, which led to the Matrimonial Causes Act 1878 (England and Wales) which permitted legal separation and maintenance after marital violence.[12] An important further

---

[10] Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, who wrote under the pen name E Ethelmer was a Manchester headmistress who was active in the women's movement from the early 1860s in campaigns including entry into higher education, the Married Women's Property Acts (the office of the Married Women's Property committee was in Manchester and she was Secretary), against the CD Acts, and on maternal custody and guardianship, as well as the suffrage. A corresponding member of the Kensington Society, she was a founding member of the Manchester suffrage committee in 1856 and among the radical supporters of women's suffrage from the North-West who in the 1880s opposed the position of the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage <CNSWS> on the married women's vote and formed the Women's Franchise League (in July 1889), the leadership of which was soon after joined by Ursula Bright and Emmeline Pankhurst. It was committed to including married women in the demand, as well as to a broad programme of civil equality for women. The WFL prefigured 20th c developments in the links it sought to build with the Labour and Socialist movements and with working class women's movement, especially the WCG; however Elmy was ousted from its leadership. <Holton 1995 pp 280-282> Following the 'Clitheroe case' Elmy wrote a series of five letters to the *Manchester Guardian* on the implications of the case and the legal position of women more generally, and in response to the response to this set up the 'Women's Emancipation Union: An association of workers to secure the political, social and economic independence of women' <WEU> in the autumn of 1891 which sought to improve the civil status of married women, especially campaigning against rape in marriage. Her own premarital sexual relationship with Ben Elmy was highly controversial within the women's movement. <Bland 1987 pp 149-50> See: 'E Ethelmer: A woman emancipator: a biographical sketch', *Westminster Review* CXLV pp 424-8, 1894; Rubinstein *Before the suffragettes: Women's emancipation in the 1890s* Brighton Harvester 1986 pp 54-63.

[11] Although the CD Acts did not apply in Scotland, there were branches of the Ladies National Association nevertheless, in Edinburgh led by Priscilla McLaren, first president of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage.

[12] Legal separation, maintenance and custody of children after marital violence was already possible in Scotland although the transfer of jurisdiction to the Sheriff Court in 1907 (amended in 1913) brought it within the reach of more working-class women <Clive 1974 p15>; the position on divorce was similar.

development was the end to the right to order a wife to return home (which Wollstonecraft had protested against in *Maria*) which was reversed in 1891 in a Court of Appeal judgement. This meant, Wolstenholme Elmy said, that "coverture is dead and buried... It is the grandest victory the women's cause has ever yet gained, greater even than the passing of the Married Women's Property Act." <quoted by Bland 1987 p 149>

In this period of legal reform Victorian feminism exposed the distance between male-female relations as idealised and the reality of legal and economic dependence. Victorian feminism did not, Rendall argues, include a challenge to women's role in the family and their concerns were related to their central acceptance of the importance of women's role as mothers. <Rendall 1985 p 34> Perhaps not *as such,* but it was a challenge to the natural and necessary subjection of wives within marriage and daughters within the family. At the least it was a demand that reality match rhetoric, and at its most radical that sexual and family relationships between women and men be placed on a wholly different basis. To say, as Rendall does, that the boundaries between feminists and conservatives in their treatment of family roles are not always easy to recognise in this period <1985 p 34> is to diminish the importance and radical nature of the principle of equality within marital relationships and the demand for an end to male dominance in the family which was central to the argument for reform of marital relationships - *and* to the fears of social conservatives. The series of legal reforms fought for and to a remarkable degree achieved by the liberal women's movement entail a sustained critique of marriage as dependence and women's role in the family as lacking civil rights needed to support it. Marriage law reform encompassed income and property, legal existence, rights in relation to children and in relation to violence, cruelty and some forms of sexual behaviour, and the right to live apart from a husband. Arguments in relation to sexual behaviour demanded that men behave according to the standards set for women (of their own class). This conflicted directly with Victorian domestic ideology's depiction of marriage and family as harmonious refuge and source of protection cemented by the wife's dependence on her husband in every way, but drew on Victorian ideals of women's duties in the family and, as an extension, to society, in arguments used to support reform.

Themes in Victorian feminism

The role of domestic ideology in forming the questions and setting parameters for the 19[th]c women's movement raises particularly interesting questions. In her memoir of her husband Josiah Conder (published in 1857) Elizabeth Conder expressed her disapproval of the American women seeking entry as delegates to the International Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840: "If we are thus to start out of our spheres, who is to take our place? Who, as 'keepers at home' are to 'guide the house', and train up children?" <cited in Davidoff and Hall 1987 p 436> Fifty years later Millicent Fawcett was using an argument with a similar premise in favour of votes for women: "[T]his difference between

men and women, instead of being a reason against their enfranchisement, seems to me the strongest possible reason in favour of it; we want the home and domestic side of things to count for more in politics and in the administration of public affairs than they do at present". <Fawcett 1894> Rather than seeing a public role as diminishing women's commitment to home and family, as Mrs Conder does, she presents women's family role as a reason for women's participation in public decision-making. Many Victorian feminists used contemporary ideas of femininity and women's responsibility for family and morality very effectively in making their arguments and claims. For Josephine Butler "the extension beyond the home of the home influence" was central to her feminism. <1869 p xxxvi> Her radical attack on the sexual double-standard was based on a view of sexual difference as of great social value, which would be enhanced by women's emancipation: "[E]very good quality, every virtue which we regard as distinctively feminine, will, under conditions of greater freedom, develop more freely". Further: "it would be wise of the State... to avail itself of this abundance of generous womanliness, of tender and wise motherliness..." The injunction to women to serve is given a social and gender-consciousness: "'I serve' will always be one of her favourite mottoes, even should the utmost freedom be accorded her in the choice of vocation". <1868 p 18-20> Emmeline Pankhurst was also to argue that the vote was not about giving up "women's duties in the home" but about attaching a larger meaning to those duties. <cited in Shanley 1990 p 13> If within the history of the period there has been a tendency to present a familial ideology as hegemonic and feminism as a rejection of that, more recent work demonstrates that women's role in the family was a central concern for many Victorian feminists both as a site of oppression and as a source of strength and a distinctive role, and that in consequence arguments from sexual difference were at least as important in the period as arguments on a basis of equality-as-sameness. Both more conservative and radical uses of difference were wielded as arguments in the social purity campaigns. Both pro and anti-suffrage campaigners drew on sexual difference to argue their case. <for examples see Lewis 1987; see also Harrison 1978; Lewis 1984 p 96>

If the idea of separate spheres and, within that, of "woman's mission" was used to codify sexual difference and to confine women and contain their aspirations, it was also a philosophy which justified new areas of influence and offered piety as a form of power. Arguments on the nature and importance of women's moral duty to family and home were very readily extended to include women's special responsibilities to society. Propagandists for separate spheres such as Sarah Lewis, Mrs John Sandford and Sarah Ellis all in their writing move from stating "the limitations women face and their necessary domestic confinement... to the demand that woman carry first into their homes and then into the wider society some of the religious zeal and fervour which other missionaries were taking to the heathen". For some writers, for example, Anne Richelieu Lamb, whose 1834 essay has the title *Can Woman Regenerate Society?*, the idea that women can and should serve their family and society in terms of raising moral standards becomes the

basis of a demand for education and a wider sphere of employment. <Caine 1997 p 84> Women's domestic and family role was used as an argument for women's engagement in public work seen as relating to the domestic role, in philanthropy, and its development in social and settlement work and, towards the end of the century, related professional roles. In health and welfare women reproduced domestic roles in the public sphere, and then went on to extend those roles. <Morris 1990 p 432> Philanthropy was a particularly important dimension of 19[th]c women's claim on the public and a tradition of women's voluntary association closely related to the women's movement continued into the mid-20th century. From the 1840s it served as a public space which women could justifiably inhabit (though not without some criticism). <Hollis 1987 p 11; Hall and Davidoff 1987 p 429> This was work through which they could learn organisational skills, committee discipline, the ability to read accounts, fund-raise and address public meetings <Prochaska 1980, Gordon 1990>, which fed into more specifically feminist organisation. It was significant to the beginnings of social work and child welfare as female-dominated professions and in the increasing role of the state in child welfare and protection <Cree 1995; Lewis 1991>, and while some educated middle-class women used voluntary associations to carve out for themselves political identities and new professions, for others who were unsure of the rightness of women's venturing outside the home, it offered a way of reconciling conflicting feelings. <Koven 1993 pp 124-126> For many women their feminist commitment grew directly from charitable activity, in Frances Power Cobbe's case with the poor and in Butler's, her work with prostitutes in Oxford and Liverpool. [13] Philanthropy played a part in the developing social welfare role of local government and acted as a route into local government for women: the National Union of Women Workers, an association of women's voluntary organisations, from the end of the century saw one of its main tasks as placing women on public bodies and in local government; the NUWW offered a socially acceptable route from voluntary service to elected service. "Philanthropy's language of succour to the needy, its commitment to the domestic and the local, its training and networking, were perhaps more useful to women than other ways in, and certainly less threatening to men". <Hollis 1987 p 13>

---

[13] The scale of women's philanthropic activity is impossible to quantify since official representation does not reflect informal activities, and women's involvement is also hidden behind that of men as the formal subscribers to associations: further, female activities in support of Magdalen Asylums emerge only through records such as letters and diaries while the clergy dominate the official records of such institutions. However, strict divisions between men and women were less sustained in philanthropic societies because women were needed to deal with female cases. <Hall and Davidoff pp 429-436>

Maternal feminism

Maternalism was a specific and common argument from difference in late 19[th]c British feminism. Butler's elision of womanliness, motherliness and service (quoted above) is a good example. In recent literature the relationship between a cluster of concepts including maternal feminism, social maternalism and maternal citizenship is not always clear and these are sometimes treated as equivalent in a way which is confusing; maternal feminism is also sometimes used to stand for all arguments from difference, rather than as a specific version of them.[14] Social maternalist arguments were based on the belief that maternal values should be used to transform the social order and that all women contribute to society in distinctive ways because of their maternal qualities, whether or not they themselves have children: an editorial in the liberal feminist journal *Shafts* described maternity as "the highest and holiest function that our life holds", but saw it as a social role as well as personally becoming a mother. <*Shafts* II Sept 1894 p 314, cited in Bland 1987> Ideas of 'spiritual motherhood' add yet another (especially hard to untangle) dimension. As Lewis comments, maternal feminism is a slippery concept. <Lewis 1994 p120>; as ideology it can be contradictory. <Yeo 1997 pp 124-130> The term is variously used but includes a core argument that women's special qualities and knowledge associated with their family role should be brought into public life. For example Michel and Rosen, discussing maternalism as an important avenue into politics for women in the USA from the mid-19th to the early 20[th]c, define it as "a political concept that accepts the principle of gender difference, specifically women's identity as mothers, but maintains that women have a responsibility to apply their domestic and familial values to society at large." Maternalist women politicians had many concerns but a special focus on the welfare of women as mothers and children. Although it was an approach which seemed to offer a bridge across other political differences among women, it was limited in its success in doing so; they instance the division in the USA between those who opposed any state role in welfare and the radical maternalism of Hull House. <Michel and Rosen 1992 p 364-5>[15]

Caine presents such arguments as necessarily conservative <1997 p 115> and Lewis distinguishes social maternalism from feminism but also presents its extension in arguments for public participation as feminist <Lewis 1984 pp 92-95>; she suggests that recent discussion takes a rather "rosy view" of maternalist policies and tends to overlook the dangers of an illiberal maternalism and its association with eugenics and pro-natalist

---

[14] Maternal feminism has also been called a "contradiction in terms"; in a firm statement of equality-as-sameness Richard Evans argues that "[E]qual rights and separate spheres are mutually contradictory doctrines. The only position upon which it is possible to base an argument for equal rights or for the elimination of gender-based injustice is the principle of the equal rights of women, as individuals". <Evans 1986 p 255>

[15] Maternal feminism was very significant in Germany in the 19[th]c and until 1914 and showed a shift from moral and spiritual emphases to a biological and social basis similar to British argument <Taylor Allen 1991>; this strand of German feminism has been seen as one of the factors leading to the rise of National Socialism <Claudia Koonz *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* New York, 1987> although Taylor Allen disagrees <pp 5-6>. Offen argues that maternal feminism was the dominant form in France in the 19[th]c <1988 pp 128-129>

policies. <Lewis 1994 p120> Although problematic alliances need to be acknowledged, the way contemporary ideas form the terms of the debate with which feminist thinking engages means that a categorisation of maternal feminism as either conservative or progressive cannot be sustained. Maternalism, like difference arguments more generally, could be used for feminist, conservative and anti-feminist purposes - and conservative feminist purposes. [16] Maternalism on Koven's definition "exalted women's capacity to mother and applied to society as a whole the values they attached to that role: care, nurturance and morality"; he emphasises how maternalism operated in relation to other discourses, of citizenship, class, gender difference and national identity and was expressed in a range of social and political practices, and that maternalist discourses lay at the heart of debates about the social role of women, children and the family among philanthropists and social workers, legislators, employers and trade unionists. <Koven, 1993 p 4> His discussion of the work of Mary Carpenter, Mary Ward and Margaret McMillan shows how three women with very different beliefs used arguments of social and civic maternalism to develop work in juvenile reformatories, local government and education and child welfare respectively. <Koven 1993, chapter two> Koven and Michel emphasise its role in the parallel emergence of state welfare and women's movements in a number of countries at the end of the 19[th]c (they discuss France, Germany, Britain and the USA) and how as women claimed new roles in maternal and child welfare they transforming a social role into public policy. <1990 pp 1076-77> They argue that as professionals and as volunteers women entered into new relationships with the state, which, in turn, sharpened their political awareness and expanded the knowledge-base and goals of the women's movement. <p 1078> They also indicate that maternalism could be a fragile foundation on which to build coalitions and that the translation of maternalist measures into state policy was not unproblematic. <p 1107>[17] Significantly, ideas of social motherhood or maternal feminism call into question the public and private boundary and the view of the family as outwith the political.

The associated idea of maternal citizenship[18] is more specific in claiming that women, through maternity, make a valuable contribution to society which must be acknowledged as a distinctive form of citizenship. It has antecedents in the ideas of republican motherhood during the French revolution and is an approach which emphasises motherhood as a national duty not only in bearing children but also, in wartime, delivering

---

[16] Writing on welfare development in the USA Molly Ladd-Taylor distinguishes three forms of maternalist ideology: sentimental, progressive and feminist. While it is useful to draw out the various strands of a far from uniform set of ideas this also less helpfully implies that these are discrete rather than overlapping categories. <Ladd-Talor 1994 p 203, cited in Howe 1992 p 140>

[17] Koven and Michel's central argument is the relation of strong and weak states to the development of voluntary-originated maternal policies. This is a problematic thesis but of no great relevance to this discussion.

[18] A renewed concept of maternal citizenship is suggested by Pateman <1986 p 24 >. Mouffe argues that this proposal for a differentiated citizenship rests on the identification of women *as* women with motherhood and that this solution therefore remains trapped within the problematic that Pateman wants to challenge. Mouffe's own argument for a conception of citizenship where sexual difference is non-pertinent invokes the problem of false

their sons to defend the state. <Lake 1993 pp 378-382> As a conception of citizenship it has been modelled on and contrasted with other dangerous work as well as military service: women in the early 20ᵗʰc compared the dangers of childbirth to coal mining; Maude Royden, writing during the First World War, said: "[L]ike the soldier, the mother takes a risk and gives a devotion for which no money can pay." <cited in Pateman 1992 p 26> Wolstenholme Elmy declared motherhood "in its largest sense is the highest function of woman... a special dignity and worthiness superior to that of the mere male faculty of fighting". She used social motherhood as an argument for political rights: it is because "women are resolved to be mothers in the highest, and no longer the ignoblest sense of that term, that they now demand for themselves and for each other, the fullest opportunity of self-development". <1894 p 6 cited in Bland 1987 pp 155-157> Although a strand in British feminist rhetoric in the late 19ᵗʰc and up until and during the First World War, these ideas have been most studied in Australia and were possibly strongest there; Lake suggests that the discourse of citizenship in the years of nation building allowed the work of mothering to be defined as service to the state. <Lake 1992 p 316> (As discussed in the following chapter, this was an argument Fabian women also used.) As an argument it could be double-edged in its consequences: Davin and Lewis (as discussed in the following chapter) have argued that maternalism was used to significantly restrict women's roles and opportunities in the early 20ᵗʰc. As Lake has shown of Australian conceptions of maternal citizenship, it is an argument which is more successful in times of population anxiety, and applies only to *some* women as mothers, not all: maternity in some racial minorities may be perceived and treated very differently. <Lake 1993> Nazi encouragement of Aryan motherhood while developing a policy of forced sterilisation and compulsory abortion for Jewish and Gypsy women is the pre-eminent example of this. <Bock 1992 pp 89-109>

New Women and Parasitism

A socialist debate from the late 19ᵗʰc on the family and questions of sexuality, property and relationships was also significant for feminism, with Edward Carpenter's *Love's Coming of Age* (1896), Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* and Bebel's *Women and Socialism* much discussed by "advanced women" (Atkinson's phrase). <Rowbotham 1973 p 67 and p 73> Change in gender relations was expressed in the idea of the "new woman". She was the subject of media interest and feminist analysis, both polemic and in a genre of "new woman" novels. <Bland 1987, Eldridge Miller 1994, Marks 1990, Cunningham 1978> The term "new woman" was almost certainly coined by the novelist Sarah

gender neutrality however and therefore the problem of equality making embodied difference politically invisible. <1995 pp 320-323>

Grand in an article in 1894[19] and novels were a significant space for discussing feminist ideas in the period, particularly in relation to social behaviour, changing expectations of marriage and relationships, and sexuality, subjects less easy to address through more conventional political means, particularly in relation to middle-class women. There is some discussion as to how far there really *were* "new women" or whether she is a fictional and media creation only, or mainly <Marks 1990> but Atkinson (as discussed in the following chapter) presents her arguments as those of and for a new and historically unprecedented generation of emancipated women. Dyhouse identifies a number of themes in women's writing (in all genres) on family life and gender relations between 1880-1914: that images of constraint, confinement and belittlement are commonly associated with family life; the comparison, especially in middle-class women's autobiography of brother's and sister's lives and privileges; a troubled relationship with mothers who seek to restrict their daughters' lives; and the discussion of 'sex parasitism' which also emphasised the problem of economic dependence which was central for socialist-feminism. Parasitism is a term for the dependence of middle-class women as wives and daughters which was current in feminist literature up until the first World War, and especially so after the publication of Olive Shreiner's *Woman and Labour* <1911>, the first three chapters of which are called 'Parasitism'. It is a harsh term, contrasting their dependence with the honesty of earning your own living. Economic dependence was increasingly identified as a problem in marriage and seen as the basis of all subservience of women to men: in arguments which have their roots in the feminist prostitution and white slavery campaigns, marriage was again described as legalised prostitution with young women traded on a marriage market; this was degrading to women and seen as making good relationships within marriage impossible.[20] Arguments included the problem of involuntary pregnancies caused by women being unable to refuse intercourse and that economic dependence was the main reason why women were unable to enforce a desired standard of morality within marriage. The double-standard was implicated in the problem of marital venereal disease, which was aired both in fiction and by the social purity wing of the women's movement (and allied organisations).

---

[19] Bland 1987 p 143, citing Gillian Kersley *Darling Madame: Sarah Grand and Devoted Friend* <Virago 1983>. David Rubinstein <1986 pp 15-16) also attributes the term to Grand in an article in the *North American Review* in 1894.

[20] For example, "[A]s long as a man demands from a wife as a right, what he must sue from a mistress as a favour... marriage becomes for many women a legal prostitution, a nightly degradation, a hateful yoke..." George Egerton *Discords.* <1894, 1983 p 155> George Egerton was the pseudonym of Mary Chavelita Dunne, who sought to protect herself from the personal attacks the sexual frankness of her fiction would be likely to prompt - and indeed did, when her sex became known. <Eldridge Miller 1994 p 207> Suffragist Ada Nield Chew argued that marriage was a form of prostitution in 'The Economic Freedom of Women', *Freewoman* 13 July 1912 p 167 <cited by Pedersen 1993 p 41>. See also Kent 1987, Bland 1986, Walkowitz 1982.

Difference as a basis for activism

Levine suggests that the most effective argument for women's rights was not the rejection of separate spheres but "a manipulation of its fundamental values". To embrace domestic ideology was a sometimes contradictory move, but the centrality of the family to most women's lives made it perhaps inevitable and certainly cogent as a political practice. The sentiment of moral superiority became the leading edge of many women's rights campaigns, not only over questions of sexuality but also in terms of access to public life. "This championship of womanliness, though defined within the limitations of separate spheres ideology, none the less functioned as a means of making their campaigns not simply a negative struggle against unjust disabilities but a positive proclamation of their identity as women."<1987 pp 13-14> Davidoff suggests that the construction of the private sphere as a feminine domain gave some 19[th]c women a base from which to make claims on civil society, and, she suggests, the possibility of a "women's culture". <1995 p 241> Elshtain finds this emphasis problematic. She argues (specifically of the US suffrage movement, but by extension of difference arguments in late 19[th]c feminism) that the 19[th]c suffragists failed to bring about structural change primarily because they accepted a public and private distinction. Instead of rejecting it they placed a different interpretation on the relative value of 'each side' than did the dominant ideology, and thus perpetuated many of its distortions. Turning anti-suffrage arguments upside down to serve as the basis for a pro-suffrage argument presented woman as purer and more virtuous, bringing morality to the public sphere but this led to "outrageous claims" about the transformation of public life when women got the vote and to demoralisation when votes for women did not achieve miracles. <1981 pp 229-239> Elshtain's argument is insightful in highlighting a discomfort with ideas of power but she draws fully on the benefit of hindsight. If as a strategy difference had a built-in contradiction which would become disabling, this would be the case in later circumstances. As Caine argues, if mid-Victorian feminists had not addressed the ideal of womanhood articulated in Victorian domestic ideology "they would not have been able to speak to their contemporaries at all. Once they addressed it, it was inevitable that the moral overtones of this ideal would become centrally involved in their feminist discourse". <1992 p 17>

Second-wave feminist accounts have commonly seen women's movement arguments which accept women's family role and use difference as a basis for participation in the public sphere as a failure to see beyond their own immersion in the private sphere, and as accepting the appeal to natural sex differences. <Pateman 1992 p 22> In part as a 19[th]c inheritance, what counts as citizenship is placed in a public world defined as either clearly masculine or as gender-neutral. When women in the mid and late 19[th]c demanded equality on the basis that their roles as women in the private sphere were part of their citizenship, this association was not self-evident. In doing so, as Pateman argues, "they grappled with the political problem of expressing sexual difference"; she suggests (as I do in relation to Wollstonecraft) that the division between public and private becomes a

political problem perhaps only after a considerable measure of civil equality has been won, and found wanting. <Pateman 1988 p 227> If a gendered opposition of public and private pervaded the Victorian discourse which sought to deconstruct it, this was because it was not fixed, because this could be seen as a questionable boundary. Feminism in any period is necessarily shaped by and bound up in the discourse of gender of that period; it is not simply in opposition to it. Political history often presents male-dominated discourse as hegemonic and feminism as a challenge or clear alternative; the shared thinking as well as the fault-lines and instabilities which allow discursive shifts are less readily apparent. That a demand for public participation on the basis of private, family-based roles and qualities was possible and the way that this demand crossed the public and private division in both 'directions' shows that definitions of citizenship were more open than they have since become to the possibility of a reconstruction of the polity which brought private values to public life. Equally, these arguments justified public intervention in the private life of the family and of sexual relations, and (though it was one of the most contested aspects) a conception of rights associated with citizenship to be extended to women within the family. As such it was to change how families were seen. Nineteenth century feminist arguments took women's moral and maternal roles very seriously. For some feminists the doctrine of separate spheres was understood as emphasising not only difference but equality in difference; because of that ideology and because of the extent to which women's work and lives were within the family or presented as an extension of family roles, this was not an argument which was seen as contradictory, as it later would be. These 19thc arguments demand both equal civil and political rights and *at the same time* that women's difference from men and specific circumstances associated with their family role should be acknowledged. The heart of the dilemma of equality and difference, Pateman argues, is "not sexual difference but women's subordination". <Pateman 1992 p 28> In Victorian arguments from difference its connection to subordination is refused.

The women's movement in the early twentieth century would continue to grapple with questions of difference, particularly in relation to women's position in the family: the restrictions on middle-class daughters and subservience of wives, the economic dependence entailed by motherhood and the double-burden on working-class mother. It would do so influenced by the ideas of maternal feminism and by a new view of the value of state intervention in relation to family responsibilities which had in part grown from women's voluntary social work. It would find it harder however to use moral arguments to present women's family role as a strength and the argument from difference would be fiercely contested within feminism. Early twentieth century feminism both drew on and contested ideas of gender, family and citizenship inherited from Victorian understanding, within feminism and more generally, and, informed by socialism, would add to them a much sharper appreciation of the economic basis of women's subordination.

CHAPTER THREE: LOVE AND WORK: Twentieth century questions

In this chapter I look at the opposition between love and work which Mabel Atkinson saw in 1914 as "the problem before the future" and its connection to the problem of women's economic dependence in the family. I examine Atkinson's argument in *The Economic Foundations of the Women's Movement* in its context in Fabian feminism both as an entry point to socialist-feminist debate in this period, and because of its importance as a text which looks forward to the post-war campaign for family endowments, the ideas of new feminism and the welfare agenda which women's organisations would develop in relation to the local state. Atkinson's focus on the need of women for economic and personal independence but not at the cost of sexual and family relationships articulates a new dimension of women's movement thinking, and her awareness of differing issues for women according to class and maternity raises questions which would become central for the women's movement after the vote was won. I also look at discussion of the renewed focus on motherhood in the pre-war period and Atkinson's discussion of infant mortality and give a short account of Eleanor Rathbone's main argument for family endowments.

Introduction

As I have argued, although a critique of the family is associated with second-wave feminism, the position of women in and in relation to the family has always raised crucial and difficult questions for the women's movement, and feminist attitudes to marriage, sexuality and family life were not characterised by either a simple consensus or conservatism. The legal reform which was, along with access to higher education, the major achievement of the mid-Victorian women's movement brought about significant changes in married women's position within the family, and in questioning the sexual double-standard the Victorian movement further opened up for scrutiny questions of power and oppression within marital relationships. During this time the middle-class women's movement did not challenge the assumption that for most women children and domestic life would be their primary occupation; rather, they wished to see legal and social change which would recognise and entrench the rights of women in the family, and saw "maternal thinking" (in Ruddick's later phrase) as socially and politically important. In the closing years of the 19thc and the period to 1914, feminist views of women's position in the family were more openly critical than the earlier women's movement had been. Arguments (for example by Schreiner, Caird, Hamilton, Meikle and accounts in fiction) look forward to the demands for independence in income and decision-making and for sexual autonomy which would be repeated at different times over the 20thc. Atkinson presents the demand for both love *and* work rather than a forced choice between them, and the refusal of economic dependence in marriage, as a new 'turn' in the women's

movement. Finding a way so that women do not have to choose between a life on their own terms and marriage and a family is, Atkinson believes, the "problem before the future". The period saw an impressive flowering of feminist thinking about women's working lives in relation to their position in the family within which "the urgency of the need to find ways of guaranteeing some economic independence to women within marriage emerged as the dominant theme". <Dyhouse 1989 p 57 and p 62> At this time "[T]he feminist revolt against 'parasitism'... made the economic conditions of wives and mothers central to all debates over the condition of the family at the end of the century". <Pedersen 1993 p 43> At the same time, the relationship between the family and the state was changing, with a greater legitimacy for state intervention in family life, with consequences which had considerable impact for women, in practical ways and as a basis for developing arguments which would radically challenge the social and economic arrangements for "human renewal" (as Eleanor Rathbone described childbearing and rearing). Atkinson uses this change in the relationship between family and state as an argument for political rights: "[P]arenthood, the home, and the nurture and education of children are no longer to be regarded as purely private and individual matters" and this means more legislation in areas which most affect women and in which women have most expertise, therefore women must be in a position to affect such legislation. <Atkinson 1910 p 56>

Women's position in marriage and the family was discussed in several (inter-related) contexts: the "marriage debate" [1] and the continuing debate over sexuality and the double-standard in relation to economic dependence or parasitism; measures to secure improved conditions for mothers of which the most important feminist proposal in this period was the endowment of motherhood; married women's employment, women as breadwinners, and childcare; in relation to national concern about infant and maternal mortality and health and in relation to the developing role of the state in family welfare through the introduction of benefits and through local authority provision. Feminist concern with the links between maternity, dependence and women's poverty was expressed most clearly in the arguments for maternal endowments, although other practical measures were part of the same discussion. The position of working-class mothers was of particular concern to the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Fabian Society Women's Group and the Women's Industrial Council, and to women in the Labour Party and trade unions. The focus on motherhood and infant health of the period was double-edged for women, presenting them with an opportunity to lobby for improved conditions and support, but also, as feminists argued at the time and feminist historians have argued since, impossible demands and increased restrictions. Questions about sexual exploitation arose both for middle-class women, with a husband's right of access to his

---

[1] The 'marriage debate' was publicly instigated by a series of articles by Mona Caird in the *Westminster Review* between 1888 and 1894; she argued that marriage was a "vexatious failure". The issue was debated in the press subsequently, including an astonishing 27,000 letters to the *Daily Telegraph* when it requested correspondence. See Mona Caird *The Morality of Marriage, and Other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Woman* 1897, Redway, London; H Quillter *Is Marriage a Failure? ... Letters to the Daily Telegraph in response to an article by Mona Caird* 1888 London, Sonnenschein. Heilman <1996> gives a good account of Caird's life and interests.

wife's body likened to prostitution, and in terms of the exploitation of poor women and girls in prostitution and "white slavery". Both were vulnerable to involuntary childbearing and to sexually-transmitted diseases.

In the period 1900-1914 'the Cause' had many aspects: continued campaigns on education encompassing the campaign for higher education for women, for better education for girls in schools, and the development of educational provision for working-class young women; the Settlement movement and developments in social work; temperance; questions of prostitution, child sexual abuse and the sexual double-standard; divorce law reform, equality in marriage and in parental rights; access to the professions, equal opportunity in employment, and equal pay; and representation in local government, as well as the best-documented and best-known, the vote. Women were active in trade unions, and the Women's Co-operative Guild (founded in 1883 in England and 1892 in Scotland <King 1993 p 137>) grew rapidly in size and influence. <Gaffin 1983; Black 1989> Women were also active in the main political parties and socialist groups: the Liberal Party had women's organisations from 1887, the Conservative Primrose League was formed in 1883, and the Women's Labour League was formed in the same year as the Labour Party, 1906, though the ILP already had many active and prominent women members. It was a formative period for 20[th]c feminism and for women's lives, particularly in relation to the reworking of the relationship between the state and family. Most women and all children were excluded from the general provisions of the 1911 National Insurance Act, which, although including maternity benefit for insured women and the wives of insured men, entrenched the concept of the male breadwinner-headed family as the basis of state benefits. The growth of the voluntary and local authority role in child and maternal welfare in this period also had complex consequences for women as mothers.

"Advanced women", socialism, and feminism

Atkinson writes of, and perhaps mainly for, a new generation of "advanced women" for whom education has been as "natural" as for their brothers, who have been encouraged by aunts and mothers to win economic independence, who do "work of real value to the world" and have a freedom the previous generation "had longed for as unattainable". <1914 p 17>[2] As well as an argument for socialist feminism, her essay tells us something about how Atkinson saw herself and her generation. As it was for novelists like Sarah Grand, independence of mind and income is an admired characteristic and an aim for both single *and* married women in a way that would have been much harder to conceive of a generation previously. Married woman's legal invisibility was seen by the mid-Victorian movement as the root cause of her subjection, within the family and in

---

[2] Compare Dora Russell in *Hypatia* describing women under thirty who do not yet have the vote but for whom "the principle of feminine equality is as natural as drawing breath - they are neither oppressed by tradition nor worn by rebellion." <1925 p 7>

excluding her from public life. Removing the worst of that injustice revealed how far women remained economically dependent and socially constrained nonetheless, and that women's responsibilities in the family and restricted opportunities and low pay in the workplace reinforced her dependent status. As single middle-class women were more able to go on to higher education and a degree of independence, and as social constraints on their behaviour eased to some extent, the way in which single and married women's lives differed and the extent to which feminist aims were more realisable by those who were single and without dependants [3] became a more visible issue. For women who had other choices and who had lived away from home in university colleges or through employment, the restrictions and diminished civic and legal status of marriage could seem like stepping back a generation. An ideological cloak which presented woman's subjection to her husband as both natural and necessary was likely to seem to someone who had, as Atkinson says, known "the power of self-direction and self-activity", ragged indeed. [4]

Atkinson sees parasitism as the main problem facing middle-class married women and contrasts it with "the life of the professional woman [which] is often toilsome and often lonely, but the power of self-direction and self-activity which economic independence brings with it counts for so much, and few women who have realised what sex-parasitism means, and have succeeded in emerging from it, will ever willingly return to it". <1914 p 14> Although Atkinson's main arguments are socio-economic she refers to the deleterious effect of economic dependence on relationships and "the degradation of love to the economic plane". <1914 p 8> The basic tenet of 'separate spheres' of male support for women's family role is challenged by this view and seen as the cause of women's oppression and the corruption of male-female relationships.[5] The term parasitism negates the notion that middle-class women's role in the family is in any way productive - the

---

[3] The two are of course not synonymous, and women of the time drew attention to the number of single women who were breadwinners for dependent relatives.

[4] Mackinnon has estimated that for the first cohort of women to graduate from university in many Western countries almost half remained unmarried: "Given a choice between an independent life and a marriage which would situate them legally and socially as subordinates, many chose independence." <Mackinnon 1989 p 233>

[5] Similar ideas were expressed by Beatrice Hutchins in a Fabian pamphlet published the same year, arguing that women cannot act honestly so long as they depend for subsistence on father, mother, husband or lover and not on their own labour, and that it was "in the economic dependence of women on men that we should look for the cause of such sex-antagonism as we see today". She identified a "small, but growing proportion of women [who] have... set themselves against the idea that they must be, or pretend to be, grown up children all their lives... be completely dependent on another person". <1914/1988> Wilma Meikle in Towards a Sane Feminism argued that economic independence was necessary not least to end "the ugly mercenary element in sexual relationships". Meikle recognises that women's ambitions are discouraged by their difficulty: "Feminine economic ambition is naturally blunted by the knowledge that while it is practically impossible for a woman to provide for her old age by her own earnings, there is always rather more than a sporting chance that marriage will give her security". <<1916 p 104 and p 166 cited by Dyhouse 1989 p 38> She saw feminism's main role as with working-class women and argued for socialism, school clinics, schools for mothers and maternal endowments. <Jeffreys 1985 p 151> Cicely Hamilton in Marriage as a Trade argued that limiting women to the "trade" of marriage stunted character and prevented intellectual growth <1909, 1981>; she herself chose celibacy. <Whitelaw 1990> Nor was she alone in this. <Jeffreys 1985 chapter 5> Other women made a personal protest against what was expected of them in marriage by living in unmarried relationships, a form of "free love" which was associated with high ideals <Brandon 1990>, but much of the women's movement was hostile to these ideas, because they feared the cause would be tainted by association. <Bland 1987 p 158>

prescription that she be decorative and leisured and as such a symbol of her husband or father's success as a breadwinner, however unattainable that may have been in many households, has come to define her situation.[6] The implication is that women who do not avoid this are mired in false-consciousness, yet Atkinson is also conscious that the only way to avoid such dependence may be celibacy and childlessness.

How economic independence for married women was to be achieved raised major questions, which for many were personal as well as political. Among the pre-war women's groups the Fabian Society Women's Group and the closely-allied Women's Industrial Council raised questions about childcare and properly paid and regulated employment for married women. Some women's and labour organisations were opposed to the employment of women with young children, which was seen as exploitative for the women as well as bad for the children, although they were wary of the misuse and extension of any prohibition. <Dyhouse 1989 p 88; Thane 1991 p 108> All of these issues are rehearsed in Atkinson's essay which is part of a remarkably productive period of work by the FWG and other groups with which they worked closely. Their analysis provided the intellectual basis for a socialist-feminism in which questions of sex oppression in both the family and the workplace were seen as inter-related and as integral to the ills of capitalism rather than subsidiary to class relations. In *Three Years' Work* [7] they said: "[S]ocialists must recognise that women's economic revolt is not merely against the enslaving economic control of the capitalist, but against the enslaving economic control of the husband". While many socialists hold that "when security and a good wage shall have been brought within the reach of every head of a family the case of the dependent woman and children in each household can be left to that head to deal with", they observe, this would be "[S]ocialism for men, but for most women would involve the subordination of the patriarchal family". <c1912, 1988 p 152> The gender knot of family, work and cultural expectations was analysed through research into women's economic and social position, and, they argued, would not be solved until "the confusion between sex-relationship and economics... is disentangled". <c1912, 1988 p 156> The WIC carried out a major inquiry into women's employment, *Married Women's Work: the Report of an Enquiry Undertaken by the Women's Industrial Council*, also published in 1915. Rathbone, carried out part of this inquiry in Liverpool and it is an important early link between her work and this socialist-feminist grouping. The report recognises that working-class women with children worked outside the home because they had no choice, but also that it could have positive benefits for them and their children and concluded that "bad as conditions are in the home when mothers are compelled to go out to work, they are worse still in the homes of women who do not earn", that any reduction of married women's work would only add to the problems of poor families, and that in any case skilled and well-

---

[6] Patricia Branca has argued that in the late 19[th]c a large number of middle-class wives had to maintain an appearance of gentility on incomes of £200-300 p.a., around half of what has been estimated as necessary to maintain the 'paraphernalia of gentility'. < Branca 1975>

remunerated working mothers "are nearly always conspicuously competent" at home as well. <*Common Cause* December 10 1915 p 468> Both groups argued against the exclusion of married women at home from the National Insurance legislation and saw it as intensifying a view of the work of a wife and mother as of no monetary value; in this they shared the viewpoint of the Women's Labour League which criticised the legislation as setting up "a quite erroneous standard of useful work" as that of the wage-earning husband and not that of the woman at home who worked as hard and contributed as much to the family wealth. <Margaret MacDonald 1911, cited in Thane 1991 p108> [8]

The FWG's was the most potentially radical of the critiques of women's position in the family and in employment. <Dyhouse 1989 p 57> They drew on, and to some extent provided a bridge between, the arguments made by socialist women and liberal feminism to form a radical and challenging synthesis. In doing so they ensured sustained attention to the economic and social basis of inequality in a period when the vote was increasingly dominant as an issue. The FWG's significance is described by Terrins and Whitehead as making not just political demands (i.e. for full citizenship) but a demand for economic reform <1984 p 15>, but it should also be seen as in bringing class and gender together without compromising feminist insight. Atkinson is clear on the right path to feminism *and* socialism. She argues that "every wise feminist will find herself more and more compelled to adopt the principles of Socialism. But the wise Socialists must also be feminists". <1914 p 24>

The Fabian Society was founded in 1884 to reconstruct society on morally acceptable lines and to find practical solutions to the economic and social evils of the day. <Pugh 1984 pp 1-5> There was an early split between the more philosophical and more pragmatic wings of the group [9] with the practical approach winning, and a basis in social and economic research was early established, giving priority to the investigation and discussion of social conditions, a pattern of "observe, collect facts, discuss and publish". <Pugh 1984 p 5> The Women's Group followed this approach. It was set up in March 1908 with the motto "Equal opportunities for men and women", an objective including workplace and educational as well as electoral questions, with the aim of acting on the commitment to equality between women and men which had been adopted as a Fabian principle but not given active priority.[10] It was an understanding of "equal opportunity" closer to a new feminist analysis of "real equality" than the liberal feminism with which the concept has

---

[7] Their account of their purposes and programme of work between 1908-1911.

[8] Suffrage organisations did not ignore these questions: Anna Martin's *The Married Working Woman* was published by the NUWSS in 1911 and the Church League for Woman Suffrage published GH Wood's *The Woman Wage Earner* (1910).

[9] As Shaw inimitably described it, "the one to sit among the dandelions, the other to organise the docks". <quoted in Brandon 1990 p 29>

[10] Pugh comments that "Fabians repeatedly agreed that equal citizenship would be a good idea, then hastily let the matter drop" <1984 p 106>. Although many Fabian women were members of suffrage organisations the Society as a whole continued to ignore it. <Pugh p 106, Terrins 1984 p 15>

more recently been associated. In *Three Years' Work* they say their aim is to make equality in citizenship an active part of Fabian Society propaganda, to study women's economic independence in relation to socialism, and to get more women on the Fabian Society executive. The opposition faced by the suffrage movement but also its growth and national profile were significant motivations in founding the group. Their interests were a principled synthesis of those of "new women" (middle-class, educated, with professional skills) and of working-class women, though most members were in the former category.[11] Although economic independence for women was their aim, they were unusual in recognising that it could not be achieved for all women in the same way. <Alexander 1988 p 156> At the outset the group formed a Citizenship Committee and a Board of Studies; Atkinson was active on both. The former concentrated on making sure that women qualified to vote in local elections were registered; it had close links to the Women's Local Government Society, the Women's Labour League and the Women's Circle of the ILP. Several members put themselves forward

for seats in the London County Council election in 1910, including Atkinson, but the local selection committee for the Progressives would not adopt her "because she refused to denounce the Suffrage agitation". <*Three Years' Work*> Their "citizenship propaganda" among women electors and support for the candidature of women on local bodies is similar to the aims of the Women's Citizens Associations as envisaged by Rathbone in 1913 and in practice in Scotland. <See chapter five> Their view of the importance of women's participation (a view which has also been attributed to Beatrice Webb) is also similar: "In local government women's citizenship is theoretically recognised... [but] little used, whilst the evils crying out for women's intervention are enormous". <*Three Years' Work* pp 147-150>

The Board of Studies initiated an ambitious programme of theoretical and empirical investigation, which included an in-depth discussion of economic independence and maternity. They set out firstly to investigate women's natural physiological and mental disabilities <Pugh 1984 p 108> (in relation to reproduction), and concluded they had been "absurdly exaggerated". <*Three Years' Work* p 156> They went on to study women's economic status in history and the present day, and to investigate how social arrangements might be modified to free women both to work and to mother children in a way that would guarantee their sharing fully, as individuals, in the social wealth of the community. In

---

[11] Women were 43% of Fabian Society members in 1913. <Harrison 1987> Alexander gives an account of the FWG membership as teachers, lecturers, journalists and writers, dancers and artists and the wives and daughters of professional men. However there were also some nurses, a weaver, gardeners, civil servants, clerks and secretaries, at least one shop assistant (Margaret Bondfield, who would go on to become the first woman cabinet minister). Members included militant suffragettes, and others belonged to the Women's Labour League, the ILP and the National Federation of Women Workers. Never very large (the group had 230 members at its peak, in 1912) it was nevertheless influential because of the energy and writing and lecturing skills of many members and because of its links to other groups: "[P]ractically every woman of note in the trade union, labour or socialist movements participated in its conferences, lecture series and research projects, if they did not actually join the Group." <Alexander 1988 p 153, 156 and 164>

doing so they exposed the gender blindness of socialist theory. As socialists they believed that the community as a whole was the owner of national wealth and that production and

distribution should be "so organised as to bring about the largest and most equal opportunities in life for each individual". Further, under socialism each individual would be economically independent. But where in this did women come in? Women's economic position was no more equivalent to men's than their political position was: the wife of the capitalist and of his workman alike "is a dependent person, subject of the master of the purse strings". Working-class women were obliged to compete in a capitalist labour market but were handicapped compared to men in training and earning-power. Their economic dependence was entrenched within the family with domestic work a form of slavery and a labour market where they were exploited as unskilled and cheap labour. The group phrased some of its concern in maternal feminist terms but were most concerned with a practical basis for non-dependent maternity. Motherhood was seen as a contradictory experience, both a disability to the worker and a service rendered to the community; the disabilities of the mother of young children, apart from "removable conditions of hardship" were both exaggerated to her disadvantage and ignored in terms of alleviating the social burden imposed on her. The "adequate fulfilment of the functions of motherhood" if it was to be accompanied by economic independence for the mother "must be in some form recognised as deserving and requiring economic assistance from the State". < *Three Years' Work* pp 152-158> The Victorian gender settlement is dismissed as a sham, in that so many women with dependent children work outside the home in conditions of exploitation, and as unworkable in that creates and depends on a corrupting relationship of subordination in wives and mothers. Instead a benign state is given a role in supporting the family.

Between 1908-1911 the group gave and discussed a number of historical papers, including one by Atkinson on 'Women under the Manor and in the Guilds', developing a view of women and the family in history which is reflected in Atkinson's 1914 essay, and observing that women and their concerns had been "taken for granted and practically ignored by our historians" (another comment which was to be repeated by second-wave feminists). The second stage of the programme also resulted in the book, *Women Workers in Seven Professions: A Survey of their Economic Conditions and Prospects.* <Edith J Morley ed 1914[12]> Their concern with working-class women as mothers led to Maud Pember Reeves and Dr Ethel Bentham's work in Lambeth between 1909-1913, which was 'action research' in maternal endowments. The account of this <Pember Reeves 1912, 1979> made a strong immediate impact and, alongside the WCG account *Maternity: Letters from Working Women* in 1915, made a major feminist contribution to the debate on maternity's ills and responsibilities of the period, insisting that debate include a social and

---

[12] The professions were teaching, medicine, nursing, sanitary inspection, the civil service, clerks and secretaries, and acting.

economic reality which contradicted the sentimental idea of maternity and unrealistic ideas of family responsibility. They also documented the large number of women who were breadwinners for their families: Beatrice Hutchins' *The Working Life of Women* showed that paid employment was a vital necessity to an estimated third of the female population who were not only tending physically but also supporting financially their families <Hutchins 1911, Alexander 1988> and Ellen Smith's *Wage-Earning Women and Their Dependants* developed the feminist critique of the (male) family wage: of the 2,870 women who were surveyed, 85% were self-supporting and nearly half were responsible for the maintenance of others. <Smith 1915, 1988 p 304>[13]

Mabel Atkinson: The Economic Foundations of the Women's Movement

Mabel Atkinson <1876-1958> is among the less well-known Fabian women. She joined the Fabian Society in 1897 when she was an undergraduate at Glasgow University and was a founding member of the Women's Group, active both on its Citizenship Committee and its inquiries, as an economist and historian. She was also a member of the Fabian 'nursery' and the Local Government Committee after 1906, and she suggested the idea of the Fabian summer school after attending a German summer school in 1907. [14] Atkinson was one of the first women undergraduates at Glasgow University, from 1894 (when women were admitted on equal terms, although classes were still sex segregated) to 1900, winning a number of prizes including a medal for the most distinguished arts graduate of the year 1900, and graduating with first class honours in Philosophy and a second in Classics. Between 1900-1902 she was a Scott Scholar at Glasgow and at the same time a Research Student at the LSE, where she worked with Beatrice and Sydney Webb on research which was published as *Local Government in Scotland* in 1904. She also studied at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, and was funded to do so by Charlotte Shaw. Atkinson was born in Stocksfield, Northumberland and in 1904 returned to the north-east of England as a lecturer at Armstrong College, Durham (later King's College). She then moved to London where she lectured at King's College for Women, London University, in economics and pioneered working-class adult education as well as writing leaders for the *Daily News* as a freelance journalist. <Glasgow University archive; Atkinson 1904, preface; McKillop and Atkinson 1911; Burrows 1957 p viii; Marks 1987> By 1911 she was a member

---

[13] The FWG was less active in the interwar period <Alexander 1994 p153>, though Pugh says that after the war they worked on the effect of different occupations on women in childbirth and on the health of their children and monitored the legislation creating the Ministry of Health, and that their priorities in this period were children's education and welfare, the vocational training of adolescents, working-class housing, and protective legislation in industry. <Pugh 1984> These emphases suggest a closer alliance with women in the Labour Party and with welfare or social feminism. The group had a "brief renaissance" in 1938, and disbanded in 1952. <Alexander 1994 p 153>

[14] The 'Fabian Nursery' was founded in 1906 as an education group for those under 28. Among the groups it set up was "a small, earnest group" which discussed local government problems. Atkinson as a member of the group "pioneered a fascinating study of local organisation of labour according to occupations, the varying terms governing apprenticeships and the range of limitations imposed on certain professions". <Pugh 1984 pp 94-96> Atkinson suggested the idea of a summer school in 1907 which was linked to a similar idea by Frank Lawson Dodd - they together developed the plan, found a house, and she drew up the educational programme. <Pugh 1984 p 117>

of the Fabian executive and she played a leadership role in the FWG Citizenship Committee, attended meetings of The Women's Freedom League[15] on behalf of the FWG, and sat on the Parliamentary Action and Joint Suffrage Committees. She became vice-chair of the Federal Council of Women's Suffrage Societies and reported back on the international movement to the Fabians. <Pugh 1984 p112-3> Margaret Cole described her as "something of a stormy element in Edwardian Fabianism" and as "very truculent" <Cole 1961 p 349, cited in Marks 1987> During the first world war she wrote on child welfare.[16]

In 1914 Atkinson married ARB Palmer, an Australian who promptly joined up; after the war she returned with him to Sydney but left after six months. Then began a second and apparently separate career in South Africa, where she worked first as a lecturer in economic history and WEA organiser in Durban from which she retired in 1936. She then committed herself to establishing higher education for black students, working unpaid much of the time, and holding classes in her sitting room when the university refused to accommodate them, work for which she is well known in South Africa. When a separate (and segregated) section of the University of Natal for Non-European education was set up after the second world war she became its director. < Marks 1987> She died in South Africa in 1958.

The Economic Foundations of the Women's Movement marks a new development in women's movement thinking, as part of a growing theoretical basis for socialist-feminism but also because of its refusal of a feminism which only meets the needs of single, middle-class women. It is significant for three main reasons: the emphasis on the economic basis of women's oppression and on the role of the state; the recognition and refusal of an opposition between love and work - which serve as shorthand for sexual and family relationships on the one hand and economic and personal independence and making a contribution in the public world on the other; and because of her insistence on different feminist aims according to class and circumstances. She seeks to resolve within the framework of Fabian socialism questions of equality and difference and class loyalty which would become important for women's movement new directions (and disagreements) after 1918. In focussing on women's need for economic independence but not at the cost of sexual relationships and family she articulates as a problem a division which had been accepted by much of the Victorian movement. It is a recognition of woman's economic and civil individuality, but raising the question of how personal relationships are to be managed now women are no longer submerged within the family as a matter of course. It was only once women had opportunities for better and higher education and some extension of employment opportunity that the choice of independent spinsterhood could seem limited; fifty years earlier it had been an achievement, as Atkinson recognises. Her argument is a response to the conflict between women's

---

[15] The militant suffrage breakaway from the WSPU led by the Pethick-Lawrences.

[16] Burrows claims, in an account based on conversations with Atkinson, that during the war she initiated Fabian discussion on the need for a Supra-National organisation which led to their contribution to the founding of the League of Nations. <Burrows 1957 p viii>

changing aspirations, fed by education and some extension of employment, the arguments of the suffrage struggle and about sexuality, the social opportunities available to at least some "new women", and the more rigid institution of marriage and the expectations of women as mothers. For women who know "self-direction and self-activity" a family role which is other-directed and dependent may be hard; for the new middle-class women at work life is not easy, but "the struggle for independent living" is nevertheless "sweet to the woman who has revolted against parasitism". <Atkinson 1914 p 14> Lessened childbearing also opened up a space in which women could raise their expectations of sexual relations and family life: as Maude Royden commented (with some exaggeration), women who are pregnant every year and burying most of their babies have little time or energy to think about their rights. <Royden 1917 p 36>

A socialism which recognises motherhood as socially valuable work is Atkinson's solution, but it is her analysis of women's changing circumstances and expression of changing aspirations that I find most interesting. For Atkinson legal emancipation is not meaningful unless or until accompanied by economic change which delivers independence for all women, including wives and mothers and poor women; nor is socialism in public life which leaves the family untouched and a site of continuing male dominance worthy of the name. She believes however that only a socialist redistribution of wealth and regard for justice could deliver maternal endowments, the main tool to end the economic disability associated with maternity. (The argument that a wage for motherhood could limit women's opportunities *to* motherhood which worried others does not appear to have troubled Atkinson.[17]) She seeks to embed a real equality, of citizenship and of opportunity, by refusing the opposition between love and work, between public and private. Although she uses in her argument the commonplace public/private distinction and identifies the private with the family and as restricting whereas the public is seen as a site of *human* activity from which most women are excluded, a deconstruction of that opposition is nevertheless at the centre of her analysis. She is, in thoroughly modern fashion, implicitly contradictory about motherhood: she assumes its social and personal value but identifies valuable work nevertheless with employment. But to perceive this as a false and forced opposition is in itself significant, whether or not a public reward for women's private work would achieve the purposes she believes it would; what has been taken for granted and as such invisible to political analysis is expressed as a problem, a significant discursive shift.

---

[17] Emma Brooke in 1909 raised the concern that this idea if introduced by men could reduce mothers to a "slave like powerlessness supported by law". She argued instead for state endowment of children which would engage "the responsibility of both parents". <*Summary of Six Papers*, 1909, 1988>

The historical analysis Atkinson draws on remains influential within feminism[18] <Alexander 1994 p 154; see for example Nicholson 1986>, although, reflecting a Marxist analysis, industrialisation is seen as the cause of women's deteriorated position and also of her aspiration to citizenship, and cultural factors are not given any significance. Atkinson argues that industrialisation created an alteration in the position of women which was greater than it created for men. The key change is from the family as economic unit to the individual as economic unit and the family as centred on affective relations. Before the 19[th]c "marriage was an industrial partnership as well as a relation of affection." The changes "in the nature and aspirations of women, which have developed in the 19[th]c, are very largely, though not entirely, due to these altered economic conditions". <1914 pp 5-6>This change in the family had different consequences according to class: "[T]o put it shortly, parasitism became the fate of the middle-class women, ruthless exploitation that of the working-class women". <Atkinson 1914 p 7>

Victorian feminism is seen as a consequence of this development in the family which created 'the surplus of women' [19] - women without husbands or work who felt themselves of no value to the world. "What wonder that in the end a revolt came, and women insisted that in the great world of human activities outside the family they, too, must have a place and power." <Atkinson 1914 p 11> The 19[th]c women's movement is seen, as later feminists would also see it, as wholly about access to the public sphere and with no real understanding of class issues. It is a characterisation as 'equality feminism' and as antithetical to the recognition of difference. Feminism is seen only as "an alternative to an impracticable ideal of marriage and motherhood for every woman". She describes its aims as "the right to work, to education, and to enter politics" and overlooks, or is unaware of, the campaigns around divorce, domestic violence and a single moral standard as well as the arguments from difference. The first feminists, Atkinson thinks, tended "to ignore differences of sex, since those differences had been made the pretext for condemning them to a condition of parasitism". For this reason it was understandable, if unfortunate in Atkinson's view, that they "should insist upon their likeness to men".[20]

---

[18] It is likely that Atkinson was influenced by Alice Clark. The *Working Life of Women in the 17th century* was not published until 1919, but Clark had also taken part in the FWG lecture series on women's history.

[19] 'The Surplus of Women' was a recurring social concern following the 1851 census which showed that women significantly outnumbered men. It is interesting to see a feminist writer using the term 'surplus' uncritically. Using 1911 census figures Atkinson argues this "over-supply" is a phenomenon in the middle-classes only. There is a confusion however in her argument between the situation in the mid 19[th]c and what she sees as the contemporary situation.

[20] Emma Brooke gave a similar account of the origin of the women's movement in the "restlessness" of single women seen as "redundant" but whose achievement was "incomplete… because it was won by ignoring sex" (by which she means sexual difference). The main difference which is "the potentiality for motherhood" must now be not ignored but affirmed. <*Summary of Six Papers* 1909, 1988 pp 107-8> Atkinson's characterisation of the Victorian women's movement suggests it had been presented to her in a way which was to be repeated as later generations of feminists looked back on earlier generations, hers' among them: see for example Vera Brittain's comment that pre-war feminists were seen as "spectacled, embittered women, disappointed, childless, dowdy and generally unloved". <*Manchester Guardian* 13 December 1928, in Berry and Bishop 1985> Atkinson seeks to explain their unfortunate qualities - it was not surprising that "in their dress and bearing they should neglect the grace and charm which a normal man will always desire in women" she says, and their attitude to marriage had been much misunderstood - maybe some *were* indifferent or opposed to marriage but most "found

This is an argument close to that of the *Oxford Essays* (1917), which is seen as the "founding statement" of new feminism <Pedersen 1993 p144 >, in which it is claimed that "certain doctrinaire feminists, starting from the perfectly sound assumption that women must be free, have arrived at the false conclusion that this freedom can only be obtained in one way... to approximate the lives of all women as closely as possible to those of men, to pretend that sex differences do not exist, and to insist that motherhood should be nothing more than a trivial and temporary incident". <Gollancz 1917 p 173> The demands put forward by Gollancz are the same as Atkinson's: economic independence for women, the endowment of motherhood under socialism, with the addition of education and training for girls in job-related skills. The overthrow of capitalism is presented as the ultimate aim of feminism, only then will it be possible to resolve "the conflicting claims between the active and the domestic life". <Gollancz 1917 p 178>

Legislative protection for women at work, which was the main dividing line between new and old feminists in the 1920s was, on Atkinson's account, at issue in the period in which she was writing, though she presents it as a problematic hangover from the 1870s and 1880s. The women's movement saw industrial protection "as another form of the masculine exclusiveness from which they themselves suffered, so that to them the right of a woman to be a doctor and the right of a woman to work underground in a mine should present themselves as similar demands". This created a damaging opposition between women's reform and other reform and had alienated women in the labour movement from feminism, seen as liberal and middle-class. <1914 pp 13-17> Protective employment legislation is one of the issues on which a division between proponents of equality and of difference and between equal rights feminism and women in the labour movement was apparently intractable.[21] Atkinson is pro-intervention. Rather than the *right* to work the working-class woman demands "protection against the unending burden

themselves driven into hostility to normal family relations, mainly because these were used as an argument to convince them that the alterations in the position of women which they desired were impossible." <1914 pp 13-14> There is a similar argument in her 1910 article. The image of embittered, unattractive older women who want to be like men is clearly a hard one to live down, and equality-as-likeness-to-men is a persistent misrepresentation of feminist aims. Atkinson's view of the Victorian movement as only middle-class liberal feminism also indicates that she had no knowledge of working-class women's activism - and if anyone did, you might expect the FWG to.

[21] Protective legislation was perceived as having drawbacks for women workers from its introduction in the 1842 Mines Act <Humphries 1981> and was an issue discussed by the Langham Place Circle in the 1860s. In 1896 Jessie Boucherett and Helen Blackburn argued for "a fair field and no favour" for women in the workplace <Boucherett and Blackburn 1896> and Josephine Butler, Millicent Fawcett and Emma Patterson (founder of the Women's Trade Union League) all campaigned against protective legislation because they believed it was a male trade unionist strategy to restrict the number of jobs open to women, an argument which would be taken up again in 1926 by the Open Door Council. It is not - as some equality feminist arguments might suggest - that women in the labour movement who supported protective legislation accepted a secondary role for women workers so much as a difference in strategy, with the strict equality viewpoint seeing *any* sex differentiation as limiting women's access and against their interests, a position which labour movement women saw as ignoring women's experience as workers and interests as mothers, and as naïvely failing to recognising the differences, as Atkinson puts it, between the demand to be a doctor and to work down the mines. However the argument that protective measures were *presented* as being in women's interests but were not in practice had some foundation; there was rather less pressure to prevent women's homework and against the 'sweated trades' where conditions were often as poor and pay even worse, but women did not present any threat to men's work and wages.

of toil which has been laid upon her". She also believes that working-class women are increasingly recognising that in the fight against capitalist exploitation their gender interests may be overlooked, of which the "shocking disregard" of the needs of women by the Insurance Act is proof.

Atkinson describes the contemporary women's movement as having two aspects: middle-class women "revolting against their exclusion from human activity"[22] whose primary values are independence and the right to work, and working-class women whose problems come from exploitation under capitalism rather than "at least, to any considerable extent" the men of her class shutting her out from gainful occupations, as is the case with middle-class women. This is a reference to the marriage bars which were being introduced in some professions, notably teaching and the civil service, and opposed by the FWG, among others. Among working-class women there "is less sex consciousness" therefore and class oppression seems more relevant. <1914 p 15> Although Atkinson presents exclusion as primarily a middle-class problem, Rathbone saw men in trade unions as trying to keep women out of the labour market, and segregated in low-skill poorly-paid areas within it. <Rathbone 1917 p104 and p118> As well as the specific neglect of women's interests in the NI Act Atkinson sees the development of social legislation more generally as creating additional burdens for working-class mothers, but giving "scant provision for her special needs". Her practical recognition of state intervention as introducing changes which working-class families could ill afford is not wholly consistent with her belief in state support for women's family role. As feminist historians have argued the focus on child health and maternity of the period was not always helpful to actual mothers; this brief argument by Atkinson shows that the problematic nature of intervention was something women activists at the time were well aware of.[23] Atkinson later took a direct part in that debate through the Infant Welfare Propaganda Committee <Palmer 1916>, and any inconsistency would be resolved for her presumably by women having the vote and influencing legislation. If it is a form of maternal feminism, it is shorn of rhetoric and presented as a very practical way to stop government making the mistakes men make in this area, as well as a matter of justice. <Atkinson 1910 p 56> (This is an argument which would be made again after the war for women's participation in local government.)

---

[22] Atkinson sees the battle for middle-class women's entry to higher education and professional employment as won <1910>; the middle-class demand for education is "now practically conceded on all sides", the right to earn a living "is rapidly being won". The right to share in the control of Government is "the point round which the fight is now most fiercely raging" <1914 p 15>

[23] The distance between the ideals of maternity and the reality of many women's lives which Atkinson summarises in this argument was also discussed at greater length by Anna Martin, a suffragist who worked in a settlement in Rotherhithe in this period. <Martin 1911>

At this time the majority of working-class women, both single and married, engaged in paid employment, though with considerable regional variation. Although married women's work was often casual, depending on the family economy at the time, and/or home-based, this does not mean it was not essential. Irrespective of the different circumstances and employment patterns of women in different classes, family and employment policy was made as if 'separate spheres' was reflected in all families, conflating 'ought' and 'is' and reinforcing the male-breadwinner model, a problem which was intensified when state interest in the welfare of children included a prescriptive family model. <Lewis 1991 pp 78-79> Atkinson suggests that a possible danger in the future is that working-class women in their desire to minimise their double burden might allow themselves "to drift without observing it" into parasitism. This could occur if the exclusion of married women from paid work were carried out; if at the same time schools and other agencies continue to take on more responsibility for children and the number of children in each family were to continue to diminish; and if the home were to lose its remaining economic activities through changes in technology and large scale production. <1914 p 15> Though not all of those fears were realised, or not fully, the "problem that has no name" identified by Friedan <1963> has much in common with parasitism and Friedan was prompted by the kind of conflict between women's education and expectations and their family role which lies behind the third section of Atkinson's argument. A similar conflict was part of women's experience in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s as women who had taken on a range of roles in wartime found their options narrowing in the post-war return to domesticity - a culture perhaps most marked in the lives of working-class women. <Gavron 1966> (An important contrary aspect of post-war Britain was the steady increase in married women's employment.)

Atkinson's third main argument is that women should not have to choose between work and love, between marriage and children or work and a life on their own terms.[24] It is a choice (as she put it in 1910) between "independence, power and variety of experience, coupled with a barren celibacy" and "marriage and maternity together with the narrow monotonous life of housekeeping, and... subservience, social, intellectual and economic..." <1910 p 54> This is the *problem before the future*, "to secure for women freedom and independence, the right to control their own destinies, and yet to make it possible *for the same women* to be wives and mothers". <1914 p 19 my ital> The new generation of "modern professional" women want work, want control of their own financial position, education and political participation, but are "no longer willing to be shut out from marriage and motherhood". This entails a new conception of marriage and of work: "a

---

[24] Atkinson does not consider any kinds of love other than within heterosexual marriage and motherhood, although the possibility of women choosing single motherhood is briefly alluded to in her 1910 article. Asserting work and love as the central human needs is attributed to Freud. Schreiner discusses the choice for women between work and love in *Woman and Labour*. <Schreiner 1911, 1978, p 65> Pedersen suggests that love or work was also an issue for Rathbone, citing a conversation (in either 1895 or 1896) between Rathbone and Margery Fry when they were both students at Somerville College on "whether it was possible for them to reconcile their ambitions with their womanhood" <Pedersen 1994 p 105> Rathbone found her resolution in her lifelong close companionship with the Scottish social worker Elizabeth Macadam, but did not have children.

revolt is beginning", women are refusing "this forced alternative". Older feminists, Atkinson says, seeing younger women with worthwhile work and independent incomes, enjoying foreign travel and able to freely cultivate friendship, "wonder what difficulties the young women of today can possibly have to contend with". But such women must "reconcile two needs of her nature which the present constitution of society make irreconcilable". Particularly because of marriage bars and automatic dismissal on marriage in most professions, most women can only preserve economic independence "so keenly appreciated and won by such fierce struggles" at a cost of compulsory celibacy, and "what for many women is much worse, compulsory childlessness". <1914 pp 17-18> Atkinson faced dismissal from her lecturing post if she married, which she did in the same year as the tract was published. (Marriage bars which were introduced at this time were extended in the interwar period.)

The choices offered (some) women by a feminist modification of the Victorian gender settlement are no longer adequate but new relationships and views of married women's role have yet to be forged. It was a conflict which would intensify and have widespread consequences, for women and for society. Royden observed (in 1917) that "[N]o one of the problems raised by the feminist movement is more difficult to solve or more urgent than that of love and marriage", that this has economic, social and religious implications as well as for the rights of children and for the "whole character of sexual relations and the importance we give them". <Royden 1917 p 36> Atkinson sees the demand for marriage alongside meaningful work and financial independence as *new*, as of her generation; the attitude of feminists towards marriage was undergoing "momentous change", she says. <1914 p 18> Alexander comments that love *and* work was "articulated as a dream" in the 18th and 19th centuries, but in the early 20thc seemed realisable as industrial development, birth control and women's suffrage appeared to promise a new epoch in the "sex-relation". It is a demand formulated in defiance of the limits of the feminism of earlier generations, in which some of the older Fabian women were included. Beatrice Webb, for example, believed it was necessary to choose between children and serious work. <Alexander 1994 p 167> While, as I have argued, Victorian feminism has been commonly misrepresented as concerned only with single women and public life and Atkinson herself shares that perception, nevertheless the recognition of this alternative as something which is wrong and can be changed is a crucial shift. If Victorian feminism developed more of a critique of women's position in the family than is often recognised, as well as recognising that many women - ideology to the contrary - were breadwinners, its arguments that women might properly be educated for a range of careers had in mind mainly single women. The demand that (middle-class) married women also be able to work outside the home would have been impractical, not only because of the time-consuming and economically significant role many Victorian women played in the home, but also because prior to property law reform there was not a lot of point in demanding opportunities to work for an income which would not be legally your own. The Victorian

arguments around married women's position are about an amelioration of the consequences of dependence rather than creating an alternative to it within marriage. To demand *both* love and work depends on smaller family sizes and developments in domestic technology, as well as access to higher education and fulfilling work. In this argument Atkinson loses sight of the distinction she has made between the needs of working-class and middle-class women. Working-class women on her own analysis have love and work, just too much of the latter. However the solution she suggests is seen as not only securing economic independence for women who would otherwise be dependent, but also enabling women who otherwise could not do so to give up employment during late pregnancy and when nursing.

A similar argument was also made by Atkinson in an article in *The Sociological Review* in 1910, replying to arguments by eugenicists that feminist ideas and education for women are damaging to the race, and to a specific argument in a previous *Sociological Review* that the "advanced woman is a "third sex", possessing neutral characteristics, and indifferent if not hostile to marriage and maternity". <1910 p 51> The article accepts the main eugenic premises and attempts to use them to support feminist aims; as a strong argument for love, independence and political rights it is interesting beyond that context. She accepts that the good of the race was of over-riding concern but argues that feminism is eugenically sound in that by giving women choices other than marriage it encouraged "her right of sexual selection" and would permit the most intelligent women to have children, which was not the case in a society which forced a division between love and work. <Atkinson 1910 p 55 and p 51> She seeks to explain and rebut the stereotype of the emancipated woman, particularly the idea that intellectual ability in a woman is de-sexing; the idea of their being a "third sex" is common but far from the truth.[25]
In this article the equation between economic independence and "developing her own individuality and ordering her own life" is spelled out. Again she emphasises that this demand is made by a "second generation" who are enjoying what their aunts and mothers fought for and know little of the bitterness of earlier battles. For them "natural womanly attractiveness" is enhanced by freedom and intellectual development. Such women want to have children, but since they can support themselves are "fastidious" and will not choose either a loveless marriage or one which (and Atkinson thinks this is true of nine out of ten marriages) requires her to "sink her individuality almost completely in that of her husband". If there was going to be eugenic legislation, which she expects, this is

---

[25] Eugenic arguments were influential in Fabian socialism. Sidney Webb linked the idea of maternal endowments to eugenist fears that the birth rate was higher among the working than middle and upper classes, and the 'less desirable' sections of the working class at that. "In order that the population may be recruited from the self-controlled and foreseeing members of each class, rather than those who are feckless and improvident, we must alter the balance of remuneration in favour of the child-producing family". This meant "we shall indeed have to face the problem of the systematic 'endowment of motherhood' and place this most indispensable of all professions upon an honourable economic basis". He wanted to confine it to the "best members of the middle and upper artisan classes" and not the Irish, Roman Catholics or Polish, Russian and German Jews. <Webb *The Decline of the Birth Rate* Fabian Society 1907 pp 16-19, cited in Macnicol 1980>

another argument for women's enfranchisement: women, who are most affected by issues of marriage and the care of children and have most expertise in these areas must be citizens and participate in making such law. <Atkinson 1910 p 56> Atkinson also makes a strong plea for women's right to choose when and whether to have children. <1910 pp 52-54>

Maternal Endowments

The idea of maternal endowment is the forerunner of the campaign for family endowments (later family allowances) primarily associated with Rathbone which was pursued between the wars (and also an issue which divided old and new feminists). It was a radical rethinking of both the economic basis of the family and of the relationship of the state to the citizen. <Rathbone 1917; Pedersen 1993 p 146> The idea became current at the turn of century in a variety of left-wing political and feminist groups.[26] <Land, 1975 p 157> In the period after the first world war it was seriously considered as policy but it is doubtful, for economic as well as political reasons, that it could have been introduced in the form feminists wanted to see. <Pedersen 1993 pp 137-140 and pp 415-422> A number of solutions to the dependence of married women were canvassed in this period, and there was debate among politically-active women as to whether endowment, wage-earning or the legal enforcement of a wife's right to maintenance would best improve the circumstances of married women, especially working-class married women.[27] Ideas of socialised childcare and co-operative housekeeping were also discussed. The argument for maternity benefits and for better working conditions and shorter hours was part of the same discussion, as were widow's pensions (though the latter was seen as an extension of the male breadwinner role, not as an alternative to it as maternal endowment was).[28] Atkinson looks at the ideas of American writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman for co-operative housekeeping and crèches, ideas with which she has some sympathy but (looking forward this time it seems to the "Superwoman" phenomenon) would be practicable only for "a

---

[26] It is probable that the proposal in feminist form originated in France: it was a demand of a French pamphlet published by the ILP in 1896 in translation as *Woman and Suffrage*. <Davin 1978 p 23> The proposal for maternal endowments was also canvassed among feminists in N. America and, despite the influence of American 'mother's pensions' in the British debate, seen as a European idea. Bock discusses a variety of similar ideas in several European countries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries <1994 pp 422-428>

[27] The Women's Labour League organised a debate in 1913 between Anna Martin, advocating the entitlement of wives to half their husband's income, and Fabian Maud Pember Reeves, arguing for family endowments. <*Co-operative News* 13 Dec 1913 p1654; Lewis 1980>

[28] The term 'mother's pensions' appears to have been used at various times both for a widows' pension and for the endowment of all women with dependent children, and widows' pensions were also called mothers' endowments. The FWG first called for "disability allowances" for mothers, reflecting the fact that their discussion of this idea grew out of their examination of women's "natural disabilities" as workers. The executive of the WLL passed a resolution in favour of pensions for mothers in 1917, meaning widows and women whose breadwinners were incapacitated and some argued for extending such pensions to unmarried mothers. Mothers' pensions were introduced in the USA with the idea that it was better to pay the mother to look after a child than to take it into care; the (UK) Local Government Board undertook an analysis of mothers pensions in the USA in 1918. Pensions for widows with dependent children became Labour Party policy in 1918 and legislation was successfully introduced in 1925.

few exceptional women" who earn a large incomes and have abundant energy.[29] In a somewhat tentative footnote Atkinson suggests that childcare might be the answer for some women. This contradicts the common assumption that childcare was not an issue for the women's movement until the 1960s, and ideas on childcare, similarly expressed, were also put forward in this period by the FWG in the *Summary of Eight Papers*. Atkinson believes, and it is the common sense of the time, that during the child-bearing years the welfare of the child must be the mother's main consideration, but argues that a woman who has children should not therefore be prevented from earning her living during her whole married life. This is an argument which could only be made when child-bearing was not continuous for most of her married life, and assumes that employment for married women can be a choice as well as a necessity. The endowment of motherhood would mean that women during the period of later pregnancy, birth and care of young children would be supported by a state endowment but, she adds firmly, no longer than for the time when this is their whole occupation.[30] She envisages women returning to employment as mature women "ripened and enriched" by marriage and motherhood and bringing valuable experience especially to areas like education and medicine, an argument backed by reference to the sexual needs of "normal" women and the superiority of the married woman living a "healthy life" over the spinster. <1914 pp 18-19> The appeal to heterosexual desire and the desire for children as "natural" and instinctive is also made in the 1910 article. <1910 p 54> The argument for married women's opportunities is at the expense of a caricature of single women.[31]

The endowment of motherhood, Atkinson argues, is the ultimate ideal of the feminist movement. This identification of feminism's aims with motherhood is one which equality feminists would come to deplore. Atkinson argues for endowments primarily on grounds of maternal citizenship: "[N]o act of citizenship is more fundamental than the act of

[29] Gilman called for such a thorough reconstruction of family life that many of her contemporaries saw her as rejecting motherliness altogether; her radical maternal feminism called for "motherhood as social service instead of man-service" and for "a mother-world as well as a father-world in which we shall not be ashamed or afraid to plant our children". <Gilman 1913 p149 cited in Koven 1993 p3>

[30] It was also a qualification made by the Family Endowment Society in 1918. Rathbone however did not envisage women returning to work after marriage and motherhood which she believed for most women would be their career. <1917>

[31] Sheila Jeffreys would certainly perceive Atkinson as having come under the sway of the sexologists and as an enemy of the independent spinster. <Jeffreys 1985 p 128> Atkinson's views in this respect were not unique: for example, Marie Stopes' and Havelock Ellis's arguments that sex was as important to women's health and pleasure as it was for men invoked the contrary ills of celibacy; the libertarian feminist journal the *Freewoman* in 1911 mounted a fierce attack on spinsters, and the socialist-feminist Stella Browne argued in it in August 1921 that it would be "an unspeakable disaster" if feminism fell "under the domination of sexually deficient and disappointed women..." <*Freewoman* 23 November 1911 and 7 March 1912, cited in Jeffreys 1985 p 93 and p 97; Jackson 1994 pp 88-101> French feminist arguments at this time against what they saw as an Anglo-Saxon emphasis on equal rights and individualism included a caricature of the emancipated women as "a functional male who was neither wife nor mother [who] quickly became a bogey". <Offen 1988 p 146> Atkinson's argument is both a response to this type of "bogey" and an expression of a problem she sees in her own life and that of others. Jackson discusses the divisions among feminists in the late 19th and early 20thc over sexuality, seeing an opposition to the sexual double-standard, a critique of dependence in marriage and the need for voluntary motherhood as in common but fierce divisions over contraception, 'free love' and ideas of women's sexual nature and their empowerment in heterosexual sexual relations. <Jackson 1994, see especially pp 80-88>

bringing into the world and protecting in his helpless infancy a new citizen"; and secondly because it is consistent with the old age pensions which have recently been introduced. Additional benefits of the scheme will be that it is then reasonable for the state to suggest restrictions on a pregnant woman's employment; that women who are no longer dependent are able to refuse sex, thus limiting population growth and too large families; and that, as Eleanor Rathbone would later argue, introducing maternal endowments would make equal pay more possible as the argument for the family wage would no longer hold. In turn this would mean the problem of lower paid women undercutting men in some areas of work would also come to an end. The context however and over-arching aim must be for the young, the aged and others who are unable to earn to be supported by the state. Women who are bearing future citizens should be "among the most honoured and respected" of those endowed by the state.

Atkinson's argument takes on a further dimension in her conclusion, in which she presents motherhood as a service to the state and thus as a duty of citizenship. This is a logical corollary of ideas of maternal citizenship, but exposes the main flaw - that it can be used to limit women who have (or may have) children's other opportunities, or to see motherhood *as a condition of* citizenship. Her conclusion situates her argument firmly within Fabian socialism's tendency to social engineering. This final paragraph is strikingly different in tone from the preceding arguments, particularly in the shift in emphasis from women's needs to women's duty. Endowment of motherhood was proposed in several forms in this period.[32] It was not only a feminist proposal and was advocated by HG Wells in *Socialism and the Family* <Wells 1906 pp 56-9 cited by Macnicol 1980 p 6> and in a controversial Fabian Society lecture the same year he set forth its connection to "the dissolution of the proprietary nature of marriage". <Brandon 1990 p 171>[33] Atkinson's conclusion has echoes of his views, including the benign perception that motherhood as should be seen as "a generously rewarded public duty and service" and the more

---

[32] Others argued for a children's allowance, including Beatrice Webb who called for a "bairn's part" in the reconstruction settlement. <Webb, Minority Report to the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry 1919, cited in Lewis 1980 p169> This has been cited as showing that the FWG preferred social benefits for children alone and wanted to avoid divisive arguments about married women's work <Pedersen 1993 p 154>, but this ignores the position of Atkinson and others. Since the need to relieve child poverty was allied to the perception that mothers' income more reliably met children's needs, argued by some charity workers and demonstrated during the war by separation allowances, arguments for maternal and child allowances were not always very far apart; nor did arguments that children not mothers should be endowed necessarily preclude greater independence for the mother. <see for example WLL member Mrs Arnot Robinson, cited in Land 1990 p 120>

[33] Wells was a prominent supporter of endowment of motherhood but his support was a mixed blessing for the feminist campaign: he felt it would enable free love and may have had a role in associating the two ideas in the public mind. He argued that "[W]omen must become less and less subordinated to individual men, since this works out in a more or less complete limitation, waste, and sterilisation of their essentially social function..." and a degradation of the "intimate and supreme duty" of motherhood. Endowment of motherhood would mean bearing and rearing *good* children <my ital> and would be revolutionary, "a new method of social organisation, a rearrangement of the social unit, untried in human experience..." <Wells *The New Machiavelli* pp 410-12> Possibly it *would* be revolutionary but this was not an argument likely to get it on public agendas, nor is there any evidence that many politically active women wished to pursue the possibilities of 'free love' at this time, though a radical minority did so, including at least two who pursued it with Wells. <see also Wells *Independent Review* 1906, vol xi, p 172>

troubling idea that "a conscious, deliberate motherhood is their special function in the State". <Wells *The New Machiavelli* p4 and p 10-12> There was no consensus on the idea. In the spring of 1912 *The Freewoman* attacked Wells' proposal as a system for not ending but institutionalising women's parasitism: "is the position of paid domestic servant the ideal of the women in the emancipation movement?". <*Freewoman* 29 Feb 1912 [34]> Millicent Fawcett opposed it on the grounds that it would destroy family life by wiping out parental responsibility, and Katharine Bruce Glazier argued against state intervention and in defence of the family in her 1911 tract *Socialism and the Home.* In the ILP Emmeline Pankhurst and Ramsay Macdonald also opposed it because they believed it would weaken the family as an institution, the latter, contradicting a Fabian feminist view of collectivity or at least excluding maternity from it, calling the idea "an insane burst of individualism, under socialism mothers' and children's right to maintenance would be honoured by the family and not by the state". <cited by Land 1980 p 70> Rathbone later sought to allay fears that ending wives' dependence would "undermine parental affection and destroy the sanctity of family life". <Rathbone 1917 p 125> Many Fabian men opposed maternal endowments as likely to lead to lower wages for working men. <Terrins 1984 p 15> The idea had both supporters and detractors in the Women's Labour League <Rowan 1982 p75> and was discussed by them at least from 1909 onwards; it was hotly debated. <Thane 1991 p 198> These were divisions which would widen in the 1920s.

The focus on motherhood

The FWG argument for maternal endowment was consonant with the increased attention given to maternal and child welfare at this time. Ideas of Empire, family, women's role and state intervention converged in a public discourse which shaped welfare reform. <Bock 1994 pp 402-5: Dwork 1987 pp 221-222> It was an emphasis which drew on a number of discourses: eugenic, socialist, social-liberal, educational and medical (especially the growing role of public health medicine) and the investigations into poverty in London and York by Booth and Rowntree. Feminist ideas about maternity and the family are framed within and contribute to as well as challenge this discourse. The impetus for the national concern with infant and child health and welfare was twofold: high levels of infant mortality (which had recently begun to be accurately recorded) <Lewis 1980 pp 28-41, Dwork 1987 pp 3-14>, and the poor physical health of army recruits during the Boer War which led to a concern with racial degeneracy and a demand for "national efficiency". Concern that Britain was declining as a military, commercial and colonial power particularly in comparison with Germany had been voiced before the war, but it seemed to realise those

---

[34] The Freewoman saw itself as the voice of a new generation of feminists who saw women's emancipation not in the vote but through sexual and economic freedom. It had anarchist connections and sought new lifestyles, new thinking. The founding editors were two former WSPU organisers Dora Marsden and Mary Gawthorpe: "The paper advocated sexual liberation; and end to monogamy; co-operative housekeeping; and economic independence for women." <Holton 1995> See:Garner *A Brave and Beautiful Spirit: Dora Marsden 1882-1960* (Aldershot, Avebury 1990); Bland 'Heterosexuality, Feminism and *The Free Woman Journal* in early 20th c

fears. The Committee on Physical Deterioration which reported in 1904 argued for greater attention to the welfare of infants and schoolchildren, recognising that it was in the national interest to safeguard the next generation. <Lewis 1980 p 15> The upsurge of concern about the bearing and rearing of children drew support from a wide range of sources: politicians from all parties, voluntary organisations and the medical profession. Many women's organisations welcomed the focus on children and maternity, particularly those associated with the labour movement, and the Women's Co-operative Guild had persistently raised concerns about the lack of value given to women's work in the home and family and the double-burden for women who went back to work when their children were young. The Guild, an organisation primarily of married working-class women, played a major role in bringing into the debate the practical realities of motherhood and their campaigning is credited with the inclusion of a maternity benefit in the National Insurance Act in 1911.[35] <Gaffin 1977>

Eugenic concerns expressed in the idea of race vigour and the nation's virility were a dimension of this discourse, and, as discussed above, some feminist as well as other socially-concerned groups took on board a number of arguments which later history has shown to be dangerous. <Dwork 1987 pp 10-14 and p 235> Good motherhood went with racial health and purity. Eugenics contributed to a reformulation of domestic ideology, shifting its justification from a moral discourse towards one based in science and medicine. But insofar as it emphasised the value of motherhood and also, implicitly, that there was racial value in some women choosing not to be mothers, it had ambivalent consequences for women. <D'Cruze 1995 pp 73-4> Middle-class women were accused of "shirking motherhood" <Davin 1978 p14>, which could mean leaving the children with other carers as well as not having children or having fewer of them, and educated women seen as unsuited for motherhood. <Atkinson 1910> The fall in the birth-rate began earliest in the middle-class and ideas of "race suicide" contained a degree of backlash against the new woman's new roles.

This has been an important area of inquiry for feminist historians. Anna Davin, in a much-cited article argues that imperialist and eugenic discourses were highly significant in reconstructing women's maternal duty, resulting in "endless mystification and rhetoric about motherhood" < Davin 1978 p 30> and "the formation of an ideology of motherhood

England', *Women's History Review* 4 1995 pp 5-23. See also Pedersen's account of the *Freewoman* debate on maternal endowments 1993 pp 43-46.

[35] The WGC campaigned for maternity benefits by gathering evidence on hardship in 1910 and on the basis of this lobbying for inclusion of a maternity benefit in the planned NI Act. The benefit included was 30s payable to the wives of insured men and to women insured in their own right. At first the benefit went to the husband; this was amended in 1913 after a further WGC campaign. The Guild described achieving the benefit as "the first public recognition of the mother's place in the home and a new step towards some economic independence for wives." < WCG AR 1913-14 cited Lewis 1980 p 24> However women not in paid work and children were otherwise excluded from the Health Insurance provisions and continued to pay for medical care.

whose influence still touches us today". <1978 p 9> This focus on mothers and their failings deflected attention from the effects on child health of poverty and poor environment, and arguments that ignorance on the part of the mothers was to blame for infant mortality and poor child health were repeated throughout the decade. If a mother's duty was to rear healthy children, the converse was that their failures of duty and inadequacy (and often their employment was seen as just such a failure) led to unhealthy children and a degenerate nation. Davin concludes that this both "led to a shift in the dominant ideology of the family" and the state asserting its interest in how families brought up children, seen as "the capital of a country". [36] < Davin 1978 p 13> Thus she suggests this was an important moment in the formation of the modern relationship between families and the state and that the concerns which initiated and justified state (as opposed to charitable) intervention in family life in terms of national good and racial improvement built on a conception of the good mother's role and a view of the proper family. Lewis argues that infant welfare centres in the period prior to the first world war sought to inculcate middle-class methods of child-raising at the same time as protective legislation and national insurance based on a male-breadwinner family model were a means of controlling the kind of work open to women outside the home and limiting the access of married women to employment benefits. Although the need for maternal and child welfare services was widely supported, the aims and concerns of the groups involved in policy-making and of the women who used the services differed widely, and she poses the question why some of the major needs articulated by women's organisations were ignored and why the services provided took the particular form they did. In defining the scope of maternal and child welfare policy, policy-makers who were predominantly male and middle-class operated within a framework of ideas of women's family role which structured the nature and extent of intervention. There was a reluctance to intervene directly because responsibility for the care of women and children rested with the male provider; while it was recognised that they were vulnerable when he didn't provide, and that many men did not, the belief that family responsibilities were the main incentive to men to work exerted a powerful influence.[37] Women's groups called for the availability of simple medical treatment as well as advice at infant welfare clinics, child or maternal endowments, clean milk, meals for pregnant and nursing mothers, and access to birth control information; and for policies to deal with low levels of nutrition, the poor health of the multiparous woman, and the inability of women and children to afford medical treatment, emphasising a social model of health. What they got instead was advice on nutrition, thrift and household cleanliness which was difficult to follow for overburdened women in crowded, poorly-constructed homes. "Government officials never considered family allowances and birth control as part of maternal and child welfare policy, which continued to be narrowly defined in terms of personal social services". <Lewis 1980 pp 13-17> Both Lewis and Davin argue that focussing on mothers' deficiencies was a great deal easier politically as well as

---

[36] Rathbone would describe children similarly in 1917.

cheaper than dealing with poverty. Similar arguments have been made by Alexander <Alexander 1994 pp 149-50> and Gittins. <Gittins 1982 pp 49-51>

Looking at how state intervention was seen by those at whom it was directed, Lewis modifies her earlier conclusions in that although there was "resistance and resentment" by working class wives to intervention, the ideal of the male-breadwinner family was not simply an imposition and the division of labour in the family was seen as a useful approach by working-class men and women, with many women accepting the primacy of their responsibility to home and children. < Lewis 1986 pp 102-5> If Atkinson saw a risk to working-class women of drifting "without observing it into parasitism", it was not so much drifting as finding it in their interests to move in that direction, at least in the short-term. It is questionable how far this was a *new* ideology of motherhood, as Davin suggests, so much as a further, or more effective, extension of the arguments of domestic ideology to working class women and families.[38] Davin situates this ideology as an extension of middle-class norms to other groups in her later work, arguing that as the state came to intervene in family life it did so with the values associated with 'separate spheres' and so different practices in working-class families were constructed as inadequacy or worse, and this justified intervention in family life, reducing both absolute parental authority and children's independence. <Davin 1996 p 208>

Lewis and Davin's earlier work over-emphasises a social control model. Dwork argues that this is at the expense of attention to the medical arguments and of acknowledging that factors other than maternal behaviour were also paid attention to by medical and other officials, for example, poverty, poor housing conditions and sanitation, and contaminated milk. <Dwork 1987 pp 227-229> Davin and Lewis present women as manipulated into particular maternal behaviour. The implication is that women would not, left to themselves, choose to be mothers or at least full-time mothers: "[t]he ideology of motherhood persuaded married women that their role of the home was of national importance..." <Lewis 1980 p 224>; because of the declining birth-rate "motherhood had to be made to seem desirable". <Davin 1978 p 13> (The birth rate continued to fall nevertheless.) Atkinson is concerned with an opposing problem, that a particular group of women want but cannot choose to have children, or can only do so at the price of their other needs and ambitions; she and other women were themselves keen to assert that women's family roles *were* of national importance. However Davin and Lewis's arguments are a reminder that these measures served a number of purposes and were not

---

[37] This view was shared by Millicent Fawcett, who saw family endowments as likely to undermine men's sense of responsibility as husbands and providers. <'The Case Against Family Endowments', *The Woman's Leader* 30 January 1925 pp 3-4>

[38] Elizabeth Roberts suggests in *Women's Work 1840-1940* that the idea of 'separate spheres' was extended to working-class women in the 20[th]c and that the "full flowering" of Victorian domestic ideology occurred in the interwar years. <Roberts 1988>

necessarily introduced in ways which women's groups wanted, and modify a persistent view of welfare provision for mothers and children as wholly benign for all concerned. But while maternalism was certainly informed by class-based, racist and anti-feminist arguments which sought to confine women in the home and made it harder for them to make other choices, it is not the whole story. Infant, child and their own welfare in and following childbirth was a very urgent concern for many women <Llewellyn Davies 1915, Palmer 1916> and sections of the women's movement campaigned to improve the circumstances of women with children with some success in the longer if not in the short-term. The part played in this discussion by voluntary child welfare workers, of whom Margaret McMillan in Bradford is among the best-known <Steadman 1990>, and of the rapidly-growing group of women professionals in health and welfare, including the much-maligned health visitors, deserves further attention, as does the work and ideas of the early women doctors who provided dispensaries and other services for poor women and children: Elsie Inglis and Sophia Jex-Blake are examples. Their initiatives had a greater role in developing services, especially health care for pregnant and nursing mothers, nurseries and school medical provision and, eventually, birth control information, than they have been credited with and since these were all called for by feminist and women's groups in the early years of the century there is no reason not to include such measures as feminist reforms.[39] Most of these demands would continue to be made by women's organisations in the interwar period, and the feminist writer Winifred Holtby includes the Infant Welfare movement, the National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality and the Nursery School movement in her list of post-war feminist campaigns.<Holtby 1934 p196> The *Maternal and Child Welfare Act* of 1918 is a case in point. The extension of the maternity and child welfare services after the war, of which this was the main implement, undoubtedly was given impetus by the war but its conception owed a great deal to pre-war and women's movement arguments. The Act permitted local government to introduce and fund a range of services including hospital provision for children under five, maternity hospitals, 'home helps' (after childbirth), meals for expectant and nursing mothers and children under five, and crèches and nurseries. Women in the Labour Party directed much of their effort in the interwar years to pressing for full implementation of this legislation <Thane 1991 p 106> as did the Women Citizens' Associations. <See chapter six>

Atkinson's argument for maternal and child welfare in 1916 (now writing under her married name as Mabel Palmer) follows from her Fabian socialism and local government interests, her determination that "advanced women" have a valid view on these matters, and the social and maternalist focus of the period as well as the intense concern over infant mortality generated, perversely, by the loss of life in the war. The report was for the Infant Welfare Propaganda Committee, a subsidiary of the National League for Physical Education and Improvement which worked closely with The Association of Infant Welfare and Maternity Centres, the National Association for the Prevention of Infant

---

[39] For example, Pugh does not include this in his list of feminist reforms of this period <1992 pp 108-9>

Mortality and the National Society of Day Nurseries. Her argument is further evidence of the strong feminist case made for increasing provision to mothers and children, and also presents the solution to these problems and social reform generally as a women's task. Not only were women campaigners able to use the space created by imperialist arguments and war deaths to advance the interests of women as mothers, but the maternalist arguments of the late-Victorian women's movement meant that the idea of maternal citizenship contributed to this discourse. Equal guardianship of children, equal divorce and maintenance after separation, and the right to refuse sex within marriage, and safer labour and opportunity to rest in pregnancy and afterwards were also citizenship rights to be fought for.

Rather than contributing to "mystification and rhetoric about motherhood" or insisting on middle-class methods of childrearing, Atkinson in this report takes a very practical approach to the social, economic and environmental circumstances of urban working-class mothers and the dangers for mothers and babies. She refers to the argument that mothers' ignorance and loss of maternal instinct is a factor in infant mortality and argues that it is an unfair accusation; knowledge of how to care for babies which was built up in very different conditions than those which industrial cities now provide is of little use, and she blames not lack of care *by* mothers but lack of care *of* mothers and children. The lack of knowledge of "modern hygiene and science" must be tackled but Atkinson shows that there are many problems beyond the mother's control: filthy and crowded neighbourhoods, poor and insanitary housing, impure milk, and poverty. She insists that there is no straightforward connection between a mother working and infant mortality (as alleged) and suggests that the money earned by the mother may be crucial to her children's well-being. <Palmer 1916 pp 7-11> Atkinson uses the national interest as her justification for a state role in maternal and child welfare: "the wealth of a nation is in its citizens" and the high number of newborns dying needlessly is equated to the toll of war. The decline of the birth rate is also an impetus for concern, particularly so since the babies unborn would have been members of "what we consider - and with reason - to be the finest race in the world". But in careful phraseology which suggests she is contradicting the dominant tenor of this discussion, suggests that a smaller number of children who are well-fed and educated may be preferable. <Palmer 1916 p 3> Most of the measures she argues for were also argued for by the WCG and other labour women's organisations and are contained in the 1918 Act (which however permitted rather than required local authorities to act). They include food for pregnant and nursing mothers, a clean milk supply, home helps, and skilled care during confinement. Her recommendations also extend to the neglected group of toddlers (an argument close to Euphemia Somerville's in Edinburgh in the 1920s) and she argues for crèches, nursery schools and inner-city children's playgrounds.

The campaign for Family Endowments

The campaign for family endowments is mainly associated with Eleanor Rathbone, and rightly, for if she did not originate the idea she was persistent in pursuing it, as an economist and social investigator, as president of NUSEC and the principle spokeswoman for new feminism in the 1920s, and as an MP.[40] She proposed institutionalising state payments for family care in 1917 as a result of seeing the effect of separation allowances in wartime on poor women and children: the allowances were "the largest experiment in the State endowment of maternity the world has ever seen". <Rathbone 1917 p101> For the first time family income was related to the number of children in the family and put into the mothers' hands directly. In its original articulation this is more an argument for putting the relationship between production, reproduction and the state on a wholly different basis than for any specific scheme of so doing and it is framed in terms of the problems of post-war reconstruction and an analysis of male/female pay differentials. At the heart of Rathbone's argument is the perception that the remuneration of all women's services - private and public - must be considered together if their position was to be improved.

This was not a new issue for Rathbone. As an undergraduate at Oxford (which she left in 1896) she had been thinking about "the economics of motherhood" <Stocks 1949 p 76> and in 1912 saw the economic dependence of mothers at the heart of the unequal status of all women and as bolstering male power: "like priests and parsons" mothers have to live but "in their case economic and social forces have worked out a solution satisfactory alike to masculine sentiment and to masculine love of power" by making *society's payment of maternity* not to the mother but to every adult male worker "as a hypothetical husband". <Rathbone *Common Cause* 1912 p 675, cited by Pedersen 1993 p 143, my ital> Separation allowances were "the final stage of her argument. Here was the experiment whose result was to provide the empirical case for family allowances: the working experiment". <Stocks 1949 p 76>[41] Rathbone's solution to a knot of problems faced by women at home and at work was to cut the link between wages and family responsibilities; her analysis of women's weak position both in the labour market and in the family connected two issues which concerned feminists, women's position as mothers and low/unequal pay, and put forward a single solution in family endowments. <Land 1990 pp 113-4> How far that analysis is

---

[40] The Family Endowment Committee was formed in 1917 in response to interest aroused by Rathbone's articles. The campaign had several phases and drew support from a variety of sources, not all of them in accord with the feminist aims. Also advanced were arguments that family endowment would address child poverty generally and in large families, reverse population decline (especially among the provident), and maintain male work incentives at the same time as avoiding possibly inflationary wage increases. <Land 1990 pp 104-5> From the outset family endowments and the family wage were opposed. This meant union opposition because this challenged the basis of bargaining strategies, and many women in the labour movement were also ambivalent, fearing the effect on overall wage levels. <Land 1980 pp 55-77; Thane 1991 pp109-112>

original to Rathbone is open to question, but she both extended it and gave it greater prominence. Rathbone was passionately concerned with the oppressed and undervalued position of the working-class mothers she first worked with in Liverpool after 1897; she was impressed by working-class women's capacity to care for their children in appalling circumstances but also saw the toll on them and the misery and lowered standards large families brought. Her argument presents a wage-based system of family maintenance as illogical, inefficient and with dreadful consequences for women and children and hence society. She further develops a feminist analysis of the family in society: women are expected by the nation to do the work of bringing up future generations, but need economic independence both as a right and as an "essential tool" for that task, and as a recognition of their citizenship as mothers. <Stocks 1949 p 76> It is an approach which assumes a sexual division of labour. Land emphasises that her view of the family remained "very traditional" <Land 1990 p 119>, as does Lewis, who argues that that the feminist campaign for family endowments was radical in transcending the equality and difference dichotomy (in that it sought to make a claim based on motherhood that would also help to secure equal pay for women in the labour market) but limited in that it did not challenge the gendered division of work, both paid and unpaid. <Lewis 1991 p 74> Like Atkinson and many labour movement women who wrote on these issues, Rathbone accepted married women's responsibility for home and family as necessary; its association with economic dependence and female poverty, domestic violence, the male desire for power and domination (what Rathbone called "the Turk complex" <1924 p 268>) and female subservience, is not. "Human renewal" requires a high proportion of adult women to give their lives to childbearing and rearing and education. <Rathbone 1917 p 112> This is not questioned, the "indirect and extraordinarily clumsy" means of paying for it is. The challenge (for Rathbone and for Atkinson) is not to women's primary responsibilities but to relationships of power in the family. Although demographic change would mean that in most families those responsibilities would rapidly become less onerous, they saw the burden of domestic work and child-rearing for working-class women as intolerably heavy. It is nonetheless a view of society which recognises that equality in the private sphere and in the public are, for the majority of women, closely linked. The acceptance of a division of labour within the family should not blind us to the challenge to normative assumptions and masculine privilege entailed.[42]

Economic independence, not only as an alternative to marriage and motherhood but as the precondition for equal and moral marriage and motherhood, and a practical recognition of the difficult circumstances in which most women were bringing up children,

---

[41] Separation allowances were widely seen at this time as evidence of the need of families for regular state support and of the capacity of the state to supply it, but also of the disciplinary controls that might accompany it. <Thane 1991 p 109>

[42] The only reference to a less-gendered division of labour in the family I have read within this discussion comes from Gollancz's conclusion to the *Oxford Essays* when he suggests that, with socialism and the endowment of motherhood, men "released from absolute absorption in breadwinning, could take their share in domestic interests". < Gollancz 1917 p 178>

are central to the idea of maternal endowment as a feminist proposal. Rathbone's 1917 article foregrounds the economic logic but the earlier history of the idea demonstrates more clearly that it is a proposal which is based on the social value of motherhood as a claim to citizenship. Rathbone's argument is, equally importantly, about the post-war problem for women in industry. The gender segregation of work which decades of women's movement effort had failed to shift had been broken down by war, and it was as unlikely that women would meekly return to pre-war circumstances as that they would give up separation allowances without a fight, she believed. But there was a danger that female labour would be used by employers to cut wage levels generally. Although not a socialist Rathbone found economic arguments compelling: "the economic soundness of state endowment of maternity has always appealed to me even more strongly if possible than its humanitarian and eugenic advantages" <*Common Cause* 1917, cited by Land 1990 p 123>, and in common with Atkinson and others she saw maternal endowments as a means of achieving equal pay because it would strike at one of the main objections to equal pay, that that a man requires a family wage but a woman only an individual subsistence wage. Thus the dependence of mothers, unjust in itself, made women's equality at work impossible because it supported arguments for a higher male wage. This was an essential connection as these ideas were developed, however emphases within the argument varied, and Rathbone also felt the argument for equal pay was problematic: it could lead to the exclusion of women workers altogether (one reason, she suspected, some male trade union leaders supported it) and achievement of equal pay would do little for the women most in need. <Land 1990 p 113>[43] In seeking a better and less haphazard means for society to pay for its own renewal Rathbone also uses the role the state has taken on in education as a model, and the "minor provisions" of its role in regulating midwifery and through child welfare clinics. That the financial responsibility for a family lies with the father is seen by most people as a fundamental part of the social structure but, she argues, it ignores how essential the services of wives and mothers are to the state and leads to male exploitation of women and to "premature old age, the chronic anaemia and ailments of the women, the malnutrition and physical and mental degeneracy of the children". <Rathbone 1917 p 124> She believed the determination of "the leaders of working men... to cling to the ideal of a uniform family wage" was "influenced by a secret reluctance to see their wives and children recognised as separate personalities" <Rathbone 1924 p 155> What for Atkinson is a problem primarily in terms of limiting the development of women, especially middle-class women, for Rathbone is primarily a problem because of the male power it entrenches within working-class families.

I have found no account of any direct pre-war connection between Rathbone and the FWG. Her politics were independent but by background liberal with a strong interventionist and social welfare bent; the Rathbone's were a family of "energetic

---

[43] Rathbone also thought the vagueness of "equal pay for equal work" in the absence of a means of measuring work of equal value separated from gendered assumptions of value created a "palpable trap". It is a trap which subsequent and ever more complex legislation has failed to spring.

reforming zeal". <Stocks 1949 p 10> However she worked with the closely-allied WIC in 1913 and her first public argument for family endowments was published both in the *Oxford Essays* in 1917, edited by the Fabian Victor Gollancz, and in the *Economic Journal* of the same year. Some sharing of ideas is very likely, and although the FWG was firmly state socialist in its beliefs its aims had a great deal in common with those of the new feminist wing of NUSEC in the 1920s. The shift to seeing the economic basis of women's oppression as underlying everything is in common: for Rathbone legal equality was "but a fleshless bone" if a woman "has no income of her own and is prevented by the burden of family cares or the jealousy of male competitors from earning one". <Rathbone 1934 cited by Land 1990 p 104>

Although labour movement and civil service opposition has received most attention in explanations for the failure of the feminist campaign < Land 1990: Pedersen 1993: Macnicol 1980>, ambivalence and disagreement within sections of the women's movement is also likely to have played a role. There were also fears that it would lead to dissension and a weakening of responsibility within the family and overpopulation by the 'wrong' groups (fears which Rathbone addressed in *The Disinherited Family);* Liberals feared it would "act as a discouragement to thrift", as did Conservatives, and neither liked what was "in effect, a proposal to socialise family dependency". <Stocks 1949 p 95> In 1930 the feminist proposal succumbed to opposition from the Treasury and the TUC. When the idea of endowment of motherhood, transmuted into family endowment, was eventually introduced as the family allowance in 1945 it had been shorn of its feminist purposes of providing an independent income for women bringing up children and, as an alternative to the family wage, making possible equal pay (which is not to say that it did not have benefits for women with children). The reasons why it was not successful in feminist form are revelatory of how the social insurance and welfare system was "constructed around a man's right to maintain" <Pedersen 1993 p 173>, but failed to fit the form and economics of many families with dependent children because of that.

"the plain daylight of our modern world"

The development of a role for state welfare in relation to the family, a development informed by social, socialist and maternal feminist as well as imperialist and eugenic arguments, created a space in which feminist demands for a radical rethinking of the economic basis of the care and upbringing of children which recognised the value of this work to the state was conceivable and credible. These arguments drew on notions of "human capital" which emphasised the importance to the state of women's work in the private sphere and sought not to end women's responsibilities for caring but to value and support it and disconnect it from abuses of male power and from poverty; rather than ending the gendered division of labour in the family, they envisaged ending the unequal division of power. Maternal endowment was the most thorough-going of the proposals which emerged from this discussion, and as such the most developed locus of a feminist

politics of the family this century and the most radical expression of a way of thinking that brought questions of family welfare and women's equality together. Other demands for maternal and child welfare were part of the same discourse however. Many of these were, at least to some extent, met and were therefore more successful than maternal endowment. No other of the reforms however presented as direct a challenge to male economic superiority in the family.

Although the period between 1900-1914 was one in which a reconstruction of motherhood as wholly domestic and as state-service was, particularly in entrenching across class the family norm of male-breadwinner and female-homemaker, antithetical to women's other interests, it was also a period when the interests of women as mothers, particularly those of poorer women, were recognised as an issue for the state (and local government particularly), leading to the delivery or partially delivery of a number of services which the new women professionals and feminist groups had argued for. Their arguments were strikingly similar whether framed within Fabian socialist feminism, pragmatic labour movement politics, new feminism or social-liberalism. The division of benefits into the wage-based system of insurance plus secondary provision for the uninsured has remained problematic since and has helped to ensure and perpetuate a dominant model of the family through its assumption of that model. [44] Women's organisations, as I have said, had, argued against the assumptions of national insurance on this model at its inception and continued to campaign for the inclusion of women at home in the national insurance system, at least until 1939. Not doing so meant that married women's earnings were entrenched as secondary and that women except when they were pregnant and nursing had no access to free or cheap health care through the state until 1948. The health problems of working-class women documented in the 1930s is one consequence. Margery Spring Rice's 1939 account of the poor health and welfare of working-class married women is an edited version of evidence collected by the Women's Health Enquiry Committee, chaired by the veteran campaigner Gertrude Tuckwell. It drew a picture of poverty and deprivation, excessive child-bearing, inadequate diet, incessant domestic toil and lack of health care (because of the cost) which echoes the accounts of WCG members writing more than twenty years previously. <Spring Rice 1939,1981>

---

[44] This creates particular problems for single-mother headed families, who do not fit the welfare paradigm and therefore are presented as an anomaly within it. This failure is apparent in Rathbone's position also. She was at different times opposed to and ambivalent about whether family endowments should be paid to single mothers. The FEC supported endowments to single mothers in 1918 but Rathbone later opposed this on grounds which have become familiar again in the welfare debates of the 1980s and 1990s, that this would encourage women to have children in a family structure which, she believed, was not good for those children. <Rathbone 1924 pp 369-370; Alberti p 75; Lewis 1995 pp 5-15> Feminist proposals for the endowment of motherhood would have avoided this problem in treating the all mothers in the same way, as at least some versions wanted, rather than depending on family form. There was considerable concern that single mothers' babies had a higher risk of mortality. < Macaskill 1993> Scottish figures show that single mothers had a higher risk of maternal mortality. <AR 1922 and 1930>

Nevertheless, it was not at the outset apparent whether family maintenance in relation to new welfare policies would depend on a wage-centred logic (the more privatised model of the self-supporting two-parent family aided only when men's earnings failed and primarily through a contributory system) or whether a more needs-based and comprehensive entitlement for mothers, children and others unable to earn would be developed (with entitlements such as school meals, non-contributory old age pensions and endowment of motherhood, all of which emphasise a redistribution within and across families), an approach which by 1913 school meals and medical inspection had made a start to and separation allowances would take further. If these two main approaches to social welfare policy can be distinguished in terms of a view of the relationship between the family and the state, in their inception and also in practice they have not always seemed so distinct.

Recent recognition of the relationship of women's movement campaigning on and view of maternity to the growth of a welfare role for the state <Bock and Thane 1991: Bock 1994> raises a number of questions on the differing views within that discussion and the influence of feminist thinking. The role of women professionals and feminist groups in arguing for health and welfare provision for women as mothers and for children cannot be disregarded as supporting only a restrictive maternal definition of women. Land questions how much maternalist politics in Britain actually achieved for women, how far it was successful in influencing state politics, and how much it was about opening up a new arena for middle-class women's work: all are questions which need more attention. <Land 1992 p 284> The circumstances of many women's motherhood were at variance with sentimental views of maternity, as Atkinson argued <Palmer 1916 p2>, and women's position in the labour market and the family alike was shaped by the personal costs of socially-unsupported motherhood. Harnessing national anxieties, women's organisations and women professionals sought to ameliorate those costs and circumstances. For women who were malnourished, exhausted and prematurely aged, and left with untreated conditions through repeated childbirth, the task of bringing up children in city slums and the physical and emotional cost of infant mortality <Llewellyn Davies 1915: Atkinson 1916: Rathbone 1917 p 124, 1918 p 33>, there could be little idea of emancipation that was meaningful beyond their daily life, at least until the odds were tilted more in their favour. (Then, Rathbone envisaged, they would join Women Citizens Associations and, using their womanly expertise, become a power in their cities and the land. <see chapter five>)

If the debate about marriage and motherhood within pre-war feminism was not successful in leading to a fundamental challenge to women's dependent position in the family, a "tentative coalition" informed by these ideas continued to pursue them in the interwar period. (It included egalitarian socialists and feminists associated with the Fabian Society, the NUWSS, the WCG and the ILP. <Pedersen 1993 p 46>) The role of liberal-leaning women's groups <chapter six> and women in the Labour Party <Thane 1993> needs to be added to this process of building consensus. Increasing state intervention in family life, the focus on the "living wealth" of the community and its reproduction, and a new phase

in the women's movement bringing to the fore a critique of the division of women's choices in life between marriage and maternity or independence, work and public life and in which socialist and economic arguments were much more important, converged in a productive discourse which was to provide much of the basis for women's increased role in public life after 1918 and a conception of women's citizenship. This was arguably most successful in insisting on provision for women and children in the family and in extending women's voice in state welfare through professional caring work and training and through the local state particularly. Atkinson, in her conclusion to *Local Government in Scotland* <1904> writes of a new phase in the work of social reform: in "the plain daylight of our modern world" it is time for reform, for the unromantic task of "slowly and painfully erecting fresh institutions" within which industrial society can function well for all its citizens. She affirms her belief "that well-made laws and good administration will in time and gradually raise the nation from step to step". <Atkinson 1904 p 400> This was the task to which many women's groups turned after the vote was won. The work of women thinkers, women's groups and women professionals, and their practical and political concern with the position of women in the family deserves to be re-assessed in terms of their influence on the changing role of the state in the early 20[th]c, and on a new view of women's lives and possibilities *even when they were married and mothers* which in turn made it possible for (especially working-class) married women to improve their position within the family and to extend their lives beyond it. [45]

---

[45] This is also related to lowered fertility which, particularly because of the improvements in infant and (less immediately) child mortality and the rapid fall in working-class family size between the turn of the century and 1930, contributed significantly to and is likely to have been shaped by women's changing possibilities. However as Mackinnon argues, changing relations between the sexes has been scarcely acknowledged as a factor in studies of the demographic transition which is presented almost as a natural phenomenon < Mackinnon 1995 pp 222-227>; women's changing self-perception is even less tangible but no less relevant. <See also Nora Federici et al eds 1993; J Gillis et al eds 1992; Simon Sztreter 1996>

CHAPTER FOUR: Old and new: feminism after 1918

In this chapter I begin by discussing the attempt by Scottish writer Willa Muir to have, and theorise herself as having, both love *and* work. Her essay *Women: An Inquiry* is a not wholly successful attempt to resolve the contradictions of her situation as writer, wife and mother and illustrates how 'difference' arguments could be a way of responding to conflicting choices for educated women. Her concern is mainly with women's intellectual work and writing and she brings psychoanalytic explanations to understanding male dominance and female conventionality and to suggest a way of revalueing gender difference. I then look at the accounts of women's political history in the period after 1918, emphasising that this was uncharted political ground for women and that the women's movement now had to regroup and learn how to *use* the vote. This included a discussion of feminist aims which led to the distinction between 'old' or equality feminism and 'new' or social feminism. I give an account of that divergence to provide a political context for the analysis of the Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association in the following chapters. I also look at how it was a divergence in relation to the priority given to issues associated with women's position in the family and as such a division marked by the socially-created alternatives of love and work. I argue that feminist history of the period is marked by a view of this divergence which depends on a view of motherhood and equality as opposed. Social feminism in seeking to include women as mothers within a feminist programme is seen as accepting a traditional family role for women and this overlooks the critique of the family which was entailed by social feminism's demands. Women's role as mothers was seen as not socially valued, as a source of poverty, personal misery and ill-health, and as underlying male abuse of power; however the answers to these problems were seen in ameliorating those ills through health and welfare provision for women and children (including birth control), family endowments, and an improved legal position in relation to children rather than in overturning the gendered division of labour in the family. These political developments include a view of women's and family problems as solved through state intervention which strongly endorses an other than *private* interest in individual families. I conclude with a short overview of the changes in women's employment and in families during the 1920s, arguing that although the period saw much smaller families and an increased standard of living as well as falling infant mortality and falling mortality in most categories, the questions of child and maternal health and welfare which concerned many women's organisations before and during the war continued to be of urgent concern.

A genius for womanhood

Women: An Inquiry is a short essay published as part of the Hogarth Essays series in 1925. It is a problematic text, but interesting as an attempt to develop feminist theory, particularly ideas of gender difference in relation to psychoanalytic thinking. The 1920s were, as discussed below, a pivotal time for British feminism. Part of a very small selection of published non-fiction by Willa Muir <1890-1970>, whose main published work is fiction and translation, the essay is an example of the way ideas of gender difference formed a significant dimension of the attempt to find new directions appropriate to the new political and social circumstances of the time. Muir concludes that a "restatement of women's aims is necessary", a task she has only begun to outline (but did not continue). Muir's concern is mainly with women's intellectual work and writing, though she attempts to draw fundamental principles from her examination of this. She poses the question 'is the creative work of women different from that of men?', and concludes that it is, an argument developed in terms of the relationship between the conscious and unconscious and the connection of this to maternity. She looks at what this might mean for art and for public life. The lack of balance between male and female caused by male dominance and the exclusion of "women's values" has a damaging effect on all of society, creating "our present one-sided civilisation". <Muir 1925 p 8> Sexual difference particularly in modes of thinking/perceiving, which is acknowledged without entailing female inferiority, and the need for complementarity, are her central themes, and a continuing preoccupation for Muir: in an article 'Moving in Circles' in 1938 she explored the difference between circular and linear thinking, presenting the former as more common in women and as socially valuable, making a link to a kind of maternal feminism <*The Listener*. 22 September 1938>[1]; an unpublished essay written in 1960-61 is entitled 'This Lop-Sided World'. The relationship between Muir's work and life is also particularly interesting. In her marriage to the poet Edwin Muir, which she entered with optimism as a self-consciously new and equal relationship, she found problems in combining her aspirations as wife, mother and writer; questions of love and work are worked through in Muir's writing and her life as she reflects on it, most fully in her memoir of Edwin Muir, *Belonging*. <Muir 1968> Muir's work, including *Women: An Inquiry,* has been out of print until recently and some remains unpublished.

Muir was born Wilhelmina Anderson in Montrose in 1890; her parents had come from Shetland and although she never lived there this was part of her identity; the family

---

[1] "A circular-minded woman can expand her circle far beyond her family, beyond her district, beyond her country, if she will, until she includes the whole of humanity. It is possible that humanity will never be at peace until the mothers of the world do just that." There is a parallel with how women's contribution as citizens was seen as progressing from home to neighbourhood to city, country and internationally. Butter comments that the linear/circular distinction came from her own educational experience: she had been taught to "think straight in order to get on, to climb the educational ladder" but came to feel that this was a distortion of her natural, people-

spoke in Shetland dialect. In *Belonging* she gives a short account of growing up angry at second-class treatment and domestic assumptions and in early unpublished fiction explores the dilemma of a clever girl who is not supposed to be. In her youth she had resented "the bland assumption all around me that men were superior to women in all ways especially where intelligence was needed". <1968 p 38> At 12 she gained a bursary to Montrose Academy and she left home for St Andrews University in 1907. As an undergraduate she was a very vocal advocate of women's rights and a founder member of the Women Students Suffrage Society. <Allen 1996 p vi> After graduating with a first in classics she taught until her marriage in 1919; by then she was a lecturer in Psychology and Vice-Principal of Gipsy Hill teacher training college in London. She lost her job on marriage although it is unclear whether this was because of a formal marriage ban or because Muir was known to be an atheist. <1968 pp 25-27> In a choice between love and work, she chose love while hoping and intending to also continue writing; she continued to link economic independence and self-respect. <1968 p 91> However her writing career did not develop beyond a promising beginning and as a translator it ended in 1939; between the mid-1930s and Edwin's death she published nothing except a few small pieces of translation. *Belonging* is (among other things and reading partly between the lines) an account of how an ambitious, intellectual woman holds together two contradictory messages, the importance of her own views and work and the need to be subservient to others' needs in the family, in this case as collaborator, muse and therapist as well as wife and mother. Butter comments: "[H]er greatest work, I think she would gladly agree, was to make possible the production of his poetry". <1987 p 59> Muir repeatedly said she did agree with this assessment; readers of *Belonging* may question this <Caird 1992-3 p 12>, not least because, as Elphinstone comments, it is autobiography as subtext, explicitly a memoir of Edwin but "one could argue that the main character is the first person narrator, Willa". <Elphinstone 1997 pp 400-1> Approach it as autobiography and Willa remains elusive, yet her voice insists on the relevance of her story too.[2]

Women: An Inquiry is insufficiently thought-through and at times inconsistent; it shows every sign of having been written hurriedly.[3] But it is insightful and particularly interesting

---

minded approach: "her mind ranged round the curriculum rather than keeping firmly within it. At first she thought of this circular-mindedness as a disability, but later she came to see it as positive". <Butter 1987 p 64>

[2] Warnock <1987> defines autobiography as "the story of a life", emphasising the construction of a story with a central character, a plot, beginning, middle and end. In *Belonging* the story is of Edwin's life and Willa and Edwin's relationship and she writes on the assumption that the reader has first read Muir's autobiography *The Story and the Fable* <1940>; *Belonging* was written when his critical reputation was at its highest. It opens with the words "I first met Edwin Muir in a Glasgow flat sometime during September 1918" and ends with his death. In *The Story and the Fable* in contrast Muir devotes only one paragraph to the marriage, which is conspicuous for its emotional restraint. He concludes it by saying "[M]y marriage was the most fortunate event in my life" but in a detailed account of his inner life and the sources of his poetry his failure to say anything more is a striking silence. <1940 pp 153-154> Stephen Spender describes the autobiographer as telling the story of two lives, their life as it appears to them and their life "as it appears from outside, in the eyes of others; a view which tends to become part of his own view of himself". <1950> *Belonging* is written by someone who has learnt that others see her only as Edwin's wife, but has never quite believed her own views do not matter.

[3] Muir briefly refers to it in *Belonging*, noting that in July 1924 when they were staying in Montrose Edwin Muir was "tackling the literary essays which appeared later as *Transition*, and I was thinking out the implications of my inability to detach myself from my emotions, which I suspected might not be only a particularity of mine but

in terms of an inchoate radicalism (of which she is aware: in conclusion Muir writes that her argument has more radical potential than she has had time to explore); in its use of psychoanalytic ideas; and its attempt to develop a theory of complementarity applicable to all of life through an examination of gender differences in creativity and cognition.[4] Cynthia Cockburn describes the inception of radical feminism in the 1970s as based in an argument that "to limit women's struggle to the demand for inclusion in what is essentially men's social contract or for engagement in work on identical terms with those of men, ignoring the reality of women's lives, is to seek to make women surrogate men in a world that is still a man's world". <Cockburn 1991 p 24> This is the problem Muir addresses. Like Atkinson and the new feminists of the *Oxford Essays* Muir positions her argument as an alternative to the "blind alleys" into which women "rushed in their first efforts at self-assertion... but are gradually deserting" and which led women to "waste themselves in trying to be like men", but she takes a highly theoretical and almost experimental approach, using psychoanalytic ideas where Atkinson talks of empirically-observed economic realities. Both however reject aligning women's lives to 'male values' and give maternity a central emphasis - in Muir's case arguing for a social maternalism which other late 19th and early 20th century feminists would recognise.[5] As well as these contemporary parallels, Muir's ideas look forward to aspects of second-wave difference feminism: for example Griffin <1984>, Daly <1984>, and her subject is one Gilligan <1982> and Ruddick <1989> take further. There is also a parallel to the anti-nuclear arguments of Easlea in *Fathering the Unthinkable.* <Easlea 1983>

Of contemporary writers Muir has most in common with Dora Russell, especially *Hypatia*, also published in 1925, not least in her exploratory vein and the importance she gives to maternity, sexuality and morality. (Russell went on to develop her ideas in the peace movement.) Russell saw women's consciousness as excluded from current ways of

---

a characteristic of most women", which became the basis of the essay. <1968 pp 114-115> There is no reference to its publication in Britain or, the following year, in the USA, despite its significance as her first published work which would be included in an essay series alongside Robert Graves, TS Eliot and Virginia Woolf. This silence suggests the difficulties she faced with her theoretical work and also her ambivalent attitude to her own work; accounts of the response to Edwin's work at the time are much more fulsome. She was also translating two works from German at the time and during the summer of 1924 had a miscarriage. <Butter 1966 p 110>

[4] The 'woman question' was of great interest to psychoanalysis during the 1920s; Freud only in 1925 specifically addressed the subject of female psychology <Bell and Offen 1983 p329> in 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes'. <1925, *Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* Vol XIX, James Strachey ed 1964> The idea of penis envy was criticised by Karen Horney who asserted instead the centrality of motherhood to the female psyche. Her discussion of male repression of their femininity and of the "masculine character of our civilisation" suggests that she may have been an influence on Muir, whose contacts with German writing pre-date her travels in Germany and Austria. <Horney 'The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity Complex in woman as viewed by men and women', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 1926, excerpted in Bell and Offen 1983 pp 334-8>

[5] It is possible that German feminist ideas were an influence. Compare for example Helen Lange's critique (in 1921) of JS Mill's idea of equality: "Equality should not be demanded because of the similarity but because of the difference of genders, so that a one-sidedly masculine culture can be completed by a feminine culture... Under male dominance, the world has been a motherless family". <Lange *Lebsenserinnerungen* Berlin 1930 pp 111-112, cited in Taylor Allen 1991 p 1> The Norwegian feminist Ellen Key was "enormously influential" and saw a gendered division of labour as the basis of a radical view of biological and social motherhood. <Bell and Offen 1983 p118> See Key *Love and Marriage* 1911; Cheryl Register 'Motherhood at the Center: Ellen Key's

thinking about the world. <Spender 1982 p 672> She argued that "the sex problem is as fundamental in politics as the class war" <1925 p 4> and wrote of women's need for knowledge consonant with their own experience. Like Atkinson and Muir she thought that although it was an unsurprising consequence of the "sense of inferiority bred in women" that women's aim was "to prove that in all respects they were just as good as men" this was a mistake. "Each class and sex has to give to the common stock of achievement, knowledge, thought, which it alone can give and robs itself and the community by inferior imitation". <Russell 1925 p 21> Feminists had been pushed into denying their sexual needs and capacity to give birth in order to prove they had intellectual needs but it was dangerous to deny women's capacity as "life-giver" and "nurturer", this was a philosophy based on the male abstraction from life which would lead to destruction. <1925 p 4> In an interview she said that feminists had emphasised individuality and the need for economic independence and this had been necessary, but now "we need some emphasis on the instinctive side of life, sex and motherhood... Life isn't all earning your living. Unfortunately we fall in love and Feminism must take that into consideration." <Eastman 1978 p118> (Like Atkinson, Meikle and others Russell found it necessary to position her call for difference against a caricature of "feminist spinster school-teachers" <1925 p 22>, something Muir does not do: she had been one.)

In arguing that women's gift is for the intuitive and individual, men's for abstraction and social organisation, and that male domination has distorted both because it denies their necessary complementarity <Muir 1925 p 25> Muir draws on a very Victorian separation [6] and is seen as problematically essentialist as a result. Statements such as "[C]reative love is the fundamental attribute of womanhood, as perhaps creative thought is of manhood" <1925 p 33> and "it is a woman's destiny to create human beings" <1925 p 21> are an anathema for many readers in the 1990s, but must be read in a context of a continuing tradition of difference feminism and as an attempt to forge *new* arguments and explanations, as Muir sees herself as doing, drawing on the most intellectually exciting ideas of her time. For Elphinstone it is an "uncomfortable" text because of the assertion that women are different in spirit from men, which implies, she believes, that women should stay in the private sphere, yet Muir's objections to the inferior status of women in a male world seem to contradict this. <Elphinstone 1997 p 401> I think this is a misreading. Mudge presents Muir's feminism as a matter of personality and says it was not a primary concern for her and that her opinions "were too inconsistent to be taken seriously". <Mudge 1992-3 p3> While *Women: An Inquiry* is more to be praised for insight than logic, Mudge's dismissive argument depends on two unpublished short stories which end with the heroine pathetically dependent on her husband's support. The admission

---

[6] In her rather condensed conclusion she makes reference to the question whether women's education, especially their higher education, should be designed so as "to secure the development of an enlightened womanhood, as distinct from manhood" <p 40>, an issue of heated discussion and disagreement within the Victorian feminist campaign for extended and higher education for women.

that gender differences may be significant, or that women can be weak and may even need men, is only a denial of feminism if that is understood on a narrow egalitarian model. Both arguments depend on a view of equality as sameness. Nor is there a *necessary* contradiction in presenting gender difference as a consequence of male domination *and* as in some ways essential; discussion of embodiment in recent feminist theory, for example, explores the way socially-constructed gender difference survives changes in the social factors which apparently form it, and seeks to address that problem without assuming such differences are immutable. While Allen's view of Muir is more sympathetic, again she sees Muir's argument as "in the light of modern feminist thinking... sadly dated and misguided" <Allen 1996 p vi> which is to overlook the radical feminist discussion of difference in second-wave feminism. However Allen sees Muir's commitment to feminism as exerting "a particularly profound influence upon her writing", in particular the novels *Imagined Corners* (1931) and *Mrs Ritchie* (1933).

Muir develops her idea of difference in an argument for complementarity. The danger for a male mode of thinking is that detachment unless balanced by the concrete creativity of women spirals into a complete abstraction which substitutes for "the fluctuations of life a stable and systematic perfection of theory which is rigidly imposed upon individual members of society. Religion becomes a creed, morality a code of law, government a party machine..." The financial system is the best example of "masculine activity pushed to extremes: it has been successfully detached from human values so that it exists for the production of money and not for the production of goods and services to humanity". Domination by either sex (a reference to theories of matriarchy [7]) is no longer necessary; "the modern world needs the creative work of both". <p 28> This calls for new values and ideals of womanhood and of morality, religion, sex and education. <p 40> A gender-differentiated relationship to the unconscious is at the centre of her thesis: "man's energy is diverted more into conscious life, woman's energy is diverted more into unconscious life, and one is not more important than the other". <pp 13-14> The essay exhibits a struggle to find a way to express the all-encompassing nature of patriarchal thinking, its influence in identity and self-perception as well as social structures. Muir talks of "masculine civilisation", "a masculine State" and "the theology of the masculine world" <pp 11-12>, expressing ideas close to the later feminist concept of patriarchy. She also reiterates a Victorian and suffrage argument that there is a need for women in public life because of (rather than despite) their differences from men and gives a description of their role in public life which is strikingly apt for the Scottish WCAs.

The connection between the formative dilemma of her life and work, the tension between her learnt view of a woman's role especially in marriage (and a Scottish woman's at that -

---

[7] Muir makes reference to *The Dominant Sex: A Study in the Sociology of Sex Differentiation* by Mathilde and Mathias Vaerting which posited an original matriarchal society overthrown by male dominance. It was translated from the German and published in London in 1923.

Scottish womanhood is seen as particularly repressed and hence repressive in *Mrs Ritchie* and *Mrs Grundy in Scotland* <1936>), and her own ambitions as an intellectual and writer. In part *An Inquiry* is an attempt to square that circle, to provide a theoretical basis for a view of women's role and work which brings together creative effort with a specifically female viewpoint. Dale Spender comments <1982 p 6> that, growing up, a woman confronts a value system in which male experience is privileged. If that view of the world does not match her experience of herself and others then she must question it and may "make it a matter of priority to develop a philosophy which helps to explain what she has got wrong: is it herself and her own experience that is at fault, or is there something wrong with what society believes?" This is a good description of what Muir is attempting. Spender also comments (specifically of Rebecca West) on the necessity for women to define and develop their own intellectual area, fostering their values and reflecting their priorities <1982 p 644>; this is close to Muir's conclusion. *An Inquiry* must also be read in relation to a time of political and theoretical turmoil for feminism: women's change in status, marked most of all by the achievement of a partial franchise, called for new political strategies and organisation, as discussed below, but also new accounts of the relative position and social contributions of women and men. The perceived inadequacies of equality feminism's "blind alleys" were a focus for debate driven and underpinned by a loss of certainties; a new gender settlement was in the making. [8]

Muir positions her discussion as seeking out essential sexual difference, which would be spiritual as well as physical; gender differences in social behaviour are a consequence of social dominance and subordination and not what interest her. A difference in creativity, if established, would establish an essential, spiritual difference. It would also allow us to assess and value women's creative work by different criteria. "In a masculine civilisation the creative work of women may be belittled, misinterpreted or denied..." <p 8> A weakness in the opening section of her argument is that although she presents the possibility of formulating an essential gender difference as a question she almost immediately slips into writing as if she has demonstrated such a difference. Throughout the essay she also writes of such differences as opposed and wholly-gendered; she qualifies this by stating that the differences between the sexes she describes "do not form a hard-and-fast dividing line. Men are not all intellect and consciousness, nor are women all intuition and unconsciousness". <p 37> But she writes in a way which ignores this qualification. She also often has three or four arguments running at once and rarely pauses to disentangle them.

Muir sees motherhood and female sexuality as forms of power and hence oppression. Men have tried to belittle motherhood and female sexuality, branding Eve as the first cause of evil, associating motherhood and original sin; and regarding women as "passive receptive

---

[8] If in its exploration of difference *An Inquiry* is situated within the dialectic of difference and equality which was current as exponents of new feminism began to make their voices heard, Muir does not however make reference to contemporary or Victorian feminist discussion of these questions.

bodies which created nothing". Now motherhood is seen as "the sole justifiable function of women"; because of that childless women are seen as failures in life, and the unmarried woman as "a ridiculous nuisance".<pp 11-12> She castigates the view that "the sexually good woman must be not only good but ignorant". The marriage contract and associated moral and religious sanctions are a means of ensuring female servitude: "[W]omen are treated exactly as an inferior class with a definite function, that of child-bearing". <p 17> These arguments come close to the ideas of 'parasitism' . She sees control of women as a consequence of men's fear of them, and women's authentic moral power is feared most of all: "[M]en are more concerned to prevent women from having untrammelled judgement and action in affairs of morality than from having access to the possession of wealth... women are hindered not only from external power, but from the inward power of creating independent moral and religious values"<p 19>, an argument interestingly close to Wollstonecraft's in the *Vindication.*

Muir distinguishes between the conventionally good woman who accepts domestic subordination and the free or creative woman. In comparison to more social constructionist arguments she introduces a strongly psychological dimension and seeks to articulate how oppression can be internalised; in Foucauldian terms, she explores the way a gendered regime of power/knowledge disciplines women. She has described women's nature as opposed to narrowness and control, so how have women come to accept a conventional morality? Her answer is in terms of what 1970s feminists would call 'conditioning': "the continuous pressure of conventional values is applied to girls almost from childhood" in a way only a very few women can resist, those "women with a genius for womanhood". <p 20>[9] The arguments which link motherhood to these views have a eugenic sub-text, using ideas of "vital energy" and the racial purposes which women's reserve of energy for maternity serves, but are primarily psychoanalytically-based. An important assumption is that the unconscious and non-rational is as important as the conscious, but (male) society so far has overlooked this, to its extreme detriment. Doughan <1980 p 9> and Jeffreys <1985 pp 182-185> have shown that Freudian ideas were used to attack and undermine feminism. Muir's use of these ideas to develop an explanation of male dominance and female subordination (again as second-wave feminism would do) and as a basis for a possible revalueing of gender difference is a further example of how feminist thinking draws on discourses of gender and culture of its time rather than functioning always as a counter-discourse.

The crucial nature of the mother's role in early child development is an argument which more recent feminist theory has found problematic; Muir uses it to assert the importance of the maternal role which she sees as having been down-graded. <p 16> Biology and psychology together are destiny: the mother creates not only a human baby but a human being, her contribution is also in forming the "harmony between the conscious and the unconscious which is a necessary condition of full human development". (She does not

consider the father's role in this.) It is an argument close to theories of child development which were introduced in this period although not dominant over behaviourism in the childcare manuals until the 1940s. <Hardyment 1983 pp 165-176> From this vital task all women's distinctive capacities follow, and if it is "her business to foster growth in her children, it must be equally her business to foster growth in all the people with whom she is intimate". In maternal feminist terms she argues that the "full content of motherhood" must be recognised "as a special application of the creative power of women", and presents these as qualities all women have, whether they themselves are mothers or not, and of great social value. <p 16> For Muir herself becoming a mother was not easy; the birth of their only child Gavin was long and difficult as a consequence of ill-judged medical intervention and left her with a damaged vulva; during pregnancy she felt anxious about her identity. "'But I am still me', I said aloud, more than once, as I stared at the figure in the glass". At that time, she says baldly, "I began unwittingly to go wrong..." and feels she lost touch with her unconscious impulses. <1968 p 143>

In *An Inquiry* women's strength is seen as lying in the unconscious: she contrasts a series of binary pairs, associating women with the creative work of motherhood, the concrete, irrational, impulsive, intuitive; women have an affinity with nature, are immersed in life, not afraid of emotion. Less positively, women are less articulate, find it more difficult to achieve a conscious individuality, are relational ("it is their danger that they tend to live in a state of perpetual reference to other people") and hence timid and inclined to conservatism. She associates men with abstraction, detachment from life; they are sure of themselves and their traditions, little influenced by fashion, and articulate. Again she insists on the necessary complementarity of these qualities: if women are hindered from full intellectual detachment, men are hindered from "supreme human understanding". This different relationship to the conscious/unconscious is also the explanation for male dominance: "the more organised and objective certainties of men impose themselves easily upon women. Men can prove their theories even when they are wrong; women cannot prove their intuitions even when they are right". <p 24> We need creative love and creative thought [10]; a proper balance means male and female knowledge together completing a circle. (Her argument might be more clearly put in a comparison between two value systems associated with gender rather than between men and women as categories.) The world needs "creative new women" who are unafraid and who will forge independent moral and religious values and an art which fully reflects her qualities and understanding. "Creative womanhood" is also needed in the public life of the State; it is important that they do not pretend to be men both because "women must carry their womanhood with them into all occupations, otherwise the advantage of their entry into public affairs will be entirely lost"; and also because "a woman who tries to do a man's work in a man's way pays too high a price for the effort", expending too much energy in

---

[9] I suspect this is how Willa saw herself - at least on the good days.

[10] The male/female parity here is a determined complementarity; from her listing of male cognitive qualities it is not at all clear that anything creative is included.

becoming formal and abstract and killing herself spiritually. [11] The problem before the future for Muir is a task for creative new women: "the problem of leavening the organised systems of society with human values". <p 35>

That Muir drew on such ideas to explain her own life and conversely on her relationship with Edwin as a basis for her ideas is illustrated by a reflection on her early marriage: "I remember saying to him, as we came down from the Heath one Saturday: 'I think I've made thee more human, and thu's made me more discriminating". The Muir's shared a complex philosophy of 'Belonging to the Universe' which drew on ideas of putting trust in the unconscious similar to those in *An Inquiry.* Their marriage on Willa's account was informed by an ideology of "True Love" (which she always capitalises), which she presents as consciously modern and with political implications: "I did not assume that Edwin and I invented... marriage comprising intimate partnership, but I did think we were in the front line of advance for such marriage, and therefore very much in the front line of advance for the making of a new unwarlike order of society". It was an attempt to theorise and live an equal relationship against the grain of a culture; "[H]e refused to boost himself up the ladder into becoming a dominant male, and I refused to be pushed down it into female subserviency. Both of us ignored the ladder as if it were not there". <1968 pp 136-141> A failure to acknowledge that social structures cannot be simply dismissed is surprising in someone who elsewhere has analysed their power. A vividly recalled account of an encounter between different social expectations of male and female behaviour is used to illustrate the difference between their view of marriage and the conventional. Two literary friends of Edwin's who she had not previously met came to call.[12] "If I said anything, Holms fiddled with his moustache and stared fixedly at E... and made no answer. Hugh gave me a quick sideways glance and made no answer either. Their conversation was addressed exclusively to E, so I fell silent. Clearly my presence incommoded them." She invented a stratagem: "I pushed my chair back, away from their little triangle, got out a darning basket I had, selected the thickest sock I could find, the largest darning needle, settled myself on a pouffe where I could catch E's eye and began with exaggerated movements to draw my formidable poker to and fro through the sock". Edwin found this amusing; as for his friends "my manoeuvre instead of amusing and embarrassing them soothed them wonderfully. I had now become what I should have been all along, an undemanding bit of background, a proper wife darning a sock". <1968 pp 37-38>[13] Willa's failure to be an undemanding wife in the background led to persistent comment on the

---

:: Cockburn's description of radical feminism, quoted above, also sees women trying to be substitute men as wrong because it would "deform the women who achieve such a goal" and would "exclude the majority of women from the project". <Cockburn 1991 p 24>

[12] John Holms and Hugh Kingmill Lunn

[13] Dora Russell wrote similarly of how visitors spoke only to Bertie not to her - "I had to live in the shadow of his reputation" - and that "for a woman, marriage presents not only practical problems, but she finds herself emotionally pulled all ways and tends by tradition and impulse to put the needs of others before her own." <1977 pp162-4, cited in Spender 1982 p 665> Ellen Wilkinson explores the tension between work and love in her autobiographical novel *Clash* <1929, 1989> Vera Brittain in this period was also seeking to resolve the dilemmas of combining marriage and children with work and intellectual and personal independence. <Berry and Bostridge 1995>

Scottish literary scene. In an account of meeting the Muirs in the early 1940s Catriona Soukup comments that Willa Muir's "openness and her refusal to be ignored did not endear her to conventional and 'proper' Edinburgh society, where women were expected to take a back seat, to be visible and decorative but silent in mixed company so that the men could hold the floor". <Soukup 1992-3 p 22>[14]

For every writer there are practical and psychological barriers: finding a voice, finding the time and financial backing, finding a publisher. There are questions about energy and space and self-esteem, a preoccupation which can be called selfishness. Muir's analysis in *An Inquiry* of how systems of value posited on a male tradition means women's creative work is not valued in the same way and of how women's natural or habitual relatedness inhibits extended work proved prophetic for her own work; her struggle to write gives a rare window on the tension between being a wife and a creative woman. Writing *Belonging,* Willa is keen that her contribution to Edwin's work be put on record but appears to have come to terms with any bitterness. She was 28 when they met and her's was the more established professional position; she had had a brilliant academic career and was ambitious to contribute to changes underway in teacher education. She described herself then as "an independent woman with a career ahead of me" <1968 p 15> and as undomestic: "I had not one single apron in my suitcase". <1968 p 31> Butter describes her as "a person of great courage and gaiety" and as very self-confident. <1966 p 52> The requirement to be secondary to her husband was a continuing battle; she wanted to give him the support he badly needed and needed to see herself relationally, but also to do independent work. Her need to write and for recognition and achievement in her own right - which she is partly ashamed of - is a complex dialogue with herself which continued for most of her life. A self-analysis in her 1953 diary is entitled "Why I am to be described as a mess". It is about how a conversation with Edwin occasioned by his revision of his autobiography "brought up in me a surprising rush of angry feeling" - that "I had no general self-confidence - in writing literature at least", how Edwin had been dismissive of some of her writing and had been given the greater credit for translations published as joint work but which she had mainly done. Yet she doubts her right even to mind. "I am ashamed of the fact that I feel it as a grievance. It shouldn't bother me, Reputation is a passing value, after all. Yet... I seem to have nothing to build on, except that I am Edwin's wife and he still loves me." In a 1955 notebook entry she wrote of a

---

[14] Others were less kind: a thinly disguised account of the Muirs in Wyndham Lewis's *The Apes of God* describes how a "very earnest, rather melancholy freckled little being fell in with that massive, elderly Scottish lady next to him - that is his wife. She opened her jaws and swallowed him comfortably." <Butter pp 108-9> A malicious drawing of the Muirs was published by MacDiarmid in the first issue of *The Voice of Scotland* <1938>, showing Willa as a monstrous figure in a bathing suit stroking the ear of a tiny lamb in the likeness of Edwin. In a letter replying to criticisms of the cartoon MacDiarmid wrote that "the real grievance against the cartoon is precisely the devastating and unanswerable truth of the essential point it makes - Willa's overpowering presence which has always been a nuisance to friends of Edwin's." <Bold 1988 p 427> Soukup says however that "Edwin was perfectly content to let Willa come between himself and any adversary" and quotes Willa in a letter (1964) saying "Edwin was a soft-shell crab and I was his carapace." George Mackay Brown in a short memoir of Edwin Muir at Newbattle (1975) in which his gentleness, serenity and saintliness feature strongly, observes: "He was not a brilliant conversationalist. His wife Willa was that. She was a marvellous talker, brimming with wit and gaiety." He also describes her as a "marvellous host" and that Edwin would say little on social occasions.

decision in 1940 after a serious illness to renounce her ambition in favour of her role in the family: "I had the conviction that I had come back to life only to devote myself to E, and in a lesser way to G,[15] and that I must kill my vanity, my ambition to write". Fifteen years later she decided she had been wrong and this had contributed to the persistent illnesses she suffered: "I began to glow with positive happiness as I decided that... I must let my 'vanity' flourish. All the Willas, the passionate little girl, the ambitious and vital student, the positive, hopeful and happy new wife, came back together and fused, as it were, in a glow of possible achievement." <cited in Butter 1978 p 69> The excerpts show how the writer sees herself functions to erode the right to write, and how that in turn is shaped by how others see her. Butter says that "Willa Muir believed in Edwin before her believed in himself" <1966 p 66>; with hindsight we can ask, who believed in Willa? Caird describes Muir's work as notable for "potentialities unfilled" and the novel *Imagined Corners* aptly as "a cake not turned". "One has the impression she had to struggle hard to find time and space for such work as she achieved" <Caird 1992-3 p12>; but it was a struggle with herself as well as with social expectations. Muir compared their work rooms in Hampstead (in the 1930s), his on the top floor and away from everything, "only a table, a chair, an ink-pot and a fine view over roofs and tree-tops", her's on the ground floor with a basket for laundry, Gavin's toys and books, a small sofa for visitors. "Here I was intruded upon at all hours by household staff... any casual caller ready for gossip and Gavin whenever he came home from school... I envied Edwin's power of sitting down immediately after breakfast to concentrate in solitude on what he wanted to do". Muir created the possibility of unbroken concentration for Edwin but did not do so for herself. Despite Woolf's stricture, the writer needs more than a room of her own, she needs permission to shut the door of it.

Questions of women's aims

Muir's exploration of gender difference adds a psychoanalytic dimension to and takes further a discussion which was current among feminists in the pre-war period and during the war and which intensified after 1918. It is one of many strands within post-suffrage feminism and is a thoroughgoing example of the way explorations of gender difference wwere a significant part of the attempt to find new feminist directions which was underway at this time. Although the women's movement had never been confined only to the suffrage struggle, even when that struggle was at its height, it had been increasingly dominated by it during the years of militant action. The war had been a very significant watershed for women, as for British society more generally, but perhaps more so for women in changing how they were seen and how they saw themselves. Rathbone argued this strongly in *Common Cause*, 30 June 1916, and, alongside the achievement of a partial franchise and the right to stand for Parliament, this called for new analyses, new organisations and new alliances. All were forthcoming, although political history has been

---

[15] Their son Gavin.

slow to recognise that this was the case. Until recently the assumption has been made that after winning the vote in 1918[16] suffrage activists packed up their pamphlets and went home. For example, Banks writes of "the feminists... who seem to vanish from the stage once the vote has been won" <Banks 1981 p6>; Jeffreys claims that feminism "lost its vital spark". <1985 p 150> Recent research on the English movement has shown that this was not the case <Lewis 1975, Doughan 1980, Alberti 1989, Pugh 1992>, but that the period was both an interesting and a difficult one as women's organisations sought to refocus. Banks' later research revised her earlier view, recognising that the suffrage "began a new era for the women's movement in which it had to face quite different challenges". <Banks 1993 p 2> This change is characteristic of a growing realisation that the 1920s were an important period for British feminism. She and others see that loss of momentum as only postponed however and a steep decline from the late 1920s. <Banks 1993 pp 17-19, Pugh 1992 pp 235-256, Smith 1990 pp 56-60>[17]

Renewed attention to the English movement in the period has shown both optimism and re-organisation and a consciousness of new challenges. The campaign for the vote had been a central focus for the women's movement which now had to regroup and learn how to *use* that vote. This was uncharted political ground for women. Following the achievement of the partial franchise some suffrage organisations changed their remit and names: the largest, NUWSS became NUSEC, symbolising its intention of working on a wider programme than the franchise, though it also continued to press for the vote on equal terms to men (which was achieved in 1928). Other organisations, for example the Women's Freedom League, had no need of a name change, but did hold discussions on a change of role. In addition, new organisations were formed including the Six Point Group and the Women Citizens' Associations. Most of the Scottish suffrage societies disbanded in 1918 but the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage became the Edinburgh Society for Equal Citizenship; "many members of disbanded suffrage societies joined the newly created Women Citizens Associations". <Leneman 1995 pp 215-6>. The loss of direction within feminism in the post-suffrage period is more apparent with the benefit of hindsight; at the time the women's movement was characterised by dissension and debate but also confidence.

If the period after 1918 was difficult for feminism it is hardly surprising. For many women the war had been a time not only of personal and family disruption and tragedy but also of unprecedented opportunities. Strachey has written of what it meant for women both in

---

[16] *The Representation of the People Act*, 6 February 1918, granted universal manhood suffrage (removing the previous 12 months residency requirement) and the vote to women who were over 30 and householders or wives of householders (though leaving 5 out of 11m adult women unenfranchised, <Kent 1987>)

[17] Caine comments that the importance of feminist developments in the interwar period have only recently come to be recognised and the fact that this period of the very recent past should have required such comprehensive rediscovery is itself significant; that feminist activities and debates should have disappeared so completely shows how tenuous a hold women's organising has on both history and on popular traditions. However the tenor of interwar feminism, she suggests, contributed to its historical neglect since it was cautious, constitutional and not

terms of the work they had taken on during the war and the requirement to give it, income and independence up afterwards. <1928 pp 370-74> There was intense pressure on women to return to the domestic sphere and a rapid "ideological backlash": war heroines became post-war blacklegs. <Kent 1988 p 223> "The peace in our time for which we all crave will mean a reaction, more or less strong, against the independence of women", the playwright and suffragette Cicely Hamilton wrote in 1927 <*Time & Tide* August 12 1927> The war unleashed a "powerful current of cultural conservatism" Smith argues <1990 p 47>, and Scott <1987> and Kent <1988> both argue that after the wartime disruption of order, the return to peace and normality was symbolised by a return to a gender order emphasising separation. Doughan refers to "the sheer rude vigour of anti-feminist forces in this period", including traditionalists and Fascists but also, more subtly, Freudians and sexologists, and "the refusal by the press, the broadcasting media and the public at large to take feminism seriously". <1980 p 9> Bolt suggests that the women's movement was not prepared for the impact of the social changes and reactionary pressures that shaped the post-war world (though you might wonder how any organisation could be so prepared), and the consequences of winning the battle for the vote. <1995 p 236>

Much recent scholarship on the women's movement in this period emphasises its *fragmentation* and the *political sobriety* of the times, both associated with a loss of momentum. Possession of the vote was a "brilliant strategic position", a suffragist wrote in the *Woman's Leader* in 1920. It was "a finer weapon than we have ever possessed; even before we actually held it in our hands we were made to feel its power, and at the moment our consciousness of that power is almost overwhelming". However she also recognised the potential pitfalls of the transition from fighting for the vote to using it. "It compelled us to concentrate all our force, all our hope, all our enthusiasm, upon a single, narrow tenet. *It immensely simplified the women's movement*. And for those of us who grew up under the stimulus of that intense concentration, the ideals of the woman's movement seemed to be summed up in the three words of our battle cry, 'Votes for Women'. <*Woman's Leader* 12 March 1920, quoted by Alberti, 1989 p 2> "Unenfranchised we had our common grievance of exclusion, whereon, whatever our views or interests, it was easy to concentrate and hammer" Cicely Hamilton argued, "enfranchised, we must needs be class and sectional, divided by our varying interests." <*Time & Tide* 8 September 1922, cited in Caine 1997 p 176 > Doughan describes a transition from romantic rebellion to necessary drudgery, from a battle which, if hard had also been exhilarating, to duller and trickier constitutional matters and methods; feminists in the 1920s, if not actually trying to live down the suffragette image, were concerned to seem "sober and respectable". <1980 p 5> He suggests there was a strong sense of anticlimax and some disillusionment, and a loss of unity which was inevitable: that by the early 1900s women working for a very wide variety of aims and from an equally wide variety of backgrounds and beliefs had come to believe that they could not achieve those aims without the vote, but once the suffrage

---

newsworthy in the way the militant suffrage campaign and also mid-Victorian feminism had been. <Caine 1997 pp 173-174>

was granted these groups tended to become distinct again and to go about their own separate ends. <1980 pp 3-4> A loss of unity and direction is emphasised by Banks: that without any great cause comparable to the fight for the vote to unite assorted groups as a single movement, organisations differed in their priorities and, more fundamentally, in terms of their definition of feminism itself. <Banks 1993 p 19> If Banks emphasises philosophical disunity, Bolt <1995 p237> sees a structural problem: that without the discipline imposed by the suffrage campaign the women's movements both in Britain and the USA suffered from anti-climax and disunity and became "more specialist, less overtly woman-centred, and harder to characterise". Pedersen similarly describes the post-war period as one of "disarray", with the NUWSS much smaller after the 1915 split, the WSPU non-existent and problems of agreeing what feminist aims were. While there is a consensus about the problem of fragmentation facing the organised women's movement from 1918, this argument may exaggerate the unity of the suffrage campaign, overlooking the 1915 split in NUWSS (almost half NUWSS's members left over its stance on the war to found the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom), and the tensions and disagreements within the suffrage campaign over militancy, while the brief attempt by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst to found a woman's party ("principally devoted to the causes of patriotism and Christabel's own self-glorification" <Lewis 1975 p 1>) can hardly have helped things. It was not that new purposes were hard to find, but they were more diverse than 'votes for women'. All the aims of NUSEC, for example, were important but none formed a central focus for campaigning or, as the suffrage had promised, seemed a means of achieving all the others. This is seen as ultimately damaging by several writers. Doughan argues that feminism became "organisationally enfeebled, theoretically confused and disastrously fragmented" <1980 p9>; Banks, while suggesting that his account of fragmentation is exaggerated because there was a considerable degree of co-operation between the different groups, nevertheless thinks that fundamental areas of disagreement served in time to create "dissension of a damaging kind". <Banks 1993 p14>

Nevertheless there was reason for optimism. Banks comments that after winning the vote "the mood of feminism changed... it produced, in a whole generation, the belief that the tide had at last turned in favour of women". <Banks 1986 p 145> Spender writes of the confidence of the period and that "[R]ather than seeking permission to enter the male domains, quite a few women assumed they had a perfect right to go in... and have a look round, and decide whether or not they wanted to join." <Spender 1982 p 605> In contrast with the 'packed up their pamphlets' view, many women in the period saw their work as now really *beginning*. Suffrage, even if only partial, was a much improved "strategic position". Women had fought hard and long for the vote not just as a symbol of citizenship - although it *was* that - but in order to achieve further aims; it was reasonable to suppose they would now go on to do so. Millicent Fawcett, writing in 1926 of the lobbies and Committee Rooms of the House of Commons said: "We were no longer there

on sufferance, but by right..." [18] <Fawcett 1926 p 1 cited by Pugh 1992 p107> Most of the national pre-war women's organisations had survived the war, and new groups were formed. In the early 1920s it must have seemed as though the pace of reform was, by comparison with previous decades, increasing, and that it made sense to suppose that with women now able to vote 'women's issues' would surely become practical politics at last. <Pugh 1992 p 44 and p 111> Parliamentary response to the new voters seemed to confirm this: in 1919 Fawcett could claim six pieces of legislation directly affecting women as the immediate results of women's new voting powers. <Fawcett 1920, cited by Lewis 1975 p4 [19]> By 1925 three out of the six points of NUSEC's 1919 programme had been achieved: opening the legal profession to women in 1918; increased guardianship rights in 1925 (though they were not fully equal until 1973); and widows' pensions (1925). <Lewis 1975 p 4>[20]

Organised women: NUSEC and other groups

Accounts of the diverging directions of feminism between the wars have focussed on NUSEC. It was, Banks claims, the most important women's group in the 1920s. <Banks 1993 p 12> The change of name in 1919 also saw a change of leadership, from Millicent Fawcett to Eleanor Rathbone (President until 1929). Despite its war-time difficulties NUSEC inherited much of the reputation and organisation of NUWSS and the 200 societies formerly affiliated to it, and under the leadership of Rathbone and Eva Hubback as parliamentary secretary NUSEC was central to post-war feminist lobbying and sponsored

---

[18] The considerable comment generated in May 1997 on the visible difference made by the larger number of women MPs elected offers a perspective on the impact the first women MPs taking their seats must have had. Nancy Astor was the first to win and take up a seat in Britain, in 1919; the Duchess of Atholl was the first in Scotland in 1923, by which year there were eight women MPs.

[19] The six pieces of legislation Fawcett was referring to were: *The Eligibility of Women Act*, 1918 (enabling women to be MPs), the *Affiliation Orders (Increase Maximum Payment) Act*, 1918 (amending the *Bastardy Act* of 1872), the *Midwives Amending Act* 1918, the *Sex Disqualification Removal Act*, 1918, the *Intestate Moveable Succession (Scotland) Act*, 1919 and the *Nurses Registration Act*, 1919.

[20] There are divergent views on the significance of this legislation (as well as what to include as a 'feminist reform'): Fawcett is prepared to include anything that affects women in a way that later commentators are not). Smith argues that feminists overstate their responsibility for this legislation and also that several measures were in fact conservative substitutes for the reforms the women's movement wanted, so that the view that women's status was substantially improved in the years after 1918 is "misleading". Rather, "[W]hat seems most striking about this burst of legislative activity is the extent to which non-feminist forces guided the pressure for reform into channels which preserved women's traditional place in society". For example, the 1919 Sex Disqualification Act was ineffective, and the government proposals on guardianship offered substantially less than the original NUSEC bill. Looking at the issues politicians *declined* to tackle reinforces his argument: they included equal pay, marriage bars, women police, admission of peeresses to the House of Lords, nationality of married women, and birth control information and family endowments. <Smith 1990 pp 52-3> His argument however identifies feminist goals with egalitarian demands and also as a demand for 'everything or nothing', overlooking the more strategic question whether legislation which improves the situation is worth having and can be counted as an achievement even if it falls short of expressed goals. (The dispute in NUSEC over the watered down guardianship bill which Smith adduces was of this kind.) Banks sees the period immediately after 1918 as a concentration on women's issues which was not to be repeated until the late 1960s. <Banks 1993 p 131> Pugh also sees the legislative programme as a feminist achievement, "the record of legislation does seem a formidable one for a single decade, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that it is attributable to the effect of women's enfranchisement in altering the priorities of the politicians", although he sees political response to the new women voters as falling off quite rapidly. <Pugh 1992 p110 > However, like Smith, he emphasises the extent to which legislation addressed women as mothers and wives: "[T]his was undoubtedly the perspective through

much of the Parliamentary legislation on women's issues in the first half of the 1920s. It had close links with a number of women MPs, especially with Nancy Astor. <Banks 1993 p 12> NUSEC redefined its role as to "obtain all other reforms, economic, legislative and social as are necessary to secure a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women". <Stocks 1949 p 105> The objective is an interesting attempt to include what would come to be called a 'new' feminist perspective within a familiar equal rights framework, with the phrase "real equality" taken from Rathbone's paper at the 1917 NUWSS discussion of its future. In the early 1920s, Pugh says, NUSEC "appeared to be firmly within the equal rights tradition" and there was continuity with the Edwardian suffragist pattern of parliamentary methods, co-operation with male political allies and a non-party position. <Pugh 1992 p51>[21] In 1931 NUSEC re-formed itself as separate educational and political organisations, the former the Townswomen's Guild, the latter the National Council for Equal Citizenship which was to continue its lobbying role, which it did until 1945, although with declining membership and influence. <Banks 1993 pp 15-16> In 1933 the *Woman's Leader* ceased publication. Pugh describes the Townswomen's Guilds along with the Women's Institutes and Mother's Union as non-feminist organisations. <Pugh 1992 p 68> Recent attention to women's organisations in the period has called into question this distinction: Beaumont's analysis and Andrews' argument suggest that the differentiation into feminist and non-feminist organisations is by no means straightforward. <Beaumont 1996; Andrews 1997 xii-xiii>

Discussion about the direction and nature of feminism in this period is summarised in the distinction between 'old' or equality and 'new' feminism, a distinction which was made at the time (though Stocks says not until 1925 <Stocks 1949 p 117>). A further division, between those women who thought it best to work in autonomous women's organisations and those who worked in and through the political parties and the labour movement has been given less attention. Banks however stresses the importance of labour movement feminism in the period and its difficult relationship with the Labour Party over birth control and family endowments. <1993 chapter 3>) The old/new distinction corresponds to *equality* and *difference,* a dichotomy which, as I have argued, continues to play a major role in feminist discourse and the formulation and critique of equality policies and in which pregnancy, childbirth and women's role in the family have been central to how difference has been seen, differences which, as Pateman has argued, are closely linked to conceptions of citizenship. One of the many interesting aspects of women's movement politics in this period is the insight it gives to the equality and difference dilemma.

---

which most politicians preferred to view women". < Pugh 1992 p114> The implicit opposition overlooks how far this was also the perspective through which many women saw women.

[21] NUSEC's goals were equal franchise, equal pay, the opening of the professions and civil service to women, the right of married women to employment and separate taxation, and an equal moral standard in divorce, solicitation and prostitution laws. <Bolt 1995 p272> Lewis lists those but also an increase in the number of women in Parliament, and equal guardianship rights. <1975> Pugh adds equal treatment in the honours list, resistance to protective legislation (though this was to change), support for Lady Astor's bills to control the sale of alcohol, and proportional representation for Westminster. <1992 p51>

As I discuss in my introduction, new feminism is also called 'social' feminism (on an American model[22]) or 'welfare' feminism. <Banks 1981 pp 176-7> Pedersen refers to "new or maternalist" feminism <1993 p 138>: the extent to which it is seen maternalist is significant to assessments of it (as discussed below), but to name it as such is to make an equation which needs to be argued; I see new feminism as having commonly included maternal feminist arguments but it cannot be reduced to it. As I have argued in chapter two, not all feminist attention to maternity and other aspects of embodied difference is usefully categorised as maternal feminism. However, naming new feminism as social or welfare feminism is useful in that it draws attention to how far its concerns were with social or welfare reform, which a more abstracted focus on difference to some extent elides. The "the conditions and economics of motherhood" <Stocks 1949 p 116> were undoubtedly among the most urgent areas for social reforms seen as needed. New feminism in Britain is identified with Eleanor Rathbone as its main and most influential exponent. The new feminist philosophy was first fully articulated in the *Oxford Essays* in 1917 but shows significant continuities with FWG arguments, as discussed in the previous chapter. Its organisational origins lie in discussions in 1917 held by NUWSS as to its future direction; papers were put forward for the meeting's consideration by Ray and Oliver Strachey and by Rathbone, who argued for "real equality" for women, meaning the taking account of their special needs "as an alternative to the concept of literal and absolute equality to men accepted by traditional feminists". <NUWSS Executive Committee minutes 22 November 1917, cited by Lewis 1975 p 4; Strachey 1928/1978 pp 369-70> Rathbone's 1925 presidential address in which she argued against "men's standards" and for "what women need to fulfil the potentialities of their own natures and to adjust themselves to the circumstances of their own lives" has been seen by several writers as defining new feminism.[23] Rathbone argued that the legal barriers to equality were now abolished although there was still "some debris" left which had to be cleared away, and it was necessary to find other ways to go forward. <<Rathbone 1929 p 28; [24] Stocks 1949 p 116> The reference to what women need to fulfil the *potentialities of their own natures* is a clear statement of gender difference, but not one which would have been seen as exceptional or problematic at the time (for example, Winifred Holtby, the feminist writer and journalist who argued strongly for equality against difference, refers quite straightforwardly to women's "biological tendency to preserve rather than destroy" <Holtby 1934 p 50>); it has been paid more attention than has the second half of the sentence "and to adjust themselves to the *circumstances of*

---

[22] In the USA the development equivalent to new feminism and also leading to splits at this time is generally known as social feminism, though as I discuss earlier this naming and distinction is not uncontested.<Bolt 1995 p 330>

[23] A similarly-worded argument is made by Rathbone in an article in *The Woman's Leader* 13 March 1925 p 52 entitled 'The Old and the New Feminism'. She gives family endowment, birth control and housing as the main objectives of the new feminism and calls for "the dangerous service of maternity, the delicate and skilled task of rearing children" to be revalued, alongside the female skills of midwifery, nursing and housekeeping.

[24] Compare Vera Brittain (1953): "the chief error of the older feminists was to use men as yardsticks. What matters to the modern woman is not how men have tackled problems in the past, but how she herself is going to tackle them in the future". On this evidence Brittain cannot be co-opted as an 'old' feminist, as Banks seeks to. <Banks 1993 p 15> I would see her arguments as drawing from both 'old' and 'new' ideas. <see examples in Berry and Bishop 1985>

their own lives". Whether a view of essential gender differences is espoused or not, and however you explain it, in 1925 most women and most men's life circumstances and experience were different. New feminism can be seen as recognising and responding to the ways women's lives differ from men's, a difference which is about unequal pay and opportunity as well as their role as mothers. Stocks observes: "[T]hroughout history the conditions and economics of motherhood had been neglected. It was the business of enfranchised women to redress that situation". <Stocks 1949 p 116>

Class is also at issue in this divergence and Rathbone was conscious of the hostility of women trade unionists to the middle-class leadership of the constitutional suffrage societies. <*Women's Leader* 17 July 1925 p 195> Although, as I have argued, the personal dilemmas faced by educated women of Atkinson's generation led to a renewed discussion of the conflict between family responsibilities and work and other achievement, it was mainly the influence of working-class women on feminism through the WCG and the labour movement which brought to the fore questions about how to manage employment and political activism and family responsibilities which would be central in the twentieth century. <Caine 1997 p 133> NUSEC under Rathbone's leadership began to emphasise social reforms of most value to women as working-class mothers. Rathbone listed as the "new issues" family endowment, birth control, social insurance and international peace. <Rathbone 1929 p 33> There is also a focus on education for citizenship associated with new feminism. Stocks reports that when the NUWSS met to discuss the society's future role two new objectives were adopted, the 'real equality' objective discussed above, and "to assist women to realise their responsibility as voters", an aim which "was intended to associate the NUWSS with the activities of the WCAs which were multiplying up and down the country". The former, she comments, covered far too many reforms to constitute a workable programme for NUWSS. <Stocks 1949 pp 105-6> It was to develop education for citizenship that the Scottish WCAs were set up, although they interpreted this remit very widely.

It was not until 1925 that family endowment and birth control information became NUSEC policy, after difficult discussions.[25] But it was protective legislation in employment which split the organisation on old/new lines, in 1927, a split which Bolt characterises as about "protection and *the meaning of equality*" <Bolt 1995 p274: my ital> and Holtby, writing soon afterwards, described as opening up "a deep division between 'protectionists' and equalitarians'". <1934 p 79> Arguments from labour women and trade unionists are credited with swinging NUSEC in favour of protective legislation. <Banks 1993 p 15> The measure in question was a compromise, committing NUSEC only to consider each case of

---

[25] Family endowment had been discussed by NUSEC since 1919 but remained a contentious issue: the annual council in 1919 resolved "to work for the endowment of maternity and childhood by the State" but that no scheme should be adopted until discussed again by the Council. In 1920 it appointed a committee to discuss the question. In 1922 it voted to support family endowment, a vote which was challenged and declared invalid the following year. The vote in favour in 1925 was however large: 111 to 42 <Pedersen 1993 p 149>This decision led Millicent Fawcett to resign from the board of the *Woman's Leader*.< Stocks 1949 p116-18>

protective legislation individually and to support those favoured by, and clearly benefiting, the workers concerned. However it brought to an end NUSEC's outright opposition to protective legislation. The majority in favour of this limited support for protective legislation was small and 11 members of the NUSEC executive resigned; the Open Door Council was formed soon afterwards; a number of disaffected NUSEC activists joined it.

If new feminism raised questions about what women needed as mothers, equality feminists replied that these were *social* not feminist issues (an argument which for some included birth control). To emphasise differences between men and women, they feared, was to put in jeopardy their demands for equal citizenship for women <Lewis 1975 p 13>, and it was also to read their position too narrowly. <Elizabeth Abbott *The Woman's Leader* 17 July 1925, cited by Lewis 1975 p 16> Later arguments feared the emphasis on gender difference which was associated with fascism in Germany and Italy and part of Mosley's rhetoric. <Holtby 1934 p161 and pp 192-3> The extent to which equality is or is not predicated on sameness or assimilation, and if so based, threatened by arguments from difference, is an issue which runs through this divergence. Equality feminism is identified, though not exclusively, with an adherence to liberal principles; a typical concern is protective legislation in employment, seen as damaging to women's interests; central equality causes were the right of women to work in the professions, equal opportunity and equal pay. Not all equality feminist groups were a continuation of Edwardian groups: they include the Open Door Council, formed in 1926 to fight restrictions on women's employment, and, though less unequivocally, the Six Point Group, formed in 1921.

The Six Point Group deserves much more research. It was innovative, radical and is generally seen as a leading 'equality' feminist organisation, although the 'six points' or demands around which it was formed include issues which can equally well be described as social reform - a reminder of the permeability of this distinction. The six points were: the position of the unmarried mother and her child; the position of the widow with children; the law on child assault; unequal rights of guardianship of married parents; unequal pay in teaching; and inequality of pay and opportunity for women and men in the civil service. <Pugh 1992 p 49> The group remained small and London-centred but as it was founded by (among others) Lady Rhondda, the publisher of *Time & Tide* (launched in 1920), and included in its membership the writers Rebecca West, Winifred Holtby and Vera Brittain, all of whom wrote for *Time & Tide* and a range of other publications, its ideas and programme were influential beyond those circles. The Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association was informally associated with the Group and shared its aims, particularly the concern with the ineffective law on child assault. Lady Rhondda was one of the speakers at the inaugural public meeting of the Scottish Child Outrage Protest Committee in October 1920. Founded in response to the political problem of feminism's breadth and varied objectives after 1918, the Group presented itself as "a definite practical body with definite simple aims" which would be effected through women's new political power. <*Time & Tide* 25 February 1921, cited by Caine 1997 p 184> By the mid-1920s, as

'new' feminism became stronger, the group focussed increasingly on equal pay, the marriage bar, and training women in business and professional skills, in contrast to NUSEC's increasing emphasis on women's welfare in the family. <Caine 1997 p 185> It adopted the slogan 'Equality first' in the autumn of 1926, taking it from Holtby's defense of 'old' feminism in *Time & Tide* in the August.

The English feminist writer Winifred Holtby (1898-1935) also deserves more attention than she has been given. While firmly declaring herself an 'old' feminist if that meant recognising that many of feminism's most straightforward aims for equality of status and opportunity had yet to be met <*Time & Tide*, 6 August 1926> and, on the measure of support for or opposition to protective legislation, a firm proponent of equality arguments, her views on the history and future of feminism and its relationship to sexuality, maternity and women's family role are by no means confined to the "narrow egalitarianism" equality feminism has been accused of. In *Women in a Changing Civilisation* <1934> Holtby provides a valuable and wide-ranging summary of post-1918 feminism and an analysis of the growing backlash against feminism, part of a "pendulum swinging backwards" also against democracy, liberty, reason, international co-operation and political tolerance. <1934 p 151> She identified a public mood which was putting women on the defensive <pp 6-7> caused by the economic slump and a "slump in idealism" which went with it , a "closing-in alike of ideas and opportunities" <p 161>, and by the "revolt against reason" led by Freudianism but also expressed in totalitarianism and nationalism, in Italy and Germany but echoed at home by Mosley. <p 114> An emphasis on sexual difference, as opposed to the "shared experience of all those vast areas of life unaffected by sexual distinction" is, she believes, dangerously part of this mood and "characteristic of a creed which places instinct above reason". <p 161> Holtby emphasises that there are still groups committed to equality, made up of older women who had been part of the suffrage struggle and "young women who grew up into post-war optimism" but they "are now in a minority and they know it". <p 115>

Her argument is in principle strongly opposed to that of Muir or other 'difference' feminists and she distrusts psychological arguments, yet there are interesting parallels: Holtby also sees lop-sided political values as having been a consequence of male dominance, expressed most conspicuously in the social neglect of children's needs and the predominance of military culture <pp 135-6>, and assumes women's greater investment in peace and political interests in children's welfare and social reform. Both Muir and Holtby were at different times members of the I.L.P.

Although she expressed her worries in her journalism about the direction in which NUSEC under Rathbone's leadership took, there were significant shared areas between their thinking, and both emphasised the importance of local government and women's contribution to it. Holtby saw local government as performing a daily, quiet revolution and women's local political participation as leading to better welfare provision and to greater

respect and resources for state education - with the latter benefiting from the energy and leadership of far-from-frustrated spinsters. Holtby's best-known and most successful novel *South Riding: An English Landscape* <1936> centres on local government politics, seen as a battleground between vested interest and progress and crucial to the possibility of equality in education and life chances in terms of class as well as gender. *South Riding* was published a year after her death, aged 37; it was inspired and informed by her mother's work as an Alderman on East Riding County Council and was intended to show "how local government, with its apparently impersonal decisions, affects the human histories of men and women in every community". <Brittain 1940 p 414>

Holtby sees a tension between love and work underlying contemporary problems: the lack of social support for "willing and successful maternity" and the contentious issue of married women working which was exacerbated by "the traditional gulf between the celibate woman engaged in non-domestic work, and the married woman employed solely in the home". <1934 p 60> She emphasises how important to the women's movement attempts to change morality (sexual but also in all personal relations) have been: this "was more subtle, difficult and painful than any other challenge made as part of the women's movement. The real battle was fought privately in a thousand homes, unchronicled and obscure". <p 61> Contrary to some 'old' feminist arguments, Holtby insists contraception is one of the most important issues for women's emancipation: it is "impossible to over-estimate" its importance in changing women's view of themselves and their lives. <pp 67-69> And, as discussed earlier, she sees improvements in welfare provision for maternity and children as very much a feminist achievement. The vote has led to a "change of emphasis in social and political action" and "increased amenities for public health, educational opportunity and domestic welfare" are due to women's direct political influence; the list of examples she gives includes nursery schools, clinics and maternity benefit, slum clearance and improved housing and the protection of children from assault and cruelty. Drawing on this argument, she sees feminism as having enhanced women's ability to be good mothers (rather than hindering it as its detractors would have it) because it has supported both better public provision for maternity and women's increased sense of their own worth, and this is progress which can only be further enhanced by smaller families, equality between mothers and fathers, and girls' education. She is scathing however about how a sentimental "cult of the cradle" is used against women. "Maternity is considered so honourable that in its name... women are underpaid, the education of many girls is crippled, women are denied the right of entry to posts... or are forced to resign from work." <p 143> Like Atkinson twenty years previously she deplores the way that social and economic conditions and cultural assumptions about maternity effectively preclude many women from making that choice. "We do all we can to discourage intelligent and energetic young women from early marriage and from having children. We dismiss them from their work; we intimidate them about their duty; we throw upon them the whole burden of domestic responsibility by teaching boys to think household occupations unmanly... we neglect maternity services..." She argues

strongly for the right to choose when and whether to have children offered by personal and economic independence and by available birth control <pp 136-7> and, although expressed more tentatively, legal abortion. <pp 137-141> She emphasises that confining women's interests to motherhood "defeats its own ends". <p 169>

Holtby's own resolution of the dilemma of love or work was to live with her friend and colleague Vera Brittain and Brittain's children from her much-chronicled "semi-detached" marriage to George Catlin. If Brittain was to declare that "[O]ne happily married wife and mother is worth more to feminism... than a dozen gifted and eloquent spinsters" <8 March 1929, cited in Pugh 993 p 262>, her freedom to pursue a writing and campaigning career depended in no small measure on the support of a very gifted and eloquent spinster. *Testament of Friendship* <Brittain 1940>, written after Holtby's early death, acknowledges that debt and the importance of their relationship. One of Holtby's most robust arguments in *Women in a Changing Civilisation* is against the idea that to be a spinster is to be frustrated - the idea "is one of the most formidable social influences of the modern world..." but rests on a narrowly sexual view of frustration and, conversely, fulfilment. She accepts that a choice between love (if that means becoming a wife and having no life or personality of one's own) and work may be necessary: many professional women and artists "may deliberately choose to remain unmarried in order not to be hampered in their work". That does not mean they are frustrated and may offer an unusually high level of personal satisfaction in their contribution and creative achievement. <1934 pp 125-133> Holtby suggests nevertheless that for both single and married women, unless "highly egotistical or highly fortunate", the "struggle to obtain freedom from domestic preoccupation exhausts a major part of her energy before it ever finds its way near her work", and analyses how women's qualities of sensitivity and imaginative insight into the needs of others, rather than being turned to value in art or administrative work "merely impose on her personal obligations" which hinder her other efforts. She goes on to argue that significant achievement demands self-belief, putting yourself first, and a degree of ruthlessness which women are discouraged from. Women are afraid of causing upset or of inconveniencing their families and in consequence "their work suffers". <pp 103-5> It could be a commentary on Willa Muir's unresolved dilemma as wife and writer.

Rights versus mothers in accounts of new feminism

Several recent accounts of old versus new feminism in this period are marked by a strong attraction to one or other 'side'. New feminism is presented both as a forerunner of radical feminism <Lewis 1975>, and as a possible solution to the equality and difference dilemma <Sarvasy 1992 p 329>, and also as conservative <Kent 1988,1990, Banks 1993, Smith 1990> and opposed to the independent woman. <Jeffreys 1985> The division still rouses strong feelings. Pedersen comments that the tone of much of this research is harshly critical of new feminists who are seen as betraying the cause of equality to accept a restricted and biologically defined 'place'. <1993 p138> Sheila Jeffreys is not even prepared

to allow the new ideas the name feminism, scathingly referring to "an ideal of motherhood which masqueraded as a 'new' feminism". <1985 p 146>. New feminism is also roundly attacked by Kent <1988,1990> and Banks <1993 p3> comments that she takes "a more hostile approach" to new feminism than Pugh does. The arguments against new feminist ideas and the assumptions behind the accusations of 'anti-feminism' and 'betrayal' highlight how problematic feminist views of motherhood and the family can be.

Jane Lewis's 1975 account of the post-suffrage period has been influential. <Bolt 1993 p271> Lewis presents class as the most important factor in Rathbone's conviction that a new approach is needed and also argues that the NUSEC aims not addressed by 1925, an equal moral standard and equal pay and opportunity, were those which were harder to remedy and could not readily be presented as a bill and implemented constitutionally, which was what NUSEC knew how to do <Lewis 1975 p 8>: they "defied a narrow equalitarian solution".<1975 p 4> Lewis emphasises that the new feminists were asking fundamental questions about the position of women in the family but concludes that their programme was aimed at ameliorating rather than fundamentally changing women's position in society. <1975 p 8> If a Women's Liberation and 'domestic labour debate' perspective influences Lewis's assessment, it points nevertheless to a continuity from the questions Atkinson posed, first to new feminism and in the late 1960s to Women's Liberation. New feminism, on this understanding, takes further the demand for both love and work, turning its focus on love and the *work* which relationships brought in their train, for most women.

The main tenor of discussion of this period is strongly critical of the 'turn' to new feminism. Kent and Banks both see it as leading to the decline of feminism by the end of the decade. Banks sees the decline of NUSEC as a result of the old/new split leaving it and the women's movement generally without strong leadership or focus, although she sees the decline as also reflecting changing priorities more generally as during the 1930s unemployment, child poverty and the threat of war were the focus of many activists' attention. <1993 p 131 and p 17> Her account of new feminism places at the centre of the old/new disagreement Rathbone's view that "the equal rights battle was virtually won" and that "[I]t was Rathbone's contention that the majority of women *were destined to be mothers*, and that it was their needs as mothers with which NUSEC should be concerned". <1993 pp 14-15, my italic> Banks also says that Rathbone "believed that the claim for equal pay should wait until an adequate system of family endowment had been achieved", which I see as a misreading of Rathbone's position. As discussed earlier, Rathbone saw the two as integrally connected, although it is fair to say that family endowments were more important to her. Labour women were closer to new feminism Banks says, and like them "they believed that most women would make marriage and motherhood *their main preoccupation throughout their lives"*. <1993 p 29 my ital> Kent presents differing views of the origin and meaning of gender difference as central to the new/old division. Feminist understandings of masculinity and femininity became transformed during the war and in

the immediate post-war period "until they were virtually indistinguishable from those of anti-feminists", with a view of gender which was more essentialist, leading to a "a fatal abandonment" of earlier ideology. <1988 pp 232-3> This view depends on a characterisation of pre-war feminism (based on her 1987 account) as presenting gender as socially constructed and not immutable. She attributes the conservatism of new feminism to the fear of renewed conflict that women competing with men in public and private arenas seemed to suggest: peace and order in the public sphere seemed to demand peace and order in the private. <1990 p 71> New feminism saw women's interests as primarily in "the occupation of motherhood - in which most women are at some time or another engaged, and which no man... is capable of performing". This quotation is from an article 'What is Feminism?' in the *Women's Leader* <July 17 1925 p195>, and Kent sees it as equivalent to 19thc anti-feminist arguments. <1988 pp 240-2> Further, "[W]hen *The Women's Leader* hailed Rathbone's book... *The Disinherited Family* as 'perhaps the most important contribution to the literature of feminism since the publication, in 1869, of JS Mill's *The Subjection of Women*' and referred to women's 'peculiar and primary function of motherhood', then the distance between feminism and anti-feminism had been effectively traversed". <1988 pp 240-2, citing the *Women's Leader* March 28 1924 p 72> "Not the rights of women but the needs of women as mothers backed feminist appeals now"; this "smacked of separate spheres". <1988 pp 240-41> So by the end of the 1920s "new feminists found themselves in a conceptual bind that trapped women in 'traditional' domestic and maternal roles, and limited their ability to advocate equality and justice for women" <1990 p 66>; it therefore could not sustain itself as a distinct political, social, and economic movement "and soon became swallowed up and disappeared, along with many of the gains women had won." <1988 p 245> Both Banks' and Kent's arguments rest on an opposition between "the rights of women" and "the needs of women as mothers". It is a reminder that equality *versus* difference, in Scott's phrase, structures an impossible choice. Both 19thc and new feminism, I would argue, took a more ambivalent view of gender differences than Kent says and her claim that gender roles had been seriously deconstructed before the war is questionable. Nor did equality feminists eschew a view of maternity as entailing distinctive attitudes and responsibilities or of militarism as expressing distinctively male values, as Holtby's 1934 argument shows.

Smith's account of the period is framed as an explanation of the change between 1920 and 1930 when "feminism seemed much less of a threat to traditional structures". This he explains also in terms of the cultural conservatism created by war and perceived wartime changes in gender roles and also public concern over the declining rate of population growth; but especially by the old/new split within feminism. Like Kent, Smith sees the fundamental distinction between new and equality feminisms not in their programmes as much as the assumptions underlying them: while new feminists accused equality feminists of adopting male values and priorities, equality feminists warned that they in turn placed "a dangerous insistence on women's natures" which made it harder for women to escape traditional roles. The focus on maternity is opposed to a focus on "the

common humanity of men and women". <Smith 1990 pp 56-60> Smith usefully emphasises that social concern generally over marriage and motherhood is likely to have ensured a more receptive audience for new feminism and its reforms, as well the resistance to 'old' demands. <1990 pp 53-54>[26] What he does not explain is why the major new demands for family endowment and birth control information were not met either (except for a very limited availability in birth control information in 1930). Like Banks he misrepresents how Rathbone saw the relationship of family endowment and equal pay. His analysis rests on a definition of radical as participation in non-maternal roles and conservative as a family role and he also presents these as in opposition.

The opposition posed by Kent between 'women' and 'mothers' is apparent also in Jeffreys' analysis of the attack on spinsters; she puts forward a view of new feminism which is close to that of a strict equality feminist of the interwar period, but from the standpoint of a second-wave radical lesbian. She sees new feminism as strongly influenced by women in the labour movement who are themselves seeking to accommodate the views of the men in that movement and so adopted "welfare goals in the place of feminism" which they represented *as* feminism. Some socialist women, she says, "saw themselves as feminists simply because they were women operating with a new and unaccustomed independence in the field of social work". They did not see feminism as necessarily challenging to men's behaviour or privileges because a view of men's and women's interests as conflicting was hard to sustain in mixed political organisations. <1985 p 151> Rathbone she claims "betrayed the cause of spinsterhood and the independent woman" and submerged "all the interests of all women into the glorification of reproduction". <1985 pp 152-3> The account which Jeffreys gives of an attack on celibacy and spinsterhood based in views of heterosexual desire in women which were current in the women's movement (if generated by sexology) is supported by the way Atkinson and others oppose their generation's sexual possibilities to the perceived rejection of femininity of an earlier generation of "manly" feminists. Jeffreys reverses the argument to caricature a focus on maternity backed by an argument that it was socially and racially important as "the glorification of reproduction" and a betrayal of those who do not choose it. A new generation of feminists "began to promote the importance of motherhood, of relationships with men and the joy and necessity of sexual intercourse" she argues and therefore turned away from the feminist causes of child sexual abuse, prostitution and sexual coercion in marriage. But this is to overlook how motherhood's value was seen as enhanced when it was freely chosen, and that sexual relationships with men were seen as desirable when they were equal and not a form of legalised prostitution, as well as continuing feminist concern with child sexual abuse, prostitution (for example by the Six

---

[26] Bolt also emphasises the political climate in which "[A]ctivists found that they made most headway on social welfare issues and in local government" suggesting that pragmatism as well as changing ideas of women's needs and duties supported a turn to social feminism. In both Britain and America feminists made the greatest gains by working with rather than against the political grain, not surprisingly. Since by the mid-1920s, in the face of economic recession and revived prejudice about married women working, NUSEC had achieved no progress on its 1919 goal of equal pay, it was likely to seem time for new directions. <1995 pp 273-6>

Point Group and Scottish WCAs). The imposition of a male-privileging view of heterosexual sex, Jeffreys claims, amounted to a determined and effective silencing of the feminist critique and a "new kind of feminism acceptable to their socialist brothers". <1985 pp 190-191> On this view both Atkinson and Muir's very different explorations of ideas about difference become forms of bad faith, against their ultimate interests.

Within an account of feminism's failure in this period, new feminism's focus on social questions and maternal well-being is equated to a damaging conservatism. The tension between equality and difference and how women's family role is seen means that historical accounts of the division are marked by some of the assumptions of that division. Closer attention needs to be paid to whether new feminists saw the majority of women as "destined to be mothers" as Banks puts it or, a reading which I argue is as valid, drew attention to the needs and difficult circumstances of those women who were mothers (with a not unreasonable assumption to many would continue to be so), if in language which (like Victorian maternal feminism) was often more rhetorical and sentimental than to current tastes. There is an important difference of emphasis, which is lost in much analysis of this period, between asserting maternity as destiny and recognising that most women are, at some time in their lives, mothers and seeking to address their social position as mothers. Banks argues that although there *were* weaknesses in the equal rights position which new feminism exposed, in turning to motherhood "they failed to realise the dangers inherent in such a position" which is that "to define women in terms of their motherhood is... to open the way to a consideration of the needs of women primarily, if not only, as mothers" and to a doctrine of separate spheres. <1993 p 136> This raises the question, firstly, whether new feminism is accurately characterised as *defining women as* mothers, or, as I suggest, *recognising* that most women *are* at some time in their lives mothers and as such face problems which demand a social and political response. In the accounts by Banks, Kent and Smith 'are' is taken to mean 'they believe all women ought to be'. But statements quoted to show that new feminism saw maternity as destiny can equally be read as stating that women who are mothers are subject to specific disadvantage not reached by the 'equality' gains made by feminism so far. This is a position which *may* include a view of motherhood as women's destiny, but does not have to include such a view. So, for example, the statement which Kent sees as equivalent to anti-feminism, that the occupation of motherhood is one "in which most women are at some time or another engaged, and which no man... is capable of performing" can be read as a statement of what is the case and indeed seems rather hard to deny, whatever your views on how babies should be born and cared for.

Social feminism is criticised for a focus on women's natures which is seen as a problematic essentialism; and for some it *was* an assertion of gender difference that was both embodied and spiritual. But it is at least arguable that it was as much based in thinking about what women need "to adjust themselves to the circumstances of their own lives", and that it need not depend on seeing the causes of those circumstances in an

essential gender difference. Even Muir's attempt to revalue gender difference retains an ambivalence about whether such differences are fixed and natural or a socially-constructed continuum. Whatever conclusions are drawn about how interwar feminists saw male/female difference, male and female life experience remained very different for most. New feminism can be seen as drawing on an assessment of those material and cultural differences and is associated with a continuing emphasis on inquiry into "the facts of women's economic conditions" <FWG 1911/1988 p156> and social research.

Banks goes on to argue that new feminism's acceptance of women's family roles was the main reason for feminism's lack of progress between gaining the vote and its second-wave resurgence. She describes the environment in the period 1918 to 1970 as hostile to the women's movement because both the main political parties subscribed to an anti-feminist ideology "seeing women's role not only as essentially domestic and maternal but also essentially dependent, both economically and in terms of their position within the authority structure of the family". This ideology was so persuasive Banks says that "it invaded even feminism itself...". <1993 pp 134-135> While I would not disagree that to present women as *essentially* domestic, maternal and dependent is anti-feminist, I think we need to examine the argument. The disaggregation of *maternal* and *dependent* was exactly what campaigners for family endowments saw as necessary, and they argued that the authority structure of the family was held in place by women's economic and personal vulnerability which should therefore be ended. Banks argues that new feminists failed to realise the dangers inherent in a position which could be co-opted by a culturally dominant view of maternity. We need however to be wary as historians of assuming that new feminists understood motherhood only in terms of the culturally dominant view. New feminist ideas of maternity are as likely to have been shaped by their own attempts to think anew about motherhood's constraints and possibilities as by any other contemporary discourse, even if other and more recent discourses cloud our perception. Their views need to be given closer attention. Implicit in Smith, Kent and Banks is a view of motherhood as only a 'traditional role' which feminists should help women 'escape'.[27] As Scott has commented, the equality/difference opposition is one we should refuse; in recognising this we need at least to raise the question whether some feminist activists and thinkers at the time refused it, and seek to read their discussions of the issue in the light of that possibility. Smith's account of feminism's "dangerous insistence on women's natures" is one in which gender-neutrality, which as several writers have argued is a neutrality strangely coincident with typically male life experience, is the implicit standard. We need to pay renewed attention to how these dangerously womanly qualities were actually seen before we can accept that this made it harder for women to escape

---

[27] This opposition also underlies the dispute between Offen and Cott over the meaning of feminism referred to in my introduction. Offen emphasises that a 'difference' feminism and a belief in gender complementarity could co-exist with a view of a radically restructured unpatriarchal family. <1988 p 145> Cott argues that this was very much a minority re-appropriation of a hegemonic view of the gendered family <1989b p 204> and closer to the "standard, conservative, status quo" than any kind of feminism; that it shared everything with the traditional

traditional roles. Atkinson did not see it so and Rathbone was, as I have argued, critical of existing family relationships and married women's lack of power within the family even though she accepted a gendered division of labour; Muir struggled to articulate a view of womanliness as a greater freedom. To equate an argument that women's circumstances as mothers and in the family was not socially valued and underlay male abuse of power, or attempts to revalue qualities ascribed to women, with an endorsement of 'separate spheres' and a Victorian view of the family is wrong. The answers to these problems were seen by social feminism in ameliorating those ills through economic, health and welfare provision for women and children, in other social reform especially of housing and public sanitation, and an improved legal position in relation to children (equal guardianship, equal grounds for divorce and requiring fathers to pay maintenance towards illegitimate children) rather than in some revolutionary reassessment of the institution of the family itself - a reassessment which is not part of 'equality' programmes either. This should not blind us to the critique of the family contained within social feminist demands or to the significance of the view of the state as the source of solutions to these problems.[28] Pedersen summarises Maude Royden's 1917 essay as presenting the task of feminism as "not only to win for women the rights and opportunities previously monopolised by men, but also to give mothers the economic and civic recognition they deserved". <1993 p 144> The small phrase *but also* is important. My understanding of new feminism was that it was seeking to go beyond "rights and opportunities" to do both. In most discussion, because of the polarising role of equality versus difference and a failure to draw distinctions in ideas of the family it becomes either-or and not *and also*.

I do not wish to argue that there was *no* loss of momentum in the organised women's movement at this time. Many women activists' focus was elsewhere, in the peace movement, against fascism, against poverty especially child poverty; and some momentum was inevitably lost once the more widely acceptable measures of feminist reform were settled (or appeared to be). This contributed to a cultural and political climate in which feminist arguments came to seem old-fashioned and not needed, and were presented as such in the media: Brittain writes of a media message that "feminism is merely hysterical since it is now quite unnecessary". <Brittain 1927 in Berry and Bishop 1985 p

view *except* that it refused "arbitrary male domination". I would underline Offen's further comment that contesting male supremacy cannot be over-estimated. <1989 p207>

[28] In a discussion of the equality and difference division in this same period in the USA Sarvasy argues that the focus on this dispute has obscured the extent to which in the inter-war period women's organisations in the USA were pursuing "the *interdependent aims* of women's complete citizenship and the creation of a feminist welfare state". <my ital> A third group of women who have been overlooked, she argues, were social feminists who drew on both traditions in seeking to build a feminist conception of welfare. In doing so they assumed a conception of gender equality that combined in new ways equal treatment and difference and tried to get to "a theoretical and practical synthesis of equality and difference as the basis for women's citizenship and as the defining characteristic of public policies". They did not achieve this "because women did not receive half the power along with the vote" and in consequence "feminists' attempts to institutionalise a new conception of gender equality within a hostile political climate fractured the women's movement".<Sarvasy 1992 p 329-330> Since Sarvasy's argument is based on analysis of the US women's movement its relevance to Britain would have to be argued, but it suggests a new way to view the period which is partially supported by the priorities of the Scottish WCAs, as discussed in chapter six.

97> Holtby saw a new generation taking for granted freedoms so recently won and seeing the ideas of pre-war feminism as "incomprehensible". <1934 pp 5-6> But this was only part of the story. The activities of feminists in a range of autonomous organisations, many of which have been paid very little scholarly attention, and in civic associations and political parties, may have had more of a continuing role than the arguments above allow for. This is especially the case if welfare goals are seen as within a definition of feminist purposes. The view of the declining role and influence of feminism and the boundaries which are conventionally drawn between what is and what is not considered to be feminism are challenged by closer attention to other women's organisations in the interwar period, a task to which I turn in the following chapters. Questions of how we assess feminism's continuing influence after 1918 have been closed prematurely by the assertion of a near-terminal decline in this period. If social feminism is fully accepted as a legitimate development within a feminist tradition, if welfare goals *are* part of feminism, then the role of the women's movement between the wars might be assessed differently. The question of definition is as relevant to our assessment of the period as it was to the dispute which historians have seen as central to it.

Family formation; women's employment

Before going on to look in detail at one interwar Scottish women's organisation it is necessary to give a brief overview of the changes in women's employment and in family formation in this period. These form the context for women's politics as much as feminist debate and Parliamentary politics do. Married women's employment in this period and attitudes to it raises a number of interesting research questions.[29] The interwar period is also particularly interesting for a distinctive pattern of family formation, as the end-point of the 'demographic transition' and a period of historically unusual relative stability and uniformity in family form. (This has, ironically, created a norm against which change is now commonly measured.) This period saw the consolidation of a trend, beginning earlier and but becoming widespread through almost all sections of society after the First World War which continues, if not in marital stability, in the small, intensely private family of the late 20th century.[30]

Although some commentators have seen social feminism as defining women through maternity and colluding with social encouragement of women to have children, as discussed above, women in this period had fewer, not more children. The birth-rate was at historically low levels and was a subject of social anxiety. With increased life expectancy marriages lasted longer and formal divorce was rare. Marriage at this time enjoyed a stability without precedence in history, though stability as measured by longevity and the absence of dissolution through death or divorce does not tell us very

---

[29] Among them is why there was not more feminist opposition to marriage bans; further research would be illuminating.

much more than that this was the case. <Davidoff 1990 p99> Illegitimacy rates were the lowest since recording began and much lower than they have been since, as was the rate of pregnancies conceived before marriage. Anderson estimates that in 1938 (and 1950) less than one quarter of first births were extra-maritally conceived, and has commented that the reasons for this and the high incidence of "at least outwardly stable conventional Christian family morality" in the interwar period merit more attention than they have so far received. <Anderson 1990 p 36> Family and community control of girls' premarital chastity was arguably at its strongest at this time. By the Second World War, large families and large households, the experience of a child's death and loss of parents in middle-age, as well as bachelors and spinsters, had all become much less usual, though in the case of bachelors and spinsters, not as unusual as they would become after the war. The pattern of a shorter period of child-bearing early in marriage, low rates of marital dissolution, low rates of illegitimacy, and (at the end of the period) high rates of marriage, which emerged in the interwar years continued to be significant until the steep rise in divorce and in the numbers of unmarried mothers and the (slightly later) fall in marriage rates of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The family of male breadwinner and female homemaker and their children, the creation of middle-class Victorian ideals, was at this time for working-class people in most regions probably more common than before or since. Although the family wage was not a reality in many sectors, this was something the labour movement continued to fight for and rising real incomes for a majority of the population and smaller family size contributed to the possibility of a gendered division of labour in the family, although unemployment in many areas and trades meant that this was not a uniform trend. The record of married women's employment at this time is contradictory in some aspects. An absence of research <Hatton 1986, McIvor 1992> and the 'smokescreen' of domestic ideology make the situation hard to assess. Rates of employment among married women are never easy to establish accurately because much married women's work was casual, seasonal and/or homework and is not enumerated. However it is likely that the real rate of married women's employment fell from the mid-to-late 19[th]c to a low during the interwar period; Gittins argues that against a norm of most women involved in the economy through the labour market or other production the period 1900-1939 was unusual for the very low proportion of married women who were active in the labour market. <Gittins 1982 p34> The levels of women's employment and homework in the period before the First World War recorded in Fabian and WIG research and women's increased employment during the war suggests that this was more the case between 1918-1939 than 1900-1918. Nevertheless, and contrary to ideology and formal[31] and informal attempts to keep

---

[30] Mackinnon argues that the demographic transition "may well be the most important social change for women in the last century and a half" in Western countries. <1995 p 222>

[31] The extent to which marriage bars had an impact on overall levels of married women's employment is difficult to assess, particularly because during the period when most were introduced it rose, at least as formally recorded. Adams has shown that in Scotland large numbers of women teachers faced with the marriage ban remained single. <Adams 1990> The 1930s saw an intensified attack on married women working, including the argument

married women out of employment, married women's employment as measured by the Census fell in 1921 and then rose slightly: from 9.6% in 1911 to 8.7% in 1921 and 10% in 1931. (It was 21.7% in 1951). In Scotland recorded rates are markedly lower than for Britain overall but again show an upward trend: 5.3% in 1911, 6.3% in 1921 and 8.5% in 1931. In contrast, women's employment rates overall remained fairly constant between 1911 and 1951 in both Scotland and Britain overall. <McIvor 1992 p 142, Halsey 1988 p 91> There was wide variation in married women's participation rates regionally, reflecting different industrial traditions, and across class, with married middle-class women's employment uncommon in this period, although middle-class daughters' employment was now well established.

Hatton describes women's relatively low levels of participation in the labour force at this time as an "enigma": the puzzle is why women's labour force participation in the interwar period remained much lower despite demographic trends and increasing wages and employment opportunities (for example in retail and clerical work) which might have suggested otherwise. Although social and institutional constraints were important, and variations in age, marital status and dependency affected women's participation, Hatton argues that employment opportunities for women generally and industrial traditions were the dominant factors determining married women's work. <Hatton 1986> Gittins also concludes that job opportunities and a tradition of high levels of women's employment were the key factors, but also the husband's employment or unemployment. <Gittins pp123-4>.[32] Hatton concludes that insofar as there were widening employment opportunities for women in the interwar period, it was largely younger and unmarried women who benefited from them. McIvor presents the typical pattern in Scotland as full-time work for younger women with most women leaving the formal economy on marriage, but suggests that continuing part-time and casual employment was more important than has been recognised. [33] Despite some widening of job opportunities for women and a general improvement in real wages in the 1920s and 1930s, women's work was generally of low status, their skills undervalued and choice of employment constrained into sex-stereotyped occupations. Strong evidence of discrimination against married and older women in the labour market in the interwar period is contained in Scottish TUC records.

---

that all married women workers should be dismissed. <Holtby 1934 p 152; Pugh 1992 p 90> The Open Door Council in *The Married Woman: Is She a Person?* argued against a feared refusal of work to all married women. (The pamphlet is not dated but textual references suggest between 1933-35.) The NWCA repeatedly objected to bans on married women's employment in the early and mid-1930s.

[32] Hatton's analysis of women's labour market participation in Britain between 1911-1981 is particularly interesting: while all ages show a slight rise in the 1920s and then a steep upward trend from the 1950s, an age breakdown shows a striking long-term pattern in the different onset of a sustained rise in participation, with the 20-24 age group showing a significant rise over the First World War, which is extended to the 25-44 age group between 1921 and 1931. The rise in participation by the 45-64 age group only occurs after the Second World War. This cohort effect also suggests that an erosion of social constraints was a factor (though Hatton does not see it as significant). Although married women have markedly lower average rates of participation until 1961 the pattern of a successive rise over different age groups is the same but beginning later. Changes in their overall participation rate were relatively small before the Second World War and show a steep upward trend from 1951. No distinction is made in this analysis between married women and married women with dependent children.

<McIvor 1992 p 150-151 and p 143> The differential between male and female earnings changed very little between 1900-1939 and in the 1900s women in Scotland earned on average 45% of average male earnings. <McIvor 1996 p 200>

A greater proportion of families were large than after the Second World War but the small family was becoming a cross-class norm. Major variations in living standards were associated with family size. For Britain as a whole in the interwar period the one to three child family had become usual across the middle-class, where it had been established rather earlier, and in the new salariat of teachers, clerks and shop assistants, and, a little later, the skilled working-class. <Anderson 1992 p 36, Davidoff 1990 p 103 > There was public concern about the low birth-rate as there had been before the war which intensified in the 1930s when the even lower birth-rates were described as "the twilight of parenthood" and "race suicide". Although there was vocal opposition to birth control and family planning information when introduced was permitted in state-sponsored clinics only within very narrow guidelines (and remained restricted until 1967), by the 1930s the idea that family size should be controlled was coming to be accepted across the social spectrum, and was encouraged by social and economic pressures. Fertility remained slightly higher in Scotland than elsewhere in Britain. If the fall in fertility and the shortened period of childbearing had a very great impact on women's lives, it was also associated with new consumption and leisure patterns, new residential patterns and an increasingly home and family-centred society. <Gittens 1982 pp 42-52>. Anderson cautions that the benefits to families of falling family sizes can be exaggerated, particularly in view of the continued risks of childhood mortality which was especially marked for poorer families; "[N]evertheless it remains the case that the standards of living, accommodation, travel and education which developed in the interwar and especially in the post Second World war periods would have been much more difficult if not impossible to attain with an average of even an extra two children per family." <1990 pp 39-40> The lessened number of pregnancies was significant for women's health and well-being but the difference made by smaller families to the demands on women of family work needs to be set against an increased focus on children's physical and psychological well-being <Hardyment 1983 chapter 4>, and a lengthening period of children's dependence as they were less likely to be in employment and more likely to stay on at school. (Although the school-leaving age was not raised to 15 until 1939, in practice 1945, fewer exceptions were allowed and secondary education was becoming more widely available.) Housing improvements had advantages *and* a down side, as autobiographies and personal accounts suggest. They meant kitchens, bathrooms, piped water and electricity but problems of isolation and lack of childcare support and also more housework and a greater possibility of being 'house-proud'. The introduction of labour-saving domestic technology which, for most families, began in this period had a major effect on domestic work but saving time on specific tasks has been associated with an increase in the frequency and number of tasks to be

---

[33] Elizabeth Roberts estimates that in North-west England where there was a strong tradition of women's employment, 40% of married women worked part-time in this period. <Roberts 1988 p 49>

performed, a raising of domestic standards and the responsibility for a higher proportion of the domestic work falling on the wife, rather than being shared by other family members. <Thomas and Zmroczek 1985, Cowan 1974>. As suburban estates were developed both for sale and by councils and housing associations and cheap transport meant people could live further from their work, working-class married women's lives became physically separated from workplaces and public spaces in the way middle-class married women's lives had been in the mid- and late-19th century. House allocation which favoured families with young children also meant separation from other family members, and Gittens argues that because of this and increased economic dependence married women in this period saw their traditional social and kin networks weakened and their dependence on their husbands become stronger. <1982 pp 24-25>[34] For middle-class women new technology, domestic ideology and fewer women going into service meant their share of domestic work rose, although the numbers of women in domestic service remained high in Scotland in the interwar period.

In terms of who care was *for*, although the number of children and their proportion of the total population was rapidly decreasing, children remained the large majority of the dependent population in this period and the elderly a small proportion.[35] The elderly were now able to be more economically independent because of the old age pension, and although Gittens has argued that parents were now less able to call on adult children's support, they may also have needed it less. In common with most of Europe the birth-rate in Scotland had begun a pronounced and sustained decline from the 1870s <Anderson and Morse 1990 pp 32-40> and, after a post-war 'baby boom' in both legitimate and illegitimate births fell even more steeply between 1921 and 1931 than it had between 1900-1918. It was at its highest point in Scotland in 1876 (35.62) and in 1930 was 45% lower. That it fell more steeply among the middle-classes and skilled working-class was a subject of public anxiety. Although the birth-rate remained higher in Scotland than it did in England and Wales, the return to high rates of emigration after the interruption of the war meant that there was an actual decline in the Scottish population during the 1920s. Emigration continued at a high level in Scotland in the 1920s but after 1930 was much diminished. The fall in the birth-rate was primarily due to limitation of births within marriage and again although the marital fertility rate in Scotland fell from the 1870s it fell most steeply in the decade to 1930. The fall in the fertility rate was also most marked among older women, with the effect of concentrating child-bearing in the earlier years of marriage. The illegitimate birth-rate also fell, though there were still significant

---

[34] Gittins has argued that, culminating in this period, the trend since the 1850s was for a growing importance to be given to the marital relationship compared to kin relationships - that for women since the 1850s greater primacy has been given to the needs of husbands and children and less to the parental family. Associated with this has been a diminution in parents' access to children's labour power (both dependent children and adult sons and daughters, especially those who have married) while the duties and responsibilities of parents to dependent children has been strengthened. <1986 p 251>

[35] those under 14 were 29.5% of the Scottish population in 1921 as against 64.5% of working age and 6.% over 65. The equivalent figures for 1931 were 26.9%, 65.8% and 7.3%> This trend would continue and intensify, and the child/elderly ratio reverse. <Coleman 1988 table 2.42 p 106>

rural/urban variations, and in some country areas it remained high.[36] Although there had been a decline since the 1850s, illegitimate births were particularly low in the interwar period, apart from the short post-war increase, and in most years were between 6-8% of all live births. <Anderson 1992 p 35>[37]

The Registrar General for Scotland commented in 1930 on a slight recovery in the birth[38] and marriage rates but this was not to continue, at least immediately: the marriage rate did not rise again just before the second world war and the birth-rate after it. He also commented on one of the lowest infantile mortality rates on record, which continued to fall. Despite the high marriage rates in the early years of the decade, less than half of the total number of women of child-bearing age (15-45) in Scotland in 1922 were married and a similarly just under half of women of child-bearing age in 1930 were married and just over half widowed or unmarried. <AR 1922-1930> Looking at women in the main marriage and childbearing years (25-40), using Census figures for Scotland, shows that the proportions in these age groups of the married and unmarried do not change very much between 1901-1931, apart from a rise in the proportion of young widows in 1921, but that there is a great change in the likelihood of being married by 1951.[39] Although this period has been described as a time in which marriage became very popular, in Scotland this was only true of the very beginning and end of the period, with a high proportion of women especially as compared with the post-war period, remaining single. (Scotland has always had a higher rates proportion of spinsters associated with the very low rates of marriage in some rural and Highland areas and with the high numbers of men emigrating. <Anderson 1990 p 29>) Rates of marriage, as well as average age at marriage, remained stable until the mid-to-late 1930s with the exception of a much higher than average rate immediately after the war. [40] Women's average age at first marriage rose from 1861 to 1921, when it fell again, but the differences were not great.[41] At this time

---

[36] In 1922 the illegitimate birth-rate was highest in the country districts - an average of 8%, but with a range of 20.4% to 3.2% - and lowest in the larger burghs, with Edinburgh lower than the city average.

[37] The variability of unmarried motherhood in Scotland has been the subject of considerable interest and many attempted but inconclusive explanations - in the 1860s as well as more recently. The discussion in Flinn concludes that although we may not understand why, by the 1930s "there had been a substantial change in human behaviour in respect to bearing children out of wedlock". <1977 pp 349-369>

[38] In 1922 the birth-rate was 23.5 (per 1000 population) and in 1930 19.51, slightly higher than in 1929 but the actual number of births was one of the lowest on record. The illegitimate birth-rate in 1922 was 6.85% - a rate lower than in all years since 1856, with the exception of 1915-1918. In 1930 it was slightly higher, at 7.35%. The birth-rate as a proportion of women of child-bearing age (15-45) was 96.4% in 1922 and in 1930 it had fallen to 80.2%.

[39] Women between 25-29 were slightly more likely to be single than married in 1911 (502 per thousand single, 491 married) and that had reversed in 1921, although the numbers were still close; in 1931 the proportions were almost equal. By 1951 women in this age group were more than three times more likely to be married than unmarried. In the 30-34 age group they were around twice as likely to be married than single in 1901, 1911, 1921 and 1931; by 1951 they were almost four times more likely to be married. In the 40-44 age group women were three times as likely to be married than single in 1901 1911, 1921 and 1931 but by 1951 four times as likely. In this age group twice the proportion were widowed than at 35-39 in 1901 but the proportion of widows drops slightly in 1911 and continues to fall.

[40] The marriage rate in Scotland was 7.01 per 1000 pop in 1922 (34,394 marriages), less than the past ten years overall and lower than the previous year but between 1919-21 rates in Scotland were the highest since the beginning of registration. In 1930 it was 6.88 <33,343>, a slight increase on the previous year.

[41] In 1861 it was 23.8, in 1901 24.3, 1921 24.5 and 1931 24.4.[41] <Flinn 1977 p 331. Table 5.2.8>

women's average age at marriage was slightly lower in Scotland than in England and Wales but men's average age was the same. Apart from war widowhood, the improvement in adult mortality meant that there was a marked reduction in the ending of marriage through death. <Anderson 1990 pp 29-30> Divorce rose in Britain overall from around 1912 but remained at low numbers until after the Second World war.[42] Remarriage was also less common in this period than it had been in the 19[th]c and would be after World War Two: in the early 1930s 7.3% of men and 4.6% of women marrying had been widowed, a figure that continued to fall. <Anderson 1992 pp 33-34>

Although the period saw falling infant mortality and a rapid lessening of the toll from the major infectious illnesses, the questions of child and maternal health and welfare which concerned many women's organisations before and during the war continued to be of urgent concern. Maternal mortality in both Scotland and England was higher in the 1920s than it had been in the previous decade (with the exception in Scotland of the year 1918); although infant mortality was falling there was little reason for complacency, particularly with fluctuating yearly tolls, while mortality of children under five remained high. The fall in infant mortality is a sensitive measure of improved public health and social conditions, and has an undoubted, if harder to measure, impact on family formation and for women as mothers. Infant mortality was never as high in Scotland as it was in England in the worst years, but it did not decline as rapidly in Scotland. It reached its highest point (since the beginning of civil registration) in the 1890s[43] and the decline was slow relative to England and Wales; by the late 1930s the Scottish rate was 25.9% above the English rate. A wide range of rates was concealed by the national average and show that it was associated with urbanisation and with poor and one-room housing. <Flinn 1977 pp 386-387; Crowther 1990 p 282; Cage 1994; Kemmer 1997> Diseases associated with poverty and contaminated food and water supplies were still very significant, as was prematurity and poor maternal nutrition.[44] <Flinn p346> Child mortality rates showed a much less dramatic improvement and although between 1920-30 each other age group showed an improvement, this was with the exception of 5-9 years, while the mortality rate of children between one and four was scarcely better in 1930 than it had been in 1920-21. Measles, whooping cough and diptheria claimed almost all their fatalities in the under fives.

---

[42] In Scotland it was recorded by the Registrar General only from 1920, when there were 394 divorces and annulled marriages (a tiny proportion); in 1921 there were 500, and in 1922 382. In 1930 there were 464, fifty fewer than in 1929, but the trend since registration began had been upwards.

[43] It was 129.4 in 1896-1900 compared to 112.3 in 1906-1910 and 85.5 in 1926-1930 <AR 1930>

[44] In 1922 the infant mortality worsened again to 101.4, an increase (of 11.1%) on 1921 and higher than the mean of the five preceding years though it was still lower than in all years between 1855 and 1916. The rise was steepest in the cities. It was explained by the measles and influenza epidemics that year, the listed causes of infant deaths show premature birth as the largest single cause at 18.7% followed by pneumonia at 16% (possibly linked to influenza) and measles as 5.9%. Diarrhoea is still a cause of death for 6.3%. In 1930 the rate was markedly lower at 83.0 and the number of infant deaths 7852, compared with 11,664 in 1922. Rates in Edinburgh (of particular concern to some members of the EWCA) were consistently better than the average for the large burghs of 114.2 in 1922 and 93.9 in 1930 at 91 in 1922 and 90.5 in 1930, although the Canongate and other city centre slums gave continued cause for concern.

Measles and influenza epidemics were implicated in the increased general mortality rate in 1922 but this was against a trend which had seen an almost consistent improvement in life expectancy since 1855; a matter of some congratulatory comment in 1930 when the general rate of mortality was the third lowest on record (1923 and 1926 had been lower). In that year the Registrar General reported that typhus, smallpox and, to a lesser extent, enteric fever, had been virtually eliminated as causes of death over the decade and that there had been a rapid decline in mortality from scarlet fever, diptheria and diarrhoeal diseases. Maternal mortality, on the other hand, was 6.6 (per 1000 births) in 1922 and 6.9 in 1930: "a rate which had shown no favourable change for many years past" the Registrar General commented in 1930. It was highest in the large burghs, with Edinburgh's rate intermediate. Although there was a significant excess female mortality which was especially notable in the first years of the century until the war and which is not all explained by pregnancy and childbirth, in the interwar period maternal mortality is the main single cause, and in this period rates in Scotland were consistently higher than in England and Wales. Maternal mortality is discussed in more detail in chapter six.

It is the main exception to a record of improved life expectancy among the population generally, including women who, if maternal mortality is excluded, show a more rapidly improving rate of mortality than men, except among the poorest section of the population where women's health relative to men's remained very poor. <Spring Rice 1939/1981; Anderson 1992 p 41> This, and the virtual departure of the fearful 19[th]c killers of typhus, scarlet fever, dysentery and diarrhoea, despite recurrent economic crisis and continuing overcrowding and poor and insanitary living conditions in parts of most Scottish cities, is an impressive measure of the success of the struggle for public health and welfare measures associated with the growth of an interventionist role for government, especially local government. However the problems of infant and maternal mortality continued to be cause for concern in this period, especially maternal mortality which came into increased focus as a problem because its rise was in sharp contrast to health and mortality improvements generally. A focus on feminism as equality for women in public life obscures the extent to which in the interwar period, just as prior to 1914, women's health and support for their maternal role were issues of concern to feminist organisations. A woman's organisation which turned its back on these questions - the strict equality position - was turning its back on a source of 'real inequality' as significant as unequal pay and the absence of equal opportunities at work. I have argued that social feminist ideas played more of a part in the argument for state intervention in family welfare up until 1918 than has been recognised. Social feminist arguments and campaigning continued to play a part after 1918 and their contribution deserves more detailed research. These arguments were also influential in the Scottish Women Citizens' Associations which I discuss in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE: A Scottish organisation: a narrative of citizenship

In this chapter I argue that attention to the detailed activities of the Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association brings a new dimension to knowledge of the women's movement in the inter-war period. In the previous chapter I looked at 'old' versus 'new' or equality versus difference as a means of analysis of, and a political conflict for, feminism in the inter-war period, and how social feminism has been seen as a problematic direction because of its acceptance of a gendered division of labour in the family and as leading to the decline of the women's movement in this period. In the absence of research on the women's movement in Scotland in this period or on the Women Citizens' Associations, attention to the nature of the EWCA as an organisation is necessary in order to situate it before going onto think about their welfare and social feminist interests. This account of the organisation also highlights 'citizenship' as an important idea in this period in relation to both the local and national state. Rathbone's argument for why such an association was needed was that organised feminism should seize the opportunity of women beginning to see themselves as citizens for the first time, and form Women Citizens' Associations to harness this new-found consciousness into "a permanent spring of action" which would lead to better social conditions in the towns. The EWCA, while not articulating its purposes in these terms, in practice fitted this intention, claiming a role for "organised women" in the new political settlement of the period and in doing so bringing new priorities to the fore, especially in relation to local government. The development of a new form of women's organisation with its specific practices and role in relation to the state is a formative moment in women's political history and marks a new stage in women's entry into public life.

(EWCA minutes of meetings are given by date only; EWCA Annual Reports are noted as AR followed by the date. Some resolutions of the EWCA are also listed in a partial index included in the archive; there is no record of when it was made.)

As I have suggested, much more detailed attention to the nature, diversity, role and influence of women's movement organisations between the wars is necessary to begin to adequately address the questions raised by research so far. If research on the women's movement in England has only drawn the outline of women's movement politics in this period, the role and nature of Scottish women's organisations remains almost wholly obscure. There is a relative paucity of research on women's politics between 1918-1939 in general <Beddoe 1989 p 132; David Doughan, p.c.>, and studies so far available are both limited and partial. <Banks 1993 p 2> There is no recent account of the Women Citizens' Associations. Scottish women's history (for this period and others) suffers from a double deficit, less visible because women everywhere have, in Rowbotham's phrase, been hidden from history, and less visible because Scottish history has also been "hidden". <Breitenbach and Gordon 1992, introduction; Breitenbach 1993 p 59; Stephenson 1993 p 149> There is a third layer of deficit for women's political history, since so much of the work of autonomous women's organisations does not come within conventional definitions of the 'political', and what work there is has focussed on the suffrage campaign and the political parties. Furthermore, although still limited, there are more records available for the suffrage and labour movements and for women's involvement in party politics than for other aspects of women's political organisation and consciousness and such research as has been conducted in the period in Scotland has so far concentrated, understandably, on these important areas <King 1978, 1992, 1993; Leneman 1991/1995; Gordon 1991; Burness 1991, 1992.> However this can mean, as Dyhouse has commented, that since it is easier to find out about women's organised campaign for the suffrage than it is to explore wider areas of feminist activity and thought during the period, historians have slipped into assuming an equation between suffragism and feminism. <Dyhouse 1989 p 6> Definitions of the political which go no wider than a focus on parliamentary politics and state government intensify this deficit in Scotland; a problem which worsens after 1918, when the British state became more interventionist and pro-active from the centre in domestic policy <Paterson 1994>, at the same time as the suffrage campaign, a focus which traditional historiography understands, is coming to an end. An analysis of the EWCA records must be tentative therefore, as we have so little information on the context in which their work must be assessed. In particular, the assumption of significant commonalties with the English movement which lies behind my use of research on England as a context (in the previous chapter) can only be an assumption, although the extensive contacts the EWCA had with NUSEC confirms they had aims and approaches in common.

In this chapter I suggest that attention to the detailed activities of the EWCA will illuminate and bring a new aspect to our understanding of the women's movement in the inter-war period. In the previous chapter I looked at the English women's movement in the period and at equality and difference as a means of analysis of and a political conflict for feminism in the 1920s, noting that the old/new dispute is equality versus difference 'in action', and that difference feminism in the form of social feminism has been seen by some as leading to the decline of the women's movement in this period. The suggestion

that the equality and difference distinction, while useful in highlighting incompatible trends within feminist discourse in the period, tends towards oversimplifying and over-dichotomising the position is reinforced by an examination of the EWCA, many of whose concerns cannot be readily categorised as either equality or difference. Of particular importance, I argue, are the ideas of citizenship which inform their work, and the relationship they developed with local government and with social and welfare reform through the voluntary sector, which will be discussed more fully in the following chapter. The EWCA papers (and those of the SCWCA, to a lesser extent [1]) tell us about the role, self-definition and activities of a women's autonomous organisation and its conception of citizenship and of a role for women in public life. They are a record of extensive campaigning and educational work by a large women's organisation in this period and give a strong sense of what citizenship meant to newly enfranchised women and the purposes to which they wished to put their new rights. The papers also show the importance of local government to the organisation. The emphasis on "education for citizenship", as well as identifying a necessary task also to some extent expresses a discomfort with party politics and a sense that many women's issues were above politics. Unlike the 'non-feminist' women's organisations studied by Beaumont they were however happy to describe themselves as politically-active, just not *party* political.

Formal committee minutes of the kind which form the basis of the EWCA archive are, with work and attention, a richer source of illumination of the political thinking of 'organised women' in the period than at first might seem the case. Nevertheless there are limitations on their use as a source. Committee minutes are working documents with a primary purpose of recording the activity and decisions of the Association, although they also serve the important purpose (discussed below) of legitimising the Association through a demonstration that its officers know how to properly conduct the business of a voluntary association. They are written up in ways which are necessarily brief and include abbreviations and frequently very summarised accounts of the business at hand. As such they were sufficient information for a reader who, as a member of the Association or an associated organisation, had knowledge of the question at issue, but can be frustrating for the historian. This is especially the case in the absence of any other work on women's organisations in Scotland in this period (apart from Cree's work on the vigilance movement <Cree 1993 and 1995>) which could corroborate references in the minutes and clarify their meaning. Additionally the minutes are, with some few exceptions which are typed, hand-written by several authors and their comprehensiveness and clarity varies according to author.

The second main source of information on the EWCA is its annual reports. These are (as discussed below) written to be read by the public and by members of organisations the Association worked with or wished to influence; again they serve a formal purpose and

---

[1] Because they are much less detailed.

also seek to give a good and business-like impression of the organisation. In such documents there is a general tendency to avoid areas of controversy and disagreement. The considerable difficulties and controversy associated with the EWCA's support for the Liberal candidate Mrs Buchanan Alderton in the 1922 Parliamentary election (discussed below), for example, is not recorded in the AR for that year and the resignation of the officers of the South Division branch over this issue is only apparent in the ARs in that the branch is not listed for several years. Careful comparison of committee minutes and the ARs has been useful. But in the nature of such elisions, there may be other controversial questions and disagreements which have been so successfully excluded that they are now invisible to the historian.

There can be several explanations for absences and silences: that the issue is not known about; that it is not a priority; that it *is* seen as important but is considered to be the business of another organisation; or that it is discussed but those discussions are not recorded because of fears of impropriety. Nineteenth century feminist campaigning on prostitution and sexual abuse breached a wall of silence on such issues - the degree of personal attack and physical danger occasioned by that campaign, and Butler's vocal determination that as a married, middle-class Christian women she *should* know of abuses from which her status protected her, are all evidence of how strong the barriers of silence had been. Such taboos on knowledge and speech had been to some extent dissipated by the 'new woman' novelists of the turn of the century, by a refusal of the equation between ignorance and purity which is voiced by a number of feminist writers in the early 1900s, and by feminist and other campaigning on sexually-transmitted disease, but further work would be necessary to clarify how far sexual questions were excluded from public speech, especially for women, in the post-war period.

In the following chapter I suggest that the question whether child sexual abuse was seen by the Association as a problem occurring in families of every class or whether it was seen as one of the many problems of the slums and the unrespectable poor is one which cannot be answered on the available evidence, and this has parallels in other issues of sexual abuse and male violence. The active membership on the EWCA committee of women medical doctors and two policewomen and its connections with the city hospitals and the developing professions of health visiting and social work suggest that it was in a position to have access to information on sexual abuse and violence in a number of settings beyond any personal knowledge, but such evidence would not be recorded in the documents of the association as to do so could be to breach confidentiality as well as, possibly, 'unwritten rules' of propriety. Again, it is in the nature of both formal committee minutes and papers for publication to exclude or limit discussion of questions on which there is ambivalence and possibly dissent, except when dissent leads to a split which has organisational consequences. Although it 'surfaces' in the minutes in relation to organised campaigning on child abuse and the demand for legal changes in the treatment of prostitutes, for example, it is reasonable to suppose that sexual abuse and exploitation is

likely to have been the subject of knowledge by committee members which only is recorded when associated with a campaign or other form of action, but is otherwise lost to historical view. Private papers, such as dairies and letters of active association members could possibly give additional insight on such questions but none are known of; again this is an area which needs further research.

The lack of overt attention to questions of domestic and sexual violence against adult women is a particularly significant silence, which again can be explained either by their being unaware of it as a problem, which I think is unlikely, or because of not recording discussion of such questions in formal and working documents. As I have said, in general an issue is mentioned only when it is the subject of a public meeting or study circle (although a decision to include an issue as such means it is likely to have been the subject of prior discussion which is not otherwise recorded) or of some form of action, for example efforts to achieve legal change. Although rape and domestic violence had been feminist concerns since the 1860s in Britain, apart from attempts to change the law on divorce, separation and maintenance to give greater protection to its victims, it was not problematised as political within the women's movement in Britain until the rape crisis and refuge movements of the early 1970s, and there is evidence that an attitude that domestic violence was a matter between husband and wife and not for public intervention was very common.<Dobash 1992>

A further absence from the archive of ideological documentation again means a source of possible illumination is not available. The Association appears to have given much greater priority to campaigning and public discussion than to written elucidation and justification of its purposes, at least beyond the recruitment leaflet and anniversary publication which I cite below. A parallel may serve to clarify my point: the Association was persistent in campaigning for legalised child adoption over several years and their support for this is stated in the minutes repeatedly in relation to organised attempts by several associations working together to get a Scottish bill on this into the Parliamentary programme and on lobbying agendas; it is because of this that we know of the Association's interest. Other sources indicate that the absence of legalised child adoption allowed abuses <King 1993 p 144>, although it could also facilitate informal arrangements for illegitimate children and where families were very large within extended families. The EWCA's reasons for supporting legal adoption are not however given anywhere in its papers. This is a parallel which - frustratingly - extends to almost all areas of their interest. However, since the Scottish WCAs were, until this work, almost wholly 'hidden from history' along with the extensive network of women's movement and associated organisations in Scotland in the post-suffrage period which this archive reveals but which remains only indicated rather than established in any detail, I hope that further and future work on this and other organisations will throw light on these questions.

Another interesting question which is raised but not answered by this archive and which, if it is to be explored further, calls for work on other records of this period, is the link between liberal feminist organisations of this kind and women in the labour movement. That such links existed is suggested by a study circle and public meetings on industrial questions generally and on women in trade unions (in 1925-26 for example); in that the EWCA was active at the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s in campaigning against exploitation of female labour in catering and shop work, both areas of low wages, poor conditions and mainly female staff; and because equal pay was a persistent demand by the EWCA which it shared with some trade unions. The first reference to women and trade unions is in October 1919 when the Women's Freedom League invited a member of the EWCA committee to a meeting to discuss the Pre-war Practices Act - of considerable concern as women who had taken on work formerly done by men during the war were dismissed from those jobs after the war, which could lead to hardship. On 20th October 1919 it is reported that the Secretary had attended this meeting and that a sub-committee had been formed "of Trade Unionists to gather more information about Trade Unions and their attitude to Woman both as co-worker, and co-trade unionists". (Trade Unions were by no means encouraging of women's employment in non-traditional areas at this time nor, with limited exceptions, during the inter-war period as a whole.) There is no further reference to this committee. The Association also had a link in the early 1920s to the Edinburgh Trades Council but it is not clear what its nature was.

That a labour movement viewpoint was not however influential is suggested by their conclusion on the vexed issue of protective legislation which is closer to the 'equality feminist' position (discussed below); though not all labour movement women unequivocally supported protective legislation which singled out women workers either. The absence of employment and trade union issues, other than equal pay and opportunity, on the programmes or questionnaires which are a useful guide to their lobbying priorities suggests that this route to political influence and participation was not high on their agenda for change. The division at this period between those women who favoured working in mixed-sex political organisations and those who persisted in the suffrage campaign tradition of non-party women's organisations was one which was widening. The EWCA was firmly a non-party women's organisation but at the same time evidently valued and took opportunities to work with a wide variety of other organisations in a way which is consistent with the liberal ethos of informed and active citizenship. The determination of the EWCA to present itself as non-party political serves however (with some few exceptions) to occlude questions of political sympathies and connections in its active membership.

The questions I pose situate the EWCA primarily in terms of the history of the women's movement and its relationship to developments in welfare, especially family welfare. The organisation needs also to be understood as part of the history of civil society and of the "rich associational culture" in Britain developing from the 1820s and for women an

important means of access to public life, and of articulating and asserting interests and identity. <Morris 1997 pp 1-2 and p13> Voluntary organisation was a way of learning skills and in so doing asserting a claim to citizenship; it provided an "alternative public".[2] Voluntary association was an important strategy for excluded groups: "[T]he middle classes, women and the working people of the labour movement all used voluntary societies, at different times and in different ways, to formulate new identities and values, to experiment with new forms of social action and relationships and to provide support and help for each other. They all went on to make and sustain a claim for a share in that legitimate power that goes with recognition and status within a dominant ideology". <Morris 1990 p 436> The EWCA does exactly this: exploring and articulating a role for "organised women" in the new political settlement of the period and in doing so bringing new interests and priorities to the fore and claiming a place for its members and its interests in the public life of the city and nation. It uses the fora of its own "alternative public" to develop its ideas and the skills of presenting them, and to spread and propagandise those ideas. It also seeks to have an impact on and share in political power through organising women voters, shaping public opinion and making authoritative interventions in political processes, and through entry to the 'policy community' as a source of expertise, as well as by putting forward its members for elected and other offices.

Walkowitz has described women in late 19[th]c England as capitalising on political/cultural circumstances to gain access to a redefined public sphere. The main example she gives is how feminist campaigns on prostitution and the sexual double-standard facilitated middle class women's entry into public life "where they claimed themselves as part of a public that made sense of itself through public discourse". <1992 p 7> This model holds true for a number of key moments in first-wave feminism, using different opportunity structures and a range of discursive strategies. The development of a new form of women's organisation with its specific practices and role in relation to the state is one such formative moment. It marks a new stage in women's entry into public/political life, as a threshold of their existence as 'legitimate players'. Women were now formally admitted to the public world, they are legally *included*, albeit that their acceptance was highly qualified. They were welcomed by many leaders of public life; the participation of MPs and the Lord Provost in early EWCA events is one token of that welcome. (Edinburgh Town Council had a long record of support for women's franchise.) They *saw themselves* as included and with an important role to play; the symbolism of the vote as admitting women to full citizenship cannot be overstated in this respect, and in the difference it made to women's sense of themselves as political actors. As a new stage in women's political participation it both called for and was created within a discourse appropriate to and making sense of the new situation and practices. This discourse was carried to a large part in ideas and ideals of what women's citizenship meant and could deliver. In this

---

[2] This phrase is Fraser's. Although her argument is in relation to the present-day women's movement, her account of how excluded groups articulate and affirm their arguments and position and develop new forms of

there was a central role for women's interests which were, in the main, unproblematically defined, although the role of differences of class and marital status in creating fractures such as those around equality and difference and the divergence between autonomous women's organisations and women in party politics would make this increasingly difficult. The "women citizens" (as they repeatedly referred to themselves) of Edinburgh used a narrative of citizenship to make sense of their role as political actors and to shape a new form of women's politics. But this was a *new* political discourse mainly in terms of the kinds of organisations created to develop a broad programme of work and the fora in which they could now directly present their arguments, in the power of vote (more limited than they at first believed) and in the role of women as elected representatives (again more limited and ambiguous than they wished or at first believed). It was founded in and drew on significant continuities: particularly the experience of suffrage campaigning, in its methods, determination to remain non-party, and (for some) belief in women's political purity; the experience, methods, cluster of concerns and ideology of campaigns on questions of sexual morality and inequality and maternal and child welfare; and on traditions of women's involvement - feminist and philanthropic - in social welfare, including both the women's voluntary/philanthropic tradition and the socialist-feminist arguments articulated in the early 20th century. Drawing on such continuities, as well as expressing knowledge, ideals and interests of leaders of the women's movement of the period who had been involved in the pre-war women's movement, was also important in permitting not only women to make sense of their role and its possibilities, but others also to do so. Thus, this discourse both allowed "organised women" themselves to understand, articulate and feel comfortable in their new role but also others to understand and accept them. As a claim to power in previously wholly male fora, it was embedded within the discursive strengths and limitations of women's traditional arenas of power/knowledge, family and morality.

The Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association

The Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association was inaugurated in Edinburgh City Chambers on 9 May 1918, and, according to the minutes of the occasion: "The Lord Provost presided, and the hall was filled to overflowing with women, who showed keen interest and great enthusiasm in the *new movement.*" <my ital> My focus is on the period to 1930 because of the availability of committee papers for much of this period although I draw on some later material. At this time their objectives were to educate and encourage women to use their vote, to get more women into elected office, and to build a role in relation to the local and national state. The EWCA continued in existence from May 1918 to March 1988. The Scottish Council of WCAs which was formed in 1919 ceased meeting annually

political language before taking those arguments into wider public arenas is highly relevant. <Fraser 1989, 1992>

in 1990,[3] but the Dundee WCA (also formed in 1918) is still listed in the Dundee phone book and holds occasional meetings. <Henderson 1995 p.c.>

Women Citizens' Associations were formed throughout Britain, the first founded by Eleanor Rathbone in Liverpool in 1913 as a means to involve and increase the level of political awareness among women who had not been part of the suffrage campaign so far. The Associations were conceived of by her as a forward-looking step in a time of limited feminist activity, both as "a machinery which will be invaluable to the Women's Suffrage Movement when the time comes to take the next great forward step" and - possibly and in the event more importantly - as a means to harness women's new-found sense of citizenship and love of country as "a permanent spring of action" which would lead to better social conditions in the towns.[4] Rathbone's argument for why such an association was needed was put in *Common Cause*, 30 June 1916. It was vital, she believed, to seize the opportunity when, because of war and women's war work which was "everywhere extolled", women were conscious of their citizenship and the public was ready to acknowledge it. "What we have to consider is how this newly aroused consciousness may be so captured and fostered and directed that it will issue not only in the doing of a certain amount of immediately useful work, but will become a permanent source of strength to the feminist movement." Women "who have discovered themselves to be citizens for the first_time during the war" must be organised so that their enthusiasm did not drain away in a period of reaction and apathy after the war. Rathbone proposes as a model the Liverpool Association of Women Citizens and goes into detail about its organisation. WCAs were numerous in England and, as in Scotland, continued into the 1930s and post-war period; a London-based central association was formed in 1918 but it seems that the Scottish associations remained independent from it. Nor does it seem the case that Rathbone continued in any formal relationship with the WCAs.[5] Rathbone's

---

[3] It is not clear whether it met between 1939-45.

[4] The summary of what Rathbone sees organised women citizens as achieving as 'better social conditions in the towns' is Alberti's <1996 p24>. It captures Rathbone's meaning, but in the article she talks less succinctly of women coming to see the city's institutions and environment with the pride and responsibility they give to the net curtains in their front window and pot of marigolds in the backyard. Alert to the potential of "her own place as citizen" women will become, on an analogy with house-proud, "town-proud" and a "new force which has to be reckoned with". The Women Citizens' Associations are so under-researched that even in a political biography of as well-known a figure as Rathbone they get no more attention than this. Of the three recent 'over-view' histories of the (in practice, English) women's movement between the wars, by Pugh, Banks and Bolt, only Pugh includes them, again briefly.

[5] The London-based National Women Citizens' Association and the local associations which were its members appear to have had similar interests to the Scottish WCAs, although I have no detailed information on them for the period I have studied for the EWCA. It is possible that they were more conservative in their interests and their published statements suggest a more strictly equality approach. Their structure was different with the national committee formed in 1918 (also in May) and then encouraging local branches to form. (However some associations in England, notably in Liverpool, pre-dated this.) The national committee appears to have had a greater role in relation to local groups than the Scottish Council of WCAs had. The 25 branches in England and Wales still in existence in 1968 had been formed between 1913 and 1930 mainly, although some had been formed in the 1940s, one in the 1950s and two in the early 1960s. The Aigburth Branch in Liverpool which was the first and started by Rathbone reported that it met monthly and with 50 members.

There is no record in the EWCA papers of any association between Scottish WCAs and the London-based NWCA except for a decision not to affiliate with them because the NUSEC affilation was under consideration. The minute on 6 Jan 1920 suggests that the request to do so came from the NWCA. The NWCA gave an account

article suggests a three-fold role for the Associations: to build up a women's organisation which will be valuable when the fight for the vote begins again after the war; to involve a new group of women - it is clear that she had politically inexperienced and mainly working class women in mind: she describes the organisation as designed so that organisationally inexperienced and less-well-educated women can carry out most of its business, and as appealing to "married working women" who are "shy of offering themselves as workers to organisations controlled mainly by the well-to-do"; and to create a "new force" organised "on non-party lines for political ends" mainly in relation to local government. This latter focus she presents as an introduction to politics, a way of demonstrating to "the average working woman... the bearing of politics upon her own problems". These women she envisages as writing to the Medical Officer of Health about the state of the ashbins and organising deputations to the Parks and Gardens Committee to obtain playgrounds for their children. The Liverpool Association's 'objects' also include securing the return of women members to local government. Rathbone - elected to Liverpool City Council in 1909 - may also have wanted to build up the sort of organised and active women's movement which could work alongside women councillors, and a means of communication to the constituency of women who she saw herself as representing (beyond and as well as the constituents of her own ward).[6]

---

of its history between 1918-1968, on their fiftieth anniversary in 1968. <Fawcett Library> Like the EWCA their initial purpose was "to educate and instruct women to use what has been gained" <1968 p 6>; also like the EWCA they see their history as beginning with the Women's Suffrage Movement "and the interest that educated women began to take in politics, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century" when women were working not only for the vote but "to improve the legal status of women and to secure entry into professions hitherto reserved for men". They credit Rathbone as "inventor" of a new sort of women's organisation and refer to how war work had broadened women's outlook. <1968 p 3> The impetus to set up the national association came however from the NCW which called a meeting in London of women's organisations to pool energies "in developing educative work on women's citizenship, and on the methods of using the new voting power given to women". An organising committee was set up under the NCW but then changed its name to the NWCA in March 1918 with the meeting to inaugurate it in London on May 31 1918 (chaired by the Mayor of London). Like the EWCA they declared themselves to be strictly non-party political and were keen to encourage and support women going into politics irrespective of party; "before party politics affected local government" they worked for women candidates at local elections with "great success" they say. <p 4. Like the EWCA they drew up questions to be addressed to candidates at local and national elections "[I]n order to secure adequate consideration for women's views in local and national affairs" <NCWCA 1918> Their local government work also included conferences for women councillors in the interwar period; after 1946 these were held annually with between 200-300 delegates, and they note proudly, a great many women mayors. <pp 42-43>
A leaflet 'Women Citizens' Associations and what they are' <NCWCA 1918> gives the objects of local associations as: "To bring together on non-party, non-sectarian, and democratic lines, women's societies and individual women, in order to foster a sense of citizenship in women, to encourage the study of political, social and economic questions and to secure the adequate representation of women in local administration, and in the affairs of the nation and of the Empire". They have no policy, they say "except that of upholding the purity if public life, and the promotion of sincere effort for the public good". They state that: "They do not constitute a Women's Party but help women to qualify themselves to take part in national life". In 1946 the National Council for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC's successor) became incorporated with the NWCA and in 1949 Women for Westminster did so. In the 1939-45 war the branches were involved in local war effort but many closed during the war and never re-opened.
Beaumont has analysed the following main recurring themes for the NWCA between 1927-33: local and national representation of women; river and air pollution; pacifism; women police; children's working hours; the nationality of married women; film censorship; raising the school leaving age to 16; the right of married women to work; equal pay; independent income taxation for married women; legislation in relation to children; and animal welfare <1997 p.c.>
[6] Rathbone was elected as an as an Independent; her secretary, election agent, canvassers and workers were all women. In her 1910 election address she said "she represents the men of the Ward as well as the women of the City". <quoted Hollis p 431> Hollis gives examples of women's local groups of the NUWW and Women's

Of these purposes, the first had become less pressing as an issue when the Edinburgh WCA was founded, although it and other women's organisations continued to press for the extension of the franchise to women on the same terms as men; as to the second, the organisation was controlled "mainly by the well-to-do"; but the third, as a focus for action in local politics which would lead to better social conditions in the towns, is as good a description of the EWCA's role in the 1920s as is possible for an organisation which was fairly disparate in its activities. Like the Liverpool 'model' WCA the Edinburgh WCA held ward-based meetings and its committee was made up of women who had been suffragists and suffragettes and who became members of the Town and Parish Councils. Pugh describes the WCA's as having a "largely middle-class and non-party character" and as not very different in membership from NUSEC. <1992, pp 50-51> This is true of the Edinburgh WCA. Its' working relationship with NUSEC, which included regular correspondence, sending delegates to the annual council, and active membership of a joint committee of Scottish women's organisations set up by NUSEC to develop parliamentary legislation, suggests much in common. Locally, the distinction between the EWCA, the Edinburgh Society for Equal Citizenship and also the local branch of the National Council of Women in terms of aims and approaches is not easy to draw; there was some overlap in membership, as there was with the Women's Co-operative Guild. All can be characterised as 'post-suffrage' organisations [7] in the sense that they show a continuity from the constitutional suffrage struggle in approaches and personnel. How far it is true that this meant a failure to extend the range of the movement to encompass, as Rathbone had intended, women not previously activist as Pugh alleges is not easy to assess. The first EWCA committee, most of whom continue to be actively involved throughout the decade, includes women who have been active in the suffrage movement, including the WSPU, one member of the WEU, and some members of the NCW and the WFL, as well as women who have been involved in other aspects of the women's movement, including the campaign for higher education. The EWCA's membership increased each year from 1918 to 1930, suggesting some success in attracting 'new' women.

The EWCA was a formal, liberal feminist, and middle-class led organisation. The members of its committees include professional women - doctors, a member of the Women's Auxiliary Service and university graduates, plus the daughter of a recent Lord Provost of the city, wives of businessmen, professors and senior journalists, and a smattering of titles. In one case where prospective committee members addresses are given they are 'good' Edinburgh addresses. That they were well-connected and seen as having influence

---

Labour League supporting women members and campaigning alongside them for amenities such as lavatories for women and admission to swimming baths.
⁷ ESEC and EWCA are straightforwardly so, the former the re-formed ESWS, the latter new and explicitly about women using their vote; the NCW was formed for different reasons but seems to have changed its orientation to some extent in the light of the franchise.

is suggested by the people they invite to speak at and chair public and other meetings (which include briefings) and to social events like the Parliamentary Reception. From 1925

the President of the EWCA is always the Lady Provost of Edinburgh, emphasising both their connections and their interest in local government.[8] The records include a number of 'firsts': Edinburgh's first woman town councillor in 1919 (Mrs Ella Morison Millar); on 27 December 1923 they held a public luncheon to congratulate the (Unionist) Duchess of Atholl as the first woman MP returned in Scotland; the same year they sent their congratulations to Margaret Bondfield on her appointment (in the Labour government) as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, the first woman minister; and in 1924 celebrated the election of Councillor Millar to the Magistrates' Bench as Edinburgh's first woman Baillie.[9]

The Association's purposes, as formally stated in their Objects in the 1918 Constitution, were *citizenship education*: "The organisation of women on non-party and democratic lines in order to foster a sense of citizenship in women, and to encourage the study of civic, economic, industrial, and social questions, including national and international politics"; and *women's representation*: "To secure an adequate representation of women in local administration, and in the affairs of the nation and of the Empire". (This is close to the NWCA's objects.) In 1923 a third object was added: "all other reforms, economic, legislative and social as are necessary to secure a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women". This is the same as the objective NUSEC adopted in 1918 when it changed its name from NUWSS, and contains the reference to 'real equality' introduced by Rathbone. The third object was added as a condition of affiliation to NUSEC in 1920 and there was some disagreement about this at the time. However the introduction to the AR of 1928-29 describes the extension of the franchise in that year as the first opportunity of obtaining through the ballot box that "real equality of liberties, status and opportunities... which has *long been one of the objects of the Association*" <my ital>, suggesting it was an articulation of their aims which had become meaningful. The 'objects' are referred to fairly often in minuted discussions, suggesting that these stated aims formed a point of reference which was important to the Association. In the Association's second year, 1919-20 (the first for which an annual report is available in the archive), the Annual Report is introduced with a summary which, as well as announcing that the year under review "has been a period of great and increasing activity", begins to flesh out the 'objects': "It has availed itself of opportunities

---

[8] In every case the Lady Provost is the wife of the Lord Provost rather than the Provost in her own right: the first Lord Provost of Edinburgh - the title she took - who was a woman was Eleanor Mc Laughlin in 1988.

[9] Cllr Morison Millar is also described as a Judge of Police, and there is a reference to her as Judge Morison Millar. (AR 1928-29) This does not mean that the statement that there have been no female judges in Scotland until 1997 is inaccurate, but that Mrs Morison Millar was a Judge in the Borough Court which was the lowest rung in the Scottish Court system (now abolished), usually presided over by an appointed councillor called a Baillie who would not normally hold a legal qualification, trying offences such as prostitution, drunk and disorderly and breach of the peace, and Borough legislation. To describe her as a Judge is perhaps to exaggerate her status.

of asserting itself in municipal and parliamentary elections; it has assisted in promoting a number of causes of social importance; it has continued and developed its work in the education of women voters, and has made considerable progress in the direction of its organisation." <AR 1919-20 p 5>

An analysis of the content of their activity and the ways they approached their aims gives a deeper and slightly different picture of the purposes of the Association than the statement of objectives does. Any organisation will set out as intending certain things but may 'settle' in other ways, according to: the interests of members; political opportunity structures; what seems practicable; and what is and is not reinforced by success. The increased emphasis on lobbying and more pro-active work on legislation and in relation to government committees of inquiry on reforms they wanted to see, rather than on getting women elected to work for the reforms, is an example. A more specific example is the scheme for Home Helps argued for by the EWCA Maternity sub-committee: although the sub-committee wants to see a National Maternity Service, the Home Helps plan is one which can be lobbied for in the Town Council and with the city MoH and could be put into place quite quickly.

The 1919-1920 Annual Report suggests a very active organisation already confidently setting out to achieve its objects, and there is no apparent let-up in activity and sense of purpose by the end of the decade: in 1930 they were still reporting "growth and expansion", and this was apparently true of Scottish WCAs more generally: the "expansion and growth of the Women Citizenship Movement throughout Scotland" is referred to in 1930 in relation to a possible SCWCA and Scottish SEC amalgamation. <Index: 13 May 1930> By June 1924 there were five sub-committees meeting regularly: Parliamentary, Finance, Local Government, Housing and Social Activities; in that year there were seven public meetings, two study circles (on 'Property and Industry', which included discussion of a minimum wage, the Co-operative movement, 'Industry in the Socialistic State' and 'Is Industry a Civilising Power?'); and they sent speakers to 70 meetings of other organisations. They were part of an equally purposeful network of voluntary educational and social service associations; as well as the women's organisations I've mentioned there is continual correspondence and some joint work with a number of other associations. Those which stand out as particularly active working relations are with local branches of the League of Nations and the Workers Educational Association (with whom they co-operated in a class on 'Citizenship' in 1922), and the School of Social Study and Training, Edinburgh University, the Edinburgh Juvenile Organisations Committee, from 1925 the Howard League and in 1927 the Smoke Abatement League, both of which they were instrumental in forming local branches of. In the 1921-22 AR they begin listing the EWCA representatives on other committees: these are the Child Assault Protest Committee (two members), the Council of Social Service, the Edinburgh Branch of the WEA, the Women's Sub-Committee of the Edinburgh and District Employment Committee, and the Ratepayers' Central Organisation of Scotland.

This pattern of representation continues to 1930, with the addition in 1924 of two representatives on the Local Advisory Council of the Edinburgh Education Authority, in 1926 three on the NCW Edinburgh Branch, one on the ECSS Mental Welfare committee and one on the committee of the Edinburgh Home for Mothers and Infants. In 1928 they were part of an ECSS sub-committee to organise a commemoration of the centenary of Josephine Butler and also had a representative on the Women's Peace Crusade. The Association clearly formed a recruiting ground for 'committee women'. Similarly, the correspondence at most executive committee meetings usually includes invitations to the Association to send representatives to meetings or conferences.

The programme of six or seven public meetings in a year and two longer-term 'study circles' meeting over a period of two to three months continues to 1930. They also had regular business or general meetings of members, occasional drawing room meetings (often with an eminent guest), regular local branch meetings and branch public meetings (on similar topics to the main public meetings and quite often repeating a lecture or debate), and monthly executive and sub-committee meetings. The social aspect of their work was significant and had its own organising sub-committee, and activities like the biennial fete and dance, 'At Homes' and an annual Parliamentary reception for local MPs and other senior figures (which seems always also to have featured humorous amateur theatricals), were social and 'networking' as well as fund-raising gatherings. However in the early years any social aspects are firmly subordinated to the political and educational purposes, at least in the account they give of themselves. It was as a busy, effective organisation that Agnes Macdonald, the EWCA's first and longest serving secretary remembered the Association when she was interviewed in the *Scotsman* on March 31 1962: "[T]here was such efficiency and drive! Deputations to Government Departments and town councils! Meetings all over the country, constant efforts to get things done. And we did get things done."

The EWCA had an office in the city (at five addresses over its lifetime, the first at 21 Castle Street), staffed by volunteers and a paid secretary[10]. In February 1920 they say <9 Feb 1920>: "the idea of combining an office and club should be kept in mind", an aim which their premises at 27 Rutland Street, which they moved into in 1925 or 1926 which were big enough to hold General Meetings in and had an East Room suitable for a handicrafts circle to meet in and for which they bought a piano, seems to have gone some way towards meeting. Membership was over 400 at the end of the first month, and 1065 at the end of the first year and continued to slowly build up throughout the following decade: in May 1924 there were 1239 members and in May 1930, 1647. Membership subscriptions were 1/- a year, an amount which was not increased until 1938 when it was doubled to 2/- <Index>. It was evidently important to keep the cost of membership at this level and to fund activities by other means; in May 1921 the "minimum subscription" was

---

[10] AR 1919-20 has a reference to clerical work done by volunteers including addressing nearly 14,000 envelopes and post cards in the year.

retained at 1/- but members were to be persuaded to subscribe more if possible <13 May 1921>; again in June 1929 the Finance Committee report that organisational costs at an average 10/- per member are not covered by membership fees but again there was no increase in the annual subscription and they hoped that members would voluntarily opt for a larger fee <AR 28-29>. This suggests a policy of better-off members, on a self-assessing basis, subsidising those who were unable to pay more than the minimum membership fee (a policy not dissimilar to that of many women's movement organisations today). Membership was on an individual basis: there was no arrangement for outside bodies to affiliate to the EWCA. Effort was put into retaining members. By 9 Feb 1920 there were 235 lapsed members, and it was decided to call on them personally. A Visiting sub-committee was set up to do this.

Annual Income/Expenditure in 1919-1920 was £383.15.4 and in 1920-1921 was £1009.6.10. Over the decade it fluctuated, in some cases in relation to the degree of fund-raising activity for associated activities. In 1923-24 <AR>, when it was £619.16.6, there is concern that they have "not yet satisfactorily solved the money problem which is common to every voluntary organisation for education" (some things never change...). In 1926-27 it rose to £1075.7.5 and in 1929-30 it was £911.6.10. Their income came - roughly equally - from membership subscriptions and fund-raising events: jumble sales, bridge parties, 'at homes', a 'flannel dance', the annual Parliamentary reception and, every second year, a major fete followed by a dance (the fete in 1920 raised £863). Nor should we overlook "the Member who supplies tablet for sale" (thanked in 1928-29 AR). These fund-raising skills were occasionally exercised on behalf of other organisations, for the Edinburgh Infirmary in 1920 and a flag day on behalf of the Simpson and Elsie Inglis Maternity Hospitals to develop ante-natal work (which it was EWCA policy to promote) in 1927, which raised £1564.0.2d. They also devoted substantial fund-raising efforts on behalf of organisations which the EWCA had a major role in bringing into being: notably the 'Industrial and Farm Colony for the Permanent Care of the Feeble-Minded' which the EWCA began promoting and fund-raising for in 1924 <see below>, and in 1927, having extended the appeal to all members of the SCWCA, handed over £12,000 in total. Similarly the Edinburgh Welfare Housing Trust was initiated by the EWCA Housing sub-committee in 1928 as a 'free-standing' organisation to finance and provide reduced rent housing for "selected families with young children" and the EWCA raised money for it as well as vigorously promoting it.

As well as the sub-committees dealing with specific aspects of work there were local branches organised in the electoral wards on the model Rathbone had suggested; a model which could have built up a formidably influential organisation in relation to local government, although this was not achieved. The original formation of sub-committees and branches <6 Nov 1918> makes clear their intention of making their influence felt

through the electoral process.[11] Policy was also developed in a methodical way through the Study Circles which fed into the organisation's lobbying and electoral work by building a knowledge base, passing resolutions (usually a study group concluded with a set of resolutions which were put to the executive committee and general meetings) and/or holding a general meeting for members to discuss its conclusions. (The subjects of Study Circles are discussed in the following chapter.)

Their style and ways of working show a continuity from the constitutional suffrage campaigns and, apart from the creation of a city-wide ward-based structure, broadly follows the methods developed by the constitutional suffrage societies: including petitions, letters to the press, deputations, large public meetings and memorials from local notables to MPs. They also worked with sympathetic MPs through Parliamentary Questions and to promote Private Member's Bills, and assiduously passed resolutions which are sent to appropriate authorities or, later, are channelled via the Scottish Council of WCAs or NUSEC. This again is very like NUSEC which Lewis describes as using contacts in the House of Commons to promote Private Member's Bills and publicising their activities through deputations, memorials, meetings, and letters to *The Times*<Lewis 1975 pa 2>) Very much in common with suffrage campaigning is their firmly non-party stance. although members were free to work individually for any party, and some did <18 Feb 1921> The emphasis on study and education reflects the return to a wider remit of a women's organisation after 1918; if they were to be authoritative and effective there was a great deal to take on board across a broad spectrum of issues. The influence of Alexia Jack, Agnes Macdonald and Lilias Mitchell as ex-WSPU activists and organisers does not seem to have led to an inheritance of more militant methods, but it is likely that they were not seen as needed, and as Doughan has suggested, the need for respectability was strong.

Vera Brittain in 1929 observed an exchange between a feminist leader from before the war and a young woman. The former remarked "I like my committee meetings to go on all day... You really feel then that you've got something done". The younger woman (who reflects Brittain's own views) replied "All day! But when do you do your work?" and the older feminist responded "I think committees *are* work!" Brittain uses this exchange to

---

[11] The Municipal and Parliamentary sub-committees were to consist of five convenors, one for each division of the city each of whom would be responsible for a divisional sub-committee composed of voters in the division (though it is not clear that this was ever achieved). A South Division Branch with representatives for the Merchiston. Morningside and Newington wards of the city was the first to be formed <AR 1919-20>; by 1921 Central. West and North branches have been added, and a branch in the East Division was formed by 1926. All five branches were still functioning at the end of the decade. although there was a period when the South Division Branch ceased. The local government sub-committee also aimed to 'cover' the city, in 1927-28 it had representatives from 21 wards of the city, it announced. In that year they report with some satisfaction that before each (municipal) election well-attended meetings were held to organise the work of canvassing and of putting questions at meetings etc, so "work was therefore carried through in each Division and Ward in a much more methodical and efficient manner". <AR 1927-28> Burness. commenting on the considerable barriers to women participating in politics says that it was "a time when women rarely asked questions at political meetings, let alone addressed them...", which emphasises the significance of the WCA's work and their emphasis on organising hustings and opportunities for women to ask questions. <Burness 1992>

discuss the differences between pre and post-war feminism, presenting the latter as "economic", meaning that women's need to work and be self-supporting, whether married or not, is now the primary aim and only if there's time after that, the political work of committees and speeches. <quoted in P Berry A Bishop 1985 pp 105-6> In this sense the EWCA has more in common with pre-war feminism (although many of its active members were employed), and if the "platform woman" was a creature of the 1890s, the early century and well into the 1920s was the time of the "committee woman", as organisational and political skills were honed by those who had time and opportunity.

That the Association's membership was *women only* is nowhere stated, but I suggest that this was because this was too obvious to be stated. In a gendered political culture which had only begun to be broken down, an organisation for women was not contested; what was less usual was the kind of work it claimed as its own though that, as I will argue below, also showed significant continuities. There are no men listed as office holders or committee members; however men (often eminent and/or ministers of the church) commonly chair and speak at public meetings and a few men were 'panel speakers' on behalf of the EWCA, although they are listed separately. The description of business meetings as "open to all women" and a reminder in the minutes to *add* "men and women invited" to advertising material for certain meetings indicates that this may not be standard.

Their formality is characteristic of voluntary organisations in the period, in the sense of having a constitution and operational procedures which are adhered to with some care - a sense of, and need to be seen as, 'doing things properly'. Almost all decisions are voted on, although the occasions when there is unanimous agreement far outnumber those when the vote is close. The Executive Committee is elected by a ballot of members at the AGM. An Emergency Committee, made up of the convenors of the sub-committees and the chairman of the Executive Committee, is empowered to take decisions if necessary between the (usually monthly) meetings of the Executive Committee. Resolutions and proposals of the sub-committees are first put to the Executive Committee and thence to general meetings, and the sub-committees give reports of their work to the Executive Committee regularly, as do EWCA representatives on campaigning groups the Association is closely involved with. While all major decisions have to be taken by a Business or General Meeting and thus voted on at least in principle by all members, the Executive Committee sets the agenda for those meetings and manages them fairly tightly. The sense of adhering to proper procedures and need to be seen as following the rules was a characteristic of groups using voluntary associations as an 'alternative public'. During the 19th century the middle-class male population learnt how to conduct meetings like this; one of the ways in which women and working class people made a claim on taking part in public life was that they demonstrated they knew how to follow such procedures and hence claimed a legitimacy from such practices. <Morris 1990> Women's groups had also developed a considerable tradition in managing committees and organisations through

philanthropic work and this carried over into women's political organisations. If they did things properly this should not however be equated with douceness. Business meetings were noisy, at least in the view of another society meeting downstairs. According to its minute of 19 Dec 1923 the Executive committee decided to do nothing in response to a complaint from the Edinburgh & District Radio Society that the noise of applause at the EWCA meetings made it impossible for them to do ... well, whatever a Radio Society did do (a perhaps unsympathetic response given that this was likely to include listening). The minute of the following meeting however, 22 Jan 1924, indicates that the Radio Society has followed this with a more specific complaint, objecting to "the noise made by the striking of umbrellas <sic> on the floor of the Arts Hall". The Executive agree to ask that this method of applause be discontinued.

A comparison of the second Annual Report (for 1919-20) and the twelfth, a decade later in 1929-30, shows that the main structure of the organisation has remained as it was set up, although now with nine sub-committees and five divisions, plus two additions, both in different ways new departures, a Dramatic and Musical Section and a Junior Section for "young people who are soon to exercise the power of the vote". The annual programme continues on the same pattern as earlier in the decade with, in the year 1929-30 six public meetings, a conference and two study circles. The comparison also emphasises the local government and university connections of the Association, and a degree of status among the committee members, which has increased over the decade with the attainment of qualifications and/or civic roles and honours by some of the women who were also committee members in 1919-20, including two who are now councillors, a high proportion of JPs, and a higher proportion of graduates. The comparison also shows a continuity in senior membership, and this continuity as well as the detailed account in the minutes suggests commitment and time-consuming activity by many senior members. Most of the Vice-Presidents also feature strongly in the minutes of the executive committee, regularly attending and contributing to meetings, running sub-committees, and acting as the Association's representatives at the SCWCA, conferences etc. It is possible that the continuing leadership role of some members could have had the effect of making the organisation rigid and not allowing new members into senior roles. There is rising membership throughout the Association's first decade but most early committee members seem to have continued to be active in the organisation. However of the 20 members of the Executive Committee in 1929-30 only one is the same as in 1919-20, Dr Garden Blaikie, although many of the vice-presidents in 1930 had been committee members in 1919. The route seems an orderly hierarchy, via a role in a divisional branch or sub-committee onto the executive committee, and hence to vice-presidency after due time, effort and eminence. [12]

---

[12] In 1930 Agnes Macdonald was secretary, a paid position she held continuously from the Association's formation; Miss A.B. Jack was the Hon. Secretary with Miss A McGregor as Treasurer, also positions they held from the outset. Of the eleven Vice-Presidents in 1930 only three are not office holders in 1919-20: they are Mrs Griffith Thomas, OBE, Lady Wallace MBE, and Lady Sleigh JP. Lady Sleigh had no position in 1919-20 but was President of the EWCA from 1925-27 and Lady Wallace was a member of the first executive committee of the

Apart from Mrs Kennedy-Fraser who was a musicologist, the interests of these influential members cluster in education, social work, medicine and public health, and local government. Dr Chalmers Watson was the first medical graduate of Edinburgh University and Dr Garden Blaikie was also an early medical graduate. Mrs Ella Morison Millar was the first woman councillor elected to Edinburgh Town Council, and Mrs Euphemia Somerville the second. Another founding member, Lady Leslie Mackenzie, had been a member of the Edinburgh School Board. More detail on committee members of the Association and their interests is given in the next chapter.

Networking and joint-working with other organisations

Although the EWCA functioned as part of a network of active Edinburgh voluntary associations, mainly with a social reform/public health perspective, its main working relationships were with other women's organisations, including other Scottish WCAs and SECs. In December 1919 several of the Scottish WCAs came together in Glasgow to establish the Scottish Council of Women Citizens' Associations[13], which continued to meet annually (it is not clear whether it did so 1939-1945) until it was disbanded in May 1990. It appears to have been wholly separate from the English WCAs. The Edinburgh WCA was an active member of the SCWCA, with, in later years, its office functioning as an office also for the SCWCA. At the first annual conference (in Greenock, 22/23 April 1921) there were 15 member associations who sent representatives and in 1934 the SCWCA had 21 member associations. <EWCA 'Quarterly Letter' 1934> When it was disbanded in 1990 it had

---

EWCA, formed in 1918. The other Vice-Presidents are: Mrs Kennedy-Fraser, now CBE, Mus D, and a - somewhat plainer - committee member in 1919-1920; Miss AB Jack FEIS; Miss Lees JP (also a Vice-President and Convenor of the West Division in 1919-1920); Lady Carlaw Martin, also now a JP (a committee member in 1919-1920); Lady Leslie Mackenzie, now FEIS (proposer of the motion to found the WCA in 1918 and chair of the provisional committee which set it up, a committee member in 1919-1920, and a past-President of the SCWCA); Cllr Mrs Somerville JP (a committee member in 1919-20, and also then a councillor though not a JP), Cllr Mrs Morison Millar, MBE JP (also a councillor and committee member in 1919-20), and Dr Chalmers Watson CBE, MD, who was chairman in 1919-20. Of these Vice-Presidents, Lady Leslie Mackenzie, Dr Chalmers Watson, Lady Wallace, Lady Carlaw Martin, Mrs Kennedy-Fraser, Mrs Somerville and Miss Lees were all members of the first elected committee of the Association, and only Ella Morison Millar among the 1929 Vice-Presidents was not a founding member. Also members of the first committee were Miss CS Ainslie, Miss Helen Mclachlan, Elizabeth and Sarah Munro and Mrs Cockburn (of the Women's Co-operative Guild).[12]
The first President was Mrs Whigham (sister of the then Lord Provost) and there were six Vice-presidents. These were Lady Findlay (who became the next President), Mrs Wauchope, Lady Ewing and Lady Gibson and two women who emphasise the Association's connection to the main campaigns of the Scottish women's movement in the past, for higher education and suffrage, Dame Louisa Lumsden (a member of the first course of university lectures for women at Edinburgh in 1868 and one of the founders of University College in St Andrews, and active in the constitutional suffrage movement from 1908 as president of the Aberdeen society and a member of the committee of the Scottish Federation of Societies for Women's Suffrage) and Sarah Elizabeth Siddons Mair, one of the most central figures in Edinburgh as President since 1865 (when she was 19) of the Ladies' Edinburgh Debating Society, a founder (at age 22) of the Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women, and from 1907 president of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage and subsequently of the Scottish Federation. Of the founding members and office-holders, eight have a recorded membership of either constitutional or militant suffrage organisations.
[13] The Council consisted of two reps from each WCA in Scotland. Its role was to co-ordinate the work of the Scottish WCAs and undertake joint action when necessary, & to arrange panels of speakers and an annual conference. <AR 20-21> The 15 were Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, St Andrews, Nairn, Aberdeen, Inverness, Greenock, Leven, Bothwell, Coatbridge, Dumbarton, Selkirk, Kirkcudbright and Newton Stewart.

nine member associations. WCA members contributed to the Scottish activities for International Women's Year in 1975 and to the processes setting up the Scottish Convention of Women in the late 1970s. <Davies 1997 p.c> In the later years new members do not seem to have been recruited and the remaining associations in this period seem to have been mainly social groups, with coach outings, talks on floral decoration, rheumatism and arthritis, and Bridge evenings. However they raised funds for the Pankhurst Centre in Manchester, and wrote to congratulate Margaret Thatcher on becoming the first woman Prime Minister of Britain. <1988, 1989 and 1990 SCWCA minutes>

Two resolutions were passed at the first SCWCA conference in 1921 (one firmly 'equality', the other undoubtedly 'welfare'): against discrimination in taxation for single women and widows (who were unfairly treated in comparison to married men without family), and on controlled milk (a health issue, in relation to infant welfare and TB). Papers were read on changing the law on the protection of children against abuse (a major issue for the Association which is discussed below). At the second SCWCA conference (in Dundee in 1922) the two main subjects discussed were 'Child Adoption' (an issue which both the SCWCA and the EWCA were concerned with throughout this period) and 'Mental Deficiency' (again an issue which both the SCWCA and the EWCA were concerned with throughout this period, see below) and they published a pamphlet on the latter. Conference subjects and resolutions put to conference were forwarded from the constituent associations. In general the interests of the SCWCA were broadly co-extensive with those of the EWCA.

Co-operation with other organisations was an important part of their way of working. Although, as I've suggested above, there was an apparent proliferation of fairly similar women's organisations, these groups campaigned together on a regular basis, as the EWCA minutes with their week-by-week account of activities show. This ranged from one organisation sending on to others a resolution for which they were seeking support, to joint deputations to local MPs, the Scottish Office or the Lord Advocate, and jointly organised conferences and public meetings on specific issues, plus long-term co-operation on joint committees and campaigns, of which the most outstanding are the Local Elections Committee, the campaign against Child Outrage, the mental deficiency campaign and the NUSEC instigated joint committee on Scottish legislation, which was formed in 1925 to draft and promote bills "specially affecting the interests of Scottish women", as NUSEC did for English and UK legislation. It was a common practice for one organisation to initiate activity on a particular concern and bring together other interested organisations to work on it in a joint committee for a period of time. Apart from the other Scottish WCAs, the EWCA's main co-operation is with the Edinburgh Society for Equal Citizenship and the local branch and Scottish Council of the National Council of Women. This way of working with other organisations continued throughout the decade and into the 1930s: for example in 1932 the EWCA in co-operation with the NCW (Edinburgh

Branch) and the Edinburgh Juvenile Organisations Committee planned a conference on the *Children and Young Persons Bill* 1932. < Index 5 Feb 1932>

Their women's movement contacts were also UK-wide, with delegates and resolutions regularly sent to the NUSEC Annual Council in London, and links to other London-based organisations including the Six Point Group, the Women's Freedom League, the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and Child (there was no separate Scottish Council until 1946), and the Women's Peace Crusade. Additionally they had some international contact. Three members attended the 11th Congress of the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in Berlin in 1929 and the following year Lady Carlaw Martin gave a report on the International Council of Women meeting at Vienna. In addition the EWCA subscribed to a number of publications which suggests they were able to participate in UK and international women's movement discussions through such fora, which were made available to members at the office. [14]

A number of women's organisations were founded in this period, including the NFWI (during the war), the Mothers' Union and the YWCA, and (later) the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds. Beaumont distinguishes these groups from feminist organisations because they saw themselves as not political and because they did not include "traditional egalitarian reforms" among their principle aims and objectives: "[*I]nstead*, each embraced the prevailing ideology of domesticity and acknowledged that women had an important obligation to care for their husbands and children." <1996 p 4 my ital>. In this she draws on a distinction between equality and women accepting family responsibilities which I have argued is not historically tenable. However she also argues, as I do, that this did not mean they saw women in the family only as dependants and like the EWCA these organisations encouraged women to become involved in local and national affairs. There is a considerable overlap in the agendas of the EWCA and these mass membership organisations (especially on issues like maternal welfare, housing and education), although the EWCA clearly saw itself as political, if not *party* political. Like the mass membership organisations it did not apparently question married women's family responsibilities. It is unlikely that it would have done so: as I have suggested, a view of egalitarian feminism in the 1920s as opposing female domestic roles and social feminism as accepting them reads a later political position into the history of the women's movement. As there was in Scotland, there was an overlap in membership between the various English women's organisations in this period as well as in agendas; Beaumont describes this as a "vibrant female network". Another parallel is in the emphasis in their rhetoric on women's rights and duties as citizens <1996 p 6>, and in an emphasis on

---

[14] From November 1920 they subscribed to *Time & Tide*, the feminist political weekly founded in 1920 by Lady Rhondda, which Dr Chalmers-Watson was also associated with, and the *Woman's Leader*, the journal of NUSEC and successor to *Common Cause;* they also received a monthly letter from the "National Union". They later added a subscription to *News* the paper of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance. On 9 Feb 1920 there is a reference to '*The New Citizen*', newspaper of the National WCAs. I have not been able to find any reference elsewhere to this publication.

education for citizenship. Beaumont comments that "[N]on-feminist women's societies may have embraced domesticity, but they were also active in securing citizenship rights for women". She concludes, as I do, that a broader interpretation of the history of the women's movement is needed. <1996 p 7>

Andrews demonstrates that overlapping networks was characteristic of the NFWI also, with links through personnel or joint campaigns and discussion of ideas; for example, speakers from NUSEC and the Six Point Group addressed meetings and contributed to the NFWI journal and some WI members were also members of NUSEC, the FWG, the Six Point Group and the Birth Control Council. They also encouraged members to vote and to stand for local government and parliament. <Andrews 1997 pp 28-29>

An apparent similarity in style and aims raises questions about how the post-suffrage women's organisations saw their roles and differences. Questions about an overlap in their work also occurred to them, and there were various proposed amalgamations. These lengthy and to some extent torturous negotiations suggest that each organisation was jealous of its autonomy and that there were differences in aims, approach, status and views. The proposed amalgamation between the EWCA and the Edinburgh Society of Equal Citizenship was something of a saga and takes up a great deal of space in the Executive committee minutes for 1920 and 1921. It is mainly interesting in showing the Association's concern for its independence, and because it brings them formally into contact with NUSEC, a contact which continues after the talks break down locally. The affiliation to NUSEC was a condition suggested by the ESEC when they proposed the merger <13 April 1920> and was much discussed with letters going back and forward and some committee members feeling it smacked of "subordination".[15] Given the initial

---

[15] Negotiations opened on 29 March 1920 and went on for nearly ten months. Discussions concluded (for the meantime) at the Business Meeting of 24 Feb 1921 with the Executive Committee are recommending no action "as the scheme was unworkable". However, after a meeting with ESEC on 16th April they had agreed to the plan in principle, with certain amendments, but were "unanimous on the advantages of amalgamation", especially sharing resources. (ESEC would transfer 300 members.) The affiliation to NUSEC was however seen as a problem and after a further exchange of letters NUSEC requested <12 Nov 1920> that the committee meet Miss Rathbone and Miss Macadam (Rathbone was President of NUSEC and Elizabeth Macadam. a Scottish settlement worker her lifelong companion) on 19 November "to discuss the future relations of the two societies". This was followed by a letter from Miss Macadam agreeing to the affiliation of the EWCA on the terms suggested by the EWCA at that meeting <3 Dec 1920>. The NUSEC affiliation now sorted out. local negotiations began, but the ten point scheme drawn up by ESEC was eventually rejected by the EWCA. Soon afterwards <24 march 1921> the Equal Citizenship Society is reported to have withdrawn from the Local Elections Committee. Other amalgamations were proposed in the 1930s: in the early 1930s there was a proposal that the SCWCA enter into negotiations with NUSEC "with a view to prevention of overlapping in the work of the two national bodies whose objects now appear to be identical..." and to the possibility that SCWCA could take over the work of the Scottish Federation of Societies for Equal Citizenship. <Index: 13 May 1930> An Amalgamation of all Scottish Women's Societies was proposed in 1931 < - Index: General Meeting 21 Jan 1931> which would bring together WCAs, Townswomen's Guilds and other members of the "Scottish Union". In 10.10.36 it was suggested that co-operation be tried for one year with the National Council for Equal Citizenship but "[D]ifficulties arose and abandoned" <Index> There was also discussion of amalgamation with the NCW in 1938 < Index: 12 and 24 March 1938> which also came to nothing, although the two organisations worked even more closely together during the 1930s.
If the merger with the ESEC was an problem, other less troublesome affiliations included affiliation to the Edinburgh WEA <20th Sept 1921> and an affiliation to the National NCW but a decision not to do so locally

wariness, in practice the connection with NUSEC seems to have been of use to the EWCA. They worked closely on a number of issues, especially over legislation, and NUSEC was a regular source of information. In the years for which minutes are available they regularly sent delegates to the NUSEC Annual Council and submitted, with due discussion and consideration, motions to it. After the division of NUSEC soon afterwards the EWCA chose to affiliate to the National Council for Equal Citizenship "in view of the value of its political work" but not to affiliate to the National Union of Guilds for Citizenship, the wing which became the Townswomen's Guilds <17 Oct 1932 Index> This suggests both that the EWCA saw its political work as primary identity - it did, after all, have social, arts and craftwork activities not dissimilar to the Guilds' - and that, even although it differed from NUSEC on key items of the new feminist agenda, it did not share the disaffection from NUSEC which its new feminism caused in some groups.

The informed citizen: To educate and encourage women to use their vote

This objective was pursued in three main ways, including education of their own members and of the general public; it makes up a considerable part of the Association's work. This is both a classic liberal approach to the political and part of a discourse of informed, participatory citizenship as opposition to fascism which feminists elsewhere also played an active part in, and which would become more important in the 1930s.[16] The EWCA had an organised panel of speakers who were sent on request to a range of other organisations: Churches, Co-operative Guilds, Scottish Mothers' Unions, Rural Institutes, Party Associations, Girls' Clubs, Men's Clubs, Rotary Clubs, Regimental and Social Clubs <AR1928-29>. These speakers, they said, "will interest your members and create a feeling of individual responsibility for the good government of the city and of the country" <printed letter n.d./1925-27> In 1925-26 they sent 146 speakers to other organisations, "a record total" and "[G]ratifying evidence of the Association's increasing usefulness..." The record was broken for the three following years, peaking at 191 in 1928-29. They spoke on "questions relating to Citizenship" and comment in 1924-25 that "[I]n the formation of a well-informed public opinion, the only hope for a democratic state, the Women Citizens Associations may be justified in claiming some share." [17]

<19 Dec 1923>. The EWCA became corporate member of the League of Nations Union, 26 March 1930. At that time a League of Nations Study Group was meeting and they sent representatives to a conference on the League.
[16] The Association for Education in Citizenship was founded in 1934 by Sir Ernest Simon and Eva Hubback, formerly parliamentary secretary of NUSEC and a founding committee member of the Townswomen's Guilds. The view of citizenship it held was similar to that of EWCA in emphasising public service and the exercise of rights. See: *Education in Citizenship* Simon and Hubback 1934, cited by Beaumont 1996 p 85. Other contemporary writings on citizenship reflect the themes of the value of voluntary philanthropic work and the need for an educated public opinion. <Beaumont 1996 p 88>
[17] The EWCA syllabus of public meetings and study groups was planned annually by a sub-committee and agreed or amended by the Executive. Suggestions for it were also made by members at the AGM. (In 1920 one woman proposed fewer meetings, another - loyally - demanded more meetings. Meetings on International Questions were also requested.) 3,500 copies of their programme were printed in September 1920. There were also ad hoc meetings, on urgent issues and responding to request or the availability of an interesting speaker. Speakers at public and other meetings were generally 'expert' with a high proportion of the legally qualified, academics, and the generally great and good. The minutes <7.10.19> refer to a planned meeting with Eleanor Rathbone (which

At the end of the decade there was a SCWCA decision to publish the *Scottish Women Citizens Quarterly*, and the EWCA were much involved in this. The first reference is made to the *Quarterly* in AR 1928-29, and that the SCWCA would accept limited financial responsibility for its publication and distribution but the EWCA would appoint an Editorial Committee. Miss AB Jack may have been the editor. There is also a reference to the first issue in May 1929, which had articles on the General Election by "leading representatives of the three parties" plus short reports of work of the Associations. In the SCWCA AR <1929-30> it states that the *Quarterly* has finished its first year of existence and has balanced its accounts, and that the March issue "is particularly useful and interesting... It contains brief and accurate explanations of every phase of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1929, written by experts in every Department of Local Government". Subscriptions are to be handled by the Edinburgh office and are now 2d per copy (8d p.a.) However (in a way which has been replicated by later Scottish women's movement magazines) finance was a continuing problem and the *Quarterly* did not survive.

The active citizen: To build a role in relation to the local and national state

My summary of their main area of work apart from citizenship education as 'to build a role in relation to both the local and national state' is not how it would have been phrased by the Association, nor is there any articulation of aims in the archive which gives an explicit account of this role. In the absence of discussion of aims other than that contained in the statement of 'objects', it is necessary to infer the EWCA's goals also from what they did or tried to do, and for them the vote was both a defining condition of citizenship and, in Rathbone's phrase, "a practical instrument for effecting reforms". <cited by Alberti 1996 p 24> The WCAs were conceived by Rathbone as a means of involving women in improving social conditions and, as I have suggested, this is a good summary of the EWCA's main, though not exclusive, area of concern in practice. Their two most active sub-committees from the outset are the Parliamentary and the Local Government; the sub-committees they add are Housing in 1923, which has a role both in relation to Local Government and the voluntary sector, and Maternity in 1927, which examines how far local authorities have taken up the powers conferred them in maternal and infant welfare and is also concerned with additional maternity services and benefits to be delivered by the state.

---

may not have gone ahead, although she did visit twice later); on 27 Oct 1921 there was a proposal for Mr B Shaw to be invited to address the Association - not all are keen though the invitation is agreed, but there is no reference to the outcome; on 2 Nov 1921 there is a reference to Mrs Stocks as forthcoming speaker (Mary Stocks was a leading 'new' feminist and a member of the original Family Endowment Committee in 1917). Typically an issue enters the EWCA agenda first as a public meeting, is then made the subject of a study group which will conclude by recommending to the Association that it take certain actions. The focus on beginning by studying an issue in some depth is similar to the approach taken by the Fabian Women's Group before the war, and reflects the WCA comment that "a woman can use her vote to better purpose if she has studied public questions". <SCWCA leaflet n.d> From both these sources the EWCA, sometimes jointly with the SCWCA, published a number of leaflets[17]. Arrangements for speakers, either coming to speak at Public Meetings, or requests for speakers from other organisations and from other WCAs, are a perpetual feature of early Executive committee minutes. Later they are not minuted in as much detail.

The content of their lobbying and related work shows that their most active areas of interest and influence were in relation to local government and to a lesser extent the Scottish Office (especially in relation to its Home and Health responsibilities and in monitoring and contributing to departmental committees of inquiry). It should be emphasised that, far from having a static nature, the state was in the interwar period undergoing considerable change, including the changing relationship of the national to the local state and the [growing role and importance of local government]. This provided opportunities for input by voluntary associations like the EWCA and the women's and social reform associations with which they worked, but was also influenced by such associations and a shared discourse of planned and professionally-led public intervention and of welfare provision and public health measures. The increase in local authority responsibilities for health and welfare was especially significant: in terms of social-liberal feminist priorities this was most important in relation to infant and maternal health, the role of school medical services, and the additional responsibilities after local government reform 1929, in which EWCA members who were councillors became actively involved. As I discuss below, the Local government (Scotland) Act, 1929 which consolidated the work of the three local authorities into one and provided for statutory committees, a process which the Association took an informed interest in, was a mixed blessing in terms of women's political participation in that it appears to have reduced the opportunities for women to be elected in their traditional areas of Parish Council and education authority work. However EWCA members who were town councillors played key roles on the new committees, and the increased role of public health and housing in the council's work was consistent with EWCA priorities. The Act also permitted public access to council meetings, which the Association had lobbied for. Britain has always had a mixed economy of welfare and in the early 20thc and until the second world war this was tilted in favour of the voluntary sector and local government, both of which offered more space for women's agency than central government welfare state legislation. <Lewis 1994 pp 39-40> The boundary between voluntary work, voluntary associations and the local state was a permeable one at this time and one which, as I discuss below, 'organised women' crossed.

The question of how to assess the role and influence of feminist organisations in relation to the state faces an additional layer of difficulty in Scotland. (This is still at issue. <Breitenbach 1997>) For a Scottish organisation there is the question of what is meant by the state as Scotland was a "nation without a state" in the sense of not having its own Parliament. < McCrone 1992> However it had many independent institutions and the period of the EWCA's active life saw an increased devolution to the Scottish Office of specific functions and responsibilities. <Brown et al 1996> If it is not straightforward to decide which legislation was seen as the province of women's groups <Pugh 1992 p109-110>, it is especially difficult to assess which proposed legislation was seen as applying to Scotland and this was and is not always made explicit. How much did their distance from the

lobbies and committee rooms Mrs Fawcett celebrated, and NUSEC successfully inhabited, matter? This did not prevent the EWCA from holding a view on and commenting on UK legislation, but, as I have said, the Scottish Office and Lord Advocate appear to have been the primary targets of their lobbying and more open to their influence, and local government was very important to them: the City Chambers offered a closer and perhaps more congenial set of lobbies and committee rooms.[18]

Very little in the records throws light on how they saw the Association's Scottish identity. Evidently they saw a need for an independent national Scottish organisation. This is reinforced by the wariness with which they responded to the possibility of affiliation to NUSEC which included a fear of loss of independence - not at all at issue in relation to federation with the other Scottish WCAs. The absence of articulation may suggest either that it is something taken for granted or, conversely, that it was unimportant. I suggest the former. The explicit references to Scottish affairs include their position on the status of the Secretary of State for Scotland, which they felt strongly about when it was being discussed in relation to the *Secretary for Scotland* bill in 1920 and 1921. The next recorded reference is not until 1933, when they resolved: "[T]hat in view of the prominence of the many discussions on the present methods of administering the affairs of Scotland and the public expression of varying opinions thereon, the Government hold an inquiry by Royal Commission... into the question" <1 May 1933, Index>, a resolution unlikely to be put forward by an Association which saw no need for any change.

Two main areas of political work are prominent in the papers, and continue as a focus for most of the decade: *representation*, in the sense of getting more women as representatives in elected positions and on boards and advisory committees, and *lobbying*, often following on from study of an issue, exerting influence on behalf of women (and with an apparently unproblematic view of women's interests). In both cases these activities were carried out in relation to local government and to Westminster, though work to get women elected was more extensive and more successful in relation to local government. There is a parallel in their approach to that of NUSEC, as Pugh describes it: that their post-suffrage programme was to be achieved both by influencing the policy of the political parties, as the NUWSS had sought to do, but also by promoting the election of women committed to a feminist programme; the way the EWCA developed this work has close parallels with the work of Societies for Equal Citizenship throughout Britain. <Pugh 1992 pp 53-61> Both EWCA's representation and lobbying work range across interests which can be described as 'equality' and 'welfare', and some which fit neither category at all neatly - though this is a point more apparent in relation to lobbying. Representation, while part of a discourse of equality, is for a purpose, which is to work on behalf of women and to permit women to work on behalf of society, much of which work can be

---

[18] Since women could vote and stand in local government elections in Scotland from 1882 it is interesting that organising for them to do so (in Edinburgh at least) does not appear to begin until after the parliamentary franchise. Women were however active members of the Edinburgh School Board.

categorised as 'welfare'. Women's movement arguments for increased representation in political fora are characteristically phrased in terms of representation *for,* and power *to.* <Brown 1996> In this case representation appears as a power to achieve goals which are both equality (for example the promotion of women teachers, an effective Sex Disabilities Act) *and* welfare, but predominantly the latter. Representation *for* sees the vote as a means of effecting reforms; the approach Rathbone expressed when she described the vote as "the keystone of the edifice" which the NUWSS sought to build - it holds the arch in place, the arch cannot exist without it, but it is far from the whole thing. *<Common Cause* 5 July 1917 p163; Alberti p 24 > The non-party position the WCA and SECs took at this time makes sense only against a background assumption of representation *for,* that there are goals and interests which women of all (and no) parties share and will work towards *as* women. This was in the short term confirmed by the approach of the first woman to take a seat in Parliament, Lady Astor, but fairly quickly became problematic.

Increasing women's representation is the activity to which the EWCA gave most initial attention. One of the first actions of the EWCA (prompted by a letter from the NUWSS) was to send resolutions on women being made eligible to sit in Parliament to the Prime Minister and Home Secretary. <4 Oct 1918> In the first five years of the Association the municipal and parliamentary sub-committees (covering the Town Council, Parish Council, Education Authority and Parliamentary politics) are the only 'issue-based' sub-committees[19], with the exception of the sub-committee on Pure Milk which is listed in the second AR, but not thereafter. When the "Parliamentary Bills sub-committee" was formed on 1st March 1920 its purposes were described as to examine bills and to draw up a Parliamentary Programme. The first meeting of the separate Local Government sub-committee reported on 3 Dec 1920 - it would meet once a month to plan a programme of visits to Municipal Buildings, and, true to local government concerns everywhere, would arrange a public meeting on the subject of 'Disposal of Refuse, and Household Hygiene'. In 1919 the WCA took the initiative in forming a Local Elections Committee to do work in relation to the forthcoming municipal elections, inviting representatives of "the various women's organisations" to participate.[20] The Local Elections Committee consisted, according to this letter, of "Representatives from seven Women's Societies having approximately a Membership of over 1800", but does not say which societies these are. (That the committee included ESEC is apparent from its resignation in March 1921.) [21] For a period of time the EWCA's municipal concerns were carried out under the auspices of this joint committee, but in 1921, after ESEC's departure, it became a sub-committee of

---

[19] Making a distinction between 'issue-based' and 'organisational' i.e. the Finance and Syllabus sub-committee which are also listed in the second AR. and the Social Activities sub-committee. It was first a Municipal *and* Parliamentary sub-committee which became two separate sub-committees in 1920.

[20] Meetings were held at the EWCA offices, and a letter dated 4 Oct 1920 on 'Edinburgh Local Elections Committee for Women Candidates' headed paper <333/8/19> gives EWCA committee members Lady Leslie Mackenzie as chairman and Lady Carlaw Martin as Vice-Chairman, and the committee's address as 21 Castle Street, the EWCA's address at this time.

the EWCA; how far it had ever been seriously other than an EWCA committee is a matter of conjecture. A similar strategy was adopted in Glasgow where several groups, including the WCA, Women's Suffrage Society, the NCW and the British Women's Temperance Association set up a Women's Local Representation Joint Committee in 1919, with the aim of securing the election of women to local bodies by finding suitable candidates, appealing for funds and supplying canvassers. Pugh says they "managed to secure the election of three or four women each year" (he doesn't say until when), a majority of whom stood for Labour rather than either for other parties or as independent. <Women's Local Representation Joint Committee (Glasgow) minutes 17 Mar 1919, 25 Oct 1919, cited by Pugh 1992 p 59>

The Local Elections Committee intended to secure the election of "suitable women candidates". "Suitable" meant that they would accept the programme agreed by the joint committee which had the following headings; The Enforcement of Existing Laws and the appointment of Women Police and paid Probation Officers; Housing; Child Welfare; Civic Recreation; Food; Public Health and Cleaning; Sex Disabilities. Sex Disabilities is what we now refer to as sex discrimination; the reference to 'the enforcement of existing laws' in the context of women police and probation officers refers to the law on child abuse, and possibly sexual offences in general. <AR 1919/20> They supported both party and independent candidates but the £70 they had raised for financial aid was to be given only to independent candidates. By "focussing the work of the various women's Associations in the city", the committee, they reported, was mainly responsible for the return of three women councillors: Mrs Somerville to the Town Council, and Mrs Inglis Clark and Mrs Melville to the Parish Council. Mrs Somerville was an executive committee member of the EWCA at this time. She was elected for the Merchiston ward in 1919 as an Independent and continued to be very active in many aspects of the EWCA's work, with a special interest in Housing and in equal opportunities for corporation staff. Cllr Somerville held the seat until her death in 1935. Mrs Ella Morison Millar was the first woman councillor elected to Edinburgh Town Council, standing as an independent for Morningside ward which she won - unusually for an Independent candidate - in a three-way fight in either November 1918 or January 1919, and then held unopposed for 30 years.[22] Although there is no record of this, it is possible that she was backed by the EWCA in her candidature, as Mrs Somerville was, as she continued to be an active EWCA member. Mrs Melville was also returned to the Parish Council in the November 1922 election, but of Mrs Inglis Clark's career as an elected member there is no further record until 1928 when she was elected to the Parish Council and 1929 when she was returned unopposed to Midlothian County Council (at this time she was also a member of the executive committee).

---

[21] The AR 1920-21 gives the reason for the ECS withdrawing its representatives as the decision that for local government representatives there should be one programme, and that Societies should not ask separate questions as Societies.

[22] The interview with her, Edinburgh Evening News 9 Dec 1945 says she stood as an Independent in the seat her father had held since 1900 until he died the previous year, the report on her retiral, Evening Dispatch 7 Jan 1949, that she split the Liberal-Unionist vote and won by over 1000 votes, and that since then she had been unopposed.

Parish and LEA elections were rather more successful for EWCA supported candidates than Town Council elections, particularly after the initial success in 1918 and 1919. Both are areas with a longer tradition of women's participation (in the case of educational involvement, going back in Edinburgh to the first School Board in 1872). No other EWCA candidates were elected to the Town Council until 1930, and there was an apparent decline in the number standing. Four of the six EWCA supported candidates in the LEA elections in April 1921 were successful, and other members were successful later in being either elected to or co-opted to the Parish Council. After the Local government (Scotland) Act in 1929 which consolidated the work of the three local authorities into one and provided for statutory committees, the Association lobbied for the "Co-option of Persons of Experience, including Women", to them <4 Oct 1929>, and were successful at least in that in 1930 Miss MG Cowan and Miss Alice Ross were co-opted onto the Education committee (both had been elected LEA members previously) and Miss SL Munro (joint-convenor of the EWCA Local Government committee) to the Public Assistance committee. This consolidation effectively reduced the opportunities for women to be elected, insofar as the Parish Council and education authority had been more conducive to women's participation.

Because the records for this period are incomplete it is not possible to be certain of a decline in electoral activity, but it is strongly suggested: with fewer women being put forward in local government elections, and no women Parliamentary candidates supported after 1922.[23] The Local government committee report in the AR 27-28 gives an impression of how support and lobbying was organised, and that it hadn't always worked well. Before each election meetings were held to organise the work of canvassing and of putting questions at meetings and these meetings were well-attended in 1927, so "work was therefore carried through in each Division and Ward in a much more methodical and efficient manner". A discussion at the 8 October 1928 General Meeting of candidatures for Town and Parish Council Elections makes clear that encouraging members to go forward is seen as part of their role, but also suggests that support had not been as forthcoming as needed: "Miss Munro made a strong appeal for the support of Miss

---

[23] In the 1920 Town Council elections, only one woman, Mrs Winram, was supported in her candidacy, presumably as an independent as the Hon Secretary of the EWCA acted as her election agent. <1920-21 AR> No women candidates at the Municipal Elections in November 1921 asked for support.[23] Miss AB Jack stood unsuccessfully for the Town Council (for the St. Stephen's Ward) in 1923, supported by the Association; they comment "[T]hough a non-party candidate she polled 1640 votes in a ward very strongly organised in party interests." < AR 23-24> The records give evidence of some persistence in pursuit of local elected office. Miss MG Cowan, who was elected to the LEA in 1921, stood again successfully for it in 1927, and unsuccessfully <DCK> for the Town Council in 1929. Another member, Mrs Baird Ross, was elected for the first time to the LEA in 1927. In 1928 Miss A McGregor (the Association's Treasurer) fought but did not win in the Town Council elections (though it was close) and in the Parish Council elections four members were returned unopposed: Mrs Inglis Clark, Miss Geddes, Mrs Melville and Mrs McIntyre; while three more won contested elections: Miss Cornwall, Mrs Deas and Miss SL Munro. In 1929 they again supported Miss A McGregor and Miss MG Cowan in the Town Council elections but neither were successful. However in the 1930 Municipal elections they supported the successful candidature of Mrs Elizabeth McIntyre (for George Square Ward). The Index shows that the Association supported candidates in the 1930s also, with names of EWCA members' candidatures listed for dates in 1936, 1937 and 1938, as well as the years mentioned above.

McGregor stating that support meant not only the belief that she was a fit and proper person but *actual work* to ensure her return." <my ital>

After the success of their three members on the LEA in 1927 (Miss MG Cowan, Mrs Alice Ross, Mrs Baird Ross) the Association notes however that: "[T]he number of women on this body and on the Town Council remains however unaltered" (presumably because new women members only replaced other women). The Local Government sub-committee decided to find out the numbers of women serving on Local Boards in Scotland as a whole. They reported that there was no machinery which would give this information for Town Councils but that the Scottish Board of Health said that 184 women out of a total 8013 members serve on Parish Councils and the Scottish Education Department informed them that there were 82 women members out of approximately 1000 on local education authorities.[24] <AR 1927-28>. The following year a Local Government study circle was formed after the election on 'The Need for Women on Local Boards', and how to achieve it, which included a discussion of 'How a Non-Party Women's Organisation can help a Woman Party Candidate', suggesting that their policy had not changed in this respect. <AR 1928-29> In that year they also (in response to a suggestion from NUSEC and in co-operation with ESEC and the Edinburgh Juvenile Organisations committee) undertook a survey of local government under the headings: status of women; housing; sanitation; maternity and child welfare; and recreational facilities. This survey was published under the title 'Civic Health and Welfare'. Local government was seen as important, and *possibly* as a particularly appropriate place for women's political activity. This was a not uncommon view at the time, and since. <Hollis 1987 pp 478-9 > Women who were housewives were also eligible to stand, along with the self-employed, leading to an argument that this created a middle-class female advantage. However their numbers in office were not large. The topic of a EWCA meeting in 1922, 'The City, the Larger Home', suggests an approach to local government not dissimilar to Rathbone's curtains and marigolds ideas or that of the NFWI. The Association comments in the conclusion to the 1929-30 AR on the importance of local government and that the trend of legislation is towards placing greater powers with the Local Authorities, but also cautions that the wider aspects of citizenship cannot be ignored and "earnest study and consideration" must be given to "economic, industrial, and social questions, including national and international politics".

Following what seemed an excellent start in the municipal elections in Edinburgh in 1919 <AR 1919-20> the Local Elections Committee decided to extend its field of operations to Parliamentary elections, by approaching political organisations to secure the adoption of women candidates and by preparing for work to be undertaken by members at an election The minute of the executive committee 1.3.20 suggest that the former was in fact

---

[24] 13 Dec 1927: a social and musical evening at which the chief guests would be "The women publicly elected to Local Government Bodies in Edinburgh - number 18."

the main priority, but no further reference is made in reports of the LEC's work to this initiative, suggesting (though there is no internal confirmation) that they met with a less than enthusiastic response. The lack of women adopted as candidates would also confirm this. In Edinburgh, as elsewhere, support for all women candidates could be problematic, and could mean campaigning against male candidates who in other contexts they might see as supporting women's interests. For the General Election in 1922 they modified their approach slightly, saying they would support a woman candidate of any party, or independent provided she supports the Association's programme and was not standing against other candidates who have "rendered good service in furthering the reforms for which the Association stands". (This latter clause was removed on 4 October 1929 <Index>) They also issued a Questionnaire to men candidates and published the answers in the press. <AR 22/23> There seems to have been no question of their endorsing male candidates. There was however controversy about how far they could, as a non-party organisation, support party candidates, or whether they should put forward their own. This argument focussed on the Edinburgh South ward where the EWCA endorsed the Liberal candidate Mrs Buchanan Alderton, the office-bearers and committee of the South Division branch resigned in protest, and the *Scotsman* declared that supporting women because they were women and opposing the (Unionist) candidate because he was a man was tantamount to creating a Women's Party. <13 Nov 1922. quoted in Burness 1992 p 160>The minutes of a special meeting called in November 1922 say that support for Mrs Buchanan Alderton was controversial because she was opposing "a sitting member who had rendered good service". The controversy doesn't seem to have helped Mrs Alderton <p 161>, who lost, with a lower share of the vote than the previous Liberal candidate. Not all women candidates, perhaps for this reason, wanted their support. Nor did they support all women; ESEC approached them and other women's societies to seek support for Mrs Hamilton More-Nisbett (an EWCA executive committee member in 1919) as an independent candidate for an (unspecified) Edinburgh constituency but after she addressed a meeting of members they decided against backing her. After the election there was a move to reconsider their parliamentary policy, but as there was not the two-thirds majority required for such action no change was made. <1922-23 AR> There is no record of work for any candidates in the 1924 election and in that year the work of the Parliamentary committee was almost wholly diverted to raising funds for the "Industrial Colony Scheme" which was championed by Lady Mackenzie (discussed in the following chapter).

NUSEC ran into related difficulties in its attempts to promote women candidates. When they gave public support to a woman candidate they were sometimes assumed to be backing her party too; thus the feminist Labour candidate at Stroud found that the local SEC had cancelled its meeting for her because of opposition by women members who supported other parties. A number of women, including Jennie Lee, firmly evaded NUSEC

support. In Glasgow the SEC abstained from electoral work in the 1924 election because their members were all working for their respective parties. <Pugh 1992 pp 54 -56>

Whether because of internal disagreement and adverse criticism, or because of the lack of success in getting independent women candidates into Parliament, there are no further reports of any Association work on behalf of Parliamentary candidates. A flurry of discussion in 1928 suggests an attempt to revive the policy in relation to the much-enlarged female franchise. This indicates that a key problem is that members of the Association have differing political views, and also that membership does not involve any "pledge" - members are not signing up to do anything very specific, and so, presumably, do not do many of the things the most active members wish they would. The practical question of how much work the office can do for candidates is also at issue. Posing the question of what actual organised help a candidate could expect if given the support of the WCA suggests that support has in practice been deemed inadequate, and insofar as they are reiterating earlier intentions, that it has not been very workable. In the event there is no record of their promoting any candidate for the election. Their public comments on the equal franchise emphasise the need for more education in citizenship rather than more work to get women into Parliament and stress its importance as "the first opportunity of obtaining through the ballot box" a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities. < AR 26-27>[25]

At the heart of the problem was a focus on gender as a unity alongside an insistence on the Association's non-party status.[26] It was not straightforward for women with party allegiances to work for all women, nor did all women wish to be seen as standing with women's support, particularly if this also led to divisive and derisive press comment. The non-party stance is, as well as sometimes expressing a view that women could be 'above politics', a consequence of the disillusion with party politics in the suffrage struggle. <Pugh 1992 p 58> But insofar as independence often masked a closet Liberalism, it could be

[25] Though they had some success at local level, neither the EWCA nor anyone else was very successful in getting women in Scotland to be selected for or elected to Parliament: between 1918 and 1945 only 8 individual women were returned as MPs for Scottish seats, while 33 stood as candidates. <ref Burness>

[26] Lady Leslie Mackenzie reported to the executive committee <minutes: 7.10.19> that the Edinburgh Local Elections committee had decided to support all women candidates offering themselves at the November elections irrespective of party *and thus remain* non-party <my ital>.

"Characteristically the 'first women', as beneficiaries of the women's suffrage movement, were seen as representatives of women at large as well as being accountable to their own electorates. The first women MPs embraced these dual accountabilities... The first women MPs were less enthusiastic about accountability to political parties. They inherited the well-earned distrust of the women's suffrage movement for political parties and viewed party politics with suspicion, even when they were endorsed party candidates. They saw the social reform issues which motivated them, such as temperance and child welfare, as being properly above party politics...."
M Sawer, Editorial *International Review of Women and Leadership*, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1996;
and that the 'non-party idea' took on organisational forms in all Australian States in the post-suffrage era;
also that: "[Edith] Cowan's attitudes were moulded by late nineteenth-century liberalism and the privileging of independent conscience as well as by suffragist distrust of party machines. Her independence of mind helped fortify her in expressing unpopular views in defence of unmarried mothers or in favour of sex education in schools. " also -

resented by other parties. <Hollis 1987 p 407-8> In clinging to independence women were swimming against a tide which saw party machinery strengthened, and women standing as independent candidates for Westminster was a short-lived strategy. Five Independent women candidates stood in 1918, one in Glasgow (for Bridgeton); there was also one Woman's Party candidate (Christabel Pankhurst); four Labour, and four Liberal women (most in hopeless constituencies). After 1918 Independent women candidates were rarely promoted, with the notable exception of Rathbone, who stood in east Toxteth in 1922 supported by the WCA but who was eventually elected in 1929 for the Combined English Universities (which used a system of PR); Rathbone was the only Independent to sit in Parliament. Independence and/or a Women's Party faced feminists with a difficult strategic choice. There were financial as well as political reasons for supporting women fighting under party auspices, but not all feminists were keen to accept a party label and none of the parties was keen to nominate women. In local government it was more possible to stand and be elected as an independent, though still difficult.[27]

The other major aspect of their political work was lobbying at elections and on specific issues and work on legislation, either in process or that they wished to see proposed. Lobbying also took the form of studying and commentary etc on legislation and on national and local government actions and potential actions, and after the initial effort to get women elected had faded, this is the main activity of the Association. The content and methods of this work is discussed further in the following chapter.

Citizenship, confidence and inclusion

The period following 1918 was a formative moment in women's entry into public/political life. Consequent on this was the perceived need for a new form of women's organisation with a role in relation to the state, and as a vehicle for women's new status as 'legitimate players' - as opposed to disruptive, oppositional, excluded, often violently so. As well as the WCA and (slightly later) the Six Point Group, the re-formation of NUSEC and the WFL are a response to this need. Women were now formally admitted to the public world but their distinct needs and the potential power of their vote were recognised by those who sought to build organisations of women in this period, and to articulate a discourse of women's citizenship. Pateman has argued that there is a sense in which this is a contradiction in terms: that citizenship is so defined as to exclude women from full participation; that it is conceived across the public and private division in such a way that a hidden sexual contract continues to support male dominance in arenas of public power. That many men in public power regarded citizenship as an exclusive attribute of their

---

The idea that women would introduce a new, purifying element into politics through non-partisan commitment to moral and social reform was found throughout the English-speaking democracies.

[27] Hollis says of England however that "[W]ith barely an exception, women councillors standing as Independents only won when the Progressives stood aside and effectively endorsed them" and that they could not win in a three-corner fight. <p 409>. Cllr Morison Millar's first election defeating the Liberal and Unionist

gender was evident from the persistence of opposition to women's franchise and women campaigners had experience of the strength of that opposition, in endless argument, ridicule, violence and every filibustering trick the parliamentary rule book. This opposition and its arguments was unlikely to have been forgotten now that the battle was won and will have affected how women saw themselves as citizens and how they acted. The emphasis on the status of citizenship is best read against this background.

Citizenship was a core concept within the suffrage movement and for the Fabian Women's Group. In their discussion of 'Furthering the Citizenship of Women' <*Three Years Work, 1908-1911*, c 1911> there are parallels to the later work of the EWCA. This work included, as well as joining the fight for the Parliamentary vote, an "equality in citizenship" programme in relation to local government not dissimilar to the EWCA programme in informing women of their vote and encouraging them to use it, and encouraging women to stand for election and working in their support. Rathbone's *Common Cause* article in which she sets out the idea of a Women Citizens' Association emphasises women's new consciousness of their citizenship; for the women she sought to include in a new form of citizenship she presents it as a move out from the private into the city: becoming not just house-proud but 'town-proud' in their own interests and those of their children. "Education for citizenship" was a way of evading the explicitly 'political' and is linked to the emphasis on being a non-party organisation which, as I have said, reflected a distrust of political parties from the suffrage campaign. Not enough research has been done on this conception of intervention in the state, but it was one which was common in a number of countries in the post-suffrage period.[28]

The educational work of the EWCA tells us a great deal about not only what they felt they needed to know in order to be effective citizens but also how they wanted to be seen as citizens. This is as serious, influential and with a wide agenda, including but not limited to traditional women's issues. The second part of their educational work, sending 'panel speakers' to other organisations, shows what they saw as their area of expertise in relation to other groups, but also what they wanted other women to include in their sense of themselves as citizens. When in 1919 they set up a panel of speakers the subjects offered, included 'The Making of a Citizen' and 'Civic Responsibility', 'Housing', 'Art in the Home', 'The Need for Policewomen', 'Child Welfare', 'The Temperance (Scotland) Act 1913', 'The Mental Deficiency Act' and 'The Aims and Objectives of the Labour Party'. Apart from Art in the Home and the Labour Party, it is a list of almost all the issues which

---

candidates by a good margin is such an exception - but is explained by her standing in the seat which her father had held for many years until his recent death.

[28] Marian Sawer discusses it in Australia where 'non-party idea' took on organisational forms in all States in the post-suffrage era mainly through the Women's Service Guild. "The non-party idea was to meet the need for 'education for citizenship' so that women could fulfil the obligations of citizenship and realise their potential for political good... It encompassed the need for women to stand together, regardless of class or party, to achieve equal citizenship and to protect the interests of women, children and the home." The platform of the women's non-party organisations in Australia which Sawer describes is very close to the EWCA programme: generally

will concern the EWCA as a lobbying organisation in the years ahead. In future years they always offer several speakers on general topics of citizenship but specific issues in relation to campaigning, social reform and/or legislation continue to be offered in a similar range to those above. In 1920 they added 'The Work of a Town Councillor'. 'The Employment of Children', 'The League of Nations' and 'Widows Pensions'. The focus on citizenship is also occasionally more clearly gendered: in 1921 for example three speakers offered 'Women's Responsibility in Public Affairs' and one speaker offered 'Woman; her duty to the community in which she dwells'.

The public meetings and the study circles had a dual function, both introducing to the public agenda issues that the EWCA felt should be given greater consideration, and informing their members so as to better act in relation to those issues. The general topics of 'Citizenship - Rights and Duties' and 'The Power of the Voter' appear in 1920 and 1921 (though they continue to be topics for 'panel speakers' throughout the decade) but later topics are more specific. An analysis of the content of the public meetings held by the Association over its first decade shows the very wide range of subjects public meetings were held on: the only categories which are significantly larger than the others are local government responsibilities (itself a wide remit) and 'international' (again, partly by its nature), which mainly focuses on the League of Nations, with, from 1925, an additional focus on disarmament. Under the first heading there were meetings on local government finance, housing, town planning and public libraries. A study circle on 'Laws Administered by the local authority' was held in 1923-24; in 1925-26 a study circle was held on public health and poor law services in response to proposals to transfer these to other public bodies (it attracted 50 members); and in 1929-30 there was a study circle on the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1929, with, they reported, "crowded attendance at lectures". Also in 1925-26 there was a study circle on 'The Woman as Worker', including legislative proposals. Public health issues addressed included pure milk, whether the future of hospitals was voluntary or state-aided, VD, mental deficiency, household hygiene and 'Towards Race Vigour' (in 1920-21). A public meeting on 'Maternal and Infantile Mortality and Morbidity' in 1925-26 was followed by a study circle on 'The Problem of Maternal Morbidity' in 1926-27, and in 1929-30 a public meeting examined Maternity Services in Scotland and elsewhere, following examination of this by a sub-committee. Penal reform was a much-discussed issue in the EWCA in the early 1920s, as was adoption; though neither feature in the syllabus of meetings after 1923 adoption continued to be an area of campaigning in relation to legislation. There was a flurry of interest in education in the mid-1920s. Social insurance was the subject of a meeting in 1920, a study circle in 1927-28 (at which 30 people discussed problems with and gaps in the 1911, 1922 and 1925 acts, and better provision for maternity and for unemployment insurance), and a public meeting on 'Social Insurance and the Protection of Motherhood' the same year. Economics and citizenship, and trade unionism in relation to women at work, were also

including "equal rights issues such as equal divorce laws and guardianship rights, the right of married women to retain their nationality, equal pay and equal opportunity".

each the subject of public meetings. Unemployment was a subject in 1923, 1924 and 1930. Some public meetings discussed aspects of the arts, often in relation to citizenship, and there were two meetings on journalism: one with Lady Rhondda of *Time & Tide* in 1924, and Winifred Holtby spoke at a general meeting on 'Woman's Place and the Press' in October 1927.

I have suggested that a narrative of citizenship formed an important part of the Association's self-perception and public presentation. The audience they had in mind is four-fold: it includes themselves, in terms of their self-perception as political actors on a new stage. It is also other women's organisations: at this time as I've said a number of organisations existed and were working together and in doing so they were building a (post-suffrage) women's movement. It is also 'unorganised women', the women they wanted to educate and encourage to see themselves as citizens, but also claimed to act on behalf of (insofar as there is a general appeal to women's interests). Finally, this is a claim on the public of policy development and government. The minutes of the Executive committee are basic, working documents written for reasons of legality and proper organisation. The other main source of much of my initial description of the early years of the EWCA is a public document, their annual reports. These are written for their members and potential members, but also for readers in organisations whom they want to impress and influence, such as the Town Council, the Scottish Office and other voluntary organisations. Again the ARs tell us how the organisation wants to be seen as serious, effective, with influence. The ARs are a record of achievements, although they also contain information on set-backs, and of an smooth-running voluntary organisation engaged in (in the later words of Agnes Macdonald) "constant efforts to get things done", with the support of prominent Edinburgh citizens, links to a number of like-minded organisations and wide interests and influence. The 'key words' are service, responsibility, citizenship.

There is, in their accounts of their work, an expectation of inclusion and influence. An emerging theme is that you read first their having achieved something, then a later Annual Report or minute suggests that it has not gone through as they had expected and further lobbying etc is necessary: the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act and women doctors in police and court work are examples. This was one of the things they had to learn over the decade, and it is perhaps characteristic of feminist campaigning after the vote and other major legal reforms had been achieved to find that there were more difficulties in acting on those rights than had been apparent during the fight for them. They were playing by the rules, only to discover that the rules favour those who hold power. However in the first decade of the EWCA such disillusion should not be over-stated. What is striking about their papers is a feeling of confidence - an expectation of progress and success, the kind of progress which attends proper organisation and hard work perhaps, but progress nevertheless. Some of that confidence is about class, at a time when a smaller middle class had an expectation of influence and a voice in the

affairs of society. Many of these women are married to men with position and influence and they expect to be able to wield it too; or, if they are university educated, this also leads to an expectation of influence. Although it was not only a middle-class struggle a significant dimension of the suffrage campaign was the inclusion of middle-class women in an area of right. Some of that confidence is about clarity of purpose. It is because citizenship is meaningful, about responsibility and participation. This is what the vote was *for,* what - in principle - it enabled. It was *an achievement* and a beginning. A recent major victory has been won: the *first thing* the EWCA does is celebrate that at a great public occasion, entitled 'An Historic Meeting of Women Citizens'. <Usher Hall, 25 October 1918> It was won by women organising and working together, and using political influence, and not giving up, all points emphasised in the account of the women's movement given by the EWCA in a Souvenir publication in 1939. Many of the WCA founding members also knew about the difficulty and brutalities of that struggle and perhaps this gave occasion for the sort of cynicism unlikely to be expressed 'on the record'. In public however and, perhaps more importantly, in their daily and weekly effort and activities they express a confidence in an appropriate and necessary relationship between a non-party feminist organisation and the state.

Their view of their role as historic is expressed in the 1939 Souvenir publication for the Association's twenty-first year. In this citizenship as exemplified in the WCA is presented as the next step in a women's movement which began with the exclusion of women from the franchise in 1832. The account emphasises both the length of time the suffrage struggle took, names a number of prominent people who advanced it - "highly educated women and public-spirited men" - and highlights the effort of the constitutional struggle which nevertheless was disappointed. It then gives an account of the militant campaign which presents its as both necessary and as inspiring. Women's war work is also mentioned. "In 1918 the 'Parliamentary Vote' was granted to women. *Training for Citizenship was the next step."* <Souvenir p 3 my ital> Citizenship and the EWCA's work is shown to be part of the historic advance of the women's movement, as the third in three stages: the constitutional suffrage campaign, the militant movement, and then the organising of women citizens. The *importance* of the achievement of the vote and of women's new status lay behind the creation of an organisation like the WCA and the way it conducted its business. Citizenship was a prize worth the fight; the vote must be *used.* This meant that women must be organised and educated in their own interests. They must be informed of their right to vote (the EWCA's first publication was a leaflet on this) and encouraged to vote: the "discouraged" or the "apathetic" voter was to be chivvied and educated into better practices. Citizenship meant having a voice, locally and nationally, and women must learn to raise that voice. Having a voice entails an assumption of being listened to. Citizenship required knowledge, of your rights and of the world in which you would exercise them: women must learn about local, national and international politics. Women must learn how to act as citizens, learn what it meant for them and take full advantage of it; implicitly they must not act in ways which (as anti-

suffrage campaigners had predicted) showed they were unfitted for citizenship. Women as citizens had an important role in achieving ends of benefit to women and to society in general, ends that had much in common with earlier public work by women's organisations but which they had successfully argued they could best achieve as full, enfranchised members of society. Thus citizenship is understood in terms of developing a distinct role for women as legitimate political actors in relation to the state; it is conceptualised as gendered and within a feminist tradition. I discuss this further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: Women and welfare: "The gospel and practice of inter-relationships":

In this chapter I look more closely at the policies the EWCA pursued between 1918-1930 and at the lives and interests of some of the most influential members. Their policy included interests which can be described as 'difference', others which can be described as 'equality' and others which do not readily fit as either. I discuss the equality/difference distinction as a tool of analysis and why it did not appear to present the EWCA with the sorts of problems with which it presented NUSEC. An analysis of questionnaires/programmes and main activities of the Association tells us about what mattered to the Association, and suggests that the EWCA was an organisation primarily oriented towards the state, but also towards other kindred organisations - readily identifiable as, and described as, a "woman's movement". Their work was primarily in relation to local government and increasingly preoccupied with 'welfare' concerns which show continuity from late 19^{th}c and pre-war areas of feminist activity but are campaigned on by the EWCA consciously in relation to the new circumstances of the suffrage and a view of the purposes of the vote, and the growing state and professional intervention in welfare issues, particularly those concerning children and maternity. I conclude that their welfare interests drew on contemporary social feminist ideas but are as much part of a tradition of women's welfare role and interests which they renewed within a social liberal conception of citizenship. As a claim to participation in previously wholly male fora it was embedded within the discursive strengths and limitations of women's traditional arenas of power/knowledge, family and morality.

The papers of the EWCA are important in giving insight into themes of citizenship, discussed in the previous chapter, and the development of social or welfare feminism, discussed in chapters three and four, but adding to our knowledge both of Scotland and of a social-liberal contribution to this. The old/new differentiation is a useful approach to the analysis of the period, but the papers of the EWCA show that it can be a more difficult distinction to make in practice than may at first seem the case. As discussed in chapter four, the distinction between 'old' and 'new' feminisms and the corresponding distinction between 'equality' and 'difference' is central to analysis of feminism in the 1920s, as is the question where 'welfare' or 'social' feminism fits into that (and whether it was, on Jeffreys influential account, even to be considered feminism at all). This has contributed to a view of feminism's decline which depends on a definition of feminism which privileges 'equality' against social or welfare feminism. Examining an organisation like the EWCA suggests the question needs to be reconsidered.

The tension between equality and difference does not appear to have been significant for the EWCA; nevertheless the kind of feminism exemplified by the EWCA is 'difference', but a difference feminism which draws on 19thc and pre-war feminist discourse as much as it draws from the current 'new' feminism. Attention to the nature and context of the EWCA's view of welfare suggests a discourse of overlapping women's, family and welfare interests which is, as a form of difference feminism, not opposed to the aim of full citizenship but integral to a citizenship construed in social liberal terms of service to the community *and* equality of rights. Paying greater attention to social feminism not simply in opposition to 'equality' arguments but in its specificity and diversity suggests also that a review of feminism's role in relation to the development of the welfare state and in supporting the greater legitimacy of state intervention in the family between the wars is overdue, and that further research is likely to show that the welfare lobbying and work of feminist organisations may have been far more important to the development of the British welfare state than has been credited.

Lobbying; and work on legislation: a 'Women's Agenda'

Most of the areas of concern of the EWCA can be identified through the programmes and questionnaires which both the Parliamentary and Local Government sub-committees produced for use in elections. Programmes were a statement of association policy which women candidates were invited to endorse, and questionnaires were put to other candidates with the intention of influencing the political parties, and as a means of gaining and publicising information which they believed women needed in order to vote. They are effectively a 'Women's Agenda' for government. The executive committee minutes suggest that programmes or questionnaires were drawn up for most or all municipal and general elections, and that attendance and questioning at ward meetings was highly organised. The use of questionnaires at elections was also a tactic NUSEC pursued. <Pugh 1992 p 54> Typically they include a range of proposals across 'equality' and 'welfare' concerns although with more of the latter, and include housing issues, the need for policewomen, and child welfare and child protection. For example one programme <no date> calls for Council advisory committees with equal numbers of men and women on Housing, Public Health, Food, and Transport; the abolition of all one-roomed houses, or their reconstruction with sanitation for each household; infant welfare centres; more facilities for outdoor games and municipal entertainments; and public lavatories for women. The minutes suggest that a great deal of consideration went into which questions to include and their phrasing, and examples of draft questionnaires show they were subject to careful amendment. At the outset the Scottish WCAs planned a joint Parliamentary questionnaire <5 Dec 1918> which, after discussion at a joint conference,

would pose questions on housing, public morals, VD, a husband's administration rights over his wife's property; and equal rights in succession and inheritance.[1]

The first example of a dated programme in the archive is a draft Municipal Programme dated February 1919 which has eleven headings: Housing, Transit (i.e. transport), Recreation, Cleaning, Lighting, Milk, Communal Kitchens, Women on Public Health Committees, Policewomen, Hostels for Women, and Watch Committee. The draft has a large number of hand-written emendations which have been made following discussion at a meeting. Although the Association's main activities in housing development do not occur until later (from 1924) this programme suggests a detailed interest in social housing, with proposals including that a larger number of three-roomed family houses should be built; that in new buildings every house should have its own lavatory and new flats should have central heating, hot water and (added in pen) bathrooms. "Express disapproval of one room houses" is also added. They wish to see an advisory council of women with whom the Town Council Housing committee "could confer on the domestic side, etc." Hollis comments that women commonly saw themselves as having an expertise in house design in terms of the housewife's needs and the health of children which male-dominated committees lacked. <Hollis 1987 p 446> Later the EWCA commented on fireplaces and larders planned for the Lochend estate but in the wrong places. Lodging houses for single women (who were otherwise at considerable risk) was another familiar demand made by women of Town Councils. < Hollis 1987 p454> The EWCA also wanted to see a "[C]heap efficient service of trains, trams, motor bus, steamboats"[2]; playgrounds in old areas (a scheme which Patrick Geddes pursued, and there was some correspondence with him in 1921); allotments; Winter Gardens ("Cheap refreshments - No licence"); Swimming - Salt water; and empty halls to be available for dancing, amateur theatricals etc. Under "Cleaning" are improved methods of disposal of refuse and detailed recommendations on washing stairs and closes, which at this time could be very insanitary. The enforcement of the Dairies Act 1914 and a supply of Grade A Milk for infants under two is called for. Safe milk was a major campaigning issue for a number of women's groups throughout Britain in relation to the high rates of infant mortality. Fresh milk was often contaminated and costly and tinned milk quickly contaminated and was often unsuitable. Doctors and women's groups called for milk depots in every town selling clean fresh milk from inspected dairies. EWCA founding member Dr Chalmers Watson led campaigning on this issue and later took matters into her own hands and started a model dairy at Fenton Barns in East Lothian. They also wanted the Town Council to take up its power under the Child Welfare legislation to co-opt women members to the Public Health Committee. The appointment of policewomen was something which was already being called for by the Edinburgh branch of the National Vigilance Association and became a continuing

---

[1] There is a reference to this proposal in the minutes but no indication whether the conference took place or questionnaire was drawn up.

[2] A provision the city still awaits. Public transport is still a local authority women's issue with women of all ages more likely to use it and less likely to have cars. <Ellen Kelly 'Local Government, the Scottish Parliament and Women's Interests', *Gender and Scottish Society seminar*, University of Edinburgh 31 October 1997.>

campaigning issue for the EWCA and SCWCA mainly as a child welfare issue; in this programme they include an equality dimension, stating that policewomen should have the status, pay and powers of policemen and be part of the regular police force. They also want to see trained women probation officers appointed to Juvenile Courts, again a continuing demand. As well as the printed headings listed above, there is the scribbled addition of "State of Streets" and "Houses of ill-fame".

A programme for the Town Council "for women candidates run by the Edinburgh Local Elections Committee on Non-Party Lines" and dated therefore between 1919-1921 has eight headings with a number of the same issues, but with the addition "[T]hat all Laws affecting the moral conditions of the city be more strictly enforced" and that steps be taken to ensure that the Children Act 1908 and Temperance (Scotland) Act 1913 are enforced. (The following year they took a firmly fence-sitting position on temperance, and in 1923 also resolved to take an interest but "no side in the matter".) In this programme they also propose Council advisory committees of equal numbers of men and women on Housing, Public Health, Food and Transit. With the exception of transport, these continue to be major areas of EWCA interest. There is an additional category of Child Welfare in this programme, with a demand for a larger number of infant welfare centres, more open spaces and playgrounds, and safe milk. Under the heading 'Food' is a demand for more national kitchens, and a more humane method of slaughtering animals (which became a particularly pressing issue in 1924). The same issues (in less detail) of disposal of refuse and cleaning of streets and lavatories for women also occur, however under the heading of "Public Health and Cleaning". As Hollis has observed, housekeepers and sanitary authorities noticed things like the source of dust and germs, and realised that private health depended on public health. Under another new heading "Sex Disabilities" there is a demand for all sex disabilities with regard to municipal employees to be removed.

From 1924 to 1930 there were municipal questionnaires every year featuring a shortened version of this agenda. In 1926 Toddlers' Playgrounds, a scheme pioneered by Cllr Mrs Somerville, is added and in 1927 a proposal for rent rebates is introduced. The EWCA also lobbied for admission of the press and public to Council meetings and when they it was introduced (in the 1929 Act), set up a rota of members to attend. The draft questionnaires for the Municipal Elections in November 1928 [3] and for the Education Authority Elections in March 1928 show a continuing focus on these same concerns, and an informed grasp of the issues and possible steps the appropriate authority might take. Both list questions which are to be put verbally at ward meetings and include detailed notes on the issues for the information of the members asking the questions. Only two headings are included in the municipal questionnaire: Housing, calling for special housing or hostels with supervision for aged persons, and for qualified women to be employed as rent collectors in the Corporation housing schemes, and Equal Pay and Opportunities for Men and Women in the service of the town council. The note on the former indicates that

housing with food and nursing care as an alternative to the Poor House should now be possible because with the Old Age pension it could be self-supporting. The note on women rent collectors refers to the introduction of women property managers in Glasgow and some English cities who can, with tenants rehoused from slum clearance areas, "by timely advice prevent destruction and misuse of property". Questions for the Education Authority Elections concern equality in training, salary and promotion between men and women teachers. The note appended refers to the sex differentiated regulations on teacher training which the Association had protested against when first introduced. They also call for the reduction in the hours of employment of school children aged 12-13 to 22 ½ per week (which was within the LEA's powers and with the exception of Glasgow, Edinburgh hours, the note says, are at 25½ hours a week the longest in Britain); specialist sewing teachers retained in the elementary schools; and future appointments to the Attendance Staff to include women. There is also a detailed recommendation in relation to a section of the Scottish Office Departmental Report on Offences against Children (the report of a committee the EWCA had earlier lobbied for - see below.) They also want more nursery schools and the school leaving age to be raised to 15, as the 1918 Act had promised but not fixed a date for.

In the same year a proposed questionnaire for Parliamentary Candidates (under discussion on 21 November 1928) referred to the Scottish Office Report on Offences against Children and called for legislation to amend the Criminal Law Amendment Acts (1885-1922) to raise the age of consent from 13 to 16 (the committee had recommended 14) and to give power to libel the communication of VD as an aggravation of offences committed under these Acts; and to amend the Children Act 1908 to permit the removal from their homes "children who have been the victim of sexual offences and cannot be properly cared for in their own homes, and the daughters and young female relatives of a man who has been convicted of incest with his daughter". They also called for fathers to have a means-tested duty of alimenting illegitimate children, and that this should be collected through the courts, and for a bill for Scotland on the lines of the *Adoption of Children Act, 1926* (something the Association had been campaigning for since 1921 and which was introduced in 1930); and a Trade Board to improve conditions in shops and catering (as major areas of low paid and poorly treated female work these had been the subject of extensive investigation and lobbying by the EWCA from the mid-decade <McIvor 1992 pp 147-8>); the establishment of a National Board of Film Censors; the extension of the school leaving age; a bill for Scotland on the lines of the Public Health (Smoke Abatement) Act 1926; modification of the Scottish succession laws to abolish the law of primogeniture and the law of preference of males to females; the ratification of the Eight Hours' Day Washington Convention; and the limitation of armaments according to the Kellogg Treaty.Arms limitation is a focus in the late 1920s and 1930s, with support and some delegates involved in the Women's Peace Crusade, but it first emerges as an issue for the EWCA in 1921 when they are involved in a memorial on arms reduction to the

---

[3] This questionnaire appears to be incomplete.

Prime Minister. They also call for legislation on the compulsory continuation of treatment of persons suffering from VD who have commenced but left treatment; this was one of two cases in which a dissenting motion was moved during discussion of these proposals but it was defeated. Compulsory treatment was a contentious issue within the women's and vigilance movements and even the limited support the EWCA gave to it may be unusual, as I discuss below. They also call for support for the 'Married Women Employment Bill', introduced by Sir Robert Newman in 1927 to amend the *Sex Disabilities Act* to be effective against marriage dismissals, which again was contentious, though much less so.

Lobbying and work on legislation, after the initial effort to get women elected had faded, was the main activity of the Association. Lady Leslie Mackenzie's description of legislation as a "a great instrument of civilisation" in a speech in 1933 gives some perspective on how such work may have been seen. Acts of Parliament were not dry and uninteresting, she said:"[W]hen you were in dead earnest to get some forward movement in what had hitherto been merely a little voluntary effort, a thorough-going Act of Parliament was a godsend". <Scotsman June 30 1933> Lobbying and work on legislation was carried out through their own sub-committees [4], through NUSEC and SCWCA, through membership of a committee of Scottish women's organisations affiliated to NUSEC which was set up in 1924 to draft and comment on women's legislation in Scotland. in which EWCA members appear to have played leading parts, and through a (possibly short-lived) SCWCA Parliamentary committee, set up in January 1926 which seemed to have a similar role. This work included passing endless resolutions sent to appropriate local government bodies, the Prime Minister, Home Secretary, etc or channelled via NUSEC or SCWCA annual councils; deputations, memorials to local MPs; demonstrations (by which they meant large public meetings which would demonstrate public opinion on an issue) and other means to exert influence and marshal public opinion; conferences and public lectures and debates; and letters to the press and other use of publicity. [5] It is about

[4] The EWCA Parliamentary sub-committee met monthly, and sometimes more frequently. In 1920-21 they focussed on the *Guardianship of Infants' Bill* and the Bishop of London's *Criminal Law Amendment Bill*; in 1921-22 they commented that the *Guardianship, Maintenance and Custody of Infants Bill* and the *Criminal Law Amendment Bill* failed to reach the Statute Book and that such bills have little chance of success unless they are adopted as government measures. In 1923-24 the bills they studied and supported were *The Equal Guardianship Bill*, a Bill for equal franchise, the *Legitimacy Bill*, *Summary Jurisdiction Bill* <CK>, and a child adoption bill. The *Criminal Law Amendment Act* of 1922 made some improvements to the legal situation of victims of sexual assault. The 1925 Guardianship of Infants Act - which was passed as a government bill much more limited in provision than the original NUSEC-drafted bill - increased but did not equalise mothers' rights. The equal franchise was introduced in 1928 and legal child adoption in Scotland in 1930. Others of those concerns - notably equal rights of guardianship for mothers and legitimacy for children of single mothers had to wait until the 1970s and 1980s respectively. Detailed work on bills in Parliament is less of an evident feature in later years, probably because this work was carried forward in the NUSEC Scottish committee set up in 1924.
[5] In at least one year press work was formalised and extensive. In 1922 Miss Maud Monn was appointed Hon. Propaganda Secretary, and, drawing on information from *Time & Tide* and the *Women's Leader*, she made contributions to the *Edinburgh Evening News* on 'the Unmarried Mother', 'The Protection of Children', 'Maternity Insurance', 'Jane Addams' and the 'Nationality of Married Women' and to the *Evening Dispatch* on the 'Mother's Rights over her Children'. <AR 22-23> Jane Addams was an American activist in suffrage and temperance reform who, influenced by the British settlement movement, formed Hull House in Chicago in 1889, which in turn influenced the British women's movement. She was an important influence in N. American social

making women's voices heard as voters and as *organised women,* a phrase they often use to describe themselves. In some cases their involvement moves beyond lobbying and exerting pressure to active initiatives. There were occasions when the Town Council consulted them, although these do not appear to have been very frequent. There was however a close working relationship with their two members who were town councillors, Cllr Millar and Cllr Somerville, and presumably also a working relationship with their members who were Parish councillors and on the LEA, although this is not as apparent from the papers. Following a committee visit to slum housing two public meetings on 'Housing' were organised and the Housing sub-committee of the Association was set up the following year, in 1924. Under the energetic leadership of Euphemia Somerville the committee later launched the Edinburgh Welfare Housing Trust. Although the Trust was formally overseen by a separate (and male-dominated) committee, Cllr Somerville was its' prime mover and it was initiated after a question in an EWCA municipal questionnaire on housing for the low paid wage earner with a large family was not satisfactorily answered. This led to "a strong committee" to finance and provide reduced rent housing for "selected families with young children", using "cheap money" loaned privately at low interest rates according to a scheme recently developed in Birmingham. The EWCA Housing sub-committee was involved in propaganda and fund-raising for the scheme, which was inaugurated at a public meeting in the City Chambers on 20th April 1928. <AR 27-28> By the following year they reported that building was underway at the Factor's Park site of 18 houses; and the following year that the first houses were opened by the Secretary of State for Scotland on 9 May 1930. <AR 28-29; 29-39>

Later the EWCA and Cllr Somerville played a key role and commissioning and distributing a privately-funded survey of the housing conditions of 443 families with young children in the St Andrew's Ward in Edinburgh, close to the East End of Princes Street. It was carried out by two women chartered surveyors who they employed in June 1931. Cllr Somerville wrote in the forward to the report that their intention was "to bring out in strong relief the environment of the child in overcrowded insanitary areas..." <Perry and Barclay 1931 p 5> The ward was one of two with the highest rate of infant mortality in the city: 108 per 1000 compared to a city average of 82 per 1000 and a rate in Morningside Ward of 13 per 1000. (The other was the Canongate.) The survey found poverty, overcrowding (more than half the families were living with four or more people to a room), the problem of sub-divided flats, only open fireplaces for cooking, infestation and no way of disposing of refuse. <Perry and Barclay 1931 p 12-14> The report highlighted that this "squalor and misery" was just behind Princes Street.

---

feminism and believed in combined middle-class and working-class action for social reform and the use of investigative methods of social science. She also presided over the women's peace conference in The Hague in 1915.

Child Outrage

Some issues stand out as the subject of major and persistent campaigns. The first, as one of the earliest to command attention and one on which there is activity throughout the decade (although it is more marked up until 1927), is Child Sexual Assault [6] or 'Child Outrage'. ('Child Outrage' is the term used within the Vigilance movement from the 1890s <Cree 1995 p 13>.) The issue emerges in the EWCA in the proposals for a Watch Committee in the 1919 Municipal Programme, an idea which shows a strong influence of vigilance tactics but does not appear to have been further developed. The Child Outrage campaign was jointly inaugurated by a number of women's organisations in 1920 and developed as the Child Outrage Protest Committee (which changed its name to the Child Assault Protest Committee in 1921).[7] The committee mobilised other women's societies for deputations etc, and also sought support from the churches. The EWCA had at least two representatives on the committee, part-funded its work, and in the EWCA papers the committee is treated with the same attention as an EWCA sub-committee. The campaign aims were primarily in relation to the justice system and prevention, and was particularly concerned with the support of children in medical examination and in court. The aims were (as listed in the AR 1920-21): more appropriate sentencing for persons convicted of child outrage; stricter administration of the laws dealing with these cases; women doctors to conduct medical examination in cases of child assault; juries dealing with such cases to be composed equally of men and women; and for women police to be appointed to safeguard children.[8] The campaign's stated aims were to promote these resolutions and "to arouse public opinion". They saw children as at risk in their own homes and in parks and cinemas, both from male family members and of 'stranger danger'. It is not clear whether it was seen only as a problem of the poor and unruly, or if there was a recognition of child abuse as occurring also in middle class homes. The focus by the EWCA on overcrowding and one room houses, which were seen as conducive to incest, and the link to prostitution might suggest the former, but there is nothing in the records which would confirm this with certainty. The focus was on assault by fathers and other family members and in public places rather than on child prostitution, although there is an attempt to prevent children's residence in brothels. At the centre of their concern is that this is a crime which is not treated as seriously as it should be in the criminal justice

---

[6] That sexual assault is the primary concern is evident from the measures they wished to see combat it although the Child Outrage Protest Committee was also concerned with other aspects of cruelty to children; it is also indexed under 'Sexual Assault' in the Index.

[7] The CAPC originated in two committees separately set up in 1920 after a trial for child assault in January 1920 in Edinburgh. <CK press re> Both were convened in March 1920, one privately, one by the Society for Equal Citizenship. It is probable that the first was set up by Dr Chalmers Watson¯. This private committee examined details of the case and arranged deputations to MPs and approached the Lord Advocate. The second committee was much larger; it organised the Public Protest Meeting in the Usher Hall and the deputation. The EWCA delegates to this committee were Mrs More Nisbett and Miss Helen McLachlan, who continue as their representatives on the permanent committee. After the public meeting the two committees came together to form the COPC.

system, and that there is preventive and child-support work which is not being carried forward because women police and women doctors, who are best-placed to act in this, are not employed to do so.

The campaign was publicly launched on October 15th 1920 at an Usher Hall meeting where speakers included Lady Rhondda (publisher of *Time & Tide* and founder of the Six Point Group, which included child assault in its 'six points' for action), Lady Nott Bower, Sub-Inspector More-Nisbett (a member of the Women's Auxiliary Service and an active member of the EWCA particularly in relation to child assault and women police) and Mr Graham, MP for Central Edinburgh. The meeting "was crowded and enthusiastic". A deputation of 29 women's organisations[9] took their resolutions to the Lord Advocate the day before the Usher Hall meeting; he was, they reported, sympathetic to their arguments and as a result the Procurators Fiscal were advised to employ women medical officers wherever possible. <AR 20-21> However there is a later reference to the Duchess of Atholl MP raising questions in the house in order to lead to the adoption of this recommendation as it had not been acted on. < AR 1923-24> The campaign's main recorded achievements were this qualified agreement and the setting up, in 1925, of a Scottish Office Departmental Committee on this issue, and much of the evidence put before the committee was obtained by the CAPC. After completion the Report was studied by the EWCA with a view to future action.[10] Additionally a sub-committee was formed to study sections of the report in co-operation with the Scottish branch of the Howard League for Penal reform (which the EWCA had been instrumental in setting up in 1921) as a first step towards holding a Joint Conference on the Report. <AR 1925-26 p 9>

Three further aims of the CAPC are included in a second unpublished version of the aims agreed at the Usher Hall meeting: transmission of VD to be an aggravation of crime in cases of assault; additional facilities for the treatment of Mental Defectives to be provided; and full lighting of the city to be restored.[11] The reference to the treatment of mental defectives here and in a printed pamphlet suggests a possible link between this

---

[8] They compare interestingly with the demands of the *Zero Tolerance* campaign in Edinburgh, particularly its third phase from 1997 on prevention and justice.

[9] There is no available information on which women's organisations, although they will have included ESEC.

[10] The suggestion that the Secretary of State should set up a committee "to investigate extent of Child Assault in Scotland and consider prevention of" was made by the Child Assault Protest Committee in 1924. <1 Oct 1924> "The appointment of the Government committee on Sexual Offences against Young Persons, was largely due to representations made to the Duchess of Atholl by the CAPC...", the EWCA reported in 1926.

[11] A first version of these aims was given to the Executive committee in May 1920 as: "1: minimum sentences; 2: no trials in Sheriff Court without jury; 3: half of jury to be women." <19.5.20> Another version of the aims also exists in note form on a typed separate sheet headed 'Resolutions of the Usher Hall meeting'. <333/8/16> These are: 1. protesting against the light sentences for Child Outrage; 2: raising of age of consent; transmission of VD to be an aggravation of crime in cases of assault; additional facilities for the treatment of Mental Defectives to be provided; a woman doctor as assistant to the Crown Medical Officer to conduct medical examinations in cases of Child Assault; juries dealing with this class of case should be composed equally of men and women; full lighting of the city to be restored; women police should be appointed to safeguard children in the streets and prepare and attend to cases of Child Outrage throughout. The first resolution only is to be sent to every Church Presbytery in Scotland. The version of the aims in the AR 1920-21 leaves out references to transmission of VD, the treatment of mental defectives, and the restoration of full lighting of the city.

campaign and the campaign on care of the feeble-minded which was also part of the EWCA's work in this period. One of the four resolutions submitted to the Scottish Office committee by the EWCA was that men found guilty of indecent assaults upon children be obliged to undergo medical examination, both physical and mental, and, if necessary, treatment. It was commonly believed that mentally retarded people were a danger to children and a problem more generally in terms of inappropriate sexual expression. This link was made in the debate on offences against children and young people in the House of Commons, July 12 1923, when "[A]ttention was drawn to the inadequate penalties sometimes inflicted for these offences, and to the general belief that those who committed them were often mentally abnormal". <Home Office Report 1925> This link is not made in discussions of the campaign on care of the feeble-minded however.

The first action of the CAPC was to print a leaflet, in response to request for information received from the Church Presbyteries.<Jan 19, 1921> The main points of the leaflet were that cases of Child Outrage were increasing and that sentences passed by the lower courts "were for the most part entirely inadequate to the offence". Recent examples of this are given, but with no names or identifying details. They also said that drunkenness or being "weak-minded" wrongly served to mitigate the punishment. They wanted judges and magistrates to understand that "they would have the support of all right thinking members of the community" if they use to the full their present powers in sentencing "serious crimes which have such terrible after effects on the little victims". <333/8/14 n.d.>

The following year the EWCA submitted a resolution to the annual council of NUSEC (in March 1921): "That efforts be made to deal with the Laws so that children may be more adequately protected from assault" <24 Jan 1921>, which was passed unanimously. <AR 1920-21> They also introduced this issue at the SCWCA, and at the first conference on 22/23 April 1921 papers on changes in the law and procedure in child protection were read by four EWCA members, Dr Chalmers Watson, Dr Garden Blaikie, Miss Rosaline Masson and Miss Tancred. Miss Tancred was Director of the Scottish Training School for Policewomen and Patrols; she had addressed a public meeting on 17th November 1919 on 'The Existing Law dealing with Offences against Women [12] and Girls'. The following year they asked the Scottish Council to take up the question of government bills to be introduced dealing with the Protection of Children from Assault, and Women Police. In March 1921 the Association discussed a Sheriff asking two members of the W.P.S to leave the Court when a case of assault against children was being tried, which they protested. <4 March 1921> It is a reminder that the context in which women's organisations were discussing child assault was one in which some men in authority still believed that these were subjects which women (at least of their own class) should not know about. In 1923 they added a demand for "the appointment of an experienced woman to attend the courts whenever cases are tried involving evidence from women and children" <AR 23-24>, and the following year they

---

[12] This is the only reference I have found which implies a concern with assaults on adult women; it is otherwise a significant absence.

were successful in gaining agreement that "if the mother is not available, an experienced woman should accompany children in Court". < AR 24-25>

The CAPC was most active between 1920 and 1925 when the Scottish Office committee on Sexual Offences against Young Persons was appointed. The committee of seven included Mrs William Fyfe of the Glasgow WCA and Mrs AC Duncan (though Mrs Duncan did not sign the final report). Mrs More Nesbitt was among those who were witnesses as was Miss Edith Tancred (for the NCW) and Miss Isabel Venters; a number of Glasgow policewomen were also witnesses and "Four mothers of assaulted children".[13] The EWCA's continued concern with this issue after 1925 is manifested in questions to Parliamentary and Council candidates as part of their election work, reiteration of proposals to increase both the minimum age of sexual relations and of marriage, for sex education (though this is usually expressed euphemistically - again it's a demand with a feminist provenance, though one which, as Cree observes of the vigilance movement, may mean primarily giving information on sexual dangers), and proposals on amendments to the law in relation to child assault up until 1935. A public meeting was held in 1927-28 to discuss the League of Nations report on the traffic in women and children, which was a focus for international feminist campaigning. Following the report of the Scottish Office departmental committee and the Howard League Conference on offences against Children and Young People (both of which were discussed at the EWCA General Meeting on 21 February 1927), they approved recommendations including that the age of consent for carnal or attempted carnal knowledge of girls be raised from 13 to 14 (also a recommendation of the departmental committee) and that "[P]rovision should be made that a girl who consents to repeated offences should be liable to be sent to a suitable institution". This is the first reference to the problematic issue of 'consent'. They again called for the communication of VD to be an aggravation of offence and they added that the anonymity of child witnesses should be ensured. They also called for provision of special treatment for victims of assault who have been infected with VD and again reiterated the need for women police and women doctors to be involved. A motion on "Sex Instruction" was not approved but they called for Cinema Films to be more strictly censored (also an issue in 1919 but not in the intervening discussions) and a minimum standard of lighting in Picture Houses. (Again picture houses were seen an issue in 1919. Were women and girls at risk of assault and harassment in picture houses or was this is an example of exaggerated middle-class alarm at the new leisure habits of the working-class in the way that, for example, ice cream shops were seen as dangerous places?) Recommendations on this issue continue to be put forward: for example in the Parliamentary Questionnaire <1 Nov 1928> they included a proposed amendment to the Children's Act 1908 on "children in grave moral danger" and raising the "age of protection for girls from sexual interference" is called for, this time from 13 to 16. In the LEA

---

[13] Report of the Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences against Children and Young Persons in Scotland, 1926. Cmd 2592. There was also a Home Office inquiry and report: Report of the Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences against Young Persons, 1925 <Cmd 2561>.

questionnaire that same year they called for the recommendation of the Departmental Committee on closer co-operation between the police, the education authority and the Parish Council for the purpose of safeguarding the welfare of victims to be adopted and in a detailed analysis of the division of responsibilities on this issue say that one authority should have overall responsibility, and that should be the education authority. The note also refers to the need for long-term supervision until children had fully recovered from the effects of assault. In 1931 the EWCA again raised this issue at the NUSEC Annual Council, proposing a resolution protesting "the unsuitability of the sentences frequently passed in proved cases of cruelty to and sexual assault of children" and calling for "mental and medical examination and if necessary treatment of the offender", indicating that the campaign had led to no change in these two central issues. <27 Feb 1931>

Closely allied to this campaign was a campaign for more women police (a UK-wide campaign) and a concern with prostitution, the solicitation laws and VD.[14] This is a cluster of concerns around sexual danger which has a precedence in late 19thc feminist campaigning on prostitution, VD, the sexual double-standard and against child sexual abuse, of which the best-known aspects are the successful campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts and Stead's series of newspaper articles on 'The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon'. Women police are seen as the best possible measure in the campaign against child assault, and VD is frequently mentioned by the EWCA in connection with child assault. The campaign for more women police in some years was the main focus of the CAPC. Before it was formed, a deputation of representatives of the EWCA and other societies lobbied the Lord Provost's committee on this issue "with the result that the appointment of two Women Police has been authorised". <AR 1919-20> Later they returned to the Council pointing out that two was not nearly enough, and that women police should be uniformed and able to patrol. A petition to the Town Council was launched in early 1922 on the need for uniformed women police to protect children in parks and cinemas which collected 3000 signatures <AR 23-24> but the following year the CAPC reported a lack of success in efforts to obtain the appointment in Edinburgh of uniformed policewomen for patrol and Court duties.

The problem of VD was high on the agenda of Scottish health administrators and, to a lesser extent, local authorities from 1916 and by the early 1920s there was a great deal of public and professional opinion in Scotland in favour of more stringent controls. <Davidson 1993 pp 213-4>. It first appears as an issue in the EWCA papers on 5 Dec 1918 in connection with a joint conference of WCAs to discuss subjects for a questionnaire to parliamentary candidates. It does not appear as an issue on later questionnaires except in

---

[14] Connections to solicitation are not made as commonly by the EWCA: however in 1922 the CAPC called for an amendment to the Police Acts which brought all these issues together: "(1) men and women are tried under one law for loitering and importuning, (2) women medical officers for examination of women and children (3) brothels to come under the same law as shebeens and gaming houses". <14 Feb 1922 >

relation to child assault.[15] Roger Davidson has suggested, in relation to the EWCA's later qualified support for the Edinburgh Corporation bill on VD that there was a relative lack of anti-regulationist sentiment in Scotland because the Contagious Diseases Acts had not applied here (although Scottish branches of the Ladies National committee were formed in the 1870s). <1993 p222> 'Solicitation and the Social Evil' was the subject of a EWCA Study Circle in 1922-23, the same year as a Scottish local government conference was held on the issue. Six lectures were attended by 64 members with lecturers including Mrs Hunter, secretary of the National Vigilance Association, Glasgow[16], and EWCA members Dr Chalmers Watson and Dr Garden Blaikie. Resolutions were passed to tighten up the law on brothels, and that medical practitioners be empowered to give warning to persons in danger of infection from VD. Compulsory treatment was discussed but a resolution in favour of this was not approved by the EWCA, <7 May 1923> and they sent "a strong protest" against a proposed 1923 Town Council measure enforcing examination on prostitutes, arguing that there were "already unjustly severe penalties directed against prostitutes". <AR 22-23> Dr Garden Blaikie was prominent among those who argued against compulsory treatment. This became a controversial issue again in relation to the Edinburgh Corporation (Venereal Disease) Bill of 1928, a private bill in Parliament which included strong provisions for the compulsory treatment of VD. Davidson notes that the EWCA, local Co-operative Women's Guild and NCW branches were prepared to give it conditional support, sharing the view of the public health department that greater powers were necessary to reduce the spread of VD and protect women and children .<1993 p221> However the issue was one on which EWCA members disagreed. It was discussed in executive and business meetings in 1928 and 1929 and three special meetings were held, including with opponents of the Bill and a meeting at the invitation of the Public Health committee with the Town Clerk, the MOH and the city VD Officer. The executive decided to support the Bill with specified amendments; however at the general meeting this recommendation passed by only 34 votes to 31, with opposition from some members who saw it as creating "a law for the rich and a law for the poor" and who argued for voluntary methods of control as preferable.

In their discussion of the "moral conditions of the city" there is a significant overlap with the concerns and work of the vigilance movement, but a difference in emphasis and approach. As I have said, there is little record of formal contact. Although criminal justice issues and the need for women police and doctors were also demands made by the

---

[15] In February 1921 the committee have been in correspondence with NUSEC on the question of penalising the transmission of VD to children and in marriage: the Parliamentary secretary of NUSEC replied that in principle they agreed that it should be penalised in those cases, but that her society thought it was impossible to guard against the infection in the case of promiscuous intercourse by penalising either party.

[16] This is the only record of a public link between the EWCA and the Vigilance Association, which is quite surprising in view of the activity of the NVA branch in East Scotland . The only other reference is in the minutes of the executive committee meeting of 16 Dec 1919, to a letter from Miss Stagg, secretary of the National Vigilance Association (Eastern division) re a meeting on March 25th with Mrs Dixon from the Assoc for Moral and Social Hygiene on the Regulation of Prostitution. They decided to "investigate" Mrs Dixon before proceeding - did so, and eventually decided to take no action. There is no known overlap in membership between the EWCA and the NVA in Edinburgh <Vivienne Cree, personal communication.>

vigilance associations, apart from the first EWCA suggestion of a Watch committee there is no other reference to the characteristic vigilance strategy of prevention and restriction through a strong public presence at docks, railway stations and public parks. Instead of this voluntarist approach the CAPC emphasised state intervention through improvements to existing legal and police means. The National Vigilance Association was set up following the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 1885 to ensure the new legislation was enforced and to press for further legislation, but was controversial among some feminists (including Josephine Butler). The focus on child sexual assault is within a tradition of feminist and non-feminist social purity work which, following the success of the campaign against the CD Acts continued to call for change in sexual relations between men and women more generally, encompassing an equal moral standard, rape in marriage, incest, child prostitution and the sexual vulnerability of women and children generally. There was an active East of Scotland branch of the NVA in Edinburgh from 1911, which later became The Guild of Service and continues as Family Care, and which was active in the inter-war period. Cree's history of the organisation shows that even within it there was no easy consensus and that feminist arguments were rehearsed on all sides of the disputes, with major differences between those who saw women and children as victims of male sexual exploitation only, and the rather more problematic notion of active female participation in prostitution. <Cree 1995, chapters 2 and 6> Vigilance and purity campaigners wanted to raise men's sexual and moral behaviour to that of women's and to protect women and children from unwanted sexual attention. That they should be, in Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy's words, "free from all uninvited touch of man"[17] was, as Cree says "a very positive, liberating message for women and children... At the same time, it was a discourse which placed women on a pedestal of moral superiority, and which could define women and children as passive, helpless creatures who required rescuing and protection". <1995 p 117> Also problematic was a middle-class imposition on working-class morality. "The vigilance discourse was, in essence, deeply conservative, aimed at imposing middle-class standards of child rearing and 'decency' on working-class families. Real structural, economic issues to do with poverty and deprivation were viewed as personal failings, to be solved through individualised methods." <Cree 1995 p 118> Cree implies a contradiction in going on to observe that nevertheless many of the vigilance protagonists were feminists, fighting for women's rights to education and the vote. The president of the NVA (Eastern Division) was Lady Frances Balfour, a leading suffragist and executive committee member of the NUWSS (in London) (who had a connection with the EWCA); leading activists included pioneering women doctors Elsie Inglis and Isabel Venters and a number of women teachers and educationalists.) The main vigilance concerns, as listed by Cree, were: prostitution, the white slave trade, the age of sexual consent, obscenity and pornography and the sexual abuse of children. Of these only the age of sexual consent and the sexual abuse of children emerge as major concerns of the CAPC, although there was some concern with prostitution and with children's residence in brothels. Cree also lists as subsidiary concerns of the NVA in Edinburgh as the campaign for policewomen,

---

[17] Elizabeth Wolstenholme-Elmy (writing as E Ethelmer), 1893 *Woman Free*, WEU Congleton p 20.

provision of public toilets, better lighting in parks and streets, and the appointment of women doctors to the Courts, all of which the EWCA and CAPC took up.

Among possible explanations for the divergence between the vigilance approach and that of the EWCA (through the CAPC) are questions of membership, priorities and style; that it may not have shared the more prohibitive and regulatory view of sexual behaviour of the vigilance movement; or that the continuing view that the intervention in and even knowledge of such matters for 'respectable' middle-class women was inappropriate made the organisation reticent. While no strong conclusion can be drawn, I believe that the EWCA was aware of the complexities and contradictions of this discourse and may have sought to avoid them as divisive, and that while individual members had strong feelings in relation to these questions they were seen as problematic as major campaigning issues. However child assault would have been subject to far more ready consensus than other aspects of the vigilance agenda, as well as being consistent with EWCA interests in child welfare more generally.

A more critical view of middle-class women's organisations engagement with such issues is taken by Linda Mahood, writing about rescue work with prostitutes and child-welfare institutions, mainly in 19thc Scotland. <Mahood 1992 and 1995> She sees such concerns as part of a middle-class attempt to police working-class morality and as such playing a key role in the emergence of the disciplinary society; middle-class women are characterised as "lady child-savers", taking the term from Platt. <1969> Middle-class intervention could rest on stereotypes of working-class neglect of their children, and reform regimes based on a class and gender ideology meant the moral regulation of young working-class women. <Mahood 1995 p 19> Although Mahood recognises that middle-class women's position was ambivalent, privileged in terms of class, subservient in terms of gender, she sees them as leaving home and a domestic role in order to insist on a domestic role for working-class women. She also however suggests that rescue work and child-saving gave middle-class women reformers "first-hand knowledge of the struggles of working-class women and girls and some sensitivity to the dangers that poverty and life on the streets posed for unprotected women." <1992 p69> Mahood's focus on institutions means that her critique does not directly engage with the CAPC emphasis on prevention and the justice system rather than rescue and reform of the children themselves. Undoubtedly their work was informed by the class and gender perspectives of their time and a view of what was appropriate and possible for middle-class and working-class women and children. However to only or primarily present middle-class women's intervention as 'lady child-saving' is to fail to recognise the complexity of the discourse around sexual danger and liberation, which drew on diverse antecedents and which contained and managed a number of ambiguities.

The equality and difference distinction is not useful in understanding the EWCA's concern with child assault. The subject and their approach cannot be associated with either

'branch' of 1920s feminism in terms of ideology or links to known concerns of other organisations, with the exception of The Six Point Group (which is generally categorised as an 'equality' organisation). Sexual difference is emphasised in that girls are the main victims of this crime[18] and in that it is one which male sheriffs and juries have not taken seriously but women on juries and as professionals are expected to see differently.

The feminist tradition of campaigning around sexual danger is undoubtedly a factor in the EWCA/CAPC campaign, not least in their identifying and giving priority to this issue. Feminist campaigning emphasised the connection between inequality, especially poverty and low female wages, and women and girls' vulnerability to exploitation; it also made a connection to sexual exploitation of women in marriage. The EWCA argument that compulsory treatment for VD could add to discrimination against prostitutes is a link to that feminist tradition, as is their role in marking Josephine Butler's centenary. The double-standard of sexual morality was however seen as a central problem in late 19th and early 20th century discussion of sexuality; it does not appear to be an issue the EWCA discussed even in 'drawing room' meetings. The lack of overt attention to questions of domestic and sexual violence against adult women is, as I have commented, a significant silence. Their approach may also have been to some extent aligned with the more class-bound and regulatory approaches that Mahood identifies, although mediated by a view that this is a male crime which a male-dominated legal system has not fully recognised or dealt with at all adequately. Dealing with offenders and supporting children in giving evidence and during trials are the solutions which are seen as most necessary by them; their focus is on prevention and justice rather than regulation of the victims. Their approach is one which sees intervention in the family as necessary however and includes a demand that men convicted of child abuse be barred from the family home (a provision which was not included in child protection law until the Children Act (Scotland) 1995, and was controversial during its passage). The departmental committee report suggests that this is a crime which is now being 'invented' in the sense that it was not previously recognised as a distinct category of assault. This is evident from the difficulty in gathering statistical evidence and the stated need for research on prevalence. This, with other aspects of the report, indicates a changing view of families, childhood and sexual relations. The proper recognition of child abuse as a crime is one of the CAPC's over-riding aims and it has as a basis premise that the family's privacy and the father-right it protects is less important than the protection of children; this is a view which continues to be contested on a variety of grounds (see for example Mount 1982) and repeatedly insisted on within feminist social work.

While the CAPC's campaign drew on both feminist and regulatory discourses it is perhaps best understood within the development of professional child protection and social work and is a reminder that this also drew on feminist and regulatory discourses.[19] It

---

[18] In the EWCA records only girls are included in discussion: the Departmental Committee also included male assault on boys.

[19] Christian and christian socialist ideas of service were also very important.

underlines the connection in the early and mid 20thc between social work and feminism which Cree makes. <Cree 1993 chapter eight> Mahood's comment that middle-class women learnt about the moral dangers of poverty through their 'child-saving' is also relevant; a number of EWCA activists took knowledge gained through charitable, feminist or semi-professional intervention in child and maternal welfare into political and professional work. For the EWCA, campaigning against child abuse is aligned as much with their interests in child welfare more generally as with a feminist tradition, and as such is in keeping with their more pragmatic and policy-focussed style and interest in measures which can be developed through local state provision and legal change. It is associated with ideas of social work and service which were to lead to professional social work and child protection and which significantly overlapped with the women's movement in Scotland in both personnel and ideology in this period. Again it is an important part of a renewed discourse of the state in relation to the family and child welfare.

The Permanent Care of the Feeble-Minded

The distinction between equality and difference is not useful either in elucidating the involvement of the EWCA with a scheme to establish in Scotland "an Industrial and Farm Colony for the Permanent Care of the Feeble-Minded", a major issue of concern for them in the 1920s, as measured by the effort devoted to it and the £12,000 raised for it, but one which is puzzling in relation to their other main interests and stated aims. Ideas of the disciplinary society and the women's movement role the development of public welfare are again relevant. This concern enters EWCA discussions in 1921 and was taken further after a public meeting on the subject (given by Dr RD Clarkson, Medical Superintendent of the Royal Scottish Institute, Larbert) in 1922/23 at which a resolution was passed and sent to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland urging the provision of homes for the permanent care of the feeble-minded in Scotland. In that year they also published a pamphlet on 'Mental Deficiency and Racial Decay' which suggests a eugenic dimension to their interest, an aspect also suggested by a public meeting 'Towards Race Vigour' in 1920/21. (At this time eugenic concerns directed attention more generally to questions of mental handicap.) As discussed in chapter three, eugenic ideas were widely influential in the period between the Boer and First World War and continued to be so during and after the war. The Colony scheme was the Association's major activity in the year 1924-25; the final fund-raising and public meeting for it is in 1926-27, which is described as the culmination of a five year effort. Although always described as a national campaign and headed by the SCWCA, the campaign was led by Lady Leslie Mackenzie, a founding and influential member of the EWCA who also chaired the SCWCA during part of this period. She later became a Board member of the Colony when it was set up in association with the Larbert Institute, along with Mrs William Fyfe from Glasgow WCA. <AR 25-26> Churches and the Women's Co-operative Guild were also involved in this campaign. Lady Leslie Mackenzie's personal championing of this cause, along with her husband, Sir Leslie Mackenzie, who was a notable pioneer in public

health, appears to have a great deal to do with the adoption of this campaign by the WCAs. The Colony was established under the auspices of the Royal Scottish Institute at Larbert on land specially purchased for it, and the WCA involvement then ended except for its representation on the Board. At no point in the record of this campaign, which in 1924-25 eclipsed all other work of the EWCA, is there any question that this comes within the `Objects' of the Association, although such work does not obviously fall within them. (This would also be true of Child Assault.) The concern with mental deficiency was presented as a "fundamental social problem which has hitherto, so far as Scotland is concerned, been rather neglected" <AR 25-26>, and in terms of both `care' and `control'.

Maternal health

A further area of outstanding concern in terms of the Association's effort was (from 1926 onwards) maternal mortality and other issues associated with childbirth and maternal health. Birth control and abortion are included in this discussion, but to a lesser extent and birth control information only becomes an issue of policy at the end of the decade, when abortion is also discussed (with no evident conclusion). The climate within which such discussion took place is suggested by the Scottish Board of Health reports on maternal mortality in 1924 and 1928, which make clear that medical ignorance and mismanagement and (although they argue otherwise) poor housing conditions and poverty led to death and suffering much of which, given the will and the resources, could have been alleviated. Provision was still influenced by a chilling view "that maternal death is in some degree a tax which the woman as an individual and the community in general must bear as a condition of fitness for survival" <Scottish Board of Health 1924>, a eugenic version of the biblical injunction that suffering in childbirth is natural which the report deals briskly with as no longer appropriate, but the widespread lack of provision and very patchy medical training is testimony to a degree of fatalism or complaisance. Although the dependence on statistical correlation and the narrowly medical approach of the inquiry is resistant to social arguments, the 1924 report nevertheless gives a vivid picture of the ills attendant on maternity in the period: poor housing, overcrowding and no water or sanitation and in some cases no artificial light during deliveries, pelvic deformities caused by rickets, underfed and malnourished mothers especially in "industrial areas", VD and over-frequent childbearing. Illegitimacy is associated with a higher rate of maternal death. It also observes that artificially-induced abortion is "fairly widespread" and for married women attributed largely to economic reasons, and that this is "exceptionally dangerous" particularly when lead or other drugs are used. The 1928 report draws attention not only to continuing high levels of maternal mortality but the high levels of suffering and disability which are "the invariable concomitants of a high maternal death-rate", and makes reference to high levels of ill-health among married women more generally. All of this suggests that the descriptions given by WCG members of maternity in the immediately pre-war years <Llewellyn Davies 1915> hold good for large numbers of Scottish women in the post-war period. The committee however states that the effect of

bad housing, overcrowding and uncleanliness "are not of much weight statistically, at least in cases of normal delivery", [20] and refused to endorse a connection between underfeeding and maternal mortality; with dubious logic they argued that malnutrition is not without effect on the general health "but is certainly not a factor of importance within our limited field of enquiry", a view which would have played a role in refuting calls from women's groups for dinners for mothers to be available at Infant and Maternal welfare centres and for improved social insurance. They also insist they cannot confirm a connection between mortality and multiparity as "[N]o clear evidence has been submitted to show the influence of excessive childbearing as a factor in puerperal morbidity and mortality". <Scottish Board of Health 1924> This robbed birth control campaigners of a strong argument to counter the argument that birth control was anti-eugenic. The committee sidestepped the question of birth control in 1924: "[T]he economic considerations that may make limitation of the family desired and the ethical questions involved do not come within the scope of our remit." The 1928 report avoided the issue entirely.

Maternal mortality rates in Scotland in the 1920s were worse than in the preceding decade (with the exception of one year, 1918) and overall there was an upward trend in the twenty years to 1930. This was a subject of widespread concern in official quarters (and the reason the Scottish Board of Health reports in 1924 and 1928) and women's groups, especially from the mid-decade onwards. The rate in Scotland was higher in this period than in England and Wales (where it also rose at this time) and remained high for slightly longer, and maternal mortality was the major cause of death for young women in the inter-war period.[21] Maternal mortality rates showed a slight reduction from 1931 but

---

[20] The statistics for areas of poor housing are likely to be affected by the greater use of midwives by poorer women and the lessened risk therefore of puerperal fever.

[21] Maternal deaths in Scotland remained at a rate of over 5.5 per 1000 live births from 1911 until 1936, and were higher throughout the 1920s than in the preceding decade, apart from a peak in 1918. The worst years were 1918 and 1928 with 6.98, and 1929 and 1930 were also very high, at 6.87 and 6.95. In some years death from abortion is particularly high and it is the main reason for the peak in 1918 of 103 deaths (compared to 62 in 1919 and between 30 and 40 for most other years to 1930). This is explained as related to the flu epidemics of those years but since a steep short-term increase in both legitimate and illegitimate births followed the end of the war suggesting increased sexual activity, an increased number of induced abortions may also have been a reason. <Registrar General for Scotland *Annual Report* 1945, Appendix X Table 1 p 86> The 1924 Scottish Board of Health Departmental Committee report suggests that the levels of maternal mortality under discussion may in fact have been an under-representation as there was a tendency for medical practitioners where at all possible to avoid classifying deaths following confinement as due to that as this suggested medical culpability. The committee's main recommendations are for antenatal care and clinics provided by the public health authorities, for public supervision of private maternity homes, for health education to encourage women to attend antenatal clinics, and for maternity benefit to be made conditional on the woman engaging qualified medical attendance. The 1924 report also makes clear the dilemma of sepsis associated with medical intervention: difficult births required intervention and sometimes hospitalisation, both meant a much greater risk of a fatal infection. Despite its clear bias in favour of doctors and its suspicion of some midwifery practices and condemnation of the persistent role of "handywomen" (which certification and training of midwives had been intended to end), the report is also evidence of medical inexperience, ignorance and excessive "instrumental interference", mainly in the use of forceps. The committee recommends the introduction of compulsory training in obstetrics and antenatal care in medical schools. The 1928 report is more explicit in its condemnation of poor medical practice, early and unnecessary intervention and the use of forceps. Its discussion of puerperal sepsis associated with the (welcomed) growth in maternity homes in the 1928 report suggests that this was a problem without any clear solution, though lack of knowledge, poor training and nursing practices are implicated. The main contribution of this second report is to state clearly that intervention by a doctor who has been attending other patients is a cause of infection, and it is therefore much more favourable to midwives: the belief that attendance on labour by a

no significant improvement until the introduction of the early antibiotics in 1936, when a steep and continuous fall began. Although this reflects radically improved treatment of puerperal sepsis,[22] the single main cause of death in childbirth, the improved management and increase in hospital and ante-natal provision which women's groups campaigned for is also a reason for the improvement.

EWCA campaigning on this issue began in 1926 and by 1930 it had come to be a dominant issue for the Association. In 1930 it began lobbying for a National Maternity Service for Scotland.[23] Questions of maternity and maternal health first arise, characteristically, through a public meeting on 'The Problem of our High Maternal and Infantile Mortality and Morbidity' addressed by BP Watson, Professor of Midwifery, Edinburgh University, followed by a Study Circle in 1926-27 on 'The Problem of Maternal Morbidity' which looked at the importance of ante-natal work, VD in relation to maternity, puerperal fever and concluded with a session on 'maternity as it should be'. Following the study circle the EWCA asked the Town Council to investigate the causes of maternal death in the city and to provide additional ante-natal clinics; and lobbied for better regulation of nursing homes; refresher courses for midwives; and they suggested to the Scottish Board of Health that maternity benefit "should be devoted directly to the securing of adequate medical and nursing attendance", a resolution that suggests no great confidence in women's own decision-making. All of these resolutions reflect the recommendations of the 1924 Board of Health committee and the EWCA appear to have stayed firmly within the medical model of its approach. The following year <November 1928> a Maternity sub-committee was formed with Dr Joan Rose, senior obstetric surgeon at the Elsie Inglis Hospital as Hon Secretary. Cllr Millar and Lady Leslie Mackenzie were also involved. Its intentions were to argue for a better maternity service and to gather information on how far local authorities employed the powers they possessed under the

---

doctor rather than a midwife indicates higher social standing must be overcome it says, and medical intervention should be restricted, except where unavoidable, and natural labour in the care of midwives be preferred. In a somewhat oblique manner the report also reiterates the belief that this high rate of maternal death is preventable were the problems to be addressed with adequate resources and determination.

The 1928 report makes clear that nothing has been done which would significantly alter the underlying causes of the high rate in the intervening period, commenting, somewhat despairingly, that "[I]t is striking and significant that the puerperal mortality rate is as high in the cities and large towns where skilled help ought to be readily available as in the sparsely populated parts...; as high in wealthy residential districts where, one would think, affluence could secure the best attendance, as among the poor, and apparently no higher in dirty and squalid houses than in those that are clean and well-kept." This report indicates that while there has been an increase in ante-natal provision, it remains very patchy, especially in rural areas, and that the standard of supervision and advice varies, as does the accommodation of clinics - village halls, it suggests, are less than ideal. It recommends improved and compulsory medical training.

Rates of maternal mortality in Scotland and in England and Wales are not directly comparable because of differences in recording practices <Scottish Board of Health 1924>, but the Board of Health believed they were higher <Scottish Board of Health 1928>. Maternal mortality also rose at this time in England, from 1921-25 to a peak in 1933, after which it declined, to 3.25 in 1939.

< Scottish Board of Health 1924, 1928; 'Maternal Mortality in Scotland,1911-1945', PL McKinlay 1945; Anderson 1990 and 1992>

[22] In the first five years of the 1940s the death-rate from puerperal sepsis was one third of what it was between 1931-5.

[23] There are records of their lobbying for this in 1930, 1933 and 1935 and in 1937 they suggest amendments to the bill which became the *Maternity Services (Scotland) Act* 1937.

Maternal and Child Welfare Acts. [24] In 1928-29, on the motion of EWCA, a new sub-committee of the SCWCA was set up to develop a similar inquiry into maternity services throughout Scotland. Ways in which social insurance could be extended to improve the circumstances of mothers were discussed by the Association at this time. [25] The following year a questionnaire was sent to all MoHs in Scotland to ascertain how far local authorities had gone in providing for an adequate midwifery service. Rural lack of ante-natal clinics was a particular problem and a general lack of adequate hospital provision for maternity. A further study circle on maternity was held in 1933, focussing on the need for a nation-wide maternity service.[26]

In this period the EWCA also discussion on how hospital provision overall should be funded, as part of the voluntary sector or "State-Aided and Rate-Aided". That this was a contested question is suggested in that their public meeting (in 1923/24) on this is billed as a debate rather than a lecture. The EWCA Study Circle in 1927/28 concluded that Poor Law hospitals should be transferred to the public health authority. The sub-committee also looked at the workings of a Home Helps scheme which had been introduced in Glasgow for cases of maternity and sickness, and concluded that such a scheme was needed in Edinburgh. A resolution to the Town Council duly followed, which was successful insofar as the city MoH had, by 1930 drafted a scheme for a panel of Home Helps in such circumstances. Issues of infant welfare and maternity were also discussed at general meetings, including scrutiny of the Annual Report of the Maternity section of the Scottish Board of Health, and of the Edinburgh MoH. Their detailed comment on proposals is another example of the Association's thoroughness when they took up an issue.

There is no mention of abortion in the papers until February 1931 when the Maternity sub-committee began to look at "the legal aspects" of maternity, including studying the laws on Insurance, Abortion and Sterilisation. Birth control is first mentioned on 29 Nov 1921 but only with a reference to correspondence from the Birth Control Society. A

[24] The Act empowered local authorities to provide maternity services in their areas include maternal and child welfare clinics, maternity hospitals, free or cheap food for pregnant and nursing mothers and day nurseries and home helps; none of these measures were a requirement however. The following year the sub-committee reported that they were gathering information on the level of provision and also on action taken to give effect to the recommendations of the 1924 Scottish Departmental committee on Puerperal Mortality and Morbidity. There is also an unspecific reference to campaigning throughout the country to "stimulate public interest, and to obtain an adequate service".

[25] That the topic 'Social Insurance and the Protection of Motherhood' included only birth-related benefits rather than a more extensive scheme such as Family Endowments is suggested by a short summary of the address on the topic given at the general meeting of 21 May 1928 by Miss M Ritson of the Scottish Board of Health, who "reviewed the development of Maternity benefit under the National Insurance Acts and explained the powers of Local Authorities under the Notification of Births Act, 1915. She also dealt with the terms of the Washington Convention and the Report of the National Health Insurance Commission". The Washington Convention was agreed by the ILO in 1919 and called for maternity leave for six weeks before and after birth on full wages (paid by a government grant) plus free medical services.

[26] In England in 1927 an unofficial Maternal Mortality committee was formed by May Tennant (wife of the Liberal MP and a social welfare campaigner) and the leading trade unionist Gertrude Tuckwell in order to lobby Parliament on the issue. There were five ministry of health investigations into maternal mortality and morbidity in England and Wales between 1924 and 1937. <Beaumont 1997>

debate at a general meeting: 'That Birth Control is in the interests of the individual and of the Nation' was held in 1925 with one of the prominent medical members, Dr Garden Blaikie speaking for the motion and the Rev Claude O'Flaherty against. (Dr Garden Blaikie, who was one of the first women medical graduates of Edinburgh University, was also a strong supporter of a National Maternity Service for Scotland.) Since the minutes are missing for the years when it became a controversial issue within NUSEC and the Labour Party, it is possible that other discussions took place, but none which led to an outcome of sufficient importance to be included in the Annual Reports. The Association passed a resolution that information on birth control should be available to married women at Maternity and Child Welfare Centres on 13 May 1931, a period of strengthened campaigning on this issue which met with qualified success. In 1931 the SCWCA also passed a resolution on this, though the motions on Birth Control and Sex Hygiene were circulated by SCWCA before being voted on at a Council meeting so that members could discuss "these controversial subjects". A public meeting on Birth Control was held in 1930 or 1931 with Mary Stocks and EWCA member Alice Ross speaking.[27]

Maternal mortality and morbidity are unavoidably questions of 'difference'; about the welfare of women in relation to their role in childbearing and in the family, and as such paradigmatically a cause which is not that of the spinster, the independent woman who Jeffreys sees as betrayed by feminism's 'turn to welfare' in this period. This is also true of birth control, and egalitarian arguments that it was not a feminist issue rest on a distinction between feminism and welfare reform. However this again brings into question the problematic dichotomising of equality and difference: although the extent to which maternal mortality was a cross-class problem is a complicating factor, nevertheless maternal mortality and morbidity are *consequences* of inequality both of class and gender, in their association with poverty, overwork and poor nutrition, and illegitimacy. Such high levels of maternal mortality were, as both Board of Health reports make very clear, preventable through medical and public action, and in that sense a failure to give sufficient priority to maternal health in terms of social importance, medical research and resources is culpable and it is a very fundamental *expression* of inequality. A women's organisation which saw maternal health and mortality as outwith its concerns was turning its back on a question of great urgency for women. Idealisation of motherhood and a call

---

[27] In their timing the EWCA reflect some ambivalence over birth control: Stopes published 'Married Love' in 1918 and in 1921 founded the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress, which opened its first clinic that year; in 1920 Margaret Sanger spoke to thousands on Glasgow Green and in 1922 Glasgow anarchists Guy Aldred and Rose Witcop published the Sanger pamphlet *Family Limitation*, for which Aldred was prosecuted. <King 1993 p 144> The WCG was the first women's group to take up the issue publicly, passing a resolution that information be available through child and maternal welfare clinics in 1923, and speakers toured the Guilds giving birth control advice. <King 1993 p 145> NUSEC adopted birth control as part of its programme in 1925, the same year as it adopted family endowments as policy. The Labour and Liberal Party women's associations also called for birth control from 1924 and 1927 respectively, and the NCW nationally did so from 1929, while in 1930 the National Birth Control Council (later the FPA) was formed. It was not however until 1949 that there was official sanction of birth control outside serious health risk, in the Royal Commission on Population in 1949 which noted both that the birth-rate was climbing and that an increase in married women's labour force participation was needed. <Lewis 1980 p 214> It was not until the National Health Service

for women to do their duty by the nation was accompanied by neglect of the risks of maternity and its social and personal costs. This contradiction is not uncommon in attitudes to maternity, which was also subject to a strong conservative strand of thought, if sometimes expressed, as above, in the newer guise of social Darwinism. Both women's groups' demands and progressive medical opinion counter this traditionalism with a significant new emphasis on antenatal care and state intervention, directly in terms of services including training and payment of midwives, and through regulation of private and voluntary provision. The view that intervention by the public health authority in these ways and later through a comprehensive national maternity service, combines a belief in the importance of social welfare generally with a perception of the ills of maternity as socially important and amenable to alleviation. This is a view which in a very practical way asserts women's right to health care and consideration of her special needs and is as much a part of women's refusal of second-class status as is the right to vote and to stand for election.

Equality issues

More straightforwardly equality issues were also an important part of their work, though in no case do they appear to have been given the amount of attention that was given to child assault, the Larbert Colony and maternal health. The equal franchise[28] was pursued with motions, memorandums to MPs etc in 1920 and again in 1926 and 1927, and in the autumn of 1928 they took the lead in organising an Usher Hall "Mass Demonstration... to celebrate the complete political enfranchisement of women" and "to rouse the interests of the new voters in Citizenship". The franchise and social circumstances of women in India became a concern at the end of the decade, as it was for other women's movement organisations. Sex discrimination was at issue mainly at the beginning of the decade, in terms of first the passage through Parliament of the Sex Disqualification Removal Act, <1919> and then the realisation that it was a measure which would have little impact. The EWCA lobbied for the Act in association with others, participating in a meeting held in Glasgow in 1919 by the National Federation of Societies for Equal Citizenship which discussed a list of amendments to the Bill then before Parliament. The limitations of the Act were apparent almost immediately. In March 1920 the EWCA supported, in slightly amended form, a resolution sent them by ESEC on the introduction of legislation "to open all branches of industry, trade and commerce to women on equal terms with men as regards training, opportunity and remuneration", noting that this was not covered by the Act.[29] On 26 October 1922 the Scottish Council was asked to take up the amendment of the Act so as to carry out the Act in the spirit in which it was drafted. (And also for good measure "Government Bills to be introduced dealing with the Unmarried Mother, the

---

(Family Planning) act of 1967 that permissive powers to give birth control advice without regard to marital status and on social as well as medical grounds were conferred on local health authorities.

[28] Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, 1928 which amends the 1918 Act in order to assimilate the franchise for men and women.

[29] The EWCA changed the resolution by adding "equal remuneration for work of equal value".

Widowed Mother, Equal Guardianship, the Protection of Children from Assault, Women Police and Equal pay for men and women teachers.) There was however no further legislation on sex disqualification until 1975.

The limitation of the Act was mainly apparent in relation to marriage bars: it covered appointment, but not dismissal. Marriage bars were introduced in a number of professions in this period, including the civil service and, of greatest concern numerically, teaching. For many middle-class women this posed in stark terms the choice between love and work which Atkinson had articulated as "the question before the future" in 1914.[30] In 1921 the Association passed a resolution opposing marriage bars in all paid occupations as against the spirit of the law as expressed in the Act, and in classic liberal feminist terms: "[I]t is an unwarrantable interference with the liberty of the individual". <16 Dec 1921> In 1922 Glasgow Corporation dismissed a number of married women employees and the EWCA decided to seek legal advice over this and also to find out whether women's organisations would support a test case "financially and morally" <24 Jan 1922>; they then found that the that proprietors of *Time & Tide* intended to seek legal advice on this case, and agreed to work with them on it <14 Feb 1922>. Lady Carlaw Martin reported to the committee on a meeting in Glasgow of women's organisations to discuss a possible Test Case but that the legal position was not strong. In 1927 they supported the *Married Women Employment Bill* introduced by (the appropriately named) Sir Robert Newman <April 1927>; the Bill aimed to rectify the anomaly in the SD Act but was not successful. However the following year a degree of dissension in the EWCA on married women working is suggested as they held a public debate on the issue 'Should Marriage disqualify a Woman for Paid Employment?' with Lady Carlaw Martin arguing that it should and another senior member, Mrs Gordon Thomson, that it should not. This debate was re-run in the West and East Division branches in following years, suggesting that it was a question of some interest to members. Their support for Sir Robert Newman's bill was contentious during executive committee discussion in November 1928 of their Parliament programme, but was approved with one dissentient. During discussion of the questionnaire for the Education Authority elections in March 1928 a motion supporting the rights of married women teachers was suggested but (after a close vote) it was lost. Adams shows that married women working was contentious among women teachers themselves and that the bar set single and married women teachers in opposition. A position supporting equality at work for single women but perceiving married women's needs very differently was not inconsistent with feminism in this period.

The third main equality concern was equal pay and equal treatment, which was discussed mainly in connection with women employees of Edinburgh Corporation (again Cllr Somerville was especially active here) and teachers. Cllr Somerville campaigned for equal pay and promotion for women council employees between 1920 and 1925. One detail of

---

[30] For an interesting discussion of marriage bars in teaching in Scotland and how this led many women to decide against marriage rather than, as intended, to leave the profession, see Adams 1990.

their inequality mentioned is that on promotion male clerical staff received double the increment of female staff. Equal pay for women clerical and technical assistants working for the Corporation is called for in the Municipal questionnaire in October1928 and again in 1929, when the previous rather brief reference was expanded to equal pay for work of equal value, equal increments and equal opportunities for promotion between men and women in the service of the Corporation. The low level of the salaries paid to Municipal Health Visitors, sanitary Inspectors and TB nurses was the subject of a protest by the Association to the Town Council in 1922-23; Cllr Millar "took the matter up" and salaries were raised.

In teaching equal pay was a particularly pertinent issue as in principle it had been introduced with the National Minimum Scale in 1919, but was overturned as one of several measures to attract men to the profession which included a wages differential between men and women teachers which lasted until equal pay was introduced in 1962. A concern with the dearth of male teachers led to a professionalisation created through considerable advantages for men in pay, status and promotion. <Fewell 1990 pp 109-131> This was also an issue the EWCA took up, in 1924 deprecating "the sex differentiation which is contained in the Regulations proposed by the Scottish Education Dept. for the Training of Teachers" <1 April 1924>. The regulations introduced, as the EWCA put it, "for the first time in that connection an element of sex differentiation" <AR 23-24>, that all men teachers must be University graduates but that women could still qualify after two years training. This led to two divergent career paths, with most women training in Colleges of Education and teaching in Primary Schools, while men and women graduates taught in Secondary schools, a distinction which is still conspicuous within the profession[31]. The EWCA commented that in theory there was no bar to the promotion of women but in practice there was no promotion for women even in the Primary Schools, where the great bulk of the teachers were women, with the exception of Infant Teachers and in Catholic schools. <Education Authority Questionnaire 1928> At the Education Authority elections in March 1928 they called for equality between men and women teachers in pay, training and promotion, including a quota of 10% of 'First Assistant' posts to be granted to women. (Among Scottish Office proposals to attract male teachers was a quota of promoted posts reserved for men.) In the Municipal Questionnaire in 1930 they expressed opposition to a proposal to increase the salaries of qualified men teachers without a corresponding relative increase to women teachers with similar qualifications.

Another educational issue which the EWCA put considerable effort into was the representation of women on the Scottish Universities Entrance Board, an area of concern from 1919 and one which is unsurprising given the number of early women graduates in their membership. The Board oversaw entrance to the Scottish universities and was all male. The headmistresses of girls' schools in Scotland initiated a campaign to change this.

---

[31] women are now three-quarters of head teachers in Primary Schools and 93% of all staff but still less than 5% of head teachers in Secondary Schools, though half of all staff. <1994 figs, *Engender Audit* 1996 p 57>)

The EWCA planned to get WCAs in other university towns involved and work towards getting a resolution passed at SUEB annual meeting in May 1920, which it was with one dissentient. It then had to be ratified at each individual university, and was no longer discussed by the EWCA.[32]

The 'glass ceiling' in the Civil Service was an early concern. At the first EWCA business meeting they discussed how "in all Government offices women could rise to a certain height, but there seemed to be a conspiracy to keep them out of the highest positions". <*Dispatch* 4 June 1918> Equal pay for women civil servants was also an issue which concerned them and in 1921 they called for women members of the Civil Service Commission.

Women Ministers of the Church was a further concern. They wrote in February 1926 to the Edinburgh United Free Presbytery expressing approval of their move in this direction. They also co-operated with Glasgow WCA in a deputation to the Church of Scotland General Assembly in May 1926. (There were no women ministers in the Church of Scotland until 1968.)

Women on Juries was also a subject which occupied the EWCA in its early years, and is an example of an issue which was both 'equality' but also 'welfare' because women on juries was seen as ensuring serious treatment of crimes against women and children. It is also an example of an issue which demanded persistence. In 1920 they passed a resolution expressing disappointment that the legislation required to enable women to act on juries had not been passed for Scotland although it had been in England and Wales <12.7.20> and was later that year (the *Women Jurors Scotland Act* 1920). In December that year they decided "to watch carefully when and in what proportion women would be asked to serve on Juries"; just because there had been legislation, its enaction was not likely to be straightforward in their view. There *were* problems calling for letters to the press and the Crown Officer; the EWCA was still arguing for measures "to ensure that an adequate number of women serve on Scottish Juries" in November 1935.

Industrial Questions and other old/new issues

Protective legislation, which was so divisive for the English women's movement in the mid-1920s was discussed extensively by the EWCA. Their position remained an ambivalent one. It was among the subjects of a Study Circle in 1925-26 on 'The Woman as Worker' which included factory legislation, trade unions and women, and *The Disinherited Family*, Rathbone's 1924 book which put forward as an argument for family endowments that provision for families needed to be separated from wage bargaining. The Study Circle resolved both that the consolidation of existing factory legislation was

---

[32] The 24 Nov 1919 minute includes a reference to 1040 women students at Edinburgh University, approx 25% of the total.

necessary and that there should be better protection of maternity, the latter the new feminist and (dominant) labour movement position; the former unclear in its implications. However later in 1926 they held three special meetings to discuss the clauses of the *Factories No 2 Bill, 1926* relevant to women and young people and concluded with a compromise motion which called for 'equalising-up': that where "women" were specified in the legislation this should be changed to "all persons" and that "the protective measures made applicable by the Bill to women only, be extended to all workers, irrespective of sex, and that young persons be dealt with in a separate category". Discussion of the bill in February 1927 again emphasised equality and that if working conditions were not healthy for women, they weren't healthy for anyone: "men should be excluded if it were necessary to exclude women as well". If apparently a good compromise on paper it is nevertheless close to the position the Open Door Council advocated which labour movement women found problematic, and it was unlikely to lead to any resolution of the problems in the short-term. However, unlike strict equality feminists, the EWCA seem always to have supported the principle of maternity leave, and the practice as laid down in the Washington Convention.[33]

Throughout the decade the EWCA was concerned both with women at work, mainly in shop work and catering, both of which were areas of significant exploitation especially of younger women workers <McIvor 1992 p 148> and with women's unemployment. In 1922 they took part in a scheme with the NCW and the Council of Social Service for retraining unemployed women as Daily Helps, Home Helps and Tailoresses, a scheme which can be seen as middle-class women encouraging working-class women to do work useful to themselves, although if the retraining scheme did not develop skills in demand it was not likely to improve the women's employment prospects and Home Help schemes were intended for poorer women during confinement. The catering trade was subject to investigation and campaigning between 1925 and 1930, in which they co-operated with the Edinburgh Juvenile Organisations committee, the Council of Social Service and the NCW, and in which the NUSEC Scottish Legislation committee was also involved. The Town Council also made an investigation into conditions in catering but when information given by management presented a rosier picture than the EWCA believed was the case, a young member 'went underground', getting a job in a cafe and bringing back a report; Agnes Macdonald saw this as an example of the flexibility possible in women's organisations. <*Evening Dispatch* December 12th 1962> A conference was held giving the results of their inquiries and detailed proposals for improvement in January 1930, and a leaflet published. Conditions in shop work and catering were a continuing issue for the Association in the 1930s.

The other key issue in the old/new split, family endowments, features several times in the EWCA programme as an issue for discussion, as do social insurance questions more generally, but there is no record of it being adopted as policy. Given the EWCA interest in

---

[33] See footnote 25.

child welfare this is surprising. (The minutes are not available for 1926, the year in which it was finally but controversially adopted as policy by NUSEC, but if it had become a major plank of EWCA policy it is unlikely that the Annual Report for that or the following years would not have included it.) Family endowments are first mentioned in the minutes on 6 June 1921 as a suggestion for a debate in the following winter programme, 'Is Equal Pay for Equal Work practicable without Family Endowment?'. In the 1921-22 programme Mary Stocks from the Family Endowment Society introduced a public discussion on this question. (Discussion was their habitual approach to questions they saw as controversial.) In 1925 or 1926 a drawing room meeting was held with Eleanor Rathbone on 'Family Allowances and the Need for a Living Wage'. No resolutions appear to have resulted from any of these meetings. It is possible that family endowments were seen as simply impractical or as problematic on ideological grounds, but there is no evidence. A refusal to include the proposal in policy suggests however that on this issue they were more closely aligned with 'old' feminism; Fawcett, as I have noted, was against the idea on strict liberal grounds that it would discourage parental (particularly the father's) responsibility. The EWCA may well have agreed, although they supported state intervention in family life in terms of goods and services. A significant absence is any public discussion of women's economic independence, the issue of principle which underlay the feminist (as opposed to anti-poverty) case for family endowments. Neither is there any discussion of or support for the main opposing argument from the labour movement, the need for a family wage. It may be that family endowments failed to become policy in feminist form not only because of the reasons rehearsed <Macnicol 1980, Land 1990, Pedersen 1993> but also because the women's movement was divided, not only between those who supported the trade union position and those who believed this was not a feminist issue, but also in that less-radical organisations could not be mobilised behind it.

Assessment of the relative importance given to these various areas of work by the Association is not straightforward. We cannot assume a direct correspondence between the attention given to an issue in the minutes, annual reports etc and the priority given it, particularly because there appears to have been an at least tacit agreement between the women's societies that they would divide up responsibilities, with one organisation taking the lead on certain issues and others making up membership of committees and deputations, sending resolutions etc. Logically, as the successor of the Edinburgh National Society for Equal Suffrage, the ESEC took the lead on franchise matters (although the EWCA organised the celebration in 1928). Provision for legal adoption, for example, is of concern to the Association throughout the decade but it had its 'own' voluntary organisation which took the lead role. This model suggests that the EWCA was seen as 'taking the lead' on welfare questions and particularly in relation to local government. (The English WCAs were closely involved in local government also.) But their form of social feminism does not readily fit patterns identified in the inter-war period in England.

Feminist politics in the inter-war period are theorised as divided into old or equality and new or social feminism, as discussed in chapter four. The main political questions posed are about the incompatibilities between them. However this archive shows that this organisation repeatedly crosses that division, campaigning for equality issues like, for example, equal pay in teaching and improvements to the Sex Disqualification legislation, and for social issues like children's playgrounds and maternity benefits - and for things that do not neatly fit as either. Equal numbers of women on juries, for example, appears to be an equality issue but was argued for in a context which suggests it was seen as necessary because all-male juries were not expected to conclude fairly on questions of sexual abuse and related questions.[34] Social concerns predominated but with only a partial overlap with the new feminist agenda: the issues which Rathbone identified as 'new', family endowment, birth control, housing, social insurance and international peace are all discussed by the EWCA and their members participated in the women's peace movement, but none is treated as a major plank of policy. They were not ruled 'out of order' therefore and birth control information and some degree of protective legislation eventually became Association policy, but none are of major concern. The parallels in the concerns of the EWCA and NUSEC are considerable and by the 1930s they see their work as overlapping and their objects as identical, but there is no reflection within the EWCA of the debate in the 1920s in NUSEC over the meaning of equality and priorities for feminism.

One possibility why the meaning of feminism was less at issue is historiographic. Disagreements attract attention and leave records; these issues have been given prominence because they were at the heart of the ideological split within NUSEC, but may not have been as important to other women's organisations or possibly even to most NUSEC members, at least until they had to vote on them. Further research would illuminate this. That much of the work and the overall policy of the EWCA does not fit at all neatly into an old/new distinction supports arguments that the equality and difference distinction over-dichotomises feminist politics in this (and other) periods. Nevertheless the distinction is not irrelevant. Posing questions as to the relative strength of equality and difference within the EWCA highlights the continuing influence of a tradition of difference feminism. If new feminist concerns are not strongly in evidence it does not follow that they were an old or equality organisation. (Millicent Fawcett would have been alarmed by the breadth of their agenda.) The EWCA as an organisation was comfortable with difference. Their conception of citizenship was one which drew on ideas of women's distinctive role in public life and saw that difference as no impediment to but a reason *for* equality.

---

[34] Or, for example, how would we categorise women's movement interests in public health: as equality, difference or not as a feminist issue? Yet Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence saw a new attitude to public health as the most significant effect of women's suffrage. <*My Part in a Changing World* Gollancz, 1938 p 167>

The equality and difference distinction mattered mainly because it led to major differences in policy priorities and because of a view that social feminist arguments dangerously weakened the feminist position, which depended on 'a fair field and no favour' for success. I suggest that the EWCA did not find this a problem for several reasons. The first is that there was no strong equality *or* new faction within the group. The differences between equality and difference feminists in NUSEC were not symmetrical: with the exception of the eschewal of protective legislation, most equality issues were supported by 'difference' feminists who however wanted to add a raft of new proposals, whereas new feminist ideas caused greater problems for equality feminists. Within the EWCA the equality issues gained support quite straightforwardly; the more contentious of the new issues they did not publicly adopt (until 1931 when birth control information became policy). Secondly, although the EWCA drew on liberalism it was less the kind of arguments Mill or Mrs Fawcett would have recognised, than a social liberalism infused with interventionist values. Thirdly, difference became a problem for the women's movement when it was challenged. There seems to have been no discomfort within the EWCA with a view of women's role as responsible for children and for homes and for welfare in private and public. Thus, equality was read, or *re*read in such a way as to integrate it with welfare feminism in their conception of citizenship. Service to the community (of people/of women) was seen as a *right* in itself, not (as is implicit in some accounts of new feminism discussed in chapter four) as accepting a definition of womanhood which sidelined equal rights.

All three forms of feminism which have been discussed, equality and new feminism, and Victorian difference feminism are all present in the political/educational work of the EWCA. The equality and difference tension was not a problem, I would argue, because the EWCA drew most strongly on a version of social feminism which, rather than new to the period, drew on a 19[th]c tradition within feminism which (as discussed in chapter two) argued difference and equality in one breath. They also drew on current discourses of both equality and difference but built these onto a long tradition of both women's rights and women's *duties*. Within this there was no apparent challenge to the idea that women had responsibility for the familial, but a determination to allow women public power to both bring women's skills and knowledge to bear in public life and, in part as a result, to end the ills of women in private life and in the family, particularly but not exclusively those of poorer women and girls.[35] What *was* new was a context in which state

---

[35] Recent research on social feminism in this period in Australia <Sawyer 1996> and in the USA (Sarvasy 1992, as discussed in chapter four), Skopcol <1992> and Michel and Rosen <1992> has considerable parallels with the social-liberal feminism in the EWCA and with new feminism. Skopcol, Michel and Rosen and Sawyer designate this as maternal feminism. Skopcol's definition of maternal feminism is wide: as middle-class women "extending domestic ideals into public life" and "policies formulated by women for women" <cited in Lewis 1994 p 120>, which describes the EWCA at this time. However I would not designate them as maternal feminist because the rhetoric of maternal feminism is not characteristic of the EWCA - if anything their rhetoric is 'equal rights' and the idea of duty and service they espouse is not related to a maternal role but a duty of citizenship shared by all. Nor did they adopt as a policy goal family endowment, the policy which arguments of maternal citizenship were most fully developed in support of in the early 20[th]c, and although maternal and child welfare were important areas of their work other aspects of social reform and equality were equally important. The ideas of women's

intervention in the family was considered legitimate and appropriate in many circumstances. Thus, 19[th]c feminist arguments which stressed welfare as a proper area for women's social action, alongside a growing role for the state as regulator and provider, created a context in which liberal feminism both influenced and was influenced by a discourse of public welfare.[36]

"clever and capable women"

The interpretation outlined above is reinforced by looking at members and their interests. The absorption of a 19[th]c view of women's responsibility for familial concerns across private and public spheres within a renewed discourse of equal citizenship alongside a growing welfare role for the state is emphasised by the public careers of a number of founding and prominent members of the EWCA. The way their interests bring together voluntary, local government and professional engagement with public welfare is significant. The founding members of the Association were, as mentioned in the previous chapter, women active across a range of interests of which local government and social work, education and public health are outstanding. This mirrors the EWCA's main areas of work and aims in practice, emphasising that the EWCA was a liberal feminist organisation within a voluntary tradition of women's welfare work which by this period had moved away from its individualistic beginnings, and had been shaped by the suffrage struggle. Possibly it was also influenced by the ideas of socialist and co-operative movement feminism with which the EWCA was in contact.

---

citizenship which the EWCA put forward included aspects of maternal feminism but cannot be fully characterised as that. As I have suggested, the terms social and maternal feminism cannot be used as synonyms and we need to differentiate between forms of difference feminism.

[36] The degree to which this is within a continuing tradition of women's welfare responsibilities is supported by the convergence between the main areas of work of the EWCA and those which Hollis describes the first elected women members in local government in England taking as their responsibility between 1865-1914. They include: education and within education, school clinics and provision for mentally and physically handicapped children; public health and sanitation, and lunacy as a branch of public health; amenities: baths and wash houses, open space for parks and gardens, street lighting, libraries, museums, and art galleries, lavatories for women and admission to swimming baths. They also include infant and maternal health, wanting to restrict child labour and to raise the school leaving age, and Housing and Town Planning, especially slum clearance. <<Hollis 1987 pp 424–455> Even in such details as their concern over the price and quality of gas, the EWCA share this agenda, and since gas was essential both for street lighting and for ovens these were both local authority and gendered concerns. Hollis argues that women's local government work grows out of both philanthropy and the suffrage movement, and for most individual women this was their route into local government. She also argues that at least from the 1890s, philanthropy had a more radical dimension, was less about personal casework and moral worth and more about changing the economic and legal frameworks of society, and individual rights and that by the turn of the century it had become overlaid with new considerations of public health and national efficiency, and informed by new perceptions of poverty. This aspect Hollis sees as developed through the settlement movement and also to some extent the Guilds of Help which are a forerunner of later voluntary/local government joint working in public welfare. <Hollis 1987 pp 27-8> Women councillors were often also active in women's and other voluntary organisations and drew heavily on philanthropic networks for support. Hollis believes that for the pre-1914 women councillors "'separate spheres' provided a language which valued women's domestic background and showed how it could strengthen civic life, and articulated an area of distinctive female expertise." <p 470> Thane sees the experience of women in philanthropic organisations of the conditions of poor women's lives creating "an early link between the women's movement and welfare". For some women in the 19[th]c philanthropy was a radicalising experience, in the knowledge it gave them of poverty, girls' and women's sexual exploitation and women's oppression as mothers. As such it fed into the settlement movement, the ideas of

Any account of the committee members is necessarily distorted in that those who have remained in the public record are likely to be those whose contribution to public and political life most accords with dominant values of the time, and following period. However there is a correspondence between the Association's activities and the areas of interest of some of its senior members which suggests they were influential in forming the directions it took. Information from the press, including obituaries, of their roles and interests needs to be read through a filter which takes into account an ascription of value according to dominant ideas of public service and women's role. In particular, the way that these accounts privilege an almost ubiquitous 'work for women and children' gives a colouring to their work which requires care, not least because middle-class women's welfare work is subject to strong stereotyping, as patronising and ill-informed, or (in the more scholarly version) as 'policing the poor' (for example Mahood, discussed above, and Donzelot 1980). Lewis argues that insofar as histories of welfare have tended to discuss the efforts of middle-class women volunteers as 'lady bountiful' or as a form of social control, the newer focus on women's social action is a timely corrective, although she cautions against allowing the emphasis to swing too far in the other direction. <Lewis 1994 p 121> No doubt there *were* 'interfering do-gooders', but this stereotype obscures a significant contribution to social policy and provision. The question to raise is how far their work was empowering for recipients, or how far their's was implicitly a politics of equality *for us* and welfare *for them?* Lewis also argues that Victorian and Edwardian women welfare workers aimed for "social participation", an aim "not so far from the modern idea of 'empowerment'", and many showed understanding and sympathy for poor women. This did not preclude them from at the same time acting from and imposing middle-class norms, especially of proper family roles. The EWCA's focus included a recognition of the difficulties of motherhood in poor housing and social conditions and for children who could not learn at school if they were hungry, tired and unhealthy, both of which were based in experience of voluntary and professional work by their members. As I have suggested above, specifically of child assault, it will also have reflected class perspectives of the period. Again, as with child assault, their emphasis (though with some exceptions) on state provision and/or legislative solutions rather than direct intervention is a significant difference from the earlier tradition and partially evades the problem. Of particular significance is the way in which knowledge gained of the circumstances of poor women and children fed into, for several members and in the association's policies, political and organisational work.

The elision of their commitment to women's equality is mostly the case for the more eminent of members, and is more true of obituaries and accounts in the 1950s than of earlier press records. [37] In the one case where an account of her life by the women

---

maternal feminism and the fight for the vote. The settlement movement is a further link between 19[th]c women's organisation in welfare and the concerns of the interwar women's movement. <Rowbotham 1992 pp 122-127>
[37] For Cllr Somerville, Lady Carlaw Martin and Dr Mona Chalmers Watson, who died in the 1930s, their women's movement activity is recorded in the press notices, as it is for Miss Jack in 1948. Dr Garden Blaikie's EWCA connection is not included in her obituary in 1945; in 1959 Cllr Millar's connection with the EWCA

herself is reported, Lady Leslie Mackenzie's speech at a luncheon in her honour after she received the CBE in 1933, she said the start and inspiration of her work was her involvement with the Women's Emancipation Union and with the suffrage campaign. <*Scotsman* June 30th 1933> Her obituary does describe her as "a pillar of the Women Citizens' Association" but with the qualification that she "was always more concerned to stress the duties and new opportunities of her sex than to assert their rights and privileges". Although most of her work was for women's suffrage and citizenship, in mental handicap and education, it is headlined 'Pioneer Work for Mothers and Children'. <Scotsman Sept 26 1945>

Leslie Mackenzie is an example *par excellence* of a role in education and social reform mixing voluntary, professional and marital connections. A primary teacher before marrying Dr (later Sir) Leslie Mackenzie[38], they moved to the city when he became MoH for Leith in 1894 (one of only three in Scotland at the time) and began pioneering work in child and maternal health. At the School of Social Study at Edinburgh University she taught health visitors and students of social study as a lecturer on local government. She was elected to the city's School Board in 1904 and promoted the introduction of school medical officers; she also supported adult and continuing education, nursery schools, and the provision of special schools for mentally handicapped children. She led the campaign for the permanent care of the feeble-minded which resulted in the Larbert Colony, which she remained a governor of. She was also President (for 15 years) of the National Association of Health Visitors, Women Sanitary Inspectors and School Nurses, and a Director of the College of Domestic Science (a 30 year connection), the latter an achievement of the late 19thc women's movement in the city. <Corr 1983>[39] <Scotsman June 30th 1937/Evening Dispatch March 4 1944/ Scotsman Sept 26 1945> Lady Mackenzie first encountered the women's movement when she was recruited in 1891 by Mrs Wolstenholm Elmy as secretary of a branch of the radical suffragist Women's Emancipation Union being set up in Galloway (in Newton Stewart), where she lived before moving to Edinburgh. When she moved to Edinburgh she was invited to join the suffrage society which "included the

---

(which was long and public) has dropped off the long list of her areas of involvement, as it has in the notices at the time of Lady Leslie Mackenzie's death in 1945. In only Agnes Macdonald, Alexia Jack and Dr Chalmers Watson's cases is a suffrage connection included in press coverage, and in Miss Macdonald's case it is her main claim to fame.

[38] Sir W.L. Mackenzie, public health pioneer and member of the Scottish Board of Health, his main areas of work were TB, the medical inspection and treatment of schoolchildren, and the care and medical and hygienic supervision of mothers and young children (this is however not headlined in accounts of his life). He played an influential role in the pre-war Scottish Housing Commission and sat on numerous public health committees and inquiries. He played a major part in bringing into operation child welfare and maternity services and is author of an influential report *Scottish Mothers and Children* <Carnegie Trust 1915> recommending such services. He received a knighthood in 1919. In the 1930s he helped set up the health service for the Highlands which was a precursor of the NHS. <*Scotman* Friday March 1 1935>

[39] Helen Corr observes that 'domestic science' had a very different meaning for "female pioneers" in the late 19thc than it held a hundred years later when its status as a girls' subject was deplored, and that its introduction into schools was seen as a victory for women and as an exertion of female independence and authority within education. She emphasises that the 'home rule' campaign (as it was commonly referred to) was led by a small group of female intellectuals who were well-educated and influential and also connected to the campaigns for women's higher education and suffrage. Helen Corr 'The schoolgirls' curriculum and the Ideology of the Home, 1870-1914, in *Uncharted Lives* 1983, pp 74-94>

prominent women of Edinburgh of that time".[40] In the account she gave of her life and work she also said how much had changed since the beginning of social service, commenting that in 1892 the phrase was not widely used. "At that time nobody would have said that mothers and babies were part of public health". There had been "enormous change in the attitude and outlook in matters relating to social organisation", for example that medical inspection of school children was now taken for granted and that "[A] revolution had undoubtedly taken place in our own times in regard to women's interests and importance in public affairs." <*Scotsman* June 30th 1933>

Ella Morison Millar was, as I have said, the first woman councillor elected to Edinburgh Town Council, standing as an Independent for Morningside ward which she held until 1949 when she retired. A well-known and influential figure, she was popularly known as the "mother of the council".<*Scotsman* Nov 6 1936> Even before election she had been familiar with council work as her father was Sir Robert Inches, Lord Provost between 1912 and 1916, and she accompanied him in his duties. She was also the first woman Baillie in 1923, an occasion of great significance to the EWCA, not least because the idea of a woman sitting in the Borough or Police Courts met with opposition from male councillors who did not believe police court work was suitable for a woman and they at first prevented it. When they said they couldn't bear to see her sitting on the bench she replied "If I can bear it I don't see why you can't". <Scotsman Obituary 26 Feb 1959> Her main areas of council work were libraries, public health and housing; she joined the new housing committee soon after she joined the Council <Evening Dispatch March 4 1944>, and was especially interested in housing for older people and single professional women. At various times she chaired the Public Health and Public Assistance committees and was convenor of the Continuation Classes sub-committee of the Education committee and of the General Purposes sub-committee on education, and of the (apparently more prestigious) Public Libraries committee, the first woman to hold that post too. <*Evening News* Dec 1 1943> Cllr Millar, looking back on her career in 1944, expressed a classic 'I'm not a feminist but...' position - declaring herself "not a feminist" as a preface to saying that there was scope for a wider use of women's talents within social administration and on the Town Council and that more day nurseries would be needed after the war because "[W]omen would not be content to be household drudges". <Evening Dispatch March 4 1944> In 1949 she was keen to distance herself from any hint of militancy when interviewed on her pioneering role in the Council; her male colleagues had been friendly - "[T]hey knew that I wouldn't smash windows!" The most important changes in her term of office, she said, had been the introduction of women police, and child welfare work such as health visitors and free milk for school children, and special educational provision for handicapped children. <Scotsman January 13 1949>.

---

[40] It would have been the ENSWS. Those she named were: Flora Stevenson, Louisa Stevenson, Mary Burton, Miss Whigham, Miss Guthrie-Wright, Miss Lees and Jessie Methven. "Their *field of service*... was narrower than it was now. They were chiefly concerned with Parliamentary votes for women, and the higher education of women." <my ital>

Euphemia Somerville was elected to the Town Council for Merchiston ward in 1919 as an independent, EWCA supported candidate and held the seat until her death in 1935, remained active in the EWCA until her death and chaired the executive committee for eight years from 1922. She was, as I have said, an example of the mutually-reinforcing relationship between an elected member and a women's society. Her work in housing illustrates this: by 1926 she was on the Council Housing and Town Planning committee and had set up at the same time the EWCA sub-committee on Housing, through which she launched the Edinburgh Welfare Housing Trust which offered "good houses for the very poor". <Maxwell 1937> [41] The accounts hint that her determination over housing, particularly slum clearance, bordered on the obsessive. She became the city's second woman magistrate (after several tries) in 1932, and as a Magistrate "[T]he woman of the streets was the subject of Mrs Somerville's special personal attention". When she was first elected to the Council she went to live for a month in the Craiglockhart Poorhouse "in order that she might obtain first-hand information on this side of Social Service", and then went on to take a Diploma at the School of in Social Study at Edinburgh University, a conjunction of experience and theory which the settlement movement encouraged. The Public Health committee's responsibilities included (from 1929) administration of municipal hospitals and the care of the mentally deficient and deranged. Mrs Somerville was appointed the first convenor of a new Mental Diseases sub-committee which oversaw the provision for mental illness and handicap, administering two major institutions and their auxiliary services. She also served on the Education and Public Parks committees of the Council, and on the latter pursued a successful scheme to create Toddlers' Playgrounds of which, at her death, there were 19. She was assiduous in the cause of equality for Council women employees, something which the Association also lobbied on persistently, and is recorded as working on questions of equal pay and promotion for women employees from 1920 until at least 1928, when she was again "steadily and persistently" pursuing equal increments of corporation clerical employees. Her first public work was in Glasgow where she organised voluntary health visitors, under Town Council auspices, and she was asked to develop a similar scheme in Edinburgh when she moved there in 1908. <Scotsman Sept 28 1935> Mrs Somerville was widowed in 1907, with three step-children and three children of her own.[42]

The record of Cllr Somerville's work is unusually complete because after her early death an appreciation was published as a book, called *A Child Lover*.< 1937> It suggests that the motivation for all her work was her experience of child poverty in Glasgow. The role of middle-class health visitors in relation to their poor clients has been much discussed with an emphasis on their problematic construction of working class mothering. Health visiting

[41] Hollis records that a number of the first women town councillors in England were particularly interested in housing and that they used voluntary and charitable networks to develop model schemes which were often intended as a demonstration of what the Council could do.
[42] A colleague on the Council describes her as being seen as "a party of one - herself", but that her position as an independent was a drawback in terms of limiting her influence and preferment on the council. <1937>

has, since its inception, included both practical help and surveillance; alleviating hardship but in ways often resented by clients. It was a precursor of other forms of welfare intervention, bringing voluntary welfare work within the purview of the local state, first as partnership and then within local government, and later the NHS.[43] The health visitors Mrs Somerville organised were all voluntary in 1908 with paid visitors introduced in 1917, though voluntary visitors continued to work alongside them. They visited fortnightly and passed on reports to "the proper official quarters". The scheme included teaching "the principles and practices of good mothering": that babies should be clean, and sleep in separate cots with the windows open; there were sewing and cooking classes and cots made from banana crates for sale. Miss JE Pagan, who worked as a volunteer visitor, described the purpose, as Mrs Somerville taught it, as "to make friends of the mothers, and advise them where they could find help in times of illness or poverty". Another contributor however describes how doors were likely to be locked against the visitors. < 1937> The play centres were a direct result of this work as she saw a need for exercise and care of the toddlers who were often neglected when a new baby came, and who also had high rates of mortality. Toddlers could be left at the playgrounds for around two hours a day and two of the play centres later became Nursery Schools.[44]

Further research on her dual role, in health visiting and then on the Public Health and Housing committees would possibly reinforce a model of first-hand information as motive and knowledge-base for an organisational and political career in welfare. Cllr Somerville was also a member of two committees of the Simpson Memorial Hospital where she was seen as having an expertise in maternal mortality, birth-rate fluctuations and VD and was a link between the hospital and the Town Council's Public Health department. Although babies and small children were undoubtedly a priority in Mrs Somerville's work, the emphasis on her as 'a child lover' underplays the extent to which this work was the creation of welfare and educational provision, mainly through the local state, and in part obscures her role as a pioneer in social housing, in promoting equal rights for women who worked for the council, and her mental health work which was considerable.

Most other EWCA active members who have left records fall into two categories, wives of prominent men, and professional women, the latter in education and medicine predominantly. The association's connection with local government was strengthened by the appointment of the city's Lady Provost as president, from 1925 when that title, which is honorary but carried with it duties and considerable status, was introduced. Harriet, Lady Findlay, the Association's first president, was married to Sir John R Findlay,

---

[43] State assistance at its inception particularly in relation to families was often "limited, conditional and intrusive" <Lewis 1986 pp 36-7> and health visitors were resented in many working-class communities. That the health visitor remains a symbol of the intrusion of the state into family life is illustrated by Mount, who sees her powers as "Stalinist" and illustrative of how the state damagingly meddles in the working-class family violating its privacy and encouraging dependence, an argument which has been significant in recent constructions of a problematic 'culture of dependence'. <Mount 1982 p 174>

[44] Although these accounts present the toddlers playgrounds as Mrs Somerville's own idea, a similar need and solution is identified in Mabel Palmer's wartime pamphlet on maternal and infant health.

proprietor of the *Scotsman* and is described as a woman of "numerous public services" of which hospital management is the most notable. In 1928 she was president of the Scottish Unionist Association, the first woman to hold that office. This is one of the few examples to be found of a formal party political connection among the EWCA founding members (although links to the Liberal and Labour parties are also suggested). Other prominent and well-connected women active in the association include Lady Carlaw Martin who was the wife of Sir Thomas Carlaw Martin, a well-known journalist who became director of the Royal Scottish Museum. In 1933 her death notice records that "[S]he took a deep interest in all matters of social welfare in Edinburgh, and was particularly identified with the women's movement". Prior to coming to Edinburgh she had been a member of the Dundee School Board. <*Scotsman* July 12 1933> Lady Wallace (who seconded the motion proposing the association) was associated with the Victoria League, and a number of committees, for District Nursing, War Hospitality and Girls' Public Schools, and was also Vice-President of the Edinburgh branch of the NCW.

The EWCA Annual Reports record the death of two of these 'committee women': Mrs Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, who died in 1930, of whom they say: "she was a pioneer in work for the emancipation of women no less than in the collection of wonderful Celtic melodies which, but for her, would have been lost to the world"; and Miss Lees, of whom they wrote that she had "devoted many years of a long life to the service of the public and of the emancipation of women". Miss Lees was an early and prominent suffragist in Edinburgh.

Alexia Jack was a teacher whose work and interests were influenced by her experience of the effects upon children of underfeeding and bad housing: "Through social work she helped in these matters…". She was a member of the WSPU and later the secretary of the Edinburgh branch of the WFL. Her obituary in 1948 records her as "a leading worker for social justice and "women's rights"" (the latter apparently requiring quotation marks) and records that she was one of the first women to join the Militant Suffrage movement. <*Scotsman* Dec 31 1948> Helen Mclachlan was also active in the suffrage movement and was "a keen educationist", as a member of a joint local authority and teachers committee. <EWCA 1939> Lilias Mitchell was a WSPU member and was imprisoned several times, first in Holloway in 1909 for taking part in a procession to Downing street. In 1911 she was appointed WSPU organiser for Aberdeen, in 1912 she was imprisoned for her part in a window-smashing campaign in London and subjected to forcible feeding, she was again imprisoned and forcibly fed during work for the WSPU in Birmingham between 1913-1914. After the war she worked as a secretary for the YWCA and wrote articles for the *Scotsman*. <Leneman 1995 p 266>

Agnes Macdonald's retirement after 21 years as secretary of the EWCA was reported in the *Edinburgh Evening News* of July 11th 1939. On December 12th 1962 when she was aged 80, she was interviewed by the *Evening Dispatch* under the headline 'The Gentle Old

Lady Who Once Went to Prison for her Beliefs', on the occasion of an STV programme on the suffragettes called 'The Fanatics' <sic> which was broadcast on that date. The interview records that she spent two months in Holloway jail after breaking the window of a London police station with a hammer but suggests that she had revised her view of the value of militancy, and she seeks to put suffragette activism in its wider context: "thousands joined the general movement for the emancipation of women, behind which was a small militant section of women who decided to take things into their own hands" but there were not many militants in Scotland so "I went to London to do my bit of damage". Miss Macdonald was also secretary of the WSPU in Edinburgh for a short period. In the interview she suggests increasing militancy eventually broke up the movement. Particularly interesting is the connection she makes between imprisonment and knowledge - new to a young woman who had been "one of the many daughters... who stayed at home" - and her future work. "We learned a lot about social conditions, particularly from the women who cleaned out our cells. It was a tremendous experience, and later it helped me after I trained to become a secretary, and took up social work." [45] Miss Macdonald's obituary records her part in the militant suffrage movement and that she was secretary of the EWCA: "[D]uring her long tenure of office, she made it an active influence in the city, promoting many social reforms." <*Scotsman* October 28 1966>

The Association's founding members included two of the city's first women doctors. Dr Garden Blaikie, by her WCA days the first Lady Warden of Edinburgh University with responsibility for women students' welfare, was, according to *The Scotsman*, as a student a member with Sophia Jex Blake of the medical class in Surgeon's Hall from which attempts were made to exclude them with ridicule and violence in 1870.[46] She qualified as a doctor and went to China as a member of a mission run by the Free Church of Scotland in Fukien, where she founded a hospital and met and married her theologian and missionary husband. Widowed soon afterwards she returned to China, to Peking, working in a mission and later a women's college. <Scotsman Sept 20 1945> Mona Geddes, later Dr Mona Chalmers Watson, was the first medical graduate of Edinburgh University (in 1894) and was a student with Dr Elsie Inglis. The first EWCA President and chairman of the executive committee in 1919-20 and a vice-president in 1930 she was, to judge from the column inches her death was accorded, perhaps the most well-known of the EWCA's 'prominent women' though it is an eminence to which they themselves contributed in planning and fund-raising for a memorial stained glass window to her in St Giles' cathedral.[47] During the war she had played a major part in founding the Women's Army

[45] There is no record of any other "social work" than her twenty years a secretary of the EWCA.

[46] At least, the *Scotsman* claims this but her name is not recorded with the first women students associated with Jex-Blake; I suspect the reporter confused the first students to attend mixed extra-mural classes in medicine as part of Jex-Blake's medical school and the first to be admitted to study at Edinburgh University itself slightly later. Missionary work was a very common destination for Scottish women medical students at this time. <add ref>

[47] Emphasising the WCA's well-connectedness, the appeal for this the EWCA launched in Sept 1938 was headed by Lady Aberdeen (a prominent woman's movement supporter), the Duchess of Atholl and the Secretary of State

Auxiliary Corps and was its senior officer, for which she was awarded the CBE.[48] Her *Scotsman* obituary (in 1936) records her "active support" of "the suffragette movement", her interest "in the education of women and the progress of the women's movement", and her connection through her mother to an earlier generation of educational and medical pioneers. Her mother (Miss Anderson of Aberdeen) had been a member of the first committee which worked to get women admitted to Edinburgh University and a relative of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, as well as a member of wider women's education and voluntary networks. Dr Chalmers Watson had an Edinburgh practice with her husband (also Dr Chalmers Watson), and she was president of the Scottish Women's Medical Association as well as (just before her death) president of the British Medical Women's Federation. She was for a time a staff member of the Bruntsfield Hospital for Women and Children (set up by Dr Jex Blake) and a manager of the Royal Infirmary, and on two Scottish Office heath committees. She was also a director of the feminist journal *Time & Tide*.[49] She was also a prime-mover in the campaign for pure milk, eventually opening a model dairy at Fenton Barns in East Lothian where she lived. Mrs Chalmers Watson, the *Scotsman* comments with a degree of under-statement "had ample scope for the exercise of her undoubted organising ability". <*Scotsman* Aug 8 1936> Safer milk was her major achievement, according to another obituary, in *Scottish Country Life*, which says that "[T]reading the difficult path of pioneers, she showed that educated women have a valuable part to play in the development of hospital and nursing facilities, and in the production of hygienic food and nutritive dietary - *departments of communal welfare which none can classify as unsuitable for their attention.*" <my ital: *S.M.T Magazine and Scottish Country Life,* September 1936> A fellow medical student (not named) writing an appreciation of her after her death <n.d.> refers to a recent conversation with her in connection with a function in honour of another woman medical pioneer and quotes her as saying: "for my own part it has been honour enough to have lived through such great times for women, and to know that the generation after us will not have the same fight for liberty."

The *Edinburgh Evening News* of December 3 1937, recording the publication of *A Child Lover,* refers to the city's "large number of clever and capable women who have devoted, and are devoting, a great part of their time to helping others. In health and housing, maternity services and infant welfare, and in coping with juvenile and adolescent problems they work hard and continuously for the general improvement of the people". Both the rhetoric of service and the list of concerns reflect a dominant, and increasingly

---

for Scotland. A memorial plaque was also temporarily erected in the Women's United Services Club in Edinburgh which she had helped to found and of which she was president at her death.

[48] In 1917 she was invited to visit France and "report on the possibility of utilising the services of women for the Army", for which she then drew up a scheme which was also used later as a model for the development of the WRENs and WRAFs, and was put in charge of developing. "Mrs Watson, as the senior officer of the Corps, was responsible for many wise provisions, which resulted in the successful employment of women with the troops in domestic and clerical duties". <*Edinburgh Evening News* Jan 26 1937> Her portrait by EA Walton is in the War Museum. Britain was the first of the allies to establish a female army auxiliary and it was very controversial, with recruits suspected of immoral and/or lesbian behaviour. However the air force and navy followed soon afterwards. <Thebaud 1994 pp 33-34> See also Arthur Marwick *Women at War* <1917>

[49] The 1939 EWCA Souvenir says she was co-editor of *Time & Tide* with Lady Rhondda.

Souvenir) and Agnes Macdonald's work with the WSPU and EWCA was a life, according to her obituary, "of service to others". Mrs Somerville's life was characterised, Agnes Macdonald wrote in 1937, by "faith, duty, and service"; that she also had power and influence is not mentioned. The ideal of service drew on voluntarist and Christian roots and articulates what has in recent years been called an 'ethic of care' <Tronto 1993, Mackay 1996>. In the short account of its own history which the EWCA gave in this 1939 anniversary publication it situated itself within the history of the women's movement, seen mainly as the struggle for the vote. Rather than "welfare goals in the place of feminism" <Jeffreys 1985 p 151>, the equality the EWCA sought and its welfare concerns are not seen as separate, let alone in opposition, the women's movement is part of social reform. Citizenship as service meant that the platforms of post-suffrage women's organisations could unproblematically include welfare issues alongside equality demands, including welfare demands which were not, or not primarily, those closely related to women's welfare.

However as women's welfare role became more respectable and suffrage and equality activism less so, it is emphasised. This may also acknowledge that the EWCA had rather greater success in promoting welfare reform than equality aims, and the identity of the organisation in later years reflected this. Insofar as the social reform dimension of the organisation came to dominate, it was drawing however on a tradition of women's welfare work which the fight for emancipation had also drawn on, and which in the early 20thc developed as both women's professional employment within the growing voluntary sector and state welfare services but also women's political work in campaigning for and contributing to the development of those services. A discursive strategy may serve several purposes, and the value of a tradition, albeit one which is now in play in a different field of action, is not inconsiderable. As I hope is clear from my discussion of the idea of discourse in chapter one, to describe something as a discursive strategy is not to imply that it was not also a matter of belief. This conception of citizenship as service drew strongly on a tradition for middle-class women which had used the idea of a special sphere of women's interest and responsibility to create and to justify a role for women outside the family, but in associated areas. For women taking the next step into public life, drawing on this tradition was not only unsurprising but may also have served to reassure their several publics - other women who they sought to recruit, and male inhabitants of the political institutions they sought to influence and to join. Women could be seen not as competing for power in a 'male' sphere but creating new areas of public life which were their own; they could take familial responsibilities into a new configuration of public and private centred on welfare. This approach may have been useful not only in pre-empting opposition and gaining support but also in dealing with the dissonance which accompanies pioneering ventures. Women citizens were able to present themselves to themselves as pursuing womanly ends, not as self-seeking but as serving others. Mackinnon, with reference to the 19thc movement for women's higher education has described how the idea of women's duty was part of a "contradictory amalgamation"

linking liberty and self-actualisation to duty, allowing women "to develop individuality, not for self-assertion, but for better service". <Mackinnon 1984 p 50> Sawer comments of Australian women politicians' use of a similar discourse in this period that depicting political participation as an extension of women's social roles rather than an alternative to it helped defuse fears that women's political equality would lead to a lessening of women's commitment to 'home duties'. <Sawer 1996> Similarly, Hollis sees women finding ways to avoid criticism that they were competing with men in unseemly fashion: "[A]t their bravest, women were well aware that they were seeking to reshape the priorities of local government, that they were refusing to accept male definitions of what was central and what was marginal". <1987 pp 471-3> A language of women's duties helped to create the public space to do so. But if this was an effective discursive strategy in some ways it also brought pitfalls. If women's political work is normalised within a discourse of welfare work for women and children it also becomes subsumed under, and can be restricted to, this area.[53]

The idea of women working politically for women is not seen as a problem within this view of active citizenship. They are comfortably 'women for women'; there are women's issues which only women really understand and that is why women like them must be politically active. That's what being a *woman* citizen is.[54] It is a narrative of citizenship which is highly gendered and drew on a difference feminism which has at least as much in

---

[53] Corr's discussion of how female educational pioneers in Scotland in the late 19[th]c "viewed the integration of domestic subjects as an assertion of female power and authority within the educational sphere" and the official use of the term 'domestic science' as a great victory is also pertinent, and equally double-edged. Corr records that Flora Stevenson and Mrs Burton on the Edinburgh School Board repeatedly recommended that boys as well as girls should be taught needlework and cookery and that woodwork or handicraft should form part of a girl's training, but with no success. She argues that domestic science was accepted into the school curriculum because this did not challenge women's traditional role as wife and mother, and more widely women's acceptance in teaching rested on their predominantly working with young children rather than challenging male teachers in senior roles. The initial opposition to women in teaching and on school boards faded because women brought "no fundamental alteration or threat to the structure of the educational hierarchy or the curriculum. The conclusion to the domestic ideology debate was that women scientists tended to be identified as biologists and nutritionists rather than the physical sciences" and that rather than revalueing the domestic, by promoting domestic science as an academic subject for girls they reinforced sexual divisions in schools. <1983 p90->

[54] This point is perhaps clearer in contrast to more recent views of women's political role. In Elizabeth Vallance's 1979 discussion of *Women in the House* which is based primarily on interviews with MPs in the 1974-79 Parliament, she observes that women MPs mainly did not see themselves as in Parliament *for* women. or even particularly *as* women, though the exception she notes to this is Lady Astor, who attempted to get women politicians to work together across party and as an MP worked closely with NUSEC. This has been a difficult issue for many women in public life, and continues to be. They are commonly expected to be preoccupied with 'women's issues' but their real interests, and the areas of interest which are more highly valued and lead to promotion, may be elsewhere. Thus Barbara Castle resented a move to co-opt her onto a committee on maternity and child welfare on the basis that she was a woman; Judith Hart felt that it was only by tackling the areas beyond those traditionally assigned to women that she could establish herself as a credible politician <Vallance 1979 p85>. Margaret Thatcher insisted that she thought of herself as a politician, not as a *woman* politician. It is not only that the values associated with 'public life' and government privilege interests traditionally part of the public rather than the private, but also part of equality feminism that there are no gendered skills and interests except those which are residually a result of socialisation. Yet, though she denied its relevance, Thatcher's gender was always at issue; this is equally true for Castle and Hart in the very need to develop strategies to combat perceptions of their role as women MPs. Vallance comments that this creates a "central ambivalence... with which it has always been difficult for them to cope". <1979 p83> This ambivalence and a view of equality premised on sameness has been a predominant characteristic of post-war women politicians at Westminster.

common with 19thc feminism as it has with post-1918 new feminism; a view of women's roles in the family is taken for granted within it and becomes a basis for public action. In education, health and welfare women in the 19thc women had reproduced and extended domestic roles in the public sphere. This is as true of these women citizens as for the earlier period. Like the women working in local government in Hollis's account, they "addressed women's questions, and stretched the municipal language to take in sewers and streets as well". If this was a language which would be used to restrict women's public participation, and to devalue the areas labelled 'women's interests', this is not something newly-enfranchised women, optimistic about the power of women's vote and women's transformative contribution to public life, can be expected to reflect.

women and welfare

As discussed in chapter three, further research is likely to show that the welfare concerns and lobbying of feminist organisations may have been more important to the development of the British welfare state than has been credited, though given the current state of research their influence in relation to that of others is difficult to assess. <Howe 1996 p 140-42; Thane 1991 p 114> The example of the EWCA suggests that the role of social-liberal women's organisations may have been considerable. Although a complex interaction of influences came together to create the 'welfare state'[55] and although welfare questions have in several ways been about women, especially as mothers and carers, we know very little about the role of women's organisations and conceptions of 'women's interests' in relation to this. <Thane 1991 p 93>[56] Thane has discussed this in relation to women in the labour movement in Britain. < Thane 1991, 1993> The considerable scholarship on family endowments has recovered an important aspect of feminist contribution to social policy. Work on "a virtually lost history" of women's leadership in welfare in the USA has been extensive in recent years <Gordon 1990 p 23 > and discussion of maternal feminism particularly in the USA and Australia has focussed on its relation to the growth of welfare provision. <Koven and Michel 1993> Welfare states have opened up new careers for women and this has reinforced a gendered division of labour.

---

[55] The phrase 'welfare state' appears only to have emerged in the late 1930s, long after its build-up had begun
[56] An important feminist argument in relation to present-day analysis of welfare issues is that the extent to which welfare provision is premised on gendered assumptions (that women will care; the male-breadwinner family model) is not acknowledged in mainstream discussion, and can be hidden by either neglect or a false gender-neutrality. Gender has moved from being an assumed component of questions of social welfare to (to a great extent) its hidden agenda. This has been related to other separations, a disaggregation which has separated public health from social work, child welfare from housing management, childcare from child protection etc. Feminist scholarship has shown the gender blindness and discriminatory character of welfare programmes particularly as reinforcing gendered arrangements in domestic and public life <Gordon 1990 p10; Land 1978 p275-84> and has developed a critique of welfare provision as regulating women's lives <Wilson 1977>; the idea of public or state patriarchy has been seen as a development of private/familial patriarchy. <Walby 1990> Such arguments have also emphasised the multi-faceted nature of the connection between women and public welfare in that the welfare actions of the state have, to a very large extent, been about women; women have had a higher propensity to suffer poverty and deprivation; and welfare provision has been administered by women. <Thane and Bock 1991; Showstack Sassoon 1987> More recent scholarship on women who campaigned for and administered and delivered welfare provision thus builds on an extensive critique which emphasises that welfare policies have been complex in their consequences for different groups of women.

Nevertheless, women working in health and welfare together with the broader women's movement "created innovative welfare approaches... that prepared the way for future social policies at large, for women's role in them and for a new vision of the relationship between the public and the private sphere". <Thane and Bock 1991 p 2> Parallels can be drawn between the EWCA's welfare interests, the welfare concerns of the "non-feminist" organisations of the period, and the concerns of women in the Labour Party. Beaumont concludes that a range of women's organisations in the 1930s played a crucial part in the fight for social welfare and health services, demanding that the state provide for the needs of women not in employment, and they were instrumental in a number of crucial campaigns "which would do much to improve the quality of women's lives". She argues that a view of what women needed beginning with more radical groups like the WCG and the FWG before the war spread to more conservative women's groups in the interwar period. <Beaumont 1996 p 231> Reforms such as family allowances, improved maternity services and free health care were introduced for a variety of reasons and have been complex in their outcomes but nevertheless, she emphasises, extended to women at home some of the rights of citizenship. <1996 p 245> Thane argues that in the period before 1914 and the inter-war period women in the Labour Party paid special attention to issues of social and economic policy concerning women and "acted within a coherent set of ideas which related feminism to an analysis of society, politics and the economy"; she argues that the role of women in bringing about Labour's commitment to a welfare state has been under-estimated. <Thane 1991 p 93 and p 114> The social policy concerns of women in the Labour Party which Thane identifies are close to those of the EWCA: better housing at affordable rents and the expansion of maternity and child welfare services, including home helps for mothers, low-cost or free food and milk for pregnant and nursing mothers and children below school age. <1991 pp 96-105> While focussing on women's needs as mothers, Labour Party women also argued that women's work opportunities, conditions and rewards in the labour market should be equivalent to those of men; female trade unionism, legislative improvement in women's pay and working conditions, and social support for working mothers and mothers at home were seen as complementary strategies. <1991 p 98>[57]

The role of social-liberalism and of the voluntary sector has also been paid less attention in the formation of the welfare state as the major historical focus has been on the contribution of the labour movement. However Beveridge presents his reforms as a culmination of pragmatic, piecemeal development in which voluntary initiative was important, as was the Liberal contribution. <Beveridge 1942> Harrison argues that a complex interaction of influences led to the Beveridge reforms and that although the demands of empire and of war, and ideas from other countries (especially Germany) were significant the main impulse to the growth of public welfare was domestic concern and that welfare

---

[57] It is possible that women's organisations' and activists' input into welfare policy was at a height during the interwar period: since women were more active in the voluntary sector and local government, and poor relief.

interventionism "advanced pragmatically and unobtrusively" through empirical responses to practical problems, with pressure from the professional classes, including the Fabians, important. <Harrison 1996 pp 69-70> The dynamic which eventually led to state intervention "originated with the volunteer who recognised the existence of a problem" which typically "he <sic> tackled through voluntary methods", skirmishing on the welfare state's frontiers and "continuously extending them". Middle-class self-interest as well as altruism played a role, as did professional perspectives which emphasised that the doctor could not cure patients until their daily living conditions were bettered, or the teacher teach pupils who were hungry and tired. <Harrison 1996 pp 70-4> The work of the EWCA reinforces this model. These developments drew on arguments for social science and planning, concern with public health and eugenics, and Christianity, all of which can be observed in the work of the EWCA as reinforcing their conception of social feminism and women's citizenship.

The social-liberal feminism of the interwar period demonstrates the breadth of feminist politics in this period and its ambition, and that available categorisations of feminist politics cannot be sustained. As I have commented, with such a wide interest in welfare issues the EWCA cannot be considered egalitarian but they do not straightforwardly support the causes which characterise the new feminist programme: family endowments were discussed several times but there is no record of formal support; their conclusion on protective legislation was to call for increased protection for all workers; housing (one of Rathbone's identified 'new' goals) was very important to them from the outset but their call for birth control information to be made available in clinics came relatively late. Their firmly non-party stance is close to the NUWSS and NUSEC tradition and disassociates them from labour movement women, many of whom saw this as effective opposition to socialism, although they also worked with labour movement women's organisations on specific issues. They cannot be categorised either with the more conservative non-feminist organisations of the period such as the Mothers' Union, the YWCA, the National Council of Women and the National Federation of Women's Institutes, even though they have a great deal in common with them as well, as unlike them they saw their task as primarily political.

Within an ideal of citizenship as service ideas of social reform and women's equality were conceptually close as well as organisationally so; feminist ends and social reform were not necessarily distinguished. The two are inter-related, as already discussed, by a belief that the best argument for women's citizenship was that women in public life would develop social reform and welfare work; this was the purpose of the vote and organising as women. However the relationship is not only one of an argument *for:* citizenship was construed in terms of service to the community *and* in terms of equality of rights. Social feminism thus had not only an identity within new feminism but within a liberal feminism which drew on a 19[th]c tradition and repositioned it in relation to ideas of public welfare.

---

schools and public health were all locally administered, as these issues became more centralised the influence of women's organisations may have diminished. <Lewis 1993 p 120>

The inter-relationship of new feminism to difference feminism within a 19thc tradition *and* ideas of equality in an organisation such as the EWCA draws on a set of connections which may trouble second-wave feminists and women politicians today but which was axiomatic for many women's movement activists in the early 20thc and between the wars. The weaknesses of social feminism lay in a view of women's interests which was unable to conceptualise and allow for differences among women, in the limits to the reforming intervention of middle-class women, and in the unwieldy breadth of its agenda. Its strength, as Rowbotham has argued, was its capacity to confront the immediate needs of women and seek practical reforms, and to challenge market-liberal approaches to women's emancipation that emphasised rights but ignored material needs. <Rowbotham 1992 pp 127-128> Newly-enfranchised women were working within an inherited political discourse, but also re-shaping it. The women's movement after 1918 brought the private and familial into the public sphere: two narratives, of citizenship and of women's concern for family and social welfare, intersect in a conception of gendered citizenship centring on state welfare provision. But it was also a public responsibility for women. A woman's place may no longer have been at home, but it was still in the family.

CONCLUSION

As I have argued, women's position in the family and work as mothers raised a number of questions for the women's movement which were addressed in a variety of ways: the identification of equality with access to public roles defined in opposition to family roles has served to obscure this history. Turning attention to this dimension of women's movement history brings into focus the extent to which feminist concern with women's role in the family, at a time when state solutions to social problems seemed increasingly convincing, led to a view of a social, primarily state, role in relation to the family. This suggests that organised women's advocacy may have played a greater part in the creation of a political consensus for state welfare provision than has been recognised. It also suggests that the interrelationship between women's emancipation, the ideas of social feminism, and changes in family formation would repay further study. It emphasises the extent to which a perceived need for different standards or values has always been part of feminist arguments, particularly in relation to women's role in the family. Equality has rarely been understood only in terms of "what men have got".

Taking Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication* as a starting point we can trace the connection of women's family position and how it is seen to the emerging modern state and to a politics of sexual difference. The Victorian legal reforms began with the attack on women's legal invisibility in property law and as such situated married women's position as of legitimate public interest and not only the private concern of her husband and family. Reinforced by the discussion of sexual relations in the late-Victorian period this meant that a conception of rights associated with citizenship was extended to women within the family and to the private sphere, although not unproblematically. Ideas of social maternalism and other arguments based in sexual difference, which were strongly influenced by the campaigns on prostitution and sexual abuse, called for reformation of private and public life in a way which brought into question the boundary between them. The 19th c women's movement demanded both equal civil and political rights and at the same time that women's difference from men and specific circumstances associated with their family role should be acknowledged. However although both arguments from difference and equality-as-sameness were used in 19th and early 20th century feminist campaigns, the conception of citizenship which was rewarded with success was a political citizenship associated with public values.

Early twentieth century feminism both drew on and contested ideas of gender and citizenship inherited from the Victorian movement, adding to them a much sharper appreciation of the

economic basis of women's subordination and its relationship to her unpaid work in the family. Gendered family roles are not seen as a problem as such, it is the association with subservience, including sexual subservience, economic dependence and a denial of individuality which is; emancipation therefore must take both public and domestic forms. A critique of the restrictions on middle-class daughters and wives, the economic dependence entailed by motherhood, and the double-burden on working-class mothers became more important, as did the associated idea of greater choices for married women, that they should neither have to choose between marriage and a place in the public world of work and achievement nor be burdened by too much work. Atkinson's analysis presents women's position as divided by class and differentially created by industrialisation but as resolved, for both working-class and middle-class women, by a better balance between family duties and paid employment, love and work. Fabian socialist feminists and others used the space created by imperialist and eugenic arguments to advance the interests of women as mothers and saw their needs as rights to be fought for, as much as the suffrage was. The focus on the "living wealth" of the community and its reproduction, a new phase in the women's movement bringing to the fore a critique of the division of women's choices between marriage and work and of the divisions among women according to class and maternity, and in which socialist and economic arguments were much more important, converged in a discourse which was to provide the basis for arguments for social reform and a distinctive conception of women's citizenship after 1918.

Willa Muir's attempt to bring psychoanalytic explanations to understanding male dominance and female disadvantage and to suggest a way of revalueing gender difference illustrates how feminist discourse meshed with other discourse of its time. Her hazardous and ambivalent pursuit in life of both love *and* work and attempt to think through difficulties and contradictions in her situation is an example, albeit a highly individual example, of the way new personal possibilities and ideas of gender difference were part of attempts to forge new feminist directions appropriate to the new political and social circumstances of the 1920s. Discussion of feminist directions has focussed on NUSEC and its split into 'old' and 'new' camps has been central to accounts of the women's movement in the 1920s. Many accounts of the period continue that polarisation (itself a measure of how much equality versus difference remains a dilemma) and reveal how a perceived opposition between women's family roles and equality underlies it. Although significant differences between the views and priorities of different groups of women were at issue, the equation of accepting gendered family roles with conservatism which underlies the critique of social feminism is hard to sustain. Equality feminists did not usually assert an other than gendered view of the family but, rather, argued

for women's right to choose other roles than marriage and motherhood. Social feminism, while accepting a gendered division of labour in the family did not accept its deleterious personal or social consequences, and challenged the idea of equality as a public value pertinent only outside the family.

However it was a challenge which, while more significant than is often recognised, had limited success. A focus on this dimension of women's movement history shows that attempts to renegotiate the gender settlement as it affects private and family life are a great deal more difficult to carry through than is creating a greater role for women in the public sphere, hard though that also may be. This is one reason why arguments from difference are less visible. The identification of 19th c feminism with a limited form of equality feminism by Atkinson, Royden and Gollancz, and of pre-war feminism equally so by Muir and Russell, and the similar way in which early second-wave feminism saw the suffrage struggle (the only feminist history available to it) as a narrow form of feminism seeking only equality with men, is not an accident but a consequence of the relative success of arguments from equality. Rathbone may have over-simplified in describing liberal equality arguments as "me too" feminism, but in essence it means women joining existing political structures rather than changing them (although this may include a belief that a greater number of women will also lead to institutional and structural change); arguments from difference more usually call for a fundamental change to political and social structures. This means that arguments from equality are easier to express and more readily understood because they remain within the terms of recognisably political discourse. Arguments from difference on the other hand are not only about women wanting to join the debate, but seek at the same time to change the terms of the debate, to challenge the ideas and values on which political and social structures are based and the conceptual boundaries which underpin them. This does not make such arguments impossible but it does mean they are harder to conceptualise, communicate and carry through - not least, as I have discussed, because they are often not even seen as 'political'. In her 1925 NUSEC presidential address, which has been taken as a defining statement of new feminism, Rathbone declared: "At last we have done with the boring business of measuring everything that women want, or that is offered them by men's standards... At last we can stop looking at all our problems through men's eyes... We can demand what we want for women, not because it is what men have got, but because it is what women need to fulfil the potentialities of their own natures and to adjust themselves to the circumstances of their own lives". <Rathbone 1929> Fitting women into a world measured, in Rathbone's terms, according to male standards is not straightforward but it has proved more possible than challenging and changing those standards of measurement. For example,

definitions of success, skill, work, and appropriate public behaviour all depend mainly on access to once all-male arenas and draw on characteristics considered typically male, still, even when they depend also on saying that such arenas and characteristics should not be considered only male. The questions which difference feminism continues to raise are about how the standards or value base creates difficulties for women in fitting in and whether, even if women deny their difference as far as humanly possible, they will ever *really* fit in? What Rathbone called the male standard is embedded as beyond serious question by being presented as 'the rational view', 'how things are' and depends on a gender neutrality which elides the extent to which theories and assumptions assume experience closer to typically male life patterns. However it is no longer accurate to characterise a standard of achievement which privileges public power and position as male. It is also a standard or expression of value which many women have accepted. It is more accurate to express this as measuring by public standards.

I am not arguing that a return to social feminism offers a solution, although I argue that the distinction between what is and what is not considered to be feminism is challenged by closer attention to the breadth of women's organisations and their concerns in the interwar period, and that the salience and influence of social feminism, including social-liberal feminism, was greater than has been recognised. As well as reasserting the claims of 'one side' of the equality and difference dispute I also argue, as others do, that feminist political and historical analysis needs to move beyond this opposition. Many of the problems social feminism faced were rightly identified by equality feminists and the extent to which the alliances it made led to a diffusion of its aims and values was a particular problem. These can be assessed more fairly when we reconsider it and see it as something more than a return to conservatism and domesticity. If equality feminism reinforces an opposition between equality/family roles, social feminism's attempts to reconcile them is at the cost of the clarity and strength of purpose equality feminism offered. Social feminism as a public role offers women emancipation through yet more responsibility, leading to what is now called the 'triple burden'.[1] Social feminism responded to the tension between women's family roles and the independence gained through work and public life by reasserting the social value of women's role in the family, by seeing it as a basis for citizenship and by calling for state services to support it, including an endowment which would end mothers' economic dependence on their husbands. It did not envisage combining caring work and employment outside the home as a solution for more than a

---

[1] i.e. employment, family roles and public/political work: changing the world *and* cooking the tea. A current television advertisement for Knorr stock cubes makes this point succinctly: there is word play on 'a woman's place is in the house' revealing that the house in question is now the House of Commons, but making a speech

minority, a view which made sense in terms of the nature of particularly working-class family formation and domestic work in the early 20thc and the kinds of paid work available to most women, although, ironically, considerable changes to family formation and domestic work which would make this more possible were already underway. Although its demands were seen by some at the time as threatening the gains made by feminism, they imply two forms of equality: one for those who choose 'work' and one for those who choose 'love'; equal pay and an end to sex discrimination in employment (established demands) on the one hand, and on the other newer demands for an end to women's personal subservience within the family, employment provision that takes into account working women's needs as mothers, decent housing, improved and free health care for pregnant women and children, greater control over fertility and that problems of violence and sexual abuse for women and children in the family be taken more seriously. "Real equality" went beyond formal and legal inclusion to seek change in economic arrangements to reflect the value of women's role in the family to the state which would lead also to equality in the family, understood in terms of each individual's rights but not as ending the gendered division of labour in the family. Like the equality feminism it criticised, however, social feminism implied that what all, or most, women needed was the same if only by making its demands on behalf of "women". As recent feminist debate has highlighted, if the strength and coherence of feminist political arguments come from asserting a unitary category of woman, this results in a view of women which excludes or downplays differences between women and creates a standard against which some women come to be measured as different. It is an understanding which has been and is difficult to put into political practice however.

That the question of equality versus difference which was so troubling for NUSEC after 1918 was not apparently a problem for the social liberal feminism of the EWCA was in part because they were formed after women over thirty could vote and saw their purposes first of all in response to the changed political situation. This called for immediate effort to educate and organise women to use their votes. The more politically and philosophically complex questions could be deferred, it seemed. But it is also because problematic questions could be addressed within a conception of *equality for* which saw - indeed did not question - women's political citizenship as gendered. Women using their vote, learning about the issues of governance, and standing as representatives was equality in a political process which would, through women's influence and the introduction of women's priorities (both of which they saw unproblematically) resolve social problems, problems which were faced by women in families

there is apparently no hindrance to also serving her family home cooked meals; it concludes with a further pun, "live a normal life".

and at work, but not confined to them. Intense concern about maternal health and mortality in the 1920s and early 1930s, continuing problems of infant and child mortality and poor health and poverty associated with unemployment and with large families, all gave these concerns great urgency. The resolution of problems such as insanitary and overcrowded housing, contaminated food and milk supplies, environmental pollution, child poverty and ill-health, maternal mortality and morbidity and the lack of access by poorer women to health services generally, and the introduction of services such as neighbourhood kitchens, nursery schools, school medical services and sheltered housing for the elderly, was not necessarily conceived of as leading to equality in the way that arguments to improve the working conditions of shop and catering workers or equal promotion for teachers and corporation employees could more readily be. Nevertheless health and welfare measures which had consequences for women's caring responsibilities and for their well-being as mothers contributed to an increase in equality between women and men in Britain.

The priorities of the EWCA presented a less explicit challenge to the accepted view of politics and "social arrangements" than the FWG or the social feminist wing of NUSEC, but it was a new view nevertheless. Their conception of these issues as gendered was not articulated in terms of rights but in terms of women's duty. Welfare was gendered as a task and in outcomes: this was work women did with and for women, if not only for women. This view of women's political role, I have argued, drew on Victorian feminist and liberal philanthropic traditions both of which presented welfare as important and appropriate work for women in politics. Victorian ideas of service and women's role in reforming "the city, the larger home" accepted that women had a special responsibility for social and moral questions and particular skills and experience to bring in these areas. Social liberalism contributed to an interventionist view of local government and philanthropy to a view of women's role in it. Social feminist and socialist feminist ideas emphasised the role of the state in family welfare, a view which in the post-war period became more widely-held and not only identified with the labour movement. Thus the ideas inherited from Victorian feminism shaped the task and identified it as a women's task; social liberalism and social and socialist feminism identified the solutions as lying in state action and provision. Pursuing welfare goals and equality as complementary created a distinctive form of women's citizenship which accepted women's gendered responsibilities in the family and beyond it. It may have been dismissed later as "housewife politics" but was based on a new view of what the state could and should do, and as such would lead to a view of welfare similar to the Scandinavian model in seeing its role and relevance to both private and public life. However the acceptance of a continuing "women's mission" holds the tension

between family/equality in a "functional ambiguity" rather than resolving it. <Cott 1987 p 20>
When women accept family welfare as their responsibility, whether in their own families or
extending it to public life, there is no open conflict of interests. It is when their welfare role and
other work and aspirations, for political power for example or more senior employment, come
into direct competition for time and personal resources, or when they see these responsibilities
not as gendered and therefore unfairly carried only by women, that practical and philosophic
tensions ensue.

The questions posed by the analysis of equality and difference as a politically significant
dichtotomy are useful in opening up historical evidence to analysis, but drawing a firm
distinction between equality and difference feminisms insists on an absence of discursive
complexity and presents as a necessary opposition what may also be a functional ambiguity
rather than disabling tension, or, at some times and in certain discourses, complementarity.
Categorical distinctions have their own history and if, as Rowbotham observes, they are useful
in sorting out strands of thought and differentiating forms of action and organisation, we need
also to test them against the words and actions of the historical actors. <1992 p 5> The social
liberal feminism of the interwar period demonstrates the breadth of feminist politics in this
period and its ambition: there are few aspects of political and social activity which do not
appear on the women citizens' agenda. It shows that available categorisations of feminist
politics cannot be sustained. This emphasises that it is vital to situate women's movement
politics and thinking in relation to the concerns and political and moral languages of its time.
This calls for a theoretical framework which situates political belief and strategy within the
discourses of gender and other relevant discourses of the time rather than in a privileged
position outside and counter to them: including gendered roles in the family and
'uncomfortable' discourses like eugenics, Christian service and social maternalism. This is not
to deny the importance of political ideologies in changing discourse, but it is to suggest that a
number of factors will play a part in how far that is possible. Feminism, like any other politics
(although this is especially the case for the politics of 'outsider' groups) must speak the political
language of its time, and in any period is bound up in the discourse of gender of that period, not
simply a counter-discourse to it, and the form opposition takes is shaped accordingly. The way
contemporary ideas and circumstances form the terms of the debate with which feminist
thinking engages is illustrated by feminist use of as well as challenge to 'separate spheres', by
the convergence of feminist, eugenic, socialist and social welfare ideas in the early years of the
century, and by the way a welfare politics and women's citizenship were linked after 1918. A
renewed focus on maternity, as Davin and others argue, led to a shift in the relationship

between families and the state but the concerns which initiated and justified state intervention in family life built on a conception of the good mother's role which meant it was highly problematic for women. I argue that benefits and disadvantages are rarely so clear cut or separable and that this change in the relationship of family and state included a greater perception of mothers as individuals and could be and was used to argue for support and services for women in their family roles, with some success in the longer term, and that to improve women's circumstances in the family was not to confine them there. This approach emphasises how feminists included contemporary common sense in their explanations and arguments. Similarly, the idea of women's citizenship which interwar groups drew on to make sense of their role as political actors and to shape a new form of women's politics built on earlier ideas in a way which allowed activists to articulate and feel comfortable in their new role but also others to understand and accept them. As a claim to influence in previously wholly male fora, I have suggested, it was embedded within the discursive strengths *and* limitations of women's traditional arenas of power/knowledge, family and morality. It sought to extend them: women's interests included stair cleaning and city sewers, better bandstands and building libraries, child sexual abuse, street lighting, maternity hospitals and world peace. It included asserting aspects of family welfare as a state responsibility, but this remained a responsibility for women in public as in private.

The problematic relationship between family interests and equality runs through, and is made visible through, the history of the women's movement. The failure to resolve problems created by this separation and opposition lies in the nature of the opposition itself: in how families and the nature of work and responsibilities in them and what is appropriate to private life are seen, and how equality is understood as a public value. The history of feminist engagement with women's role and situation in the family shows that these views have been historically and discursively fixed. How these questions are discussed is strongly marked by the opposition, and thus it shapes solutions put forward. It becomes an opposition between the interests of women as individuals and (often the same) women as family members. Historically it becomes an opposition only when women as mothers are perceived as individuals with needs separate from and beyond their family role. Atkinson's articulation of the demand by women for love (sexual relationships and children) and work (economic and personal independence) names a refusal to resolve this opposition through a separation between those women who marry and have children and those who have public careers and were seen by some as a 'third sex'. The demand for love and work presents women as having interests on both sides of the equality/family opposition.

The Fabian Question:

My interest in this area of research was, as I have said, focussed by a problem named by the Fabian Women's Group in 1911 (and not, of course, only by them) and by its reproduction across a century of change. The 'Fabian question' states in specific form an association between women's caring work and disadvantage: the FWG called into question the link between maternity and economic and social exclusion. This is not the only question feminism raises in relation to women's family position but it is pivotal. That this was seen as a problem was in itself significant. To do so was to name a connection between maternity and an unequal share of resources which was (and is) disguised by sentimental discourses of motherhood, in which the Victorians had excelled, and by the belief in a family income as unproblematically a resource for women and children. It was to position maternity as not 'naturally' entailing economic dependence and precluding other work, or where mothers also worked outside the home, a reason for low pay and limited opportunities. It recognised that women's disabilities as mother and as worker reinforced each other and presented the very unequal share of resources which women's family roles gave them as the result of social arrangements which therefore could be changed by other social arrangements. The second stage of their inquiry thus took as a starting point basic premises of Fabian socialism, that production and distribution should be "so organised as to bring about the largest and most equal opportunities in life for each individual", and of early twentieth feminism, that the economic dependence of wives and mothers was a central problem for women and for family relationships. For women who were not caring for young children their path to economic independence would be the same as men's, in properly-rewarded work; the more difficult problem was how to combine "the adequate fulfilment of the functions of motherhood" with "economic independence of the mother". They emphasised the contradictory status of motherhood as "a disability to the worker" and "a service rendered to the community", that it is positioned across a work (as public work)/family opposition. It is a problem because work is understood only in public and market terms; it is not a private and family matter only since it is of social benefit beyond the family. It is an argument for equality which goes beyond legal and political inclusion to a radical reformation of the labour market and social provision for the care of children. The solution of maternal endowment is a partly public answer which repositions motherhood as a form of waged work. Their argument is valid beyond its Fabian socialist context in bringing the public value of equality to family economics and relations.

I have suggested that the statement, that "[T]he practical problem is how to combine the fact that as social beings most people live in families and are interdependent with equality of opportunity for each individual" articulates the same problem. <1995 p 27> The difference of language between the 1911 and 1995 formulations is significant. Where the FWG name this as a problem for women, in 1995 it is presented as a problem for people. For the FWG it was taken for granted that mothers cared for young children; what they questioned was their economic dependence and exclusion from other work as a result. The EOC no longer make this assumption, and would be criticised for doing so; the use of "most people" is a rejection of the argument that lies behind that assumption, that women and not men should care for children. But it is also a form of gender neutrality which hides the fact that most of the people who do the kind of caring work in families which is a bar to their equal participation in the labour market (and other opportunities) are women. One answer to the problems presented for women by caring responsibilities in the family has been to assert that these are not only women's responsibilities. This has not been effective in significantly altering the gendered division of labour in most families but a linguistic change in response to the same argument obscures that. The 1995 use of 'family' rather than 'children' includes a recognition (partly a result of demographic change) that care within families is also for adult dependants. The concept of interdependence expresses a move away from the idea of women at home, children and other non-earners as dependants of the breadwinner towards seeing all family members as interdependent; this is a useful conceptualisation which I will return to. The phrase "equality of opportunity" is common to both discussions though in the latter it is no longer embedded within socialist thinking or solutions; arguably it is now confined to labour market issues but the Fabian women understood it more widely. Both formulations see the problem as an interaction between the labour market and the family, which is intensified by how women's responsibilities are seen by themselves and others. For the FWG this is an inheritance from historic economic and social conditions which are now undergoing change but which have created the "confusion between sex-relationship and economics" which must be "disentangled". In the EOC research views and practices which no longer match economic or social conditions are seen as creating an economic rationale which shapes individual and family decision-making. In both formulations the tension is seen as between what is possible for the individual and the constraints entailed by caring; between a more autonomous lifestyle and accepting a primary responsibility for the well-being of other family members. I have suggested that this becomes a tension only when women see more autonomy as possible and desirable (or that the things which come with it are - travel, income and identity as Atkinson argues) and responsibility for other family members and a view of their role associated with that as a barrier to opportunity.

It is a 'gender knot' which will not be disentangled or resolved by cutting only one of its constituent threads.

Since 1970 the "social arrangements" for caring have been extensively discussed, particularly in relation to childcare. The most comprehensive inquiry into questions of care and maternal employment in recent years was undertaken by the Employment Committee in 1995 and it made a series of wide-ranging recommendations, calling for a national strategy on child care. The experience of other European countries, especially the Nordic countries, provides a much-cited model of good practice (though not without limitations, as discussed below). This means that this is now less a question of *how* but *why not*? Why have the "social arrangements" which would enable women to have children and participate equally in the social wealth of the community not been put into place?

There was no formal conclusion to the FWG's deliberations in this second stage of the inquiry, as there had been for the first . The answer was likely to lie in assistance through the state but a full answer must wait until "the facts of women's economic conditions in past and in the present had been closely examined".[2] <1911/1988 p 156> Socialist, social and social liberal feminism. I have argued, contributed to a consensus for a much greater state role in welfare and tried to ensure that the interests of women as mothers and at home were included in policy. The success of arguments for welfare provision which made a contribution towards some family needs, alongside falling family size and an improved standard of living for most working-class families in the interwar period, meant some amelioration of problems women had faced in their family role, although it was at the cost of reaffirming a male breadwinner model of the family. However, in a trend which began in the interwar period but is more apparent after 1945 when welfare provision was much extended at the same time as labour market demand increased, married women except when children are very young or in specific circumstances which extend dependency, had much more opportunity to extend their employment and, more recently, higher education. And a gendered view of welfare created jobs which women took; women are a majority of workers in health and social work (79.5%). <Scottish Abstract of Statistics 1996> Although social feminism, alongside cultural and market emphases, has been seen as confirming women's role as domestic, this was not what happened: most women's lives became shared between family roles and employment, in what became acknowledged as "women's dual role". As I have suggested in relation to the idea of a public

---

[2] Their work was interrupted by war but Atkinson's 1914 essay and other publications are clearly related to these group discussions.

responsibility for welfare for women, women left home but they did not leave their family role in doing so; women took on new roles but retained primary and default responsibility for caring work in families. Again, it allows a "functional ambiguity" and where there are tensions, these are not in outright opposition unless or until a gendered division of family labour is contested.

More recently however women's dual role has been seen as a barrier to her full as opposed to secondary participation in the labour market, as has women's confinement to a narrow range of occupational sectors, and to equal participation in political and other public roles. This has led both to renewed calls for men to play a greater part in caring and for better state or market provision to support people with family responsibilities. There has also been a renewed assertion that women who are serious about public careers should make a choice between that and having children. <Innes 1995 pp 93-96> The majority of women with dependent children in Britain are also economically active. <OPCS 1996 table 7.11> Although the proportion of women in Britain who have children has fallen considerably from a post-war peak in the 1960s[3], most women still do so and a high proportion now return to employment after maternity leave; more are also returning to work full-time and almost all mothers return to employment while their children are still at home. <Brannen et al 1994> The majority of families with children are headed by two parents, both of whom are in paid work, though mothers are much more likely to be in part-time work than fathers are. <Harrop and Moss 1994>A minority of children are cared for professionally and the major responsibility for day to day care of children under five is taken by their mothers; most additional childcare is provided by other family members.<Marsh and McKay 1993> The proportion of people who spend significant time in caring for adult dependants has risen for both women and men (although women are a majority) making this also part of the same practical opposition. Neither market nor state solutions have been found to prevent the widespread association of caring with poverty and no effective way has been found of valuing unpaid work of caring. There is a correlated low value put on most caring work in employment.

The solution proposed by the women's movement in the 1970s <Rowbotham 1989>, reiterated many times since <for example Okin 1989, Harman 1993>, and now formally part of European Union social policy, is that both public and private responsibilities should be balanced more

---

[3] The proportion of women childless by age 30 has doubled in twenty-five years: over a third of women born in 1960 reached 30 without having children, half that proportion of women born in 1945 did. Part of this change is likely to be a result of a trend in delaying pregnancy which has been marked since 1980 but it is unlikely that it will completely reverse the fall in fertility; OPCS projections are that 2 in 10 women born in 1980 will not have children against 1.5 in 10 for women who have now passed the childbearing years. <Population Trends 67, Spring 1992.

equally between women and men, with social provision and public encouragement to support this. In recent years a shorthand term for this has been 'the revolution that never happened'.[4] This has been associated with the ideas of 'family friendly' provision in the workplace, now British government policy, and proposals for job-sharing and more properly-rewarded and non-discriminatory part-time work. This solution has a number of problems: a disinclination among fathers to take up parental leave and similar provision when available in numbers anywhere near women's; and that employment conditions over the period in which these ideas have been discussed have deteriorated, with insecure employment and very long hours of work becoming more common, intensifying pressure on those in work. When caring responsibilities are associated with loss of seniority at work, and part-time and flexible work especially so, then men sharing these costs with women replaces a male/female inequality with one between carers and those without dependants: the latter in senior positions, the former as a secondary labour market. A further problem with this solution is that it depends on a false symmetricality: male/female association with caring could be more balanced than it is but, because women bear children, there is a differential commitment which only an extreme gender neutrality denies; and since not all families are headed by a man and woman, or by two people, this is not a solution which works for those which are not.

The opposition between gender equality and family roles has been intensified by the relative success, and visibility of that success, of equality feminism since 1970 in arguing for a greater role for women in employment and public life. For a woman who is high earning the 'opportunity costs' of childbearing (in the revealing economic phrase) are much higher than for a woman whose education and role in the labour market has been restricted because of the assumption that she will leave to have children. Women in senior roles in management and politics are much more likely to be childless than are men in public positions and they are also more likely not to be married; in Atkinson's formulation, they have chosen work. <Lindley ed 1994> Those who have benefited least from improvements in women's earnings and employment opportunities since 1970 are single mothers, mothers with unemployed partners, poorly educated women, women from ethnic minority groups and older women. Since 1975 there has been a widening earnings gap between groups of women which is greater than the gap which has grown between groups of men; it is marked by maternity, although also by age and ethnicity. <Innes 1995 pp 277-284; Walby 1997 pp 50-65> Women before childbearing now have almost equal pay with men of the same age; the gap between women's and men's earnings

---

[4] a term attributed to Shirley Williams

widens over time and the greatest divergence is between the wages of fathers and mothers. <Waldfogel 1994; Corti and Dex 1995>

The tension between gender equality and family roles is exacerbated by changes in the family: the small size and intense privacy of modern families means that tasks are not shared between other members of the household or a wider kinship group and fall only to (able-bodied) adults in the immediate family, while informal and semi-formal support for caring roles is not as available as it has been in some social settings. These changes are themselves connected to the increase in married women in the labour market who are therefore less available to develop and cement ties of kinship and neighbourhood. (Grannies work too; maiden aunts scarcely exist in fact or in concept; Girl Guides and Playgroups have been closing down for want of adult volunteers.) This has increased the isolation of women remaining at home with children or in other caring roles.

The relative success of an equality model of feminism has reinforced an identification of equality or liberation with employment and participation in public life but has further marginalised caring and private roles. The emphasis on 'work' has meant that 'love' has become invisible, except insofar as there are tasks which can be replaced by professional caring thus freeing the carer to fully participate in public life. Family responsibilities are positioned as a hindrance to full participation in the market and public life. Rather than questioning the boundary between public and private, public values have become hegemonic and success in public demands a minimisation of private responsibilities.[5] Radical feminism has also played a role in this. Second-wave feminism began with a focus on the personal, including the family, positioning the family as political, and making links to women's lack of power in the public world. <Rowbotham 1989, 1992> The family was seen as the last major site of women's oppression and the place where problematic gendered characteristics were reproduced. This argument reinforced the division between an equality possible for women outwith the family (whether in public life or separate enclaves of cultural feminism) and those who remained within it. It usefully added to the research and public agenda a number of questions about the family. Because liberation and family ties were seen as necessarily opposed the argument led

---

[5] This opposition contributes also to a virtual impasse in family policy, illustrated by the failure of the previous government to develop legislation which met their stated aims in family policy (the problems faced in implementing the Child Support Act are an illustration) and in the problems faced by the present government in reforming the benefits system in relation to families with dependent children, especially single mother headed families. <Innes 1996, unpublished paper>

to a closure. More recently there has been only limited attention to these questions within feminist debate and in political theory. I have argued elsewhere that this absence was exploited by right-wing and centrist family theorists. <Innes 1995 176-179>[6]

I have suggested that the solution which came closest to, or seemed at least to promise most in, resolving the opposition of family interests and gender equality, a high level of welfare provision which would support family responsibilities is not a resolution but only postpones and occludes the tension between equality and care. Since the welfare demands of social feminists were not fully achieved in this country, this has not been demonstrated. However in those countries where a welfare-based model of equality has been most fully developed there are fears that progress towards equality may not be sustained <Eduards 1992> and of a `backlash` among younger women against the demands of carrying both public and family roles. <Discussion, EOC conference, *Scotland and Norway* 1995; international seminar on women and citizenship in Europe, University of Glasgow 1997> The Nordic countries are characterised by a high degree of formal equality with almost equal participation by women and men in the labour market, state support for people combining paid work with family responsibilities, and the highest proportion of women in government in the world.[7] Recent research has emphasised that even this is not enough to guarantee gender equality in employment and public life: in Finland the most usual explanations for gender hierarchy and women's subordination, that women's involvement in working life is quantitatively and qualitatively lower than that of men, that women have lower levels of educational qualifications than men, and that women are less organised in protection of their interests, do not hold, and state support for parents and other carers is accepted as a social right. If these explanations were adequate, Finnish women ought to be in an enviable position of full gender equality. However men dominate senior and decision-making positions in employment, economic life and administration, there is a high level of gender segregation in employment, and a persistent gender gap in wages comparable to Britain's. <Rantalaiho 1997 p 18> This is true of all the Nordic countries although women's participation in employment and public life and welfare provision to support family roles is much better than elsewhere. Take up of provision to support parents in combining employment and caring in the Nordic countries has been almost wholly by mothers. < Arve-Pres Birgit ed 1995> Two contradictory assumptions underlie recent research on continuing inequalities for Nordic women: that an unequal gendered division of family work is not at issue because of state support; and that women do most of the family work and that this has consequences for

---

[6] Offen makes a similar point in relation to right-wing family arguments in the USA. <1988 p 155>

their employment.<Innes 1997> I am emphasising this point because discussion of the consequences of the opposition between work and caring commonly sees it as resolved by a high level of welfare provision; while this of course would help a great deal it does not address the underlying problem. It also leaves women very vulnerable to welfare cutbacks, as employees and as carers. Furthermore the conceptual problems of an equality/family opposition and view of the family as properly private and self-sufficient underlie conceptions of welfare and contribute to problems in how welfare provision is seen and the relationship between welfare and work.[8] I am not arguing that a high level of welfare provision is not valuable, nor that the economic independence and wider room for action achieved by equality feminism, especially in the Nordic countries, is not important. But the limitations of the Nordic model show that "there is no single key to abolish gender inequality. Inequality is systemic. As a system it reproduces itself like a mythical monster: when you hack off its head, it grows two others". < Rantalaiho 1997 p 20> The history of the women's movement in Britain teaches us the same thing: a persistence and complexity in gender inequality which demands more than formal citizenship and access to the labour market to remedy.

Autonomy and dependence

"Now it is pretty clear, in spite of modern theories, that the very frame and being of societies, whether great or small, public or private, is jointed and glued together by dependence. Those attachments which arise from, and are compacted by, a sense of mutual wants, mutual affection, mutual benefit, and mutual obligation, are the cement which secures the union of the family as well as the State." This comment (which could be communitarian or New Labour [9]), was made by Hannah More, Wollstonecraft's most public opponent, in 1799.[10] If More and Wollstonecraft have been presented as representing 'equal rights' on the one hand and 'family values' on the other, I have argued that it is not as simple or as oppositional as that. Her observation places questions of dependence and caring within families in the context of a

---

[ ] Sweden, Finland , Norway and Denmark occupy the first four places on the UN's index of world-wide gender equality <UN Human Development Report, 1995>

[8] This is illustrated by the way the programme for 'welfare to work' is envisaged as crossing the public and private boundary, but does not challenge the boundary itself and further illustrated through it in a specific version of a familiar contradiction: among schemes taken as a model of good practice in 'welfare to work' for single mothers are modules (with childcare provided) which train women to become childcarers; the government is proposing to pay single mothers to care for other people's children as an alternative to paying them to care for their own. Most single mothers fit neither the dominant model of the self-sufficient family nor the main model of routes to equality or liberation for women. The extent to which this is so should, rather than positioning single parent families as aberrant (which history shows is not the case) call into question those models and the uniformity they impose. Whether single parents' needs are met by any policy proposal is therefore a test which exposes how far it depends on assumptions about the family, and about women's roles.

[9] Or from John Major, who liked to compare his common sense to "modern theories".

[10] *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* vol 2, London 1799 p 186-7.

question which is at the heart of democracy, and although the meaning given to dependence has changed the issue remains urgent. The opposition between family/equality is a specific expression of a tension at the heart of modern society and poses one of the most central questions for philosophy and politics: how to reconcile social and individual interests. I do not want to deny the social importance of interdependence and caring but to make visible the role of *gender* in it; and that this has led to an association of caring with disadvantage which has long been protested but continues to be the case. More's answer was to assert that these *were* gendered responsibilities but that they should be recognised as socially valuable; this was also argued by some Victorian feminists but without success. Social change in the twentieth century, in which feminism has played a complex part, has intensified the tension between public and private roles and responsibilities.

Care for young children and other dependants who require time-intensive personal attention poses in an acute form the tension between social and individual interests within families (as the main site of such care) and hence, when that conflict is not contained within the family, for society. Families are seen in some present-day political debate as the last remaining unit which can offer stability in a changing world. <Midgley and Hughes 1997 p 62> The way that women's interests and family interests have been placed in opposition is evident in the debate on the 'crisis in the family'[11] in both liberal and anti-feminist constructions; this has included the suggestion that women in putting their personal interests ahead of those of children and families have created this crisis. This difficult opposition contributes to the failure to adequately address these questions. <Innes, unpublished paper 1996> Within the family individual interests (for example to take a new job in the USA) are routinely in opposition to the interests of the group (the children will not be well-served by moving school; their father has a job here). Such tensions were more readily resolved when wives' and children's needs were considered subservient to the father's interests, a subservience which becomes economic sense when the father is the only or chief breadwinner. As Midgley and Hughes observe, "[I]ndividual interests really do clash with social interests, and this clash is not just an external one. It occurs within one and the same person, depending on which perspective he or she is taking". <1997 p 62> It is a tension which was called into being by women's emancipation but which is held in abeyance when women accept responsibility for the private as self-evident. This can include accepting a gendered division of labour between employment and family; or taking up roles in public life but not finding this a conflict with private roles because a choice is made in favour of 'work'; or delegating caring roles (primarily possible for middle-class and highly educated women or

where there is a high level of appropriate welfare provision); or by modifying work/public life to fit in with caring roles (the growth of part-time work after 1945; women's greater participation in 'flexible' work today). In summary, insofar as there was conflict most women either accepted it as narrowing their choices, managed it, or held any negative consequences to be unavoidable. It is when women *in the family* see themselves as individuals with interests different from their families (as well as interests in common), and that the responsibilities they have are not fully shared by other family members or supported by social provision and therefore in unfair conflict with their interests as individuals, that the conflict between rights and responsibilities becomes a public tension.

To return to the idea of "real equality". I have suggested that this was, within social feminism, about extending the ideal of equality to family life and seen as a development of legal and formal equality and not antithetical to it. It became so because of the dichotomy in how equality and difference were positioned in political discourse, and how difference was read within an existing hierarchy of values. I have suggested that this is linked to the opposition between the family and how work and responsibilities in it are viewed, and equality understood as a public value. The history of women's movement engagement with women's situation in the family shows that these views have been historically and discursively fixed. I have argued that this opposition is false in that most women have interests on both side of this separation and that a solution which only asserts equality understood as access to public life and resources reinforces and deepens a division between people with caring roles, mainly women, and others.[12]

The oppositions which recur in analysis of women's roles in the family and feminist and other social and political responses to them are not equivalent: to present them as the same would be to ignore the specificity of different circumstances and arguments. However they are inter-related and hold in place the complex of economic, social, cultural and subjective factors which I summarise as the 'gender knot'. Although I have argued that the dichotomy between equality and difference is itself part of the problem, its analysis may hold the key to getting beyond the family/equality tension. Further exploring the question where and when equality versus

---

[11] Whether it can reasonably be described as a "crisis" is questionable and depends very much on your viewpoint on family change.

[12] This second group includes women who do not have or are able to minimise caring responsibilities, and the former includes more men now than formerly, though still as a very small proportion. Insofar as men have taken on participative caring work in families then it is an opposition which also becomes a tension for them. There always have been women who have delegated caring responsibilities (and Wollstonecraft argued that they should not do so). But since at least the end of the 18th century until very recently their public freedom has been limited, except for a small number of exceptional women, if not as much by practical responsibilities, by a view of their proper sphere of life.

difference surfaces as a problem, and when it is irrelevant, or when equality and difference are complementary, and how that relates to levels of welfare provision and the degree of privacy of the family would, I suggest, confirm this as a productive direction. Redrawing the conceptual boundaries which form this tension calls for not a reassertion of difference *or* equality but a parallel assertion of both: that equality is brought to the family and that *at the same time* the differences associated with family and caring roles are insistently brought into public life and not managed (more and less well) in private. This is particularly important in order to recognise interdependence, to publicly refute the idea that there are any (or more than very few) truly autonomous individuals[13] and thus replace that standard of the citizen with one which recognises interdependence as the case, within families and other social groups, and between families and the state.[14] This calls for a redrawn public and private boundary (it is, as I have discussed above, necessary as well as problematic) to include a recognition of their mutuality not just in terms of the barriers which private responsibilities create for participation in public life but also more positively the support provision in private gives to those in public roles, and the new opportunities a reconfiguration of public and private could bring.[15] As Scott has argued, feminism cannot give up on equality as it is a central value for democratic politics. < 1988 pp 172-4> But it must be understood in a way which breaks its ties to sameness and autonomy and emphasises its meaning as *participation*, and we need to see citizenship primarily in those terms. <Fraser 1992> Nor can feminism give up on difference, but this means taking the fears raised by arguments from difference seriously: finding ways of revalueing female social roles but not by defining all women in terms of them; refusing a unitary conception of women and women's interests (let alone women's natures) *and* a fixed and binary view of male and female. <Butler 1990> Bringing arguments about difference to public life more generally is also made more possible through an emphasis on equality as participation.

---

[13] i.e. rather than privileging the autonomous citizen whose private roles and responsibilities are in fact managed by others. The gendered division of labour, as has repeatedly been argued, hides the extent to which 'autonomous man' is usually dependent on others to iron his shirts, care for his children and parents, make coffee before meetings, remember his brother's birthday and do his 'emotional housekeeping'. Theories of masculinity as control and projection extend this to managing his emotions and expressing his sexuality <Rutherford 1996 pp 25-28>

[14] Most discussion of citizenship today focuses on questions of equality of status between adults and of individual rights and liberty. This discussion overlooks the inherent areas of collectivity in life, areas for which obligations of care for and socialisation of children are paradigmatic of but which it is not restricted to. <Alison Jeffries, seminar, department of Politics, University of Edinburgh 6 March 1998>

[15] There is a growing debate about new ways of working. The ways of creating a better balance between work and the rest of life which some women are pioneering is a possible model for a new balance of private life and responsibilities and employment and political roles which changes in the organisation of work and production call for. <Innes 1995 pp 301-328>

In arguing that families need equality I am within a tradition extending from JS Mill to Susan Moller Okin. But if this is to say nothing new, it is also to say something necessary. Similarly to the lack of "social arrangements" to resolve the tension between caring roles and unequal opportunity, the question is not what to do but *why* has this not happened? Part of the problem is the dominant understanding of equality as a public value and because of that inappropriate to private life.[16] Again I would reassert the need for a double-move: that the ideal of equality is extended to private life at the same time as public life takes better into account people's family and other private roles and responsibilities. Doing both rather than one or the other resolves a number of the problems of only asserting 'one side'. My argument that the family must be a site of equal relations is close to Okin's conclusion that it must be characterised by justice, but I differ strongly from her view that a just future will be one without gender and in which sex will have no more relevance than eye colour now does. <1989 p 171> For the reasons I rehearse on page 51 this is neither likely nor desirable: valuable human differences would be ironed out and the risk in doing so is that difference is still a factor in judgements which people make but becomes an unacknowledged one.

In calling for equality *and* difference I am close to Scott's conclusion, but am vulnerable therefore to the criticism I make of her (pp 54-55) that you cannot deconstruct and redefine by edict: meaning exists within discourse and not outside it. We can *say* that the women's movement must not let its arguments be forced into pre-existing categories but the discourses we engage with and which shape our thinking are themselves regularised and made meaningful through such categories, which are as much a part of discourse as gestures, words and syntax are, and as access to knowledge, to means of expression and positions of authority is. But to analyse the inter-related oppositions between equality and difference, public and private and family interests/gender equality as regularities within discourse is also to perceive them as changed within discourse. If discourse theory is criticised as overplaying questions of meaning, and underplaying material sources of power and inclusion and their converse, it emphasises however that change to the political/moral boundaries which structure meaning and to material provision and policy are not separable. To say that ideas and formulations exist within discourse is not to argue that change is impossible but that since a contest for power takes place between different discourses and through discourse and that a discursive construction and reconstruction of meaning and of power is continuous, that ideas which are timely in relation to

---

[16] One way to illustrate that equality is seen as a public value is the argument discussed above, that men should take more of a role in the family so that women can take more of a role in public life. Men's move into private is not described as about equality *per se* but it is seen leading to women's equality with men in that they can then participate fully in employment and public life.

dilemmas people face in their lives and communicated in ways which address political needs. can make a forceful intervention. This approach is strengthened when new analyses are brought together with other forms of radical social critique (as Nicholson and Seidman advocate <1989>).

An opposition between women's interests and the family has, I have argued, become one of the `self-evidences` of our age. It has been entrenched in recent years because of the relative success of equality measures predicated on equality-as-sameness, reinforcing the idea of a choice between public achievement and a (demanding) private life. If the tension for women between equality and family ties is one case of a problem that arises in many contexts for liberal democracies, it is posed in acute form in relation to families. These are questions which must be returned to and it may be politically timely to do so. But they must be addressed as part of a broad discussion of dependence and autonomy, individual and social needs, rather than presented as a problem for women: they must be addressed as problems of democracy and problems of, as Rathbone put it, society`s renewal rather than as a means to women`s emancipation. At the same time, this must not be a false gender neutrality; that solutions will be of greater significance to many women than men must be recognised. It is not a problem only for feminism, though feminist theory, including feminist poststructuralist theory, has much to offer in addressing it. We need a new discussion of the intersection of private and public, and of rights and responsibilities (as communitarians argue), but bringing to the fore in it how these are divided by gender, class and ethnicity and how rights can obtain for people in private caring roles alongside the responsibilities they already carry: how mutual wants, mutual affection and mutual obligation at present underpin benefit for those who also have public power and entrench disadvantage for those who do not. Part of that discussion and essential to its clarity must be that a full recognition of changes in women's lives and expectations and progress towards gender equality is placed as central to discussion of the family, rather than apart from and opposed to it. It means trying *again* to bring equality to private life and family relations, an equality understood as much more than "what men have got".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbott Pamela and Wallace Claire *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives* London and New York. Routledge 1990

Abrams Rebecca *Woman in a Man's World: Pioneering Career Women of the 20thcentury* London. Methuen 1993

Adams Katherine 'Divide and Rule: The Marriage Ban 1918-1945 in Paterson and Fewell 1990

Alberti Johanna *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace, 1914-1928* Basingstoke. Macmillan 1989

Alberti Johanna *Eleanor Rathbone* London. Sage 1996

Alcoff Linda 'Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory' *Signs*, Vol 13 no 3 Spring 1988

Alexander Sally ed *Women's Fabian Tracts* London. Routledge 1988

Alexander Sally *Becoming a Woman: and other essays in 19th and 20th century Feminist History* London. Virago 1994

Allen Ann Taylor *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* New Brunswick. Rutgers University Press 1991

Altbach Edith H *From Feminism to Liberation* Schenkman. Cambridge Mass 1971

Anderson Michael 'What is New about the Modern Family?' OPCS Occasional Papers no 31 1983

Anderson Michael and Morse DJ 'The People', in Fraser and Morris eds. 1990

Anderson Michael 'The Social Implications of Demographic Change' in FML Thompson ed *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, vol 2 1990

Anderson Michael 'Population and Family Life' in Dickson and Treble eds. 1992

Anderson Michael, Bechhofer Frank Gershuny Jonathan eds *The Social and Political Economy of the Household* Milton Keynes. Open University Press 1994

Anderson Michael 'Today's Families in Historical Context'. Report for the Rowntree Foundation. January 1994

Anderson Michael *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914* London Macmillan 1980. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press 1995

Andrews Maggie *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Institute as a Social Movement* London. Lawrence and Wishart 1997

Aries P *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family life* New York and London. Knopf Jonathan Cape. 1962

Arve-Pres Birgit ed *Reconciling Work and Family Life - a challenge for Europe?* Stockholm. Swedish Ministry of Health and Social affairs 1995

Assiter Alison *Enlightened Women: Modernist Feminism in a Postmodern Age*, London. Routledge 1996

Atkinson Mabel *Local Government in Scotland*. Blackwood. Edinburgh 1904

Atkinson Mabel 'The Feminist Movement and Eugenics' *The Sociological Review* vol 111 Canterbury. University of Kent 1910

Atkinson Mabel *The Economic Foundations of the Women's Movement* London. Fabian Society 1914

(see also Palmer Mabel)

Bacchi Carol Lee *Same Difference: Feminism and Sexual Difference* St. Leonards N.S.W. Allen & Unwin 1990

Banks Olive *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement* Oxford, Martin Robertson 1981

Banks Olive *Becoming a Feminist: The Social Origins of 'First Wave' Feminism* Brighton, Wheatsheaf 1986

Banks Olive *The Politics of British Feminism, 1918-1970* Aldershot, Edward Elgar 1993

Barrett, Michelle and McIntosh Mary *The Anti-social Family* London, Verso, 1982

Barrett Michelle and Phillips Anne *Destabilising Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* Cambridge, Polity Press 1992

Barry Andrew, Osborne Thomas, Rose Nikolas eds *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and the Rationalities of Government* London, UCL Press 1996

Beauman Nicola *A Very Great Profession: The Woman's Novel 1914-39* London, 1983

Beaumont Catriona *Women and Citizenship: A Study of Non-feminist Women's Organisations and Women's Movements in England, 1928-1950* unpublished PhD thesis University of Warwick 1996

Beddoe Deirdre *Back to Home and Duty: Women Between the Wars, 1918-1939*, London, Pandora 1989

Behlmer G *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England 1980-1908* Stanford, Stanford University Press 1982

Bell Susan G and Offen Karen eds *Women, the Family and Freedom: The Debate in Documents* Stanford, Stanford University Press Vol 11 1983

Benhabib S 'Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Jurgen Habermas' in Calhoun Craig ed 1992

Benn S and Gaus G eds *Public and Private in Social Life*, London and New York, Croom Helm 1983

Berry Paul and Bishop Alan *Testament of a Generation: The Journalism of Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby* London, Virago 1985

Berry Paul and Bostridge Mark *Vera Brittain: A Life* London, Chatto & Windus 1995

Black Clementina ed *Married Women's work: the Report of an Enquiry Undertaken by the Women's Industrial Council* London, Women's Industrial Council 1915, Virago 1983

Black Naomi *Social Feminism* Ithica and London, Cornell University Press 1989

Blackburn Helen and Boucherett Jessie *The Condition of Working Women and the Factory Acts* London, 1896

Bland Lucy 'Marriage Laid Bare: Middle-class Women and Marital Sex, 1800-1914' in Lewis ed 1986

Bland Lucy 'The Married Woman, the 'New woman' and the Feminist: Sexual Politics of the 1890s' in Rendall Jane eds 1987

Bland Lucy 'Heterosexuality, feminism and *The Free Woman Journal* in early 20[th]c England', *Women's History Review vol 4, no 1 1995*

Bland Lucy *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* London, Penguin 1995

Bock Gisela and Thane Pat eds *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s* London, Routledge, 1991

Bock Gisela and James Susan eds *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity* London, Routledge 1992

Bock Gisela 'Poverty and Mothers' Rights in the Emerging Welfare States' in Francoise Thebaud ed 1994

Bold Alan *MacDiarmid: Christopher Murray Grieve, A Critical Biography* London, Murray 1988

Bolt Christine *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1993

Bolt Christine *Feminist Ferment: "The Woman Question" in the USA and England, 1870-1940* London, UCL Press 1995

Borchgrevink Tordis and Gullviag Hotter Oystein eds *Labour of Love: Exploring Gender, Work and Family Interaction* Avebury, Aldershot c1995

Boston Sarah *Women Workers and the Trade Union Movement* London, David-Poynter 1980

Bould Chrisma and Mackay Fiona ed *Gender Audit 1997* Edinburgh, Engender 1997

Branca Patricia *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home* London, Croom Helm 1975

Brandon Ruth *The New Women and the Old Men: Love, Sex and the Woman Question* London, Secker and Warburg 1990

Brannen Julia, Meszaros George, Moss Peter and Poland Gill *Employment and Family Life: A Review of Research in the UK* London, HMSO 1994

Braybon Gail *Women Workers in the First World War: The British Experience* London, Routledge 1981

Breitenbach Esther 'The Impact of Thatcherism on Women in Scotland' in Brown and McCrone eds *The Scottish Government Year Book* Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh, 1989

Breitenbach Esther and Gordon Eleanor eds *The World is Ill-divided: Women's Work in Scotland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1990

Breitenbach Esther and Gordon Eleanor eds *Out of Bounds: Women in Scottish Society, 1800-1945* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press 1992

Breitenbach, Esther 'Out of sight, out of mind?: the history of women in Scottish politics'. *Scottish Affairs* Vol 2, winter 1993

Breitenbach Esther 'Feminist Influence on the Local State: Reflections on the Scottish Experience'. Paper for ECPR, Bern, Feb 1997

Brennan T and Pateman C '"Mere Auxiliaries to the Commonwealth": Women and the Origins of Liberalism'. *Political Studies* VII 1979

Brittain, Vera *Testament of Experience: An autobiographical story of the years 1925-1950*, London, Macmillan 1940, Virago 1979

Brown Alice 'Women and Politics in Scotland'. *Parliamentary Affairs* vol 4, 1996

Brown Alice, McCrone David and Paterson Lindsay *Politics and Society in Scotland*, London Macmillan 1996

Brown John *The British Welfare State: A Critical History* Oxford, Blackwell, 1995

Brownmiller Susan *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* Harmondsworth, Penguin 1977

Brunt Rosalind and Rowan Caroline eds *Feminism, Culture and Politics* London, Lawrence and Wishart 1982

Burchill Graham, Gordon Colin and Miller Peter eds *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991

Burchill Graham 'Liberal government and techniques of the self' in Barry eds 1996

Burness Catriona 'Women and Political Culture in Scotland: past, present and future' (part one); *Gender and Scottish Society: Polities, Policies and Participation* University of Edinburgh 31 October 1997

Burness Catriona '"Kept some steps behind him": Women in Scotland, 1780-1920' in Gifford and McMillan eds 1997

Burness Catriona 'The Long Slow March: Scottish Women MPs, 1918-45' in Breitenbach and Gordon, 1992.

Burstyn JN *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* London, Croom Helm, 1980

Burton Antionette 'History is Now: feminist theory and the production of historical feminisms' *Women's History Review* Vol 1, no 1 1992

Butler Josephine *The Education and Employment of Women* London 1868

Butler Josephine ed *Women's Work and Women's Culture* Macmillan, London 1869

Butler Judith *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* London and New York, Routledge 1990

Butler Judith and Scott Joan W eds *Feminists Theorise the Political* New York and London, Routledge 1992

Butler MA 'Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy' in Pateman and Shanley eds 1991

Butter Peter H *Edwin Muir: Man and Poet* Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh 1966

Cage RA 'Infant Mortality Rates and Housing: Twentieth Century Glasgow' *Scottish Economic and Social History* Vol 17 1 1997

Caine Barbara *Victorian Feminists* Oxford, Oxford University Press 1992

Caine Barbara *English Feminism 1780-1980* Oxford, Oxford University Press 1997

Caird Mona *The Morality of Marriage and Other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Women* London 1897

Cairns Janet 'Cakes not Turned' in *Chapman* 71, winter 1992-93 pp 12-19

Calhoun Craig ed *Social Theory and the politics of Identity* Oxford, Oxford University Press 1991

Calhoun Craig ed *Habermas and the Public Sphere* Cambridge and London, MIT Press 1992

Carrier John *The Campaign for the Employment of Women as Police Officers* Aldershot, Gower 1988

Carswell, Catherine *Open the Door* London Andrew Melrose 1920, Edinburgh Canongate 1996

Carswell, Catherine *The Camomile* London, Chatto and Windus 1922, Virago 1987

Carswell, Catherine *Lying Awake: An unfinished autobiography and other posthumous papers* edited and with an introduction by John Carswell, London, Secker & Warburg, 1950

Castle Barbara *Fighting All The Way* London, Macmillan 1993

Checkland Olive *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: Social Welfare and the Voluntary Principle* Edinburgh, John Donald 1980

Clark Alice *Working Life of Women in the 17th Century* London 1919, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1982

Clive EM and JG Wilson *The Law of Husband and Wife in Scotland* Edinburgh, W Green and Son 1974

Close Paul and Collins Rosemary eds *Family and Economy in Modern Society* London, Macmillan 1985

Cockburn Cynthia *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organisations* Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1991

Coleman DA 'Population' in Halsey AH ed 1988

Collette Christine *For Labour and For Women: The Women's Labour League 1906-1918* Manchester, Manchester University Press 1989

Coole Diana 'Re-reading Political Theory from a Woman's Perspective' *Political Studies* 34, Vol 1 March 1986 pp129-148

Coole Diana *Women in Political Theory: From Ancient Misogyny to Contemporary Feminism* second edition 1993 Brighton, Harvester

Coontz Stephanie *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* New York Basic Books 1992

Corr Helen 'The Schoolgirls' Curriculum and the Ideology of the Home, 1870-1914' in Glasgow Women's Studies Group 1983

Corr Helen 'An Exploration into Scottish Education' in Fraser WH and Morris RJ ed, 1990

Cott Nantcy *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England 1780-1835* New Haven 1977

Cott Nancy 'Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850' *Signs* Vol 14 1979

Cott Nancy *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* New Haven, Yale University Press 1987

Cott Nancy 'What's in a Name? The Limits of Social Feminism' *Journal of American History* Vol 76, December 1989

Cott Nancy comment on Karen Offen 'Defining Feminism' *Signs* 15, Autumn 1989

Courtney KD et al *Equal Pay and the Family* London, Headley Bros 1918

Cree Vivienne E *Social Work's Changing Task: An Analysis of the Changing Task of Social Work as seen through the History and Development of one Scottish Voluntary Organisation, Family Care* PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh 1993

Cree Vivienne E *From Public Streets to Private Lives: The Changing Task of Social Work* Aldershot, Avebury 1995

Crowther MA 'Poverty, health and welfare' in Fraser WH and Morris RJ, 1990

Cunningham Gail *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* London Macmillan 1978

Daly Mary *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* London, The Women's Press 1984

Davidoff Leonore and Hall Catherine *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-class 1780-1850* London, Hutchinson 1987

Davidoff Leonore in FML Thompson ed *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, vol 2 1990

Davidoff Leonore *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* Cambridge. Polity 1995

Davidson Roger 'A Scourge to be firmly gripped': The Campaign for VD Controls in Interwar Scotland. *Social History of Medicine* 1993

Davin Anna 'Imperialism and Motherhood' *History Workshop Journal* 5 1978

Davin Anna *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* London. Rivers Oram Press 1996

D'Cruze Shani 'Women and the Family' in Purvis ed 1995

Delphy Christine and Leonard Diana *Familiar Exploitation: A New Analysis of Marriage in Contemporary Western Societies* Oxford. Polity 1991

Delmar Rosalind 'What is Feminism?' in Mitchell Juliet and Oakley Ann eds 1986

Dennis Norman and Erdos George *Families Without Fatherhood* London. Institute of Economic Affairs 1992

Devine TM and Finlay RJ eds *Scotland in the Twentieth Century* Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press 1996

Dickson A and Treble JH eds *People and Society in Scotland Vol 111. 1914-1990* Edinburgh. John Donald 1992

Doggett Maeve E *Marriage, Wife-Beating and the Law in Victorian England* London. Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1990

Donzelot Jacques *The Policing of Families*, London. Hutchison University Press. 1980

Doughan David *Lobbying for Liberation: British Feminism, 1918-1968* London. City of London Polytechnic 1968

Doughan David and Sanchez Denise *Feminist Periodicals, 1855-1984, An Annotated Critical Bibliography of British, Irish, Commonwealth and International Titles* Brighton. Harvester 1987

Dubois Ellen Carol 'Comment on Karen Offen Defining Feminism' *Signs* 15. Autumn 1989

Dwork Deborah *War is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: A History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898-1918* London and New York. Tavistock 1987

Dyhouse Carol 'Working-class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England. 1895-1914 *Journal of Social History* Vol 12 1979

Dyhouse Carol *Feminism and the Family in England 1880-1939* Basil Blackwell. Oxford 1989

Dyhouse Carol *No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities, 1870-1939* London. UCL Press 1995

Easlea Brian *Masculinity, Scientists and the Nuclear Arms Race* London. Pluto 1983

Eastman Crystal *On Women and Revolution* Blanche Weisen Cook ed Oxford. Oxford University Press 1978

Eduards Maud L 'Against the Rules of the Game: On the Importance of Women's Collective Actions' in *Rethinking Change: Current Swedish Feminist Research* HSFR. Uppsala 1992

Einhorn Barbara and Yeo Eileen eds *Women and Market Societies: Crisis and Opportunity* Aldershot. Edward Elgar 1995

Eisenstein Hester 'Consciousness-Raising: the Personal as Political' *Contemporary Feminist Thought* Unwin. London and Sydney 1984

Eisenstein Hester and Jardine Alice eds *The Future of Difference* New Brunswick. Rutgers University Press 1988

Eldridge Miller Jane *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel* London. Virago 1994

Eley Geoff 'Nations. Public and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the 19th century' in Craig Calhoun ed 1992

Elliot Faith Robertson *The Family: Change or Continuity?* Basingstoke. Macmillan 1986

Elliot Faith Robertson *Gender, Family and Society* Basingstoke. Macmillan 1996

Elphinstone Margaret 'Willa Muir: Crossing the Genres' in Gifford Douglas and McMillan Dorothy eds 1997

Elshtain Jean 'Moral Woman and Immoral Man' *Politics & Society,* 1974

Elshtain Jean *Public man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* Oxford. Robertson 1981

Elshtain Jean eds *The Family in Political Thought* Brighton. Harvester 1982

Elshtain Jean *Power Trips and Other Journeys: Essays in Feminism as Civic Discourse* Madison. University of Wisconsin Press 1990

Eribon Didier *Michel Foucault* London. Faber 1992

Evans Judith *Feminist Theory Today* London. Sage 1995

Evans Mary ed *The Woman Question,* Second edition. London Sage 1994

Evans Mary *Introducing Contemporary Feminist Thought* Cambridge. Polity 1997

Evans Richard J 'The Concept of Feminism: Notes for Practising Historians' in Joeres Ruth-Ellen and Maynes Mary Jo eds 1986

Fabian Society Women's group *Summary of Six Papers* Fabian Society 1909. in Alexander 1988

Fabian Society Women's group *Three Years Work, 1908-1911.* c 1911.in Alexander 1988

Fagnani Jeanne 'Why do men not make use of their parental rights?' in Arve-Pres Birgit ed 1995

Fawcett Millicent Garrett *Home and Politics* London 1894

Fawcett Millicent Garrett 'The Emancipation of Women' *Fortnightly Review* 50 Nov 1898

Fawcett Millicent Garrett *The Women's Victory and After: Personal Reminiscences* London 1920

Fawcett Millicent Garrett 'The Case Against Family Endowments' *The Woman's Leader* 30 January 1925

Fewell Judith 'The Protection Racket: The occupation of the teaching profession' in Paterson and Fewell eds 1990

Fielding Muriel 'Ignota. the Unknown Woman: Elizabeth Clarke Wolstenholme Elmy. 1833-1918' in Yeo ed 1997

Finch Janet and Dulcie Groves eds *A Labour of Love: Women, Work and Caring* London. Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1983

Finch Janet *Family Obligations and Social Change* Cambridge. Polity Press 1989

Finch Janet and Mason Jennifer *Negotiating Family Responsibilities* London. Tavistock/Routledge 1993

Finch Janet 'The State and the Family' Lecture 30 Oct 1996. Edinburgh. International Social Science Institute 1996

Firestone Shulamith *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* London. Cape 1971

Flandrin Jean Louis *Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality* Cambridge and New York. Cambridge University Press. 1979

Flax Jane 'The Family in Contemporary Feminist Thought: A Critical Review' in Elshtain 1982 ed

Fletcher Sheila *Maud Royden: A Life* Oxford. Blackwell 1989

Foucault Michel *The Archaeology of Knowledge* London. Tavistock Publications 1972

Foucault Michel *The Order of Things: An archaeology of the human sciences* London. Routledge 1973

Foucault, Michel *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* Bouchard Donald ed Ithica and New York. Cornell University Press 1977

Foucault Michel *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* London. Penguin 1979

Foucault, Michel *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings. 1972-1977* edited by Colin Gordon Brighton. Harvester Press 1980

Foucault Michel *The History of Sexuality vol 1, An Introduction* London. Penguin 1981

Foucault Michel *The History of Sexuality vol 2, The Use of Pleasure* London. Penguin 1987

Foucault, Michel *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* London. Routledge. 1989

Foucault Michel *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* London. Tavistock Routledge. 1989

Foucault. Michel *Politics and the Study of Discourse (1968)* in Graham Burchill et al eds 1991

Fraser Nancy *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* Minneapolis. University of Minnesota press 1989

Fraser Nancy 'Politics. culture. and the public sphere: toward a postmodern conception' in Nicholson and Seidman eds 1989

Fraser Nancy and Nicholson Linda J 'Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism' in Nicholson ed 1990

Fraser Nancy 'Rethinking the Public Sphere' in Calhoun Craig ed 1992

Fraser W H and Morris RJ *People and Society in Scotland Vol 11, 1830-1914* Edinburgh. John Donald 1990

Frazer Elisabeth. Hornsby J. Lovibond F eds *Ethics: A Feminist Reader* Oxford. Blackwell 1992

Frazer Elisabeth. Lacey Nicola *The Politics of Community* Hemel Hempstead. Harvester Wheatsheaf 1993

Friedan Betty *The Feminine Mystique* New York. WW Norton 1963

Gaffin Jean 'Women and Co-operation' in Middleton Lucy ed *Women in the Labour Movement: The British Experience* London. Croom Helm

Gaffin Jean and Thoms D *Caring and Sharing: The Centenary History of the Co-operative Women's Guild* Manchester. Co-operative Union 1983

Garcia Jo. Kilpatrick Robert and Richards Martin eds *The Politics of Maternity Care* Oxford 1990

Gardiner Juliet ed *The New Woman: Women's Voices 1880-1918* London. Collins & Brown 1993

Gatens M 'Wollstonecraft' in Pateman and Shanley eds *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* Polity 1991

Gavron Hannah. *The Captive Wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers* London. Routledge & Kegan Paul 1966

Gifford Douglas and McMillan Dorothy eds *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press 1997

Gilligan Carol *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* Cambridge Mass. Harvard University Press 1982

Gilman Charlotte Perkins *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* New York 1899

Gittins Diana *Fair Sex: Family Size and Structure, 1900-39* London. Hutchinson. 1982

Gittins Diana *The Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies* Basingstoke. Macmillan. 1985

Gittins Diana 'Marital Status. Work and Kinship. 1850-1930' in Lewis Jane ed 1986

Glasgow Women's Studies Group *Uncharted Lives:Extracts from Scottish Women's Experiences, 1850-1982* Glasgow, Pressgang 1983

Glendinning Caroline and Millar Jane eds *Women and Poverty in Britain in the 1990s* Hemel Hempstead. Harvester Wheatsheaf 1992

Glendinning Victoria *Rebecca West: A Life* London. Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1987

Gollancz Victor ed *The Making of Women: Oxford Essays in Feminism* London. George Allen & Unwin 1917

Gonda Caroline ed *Tea and Leg-irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland* London. Open Letters Press 1992

Gordon Ann D. Buhle Mari Jo and Dye Nancy S 'The Problem of Women's History' in Carroll Berenice ed *Liberating Women's History* Urbana. University of Illinois Press **date?**

Gordon Colin 'The Soul of the Citizen' in Scott Lash ed *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity* London Allen & Unwin 1987

Gordon Eleanor 'Women's Spheres' in Fraser and Morris eds 1990

Gordon Eleanor *Women and the Labour Movement in Scotland 1850-1914* Oxford. Clarendon Press 1991

Gordon Eleanor 1997 'Women's Lives and Work in Victorian Glasgow'. unpublished paper. University of Glasgow 1997

Gordon Linda 'What's New in Women's History'. in Teresa de Laurentis *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies* Bloomington Indiana University Press 1986

Gordon Linda ed *Women, the State and Welfare* Madison. University of Wisconsin 1990

Gorham Deborah *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* London. Croom Helm 1982

Gorham Deborah 'Have we really rounded seraglio point? Vera Brittain and inter-war feminism' in Smith ed 1990

Griffin Susan *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* London. The Women's Press 1984

Haber Honi Fern *Beyond Postmodern Politic: Lyotard, Rorty. Foucault* New York and London. Routledge 1994

Hall Catherine *White, Male and Middle-class: Explorations in Feminism and History* Cambridge. Polity 1992

Halsey AH ed *British Social Trends since 1900* London. Macmillan 1988

Hamilton Cicely *Marriage as a Trade* London Chapman and Hall 1909. The Women's Press 1981

Hamilton Cicely 'The Backwash of Feminism' *Time & Tide* 8 September 1922 in Spender Dale ed 1984

Hamilton Cicely 'The Return to Femininity' 12 August 1927 in Spender Dale ed 1984

Hamilton Cicely *Life Errant* London, Dent 1935

Hamilton Sheila *Women and the Scottish Universities c1869-1939: A Social History* unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh 1987

Hardyment Christina *Dream Babies: Childcare from Locke to Spock* London, Jonathon Cape 1983

Hareven Tamara K 'Recent Research in the History of the Family' in *Time, Family and Community: Perspectives on Family and Community History* ed Michael Drake Milton Keynes, Open University Press 1994

Harrison Brian *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* London, Croom Helm 1978

Harrison Brian *Prudent Revolutionaries* Oxford, Clarendon 1987

Harrison Brian *The Transformation of British Politics* 1860-1995 Oxford, Oxford University Press 1996

Hartsock Nancy 'Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?' in Nicholson ed 1990

Hatton TJ *Female Labour Force Participation: The Enigma of the Interwar Period* London, Centre for Economic Policy Research 1986

Heilman Ann 'Mona Caird (1854-1932): Wild woman, new woman and early radical feminist critic of marriage and motherhood' *Women's History Review* Vol 5 no 1 1996

Hekman Susan J *Moral Voices, Moral Selves: Carol Gilligan and Feminist Moral Theory* Cambridge, Polity Press 1995

Hendry Joy ed *Peerie Willa Muir*, Edinburgh *Chapman 71*, Winter 1992-93

Hetherington Sheila *Katharine Atholl 1874-1960* Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press 1989

Higonnet Margaret R, Jenson Jane, Michel Sonya and Collins Weitz Margaret *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* New Haven and Londpn, Yale University Press 1987

Hill Collins Patricia *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* Boston and London, Unwin Hyman 1990

Hirsch Marianne and Fox Keller Evelyn eds *Conflicts in Feminism* New York and London, Routledge 1990

Hollis Patricia *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government 1865-1914* Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987

Holtby Winifred *Women and a Changing Civilisation* London, Bodley Head 1934

Holtby Winifred *South Riding: An English Landscape* London, Collins 1936

Holton Sandra S 'Women and the Vote' in Purvis ed 1995

hooks bell *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* Boston, South End Press 1984

hooks bell *Yearnings* Boston, South End Press 1991

Hopkinson Diana *Family Inheritance: A Life of Eva Hubback* London, Staples Press 1954

Howe Renate 'Gender and the Welfare State: Comparative Perspectives *Gender & History* Vol 8 no 1 April 1996 pp 138-142

Humphries Jane and Rubery Jill eds *The Economics of Equal Opportunities* Manchester EOC 1995

Humphries Jane 'Economics, Gender and Equal Opportunities' in Humphries and Rubery eds 1995

Humphries Jane 'Protective Legislation' *Feminist Review* 1981

Hutchins Beatrice L and Harrison Amy *History of Factory Legislation* London, PS King 1903

Hutchins Beatrice L *The Working Life of Women* London, Fabian Society 1911

Hutchins Beatrice L *Conflicting Ideals: Two Sides of the Woman's Question* London, Murby 1913

Hutchins Beatrice L *Conflicting Ideals of Women's Work* London, Fabian Society 1914

Hutchins Beatrice L *Women in Modern Industry* London, G Bell 1915

Innes Sue *Making it Work: Women, Change and Challenge in the 1990s* London, Chatto and Windus 1995

Innes Sue 'Trailblazers who still light the way', *The Herald* March 9 1996

Innes Sue 'Feminist Politics and the State, An Historical Perspective', European Consortium for Political Research, Bern, March 1997

Innes Sue 'On the way from formal to real equality' *Eagle Street* Newsletter of the Finnish Institute issue no 4 June 1997

International Year of the Family *Report of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Parenting and International Year of the Family UK, Parliamentary Hearings* London, IYF 1994

Irwin Sarah 'Gender and Household Resourcing: Changing Relations to Work and Family' GAPU Working Paper no 12 Sept 1995

Jackson Margaret *The Real Facts of Life* London, Taylor and Francis 1994

Jamieson Lynne 'Limited Resources and Limiting Conventions: Working-class Mothers and Daughters in Urban Scotland c1890-1925' in Lewis ed 1986

Jeffreys Sheila *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930*, London Pandora 1985

Jenson Jane, Hagen Elisabeth, Reddy Ceallaigh *Feminization of the Labour Force: Paradox and Promises* Cambridge, Polity 1988

Joeres Ruth-Ellen and Maynes Mary Jo eds *German Women in the 18th and 19th centuries* Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1986

John Angela V ed *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918* Oxford, Blackwell 1986

Joshi Heather ed *The Changing Population of Britain* Oxford, Blackwell 1989

Kanthack Emilia *The Preservation of Infant Life* London 1907

Kemmer Debbie 'Investigating Infant Mortality in Early Twentieth Century Scotland Using Civil Registers: Aberdeen and Dundee Compared' *Scottish Economic and Social History* Vol 17 1 1997

Kent Susan Kingsley *Sex and Suffrage in Britain 1869-1914* Princeton, Princeton University Press 1987

Kent Susan Kingsley 'The Politics of Sexual Difference: World War 1 and the Demise of British Feminism' *Journal of British Studies*, vol 27, no 3 July 1988

Kent Susan Kingsley 'Gender Reconstruction after the First World War' in HL Smith eds 1990

Kent Susan Kingsley *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* Princeton, Princeton University Press 1993

Kerber Linda *Towards an Intellectual History of Women* Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press 1997

Kersley Gillian *Darling Madame: Sarah Grand and Devoted Friend* London, Virago 1983

King Elspeth *The Scottish Women's Suffrage Movement* Glasgow, People's Palace Museum 1978

King Elspeth 'The Scottish Women's Suffrage Movement' in Breitenbach and Gordon eds 1992

King Elspeth *The Thenew Factor: The Hidden History of Glasgow's Women* Edinburgh, Mainstream 1993

Koven Seth and Michel Sonya 'Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain and the US, 1880-1920' *American Historical Review* 95, 1990

Koven Seth and Michel Sonya eds *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* London and New York, Routledge 1993

Koven Seth 'Borderlands: Women, Voluntary Action and Child Welfare in Britain 1840-1914' in Koven and Michel eds 1993

Kuhn Thomas *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Second edition, Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1970

Ladd-Taylor Molly *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* Chicago, University of Illinois Press 1994

Lake Marilyn 'Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation - Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts' *Gender & History* 4 no 3, autumn 1992

Lake Marilyn 'A Revolution in the Family: The Challenge and Contradictions of Maternal Citizenship in Australia' in Koven and Michel eds 1993

Lake Marilyn 'The Inviable Woman: Feminist Conceptions of Citizenship in Australia, 1900-1945' *Gender & History* vol 8 no 2 August 1996

Lamphere L and Rosaldo MZ eds *Women, Culture and Society* Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1974

Land Hilary 'The Introduction of Family Allowances: an Act of Historical Justice?' in P Hall et al eds *Change, Choice and Conflict in Social Policy* London, Heineman 1975

Land Hilary 'Who Still Cares for the Family?' *Journal of Social Policy* 9 1978

Land 'Women: Supporters or Supported?' in *Sexual Divisions and Society: Process and Change* Leonard et al ed London, Tavistock 1979

Land Hilary 'The family wage' *Feminist Review* vol 6 1980

Land Hilary 'Eleanor Rathbone and the Economy of the Family' in Smith ed 1990

Land Hilary Introduction to *Gender & History* 4 no 3, autumn 1992

Lasch Christopher *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* NY Basic Books 1977

Lee Robert, introduction to Brandstrom A and Tedebrand L eds *Society, Health and Population During the Demographic Transition,* Almqvist and Wiksell International, Stockholm c1986

Lefaucheur Nadine 'Maternity, Family and the State' in Thebaud Francoise ed 1994

Leneman Leah *A Guid Cause: The Women's Suffrage Movement in Scotland* Second edition Edinburgh, Mercat Press 1995

Lewis Jane 'Beyond Suffrage: English Feminism in the 1920s' *The Maryland Historian,* 6 1975

Lewis Jane *The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England 1900-1939,* London Croom Helm 1980

Lewis Jane 'In Search of a Real Equality: Women Between the wars' in Gloversmith F ed *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s* Brighton 1980

Lewis Jane *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* Brighton, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1984

Lewis Jane 'The Working-Class Wife and Mother and State Intervention, 1870-1918' in Lewis ed 1986

Lewis Jane ed *Labour & Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850-1940* Oxford, Blackwell 1986

Lewis Jane 'Anxieties about the Family and the Relationships Between Parents, Children and the State in 20[th]c England' in Richards M and Lights P eds *Children in Social Worlds* Oxford, oxford University Press 1986

Lewis Jane ed *Before the Vote was Won: Arguments For and Against Women's Suffrage* New York London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987

Lewis Jane *Feminism and Social Action in England since 1860: The Lives and Work of Five Victorian and Edwardian Women* Aldershot, Edward Elgar 1991

Lewis Jane 'Models of Equality for Women: The Case of State Support for Children in Twentieth-century Britain' in Bock and Thane eds 1991

Lewis Jane *Women in Britain since 1945: Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-war Years* Oxford, Blackwell, 1992

Lewis Jane *Women and Social Policies in Europe: Work, Family and the State* 1993

Lewis Jane 'Women's Agency, Maternalism and Welfare' *Gender & History* 6 no 1 1994

Lewis Jane 'Gender, the Family and Women's Agency in the Building of 'Welfare States': the British Case' *Social History* Vol 19 1994

Lewis Jane *The Problem of Lone Mother Families in Twentieth Century Britain* LSE Welfare State Programme Discussion Paper, London LSE 1995

Levine Philippa *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900* London, Hutchinson Education 1987

Levine Philippa *Feminist Lives in Victorian England: Private roles and public commitment* Oxford Blackwell 1990

Light Alison *Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* London and New York, Routledge 1991

Llewellyn Davies Margaret ed *Maternity: Letters from Working Women* 1915, London Virago 1978

Lorch, Jennifer *Mary Wollstonecraft, the making of a Radical Feminist* New York, Oxford Berg 1990

Lorde Audre 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference' in *Sister/Outsider* 1984

Lorde Audre *The Audre Lorde Compendium* London, Pandora 1996

Lovenduski Joni and Randall Vicky *Contemporary Feminist Politics* Oxford, Oxford University Press 1993

Lundell Torberg 'Ellen Key and Swedish Feminist Views on Motherhood' *Scandinavian Studies* 56, no 4 Autumn 1984

Macaskill Hilary *From the Workhouse to the Workplace: 75 Years of One-Parent Family Life 1918-1993* London, National Council for One Parent Families 1993

McCrone David *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* Routledge 1992

Macdonald JR *Wage-Earning Mothers* London, Women's Labour League n.d.

McIvor Arthur J 'Women and Work in Twentieth Century Scotland' in Dickson and Treble eds 1992

Mackay Fiona *Getting There, Being There, Making a Difference: Gendered Discourses of Access and Action in Local Politics*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh 1996

Mackinnon Alison *One Foot on the Ladder* St Lucia, University of Queensland Press 1984

Mackinnon Alison 'Interfering with Nature's Mandate: Women, Higher Education and Demographic Change' *Historical Studies in Education* 1 1989

Mackinnon Alison 'Were Women Present at the Demographic Transition?' Questions from a Feminist Historian to Historical Demographers' *Gender & History* 7 no 2 August 1995

Mackinnon Alison *Love and Freedom: Professional Women and the Reshaping of Personal Life* Cambridge University Press 1997

McLaughlin Eithne 'Gender and Egalitarianism in the British Welfare State' in Humphries and Rubery eds 1995

McNay Lois *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1992

McNay Lois *Foucault: A Critical Introduction* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994

Macnicol John *The Movement for Family Allowances, 1918-45: A Study in Social Policy Development* London, Heinemann, 1980

Mahood Linda 'Family Ties: Lady Child-Savers and Girls of the Street 1850-1925, in Breitenbach and Gordon ed 1992

Mahood Linda *Policing Gender, Class and Family, Britain 1850-1940* London, UCL Press 1995

Marcus Jane ed *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West, 1911-1917* London, Virago 1983

Marsh Alan and McKay Stephen 'Families, work and the use of childcare' *Employment Gazette* August 1993

Maynard Mary 'Privilege and Patriarchy: Feminist Thought in the 19th century' in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall eds 1989

Marshall TH *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* Cambridge 1950

Martin Anna *Married Working Women* London, NUWSS 1911

Martin Rux 'Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault' in Luther H Martin ed *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* London 1988

Meikle Wilma *Towards a Sane Feminism* London, Grant Richards 1916

Mendus Susan and Rendall Jane eds *Sexuality and Subordination: Inter-disciplinary Studies of Gender in the 19th century* London, Routledge 1989

Michel Sonya and Rosen Robyn 'The Paradox of Maternalism: Elizabeth Lowell Putname and the American Welfare State *Gender & History* 4 no 3, autumn 1992

Midgley Clare *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* London and New York, Routledge 1992

Midgley Mary and Hughes Judith 'Are Families Out of Date?' in HL Nelson ed 1997

Milkman Ruth 'Women's History and the Sears Case' *Feminist Studies* 12 1986

Mill John Stuart *On liberty: three essays; Representative government; The Subjection of Women* with an introduction by Millicent Garrett Fawcett Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1963

Miller Peter, Rose Nikolas 'Governing Economic Life' *Economy and Society* 19, no 1 1990

Miller Peter. Rose Nikolas 'Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government' *British Journal of Sociology* 43 no 2 1992

Millward Neil and Woodland Stephen 'Gender Segregation and Male/female Wage Differences' in Humphries Jane and Rubery Jill eds 1995

Minow Martha 'Learning to Live with the Dilemma of Difference: Bilingual and Special Education'. *Law and Contemporary Problems* 48 1984

Mitchell Juliet and Oakley Ann eds *What is Feminism? A Re-examination* Oxford. Basil Blackwell. 1986

Mitchison Naomi *All Change Here: Girlhood and Marriage* London. Bodley Head. 1975

Morgan David HJ *Social Theory and the Family* London. Routledge and Kegan Paul 1975

Morgan David HJ *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies* Cambridge. Polity 1996

Morley Edith J eds *Women in Seven Professions* London. Fabian Society 1914

Morris R.J 'Clubs. Societies and Associations'. in FML Thompson ed *The Cambridge Social History of Britain* Vol 3 Cambridge 1990

Morris R.J 'Scotland. 1830-1914: The Making of a Nation within a Nation'. in Fraser and Morris eds 1990

Morris R.J 'Civil Society, Subscriber Democracies and the Parliamentary Government in Great Britain'. unpublished paper. University of Edinburgh 1997

Mouffe Chantal 'Feminism. citizenship and radical democratic politics' in Butler and Scott eds 1992

Mouffe Chantal ed *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* London. Verso 1992

Mount Ferdinand *The Subversive Family: An Alternative History of Love and Marriage* London. George Allen & Unwin 1982

Mowat Charles *Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940* London. Methuen 1955

Mudge Patricia Rowland. 'A Quorum of Willas: another look at Willa Muir' *Chapman 71*, Winter 1992-93

Muir Edwin *An Autobiography* London. Hogarth Press 1987

Muir Willa *Women: An Inquiry* Hogarth Press 1925

Muir Willa *Imagined Corners* London. Secker 1931

Muir Willa *Mrs Ritchie* London. Secker 1933

Muir Willa *Mrs Grundy in Scotland* London. Routledge 1936

Muir Willa *Belonging: A Memoir* Hogarth Press 1968

Muir Willa *Imagined Selves*, edited and introduced by Kirsty Allen Edinburgh. Canongate 1996

Nicholson Linda *Gender and History: The Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family* New York. Columbia University Press. 1986

Nicholson Linda ed *Feminism/Postmodernism* London and New York. Routledge 1990

Nicholson Linda and Steven Seidman eds *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics* Cambridge. Cambridge University Press 1995

Nicholson Linda 'The Myth of the Traditional Family' in Nelson HL ed 1997

Nelson Julie A *Feminism, Objectivity and Economics* London and New York. Routledge 1996

Nelson Hilde L eds *Feminism and Families* London and New York. Routledge 1997

Oakley Ann 'Feminism and Motherhood' in Richards and Lights eds 1986

Offen Karen 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs* 14 Autumn 1988 and (amended) in Bock and James eds 1992

Offen Karen Replies to Nancy Cott and Ellen Carol Dubois *Signs* 15. Autumn 1989

Okin Susan Moller *Gender, Justice and the Family* Basic Books 1989

Okin Susan Moller 'Thinking like a woman' in Deborah Rhode eds *Theoretical Perspectives on Sexual Difference* 1990 New Haven. Yale University Press

Okin Susan Moller *Women in Western Political Thought* Second edition Princeton. N.J. Princeton University Press 1992

Olsen Frances E 'The Myth of State Intervention in the Family' *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 18. no 4. 1985

Open Door Council *The Married Woman: Is She a Person?*. London Open Door Council n.d c1933-5

Oram Alison 'The Spinster in Interwar Feminist Discourses' *Women's History Review* 1 1992

Palmer Mabel *Life-Saving in War-Time: A Campaign Handbook for the Infant Welfare Propaganda Committee* London. Arthur Pearson 1916

Palmer Mabel *The History of the Indians in Natal (Natal Regional Survey Vol 10)* Cape Town and London. University of Natal/Oxford University Press 1957

Papworth Lucy Wyatt and Zimmern Dorothy, *Women in Industry: A Bibliography* WIC 1915. Virago 1983

Pateman Carole 'Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy' in Benn and Gaus eds 1983

Pateman Carole *The Sexual Contract* Cambridge. Polity Press 1988

Pateman Carole *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* Oxford. Polity Press 1989

Pateman Carole and Shanley Mary Lyndon *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* Cambridge. Polity 1991

Pateman Carole 'Equality, difference, subordination: the politics of motherhood and women's citizenship' in Bock and James ed 1992

Paterson Fiona and Fewell Judith eds *Girls in their Prime: Scottish Education Revisited* Edinburgh. Scottish Academic Press 1990

Paterson Lindsay *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* Edinburgh. Edinburgh University Press 1994

Pearce Malcolm and Stewart Geoffrey *British Political History 1867-1990: Democracy and Decline* Routledge London and New York 1992

Pedersen Susan 'Gender. Welfare and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War' *American Historical Review* 95. 1990

Pedersen Susan *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France 1914-1945* Cambridge. Cambridge University Press 1993

Pedersen Susan 'Eleanor Rathbone: The Victorian Family under the daughter's eye' in Pedersen and Mandler eds 1994

Pedersen Susan and Mandler Peter eds *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain* London and New York. Routledge 1994

Pember Reeves *Round About a Pound a Week* London Fabian Society 1912. Virago 1979

Perry Evelyn E and Barclay Irene T *Behind Princes Street* Edinburgh. n.p. 1931

Perry R *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An early English Feminist* Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press 1986

Phillips Anne *Divided Loyalties: Dilemmas of Sex and Class* London, Virago 1987

Platt Anthony *The Child-savers: the Invention of Delinquency* Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1969

Poovey Mary *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* London, Virago 1989

Prior Mary ed *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* London and New York, Methuen 1985

Prochaska FK *Women and Philanthropy in 19^{th}c England* Oxford, Oxford University Press 1980

Pugh Martin 'Domesticity and the Decline of feminism 1930-1950' in Smith HL ed 1990

Pugh Martin, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain 1914-1959*, London Macmillan 1992.

Pugh Patricia *Educate, Agitate, Organise: 100 Years of Fabian Socialism*, London Methuen 1984

Purvis June Introduction *Women's History Review* Vol 1, no 1 1992

Purvis June ed *Women's History: Britain 1850-1945, An Introduction* London, UCL Press 1995

Purvis Trevor and Hunt Alan 'Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology...' *British Journal of Sociology* 44 1993

Rantalaiho Lisa and Heiskanen Tuula eds *Gendered Practices in Working Life* Basingstoke and London Macmillan 1997

Rathbone Eleanor *The Problem of Women's Wages* Liverpool, Northern Publishing Co Ltd 1912

Rathbone Eleanor 'The Economic Position of Married Women' *Common Cause* 3 p143 4 Jan 1912

Rathbone Eleanor 'Women Citizens' Associations' *Common Cause* 30 June 1916

Rathbone Eleanor 'The Remuneration of Women's Services' in Gollancz ed 1917

Rathbone Eleanor *The Disinherited Family: A Plea for the Endowment of the Family* London, Edward Arnold 1924

Rathbone Eleanor, 'The Old and the New Feminism' *The Women's Leader* 13 March 1925

Rathbone Eleanor 'What is Equality?' *The Women's Leader* 12 11 February 1927

Rathbone Eleanor *Milestones: Presidential Addresses at the Annual Council Meetings of NUSEC* Liverpool NUSEC 1929

Rathbone 'Changes in Public Life' in Strachey Ray *Our Freedom and Its Results* London Hogarth 1936

Reid Marion *A Plea for Woman* Edinburgh William Tait 1843, Polygon 1988

Rendall Jane *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the US 1780-1860* Basingstoke, Macmillan 1985

Rendall Jane eds *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914* Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1987

Register Cheryl 'Motherhood at the Center: Ellen Key's Social Vision' *Women's Studies International Forum* 5 no 6 1982

Rich Adrienne *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* London, Virago 1977

Riley Denise *Am I that name? Feminism and the Category of Women in History* Basingstoke, Macmillan 1988

Roberts Elizabeth *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working Class Women, 1890-1940* Oxford, Blackwell 1984

Roberts Elizabeth *Women's Work 1840-1940* Macmillan London 1988

Roberts Shirley *Sophia Jex-Blake: A Women Pioneer in 19thc Medical Reform* London and New York, Routledge 1993

Robertson David *The Penguin Dictionary of Politics* Second edition London, Penguin 1993

Rosen Andrew *Rise Up, Women! The Militant Campaign of the WSPU, 1093-1914* London 1974

Ross Ellen "Fierce Questions and Taunts": Married Life in Working-class London 1870-1914' *Feminist Studies* 8 1982

Ross Ellen *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1810-1918* Milton Keynes, Open University Press 1993

Rowan Caroline ''Mothers, Vote Labour!' The State, the Labour Movement and Working-class Mothers, 1900-1918' in Brunt and Rowan eds 1982

Rowbotham, Sheila *Hidden from history: 300 years of women's oppression and the fight against it* London, Pluto Press, 1973

Rowbotham Sheila and Weeks Jeffrey *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* London, Pluto 1977

Rowbotham, Sheila *A New World for Women: Stella Browne - Socialist Feminist* London 1977

Rowbotham, Sheila *The Past is Before Us: Feminism in Action since the 1960s* London, Pandora, 1989

Rowbotham, Sheila 'To be or not to be: the dilemma of mothering', *Feminist Review* 31, Spring 1989

Rowbotham, Sheila *Women in Movement: Feminism and Social Action* New York and London, Routledge, 1992

Rowbotham, Sheila, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* London, Viking 1997

Rowntree Seebohm *Poverty, A Study of Town Life* London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1902

Rubinow Paul ed *The Foucault Reader* London, Penguin 1986

Rubinstein David *Before the suffragettes: Women's emancipation in the 1890s* Brighton, Harvester 1986

Rubinstein David *A Different World for Women: The Life of Millicent Garrett Fawcett* Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991

Ruddick Sara *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* London, Women's Press 1989

Russell Dora *Hypatia: or, Women and Knowledge* London 1925

Russell Dora *The Tamarisk Tree* Vol 1 London, Virago 1979

Sarvasy Wendy 'Beyond the Difference versus Equality Debate: Postsuffrage Feminism, Citizenship and the Quest for a Feminist Welfare State', *Signs* 17 no 2 winter 1992

Sawer Marian 'Challenging Politics? Seventy-five Years of Women's Parliamentary Representation in Australia' *International Review of Women and Leadership* 2, No. 1, July 1996

Sawicki Jane 'Foucault and Feminism: Toward a Politics of Difference' in Shanley and Pateman eds 1991

Schreiner Olive *Woman and Labour* London, Unwin 1911

Scott Joan W 'Rewriting History' in Margaret R Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, Margaret C Weitz ed *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, New Haven, Conn 1987

Scott Joan W *Gender and the Politics of History* New York. Columbia University Press. 1988

Scott Joan W 'Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference: Or. the uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism' in Hirsch M and Fox Keller E eds 1990

Scott Joan W ed *Feminism and History* Oxford, Oxford University Press 1996

Scott Joan W 'The Imagination of Olympe de Gouges' in Yeo ed 1997

Segal Lynne *What is to be Done About the Family? Crisis in the Eighties* London, Penguin 1983

Shanley Mary Lyndon *Feminism, Marriage and Law in Victorian England* 1990

Shanley Mary Lyndon 'Marital Slavery and Friendship: John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* in Pateman and Shanley eds 1991

Shepherd Nan *The Quarry Wood* Edinburgh. Constable 1928. Canongate 1987

Shorter Edward *The Making of the Modern Family* London : Collins 1976

Showstack Sassoon Anne *Women and the State: The Shifting Boundaries of Public and Private* London. Hutchinson Education. 1987

Simons Jon *Foucault and the Political* London and New York. Routledge 1995

Skocpol Theda *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origin of Social Policy in the US* Cambridge and London. Harvard University Press 1992

Smart Carol 'The Family and Social Change: Some Problems of Analysis and Intervention' GAPU Research Working Paper 13 University of Leeds 1995

Soper Kate 'Feminism. Humanism and Postmodernism'. in Evans Mary ed 1994

Somerville Euphemia: A Child Lover Edinburgh. Robert Grant & Son Ltd 1937 (Memoir of Eupehmia Somerville. no author or editor given.)

Stacey Judith 'Are Feminists Afraid to Leave Home? The Challenge of Conservative Pro-family Feminism' in Mitchell & Oakley eds 1986

Stephenson Jayne 'Scottish Women's Studies' (Review) *Gender & History* vol 2. no 1 1993

Stetson Dorothy M.A *Woman's Issue: The Politics of Family Law Reform in England* London and Westport. Greenwood Press 1982

Stone Lawrence *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* 1977 London. Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1977

Smith Harold L 'British Feminism in the 1920s' in HL Smith ed 1990

Smith Harold L *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* Edward Elgar. Aldershot 1990

Snowden Ethel *The Feminist Movement* London. Collins 1911

Soukup Catriona 'Willa in Wartime' *Chapman 71*: Winter 1992-93. Edinburgh

Spender Dale *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them* London. Pandora 1982

Spender Dale ed *Feminist Theorists: Three Centuries of Women's Intellectual Traditions* London 1983

Spender Dale *There's Always Been A Women's Movement This Century* London Pandora 1983

Spender Dale *Time & Tide Wait for No Man* London. Pandora 1984

Spring Rice Margery *Working-Class Wives* London. Penguin 1939. Virago 1981

Squires Judith *The Contribution of Contemporary Feminist Political Theory to the Public/Private Debate*' University of London. unpublished PhD thesis 1989

Squires Judith 'In Different Voices: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Cultural Politics and Implications for Political Strategies' European Consortium for Political Research, Bern, March 1997

Steadman Caroline *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan 1860-1931* New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press 1990

Strachey Ray *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* London G Bell 1928, Virago 1978

Strachey Ray *Our Freedom and Its Results* London Hogarth 1936

Stocks Mary *The Case for Family Endowment* London, Labour Publishing, 1927

Stocks Mary *Eleanor Rathbone: A Biography* London London : Gollancz, 1949

Helena Swanwick *The Future of the Women's Movement* London, G Bell 1913

Tarrow Sidney *Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements and Cycles of Protest* Ithica, Cornell University Press 1991

Taylor Barbara *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and feminism in the 19th c* London, Virago 1983

Taylor Barbara 'For the Love of God: Religion and the Erotic Imagination in Wollstonecraft's Feminism' in Yeo ed 1997

Teitelbaum Michael S and Winter Jay M eds *The Fear of Population Decline* Orlando and London, Academic Press, 1985

Terrins Deidre and Whitehead Philip *100 Years of Fabian Socialism: 1884-1984* Fabian Society, London 1984.

Thorne Barrie Yalom Marilyn eds *Rethinking the family: Some Feminist Questions* New York, Longman c1982

Thane Pat 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England' *History Workshop Journal6* 1978

Thane Pat 'The Working-class and State Welfare in Britain 1880-1914 *Historical Journal* 27 1984

Thane Pat 'The Women of the British Labour Party and Feminism 1906-1945' in Smith ed 1990

Thane Pat 'Women in the British Labour Party and the Construction of State Welfare 1906-1939 in Koven and Michel eds 1993

Thane Pat *Foundations of the Welfare State*. Second edition Harlow, Longman, 1996

Thebaud Francoise ed A *History of Women: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century* Vol V, Cambridge and London, Harvard University Press 1994

Thomas Graham and Zmroczek Christine 'Household Technology: The 'Liberation' of Women from the Home?' in Close and Collins ed 1985

Tomalin Claire *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* London, Penguin 1974

Tronto Joan *Moral Boundaries: Political Arguments for an Ethic of Care* London and New York, Routledge 1993

Uglow Jenny 'Josephine Butler: From Sympathy to Theory' in Spender dale eds 1983 pp146-164

Vaerting Mathilde and Mathias *The Dominant Sex: A Study in the Sociology of Sex Differentiation* London, George Allen and Unwin 1923

Vallance Elizabeth *Women in the House: A Study of Women Members of Parliament* London, Ashlone Press 1979

Vicinus Martha ed *Suffer and be still women in the Victorian age*. Bloomington. Indiana University Press 1972

Vicinus Martha *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women*, 1850-1920. London : Virago. 1985

Walby Sylvia *Theorising Patriarchy* Oxford. Blackwell 1990

Walby Sylvia *Gender Transformations* London and New York. Routledge 1997

Waldfogel Jane *Women Working for Less* LSE Welfare State Programme. discussion paper. London. LSE 1993

Michael Walzer *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* Oxford. Blackwell. 1985

Walkowitz, Judith R *Prostitution and Victorian society: Women, Class, and the State*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press 1980

Walkowitz Judith R 'Male Vice and Feminist Virtue....' *History Workshop Journal* 13. 1982

Walkowitz, Judith R *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in late-Victorian London*. London Virago 1992

Warnock Mary *Memory* London. Faber 1987

Weston Kath *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* New York. Columbia University Press 1991

Whitelaw Lis *The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton, actress, playwright, suffragette* London. The Women's Press 1990

Wilkinson Ellen *Clash* 1929. London Virago 1989

Wilson Elizabeth *Women and the Welfare State* London Tavistock 1977

Wittgenstein Ludwig *Philosophical Investigations* Oxford. Blackwell 1958

Wollstonecraft, Mary *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* edited with an introduction by Miriam Brody Kramnick Harmondsworth. Penguin. 1985

Political Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft ed Janet Todd Vol 1 London. William Pickering 1993

Mary/Maria ed Janet Todd London. Pickering & Chatto 1991

Yeo Eileen 'Some Contradictions in Social Motherhood' in Yeo ed 1997

Yeo Eileen *Mary Wollstonecraft and Two Hundred years of Feminisms* Rivers Oram Press. London 1997

Young Iris Marion *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 1990 Princeton. New Jersey, Princeton University Press

Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association

EWCA Constitution 1918 <SRO GD 333/1>

Annual Reports EWCA 1919-20 to 1934-35 <SRO GD 333/2>

Minutes of Annual General Meetings 1939-1944 <SRO GD 333/4>

Minutes Executive Committee and General Meetings May 1918-October 1919 <SRO GD 333/7>

Minutes Executive Committee and General Meetings 1919-1921 <SRO GD 333/8>

Minutes Executive Committee and General Meetings 1921-1925 <SRO GD 333/9>

Minutes Joint Maternity Committee 1939-1944 <SRO GD 333/24>

Minutes of Joint Committee with Edinburgh National Council of Women 1932-1939 <SRO GD 333/29>

Programme for Enfranchisement Celebration 31 October 1928 <SRO GD 333/7>

Minutes of Annual General Meetings 1939-1969 <SRO GD 333/4>

Minutes of Annual General Meetings 1986-1988 <SRO GD 333/5>

Publicity Papers, assorted <SRO GD 333/46/47>

Publicity Papers, assorted, including notices of meetings 1933, 1934; EWCA Card 1934-35 <SRO GD 333/50>

Reeves Marion *Protection or Freedom* (leaflet) Women's Freedom League n.d. <SRO GD 333/50>

Notice of Conference 'The Community and the Moral Protection of Children' November 1933 <SRO GD 333/50>

Index to the Policy of the EWCA n.d. <SRO GD 333/6>

Annual Reports 1922-23 - 1958-59 (incomplete); Misc Syllabi and Programmes <Edinburgh Central Library YHQ 1599>

Souvenir of Coming of Age, 1918-1939 Edinburgh. EWCA 1939 <ECL YHQ 1599>

Scottish Council of Women Citizens' Associations

Constitutions, minutes of meetings (incomplete) 1920-1970 <SRO GD1/1076/1>

Statements of Aims 1918-1927 <SRO GD1/1076/2>

Annual Conference Programmes (incomplete) 1925-1935 <SRO GD1/1076/3>

Annual Reports, Dundee and Glasgow 1918-1922 <SRO GD1/1076/4>

Minutes of Annual General Meetings 1919-1990 (incomplete) <SRO GD1/1076/5-11>

Scottish Women Citizens Yearbook 1923 <SRO GD1/1076/16>

National Women Citizens' Association

NWCA Urban District Councils (leaflet) < Fawcett Library 5/NWC I3/5>

Teddington and the Hamptons' Branch of the NCWCA 1918-1968 (leaflet) <FL: 323.340604621b>

Dulwich Women Citizens Assoxiation: Report of Session 1934-5 <FL: 5/NWC/DD1/4/2>

NWCA 'Women Citizens' Assocs and what they are' NCWCA 1918 <FL 5/NW I3/3>

NWCA information leaflet on local councils and their powers 1933 <FL: 5/NWC I3/5>

NWCA 1918-1968(1968) <Fawcett Library 323.3406041>

Government publications

Beveridge William *Social Insurance and Allied Services: A Report* 1942-3 Cmd 6404

Census of Scotland 1921, Vol 1, Part 1 City of Edinburgh

Census of Scotland 1931, Vol 1, Part 1 City of Edinburgh, Vol 11, Population Statistics

Census of Scotland 1981, Historic Tables 1801-1981

Employment Committee *Mothers in Employment* London, HMSO 1995

Report of the Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences Against Young Persons London HMSO 1925 (Cmd 2561)

Report of the Departmental Committee on Sexual Offences Against Children and Young Persons in Scotland Edinburgh HMSO 1926 (Cmd 2592)

Registrar General for Scotland *Annual Report*, nos 67 (1921) 68 (1922), 69 (1923), 70 (1924), 18 (1925), 19 (1926), 20 (1927), 21 (1928), 22 (1929), 23 (1930)

McKinlay PL 'Maternal Mortality in Scotland, 1911-1945' Appendix X and Table 1 p 86 Registrar General for Scotland *Annual Report* 1945

Scottish Board of Health, Second Annual Report 1920 (Cmd 1319)

Department of Health for Scotland, First Annual Report 1929 (Cmd 3529)

Department of Health for Scotland, Second Annual Report 1930 (Cmd 3860)

Scottish Board of Health *Schemes of Maternity Service and Child Welfare Circular no VIII* 1924

Scottish Board of Health *Puerperal Morbidity and Mortality* Report of the Scottish Departmental Committee Edinburgh HMSO 1924

Scottish Board of Health *Mortality and Sickness Associated with Pregnancy and Parturition: Further Considerations* Edinburgh HMSO 1929

Scottish Abstract of Statistics 1996

OPCS *Living in Britain: Results from the 1994 General Household Survey* London HMSO

Webb Beatrice Minority Report from the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry 1919 vol 13