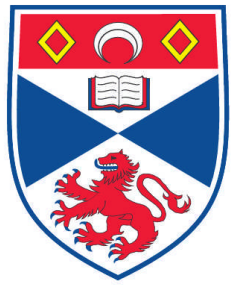
THE TIMES AND THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT 1900-1918

Anita Sama

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MLitt
at the
University of St. Andrews



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The Times and the Women's Suffrage Movement 1900-1918

A Dissertation

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Master of Letters

by

Anita Sama

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DECLARATION:-

This dissertation embodies the results of the higher study undertaken by me on the topic approved by the Senatus Academicus of the University of St. Andrews in accordance with the regulations governing the degree of Master of Letters in Arts.

I was admitted under Resolution of the University Court, 1967, No. 9 to read for the degree of M.Litt. from October, 1973, in terms of Ordinance D (Higher Study and Research 1974-75, pp.21-24).

Anita Sama

CERTIFICATE:-

I certify that ANITA SAMA has spent no less than two academic years in full-time higher study in the field of Arts, that she has fulfilled the requirements under Ordinance D, Resolution No. 9 of the University Court of St. Andrews (Regulations for Higher Study and Research), and that she is qualified to submit the accompanying dissertation for the degree of Master of Letters (Modern History).

Ruddock F. Mackay
Supervisor

The thesis, "The Times and the Women's Suffrage Movement 1900-1918", is aimed at clarifying the paper's treatment of a contentious subject and amplifying the historical data about the movement itself. In order to accomplish this, the daily issues of the newspaper and its background were examined, along with the available sources on women's suffrage.

After first reviewing the past and status of The Times, and the history and achievements of the suffragists, the study takes the shape of a chronological account of the paper's response to the movement in the first 19 years of the twentieth century.

Until 1905, the response was negligible, as indeed was the energy of the suffragists. With the advent of militant tactics, inspired by the Pankhurst-headed Women's Social and Political Union, the public image of women's suffrage began to change and, with it, press coverage. Until 1908, these new tactics were largely symbolic, though often leading to the arrest and imprisonment of the new style "suffragettes". Besides opposing female enfranchisement in leading articles, there is some evidence that The Times allowed its opinions to spill over into its news columns - an occurrence which was to become increasingly obvious when militant tactics took on the violent aspect of stone throwing from 1908-1911. During this later period, The Times' editorial opposition hardened; when the suffragettes began employing arson and other property damage, in what was openly claimed to be "guerrilla warfare" in the years

preceding the first world war, The Times used its respectable journalistic leadership to condemn the militants and urge active public and parliamentary opposition to the enfranchisement of women.

When Britain entered the war, concern with the militant women disappeared from The Times' columns, as did other news unrelated to the conflict. By 1916, however, the participation of women in wartime activities began to command publicity, and a groundswell of support for enfranchisement finally overtook The Times in 1917. Subsequent leading articles were favorable, as were the majority of its wartime news accounts of women.

Besides serving as a record of The Times' sensitivity to a popularly discussed topic, the study uncovers a thread of consistency running from the first perfunctory opposition to women's suffrage through active condemnation of militancy and final support of female enfranchisement. The Times always emphasized its adherence to educated public opinion; and even when its editorial shift did come, it seemed only to emphasize continuing reflection of this opinion and recognition of the trends acting upon it. The Times can then be seen as a newspaper possessing not only strength but flexibility towards political and social change.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NSWS	National Society for Women's Suffrage, an early constitutional society.
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, chief constitutional society during 1900-1918.
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union, chief militant society.

REFERENCES TO THE TIMES

In footnotes where the form is, e.g., 1908 13 June 9 d, the source of reference is The Times citing year, date, month, page and column.

Newspapers are unique barometers of their age. They indicate more plainly than anything else the climate of the societies to which they belong.

This is not simply for the obvious reason that they are a source of news about their time but because the conditions in which they operate, the responsibilities they are expected, or allowed, to fulfil, the pressures they have to meet, their circulation and economic base, the status of those who write for them and their relationship to their readers, all provide a direct insight into the nature of their communities.

Francis Williams
The Right to Know:
The Rise of the
World Press (1959)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. The Times - Position and Tradition

In assessing its own past, The Times once published a leading article which said, "Certainly no one can understand The Times who does not understand that it is an institution."[1] Its foundation as an institution standing for fairness and respectability was built in the early years of the nineteenth century. Established as the Daily Universal Register in 1785 by the first John Walter, The Times began to attain authority and independence with the appointment of Thomas Barnes as editor in 1817. John Walter's son successfully dealt with the business and printing interests and left Barnes to develop the editorial side of the newspaper. The official History of The Times described Barnes' aims: "...to foster, to guide and to ally himself with the feeling of the country."[2] Francis Williams describes, in his comprehensive study of the press, how Barnes' sensitivity to public opinion led to a circulation which eventually became three times the quantity of the rest of the press put together.[3] When John Delane inherited the editorship he also inherited a tradition and dedicated himself to uphold and strengthen its influence - a task which he carried out so successfully that in 1855 one critic remarked:

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1. 1967 18 January 13 abc.

2. History of the Times, quoted in Francis Williams, Dangerous Estate: The Anatomy of Newspapers (1957), p. 74.

3. Williams, Dangerous Estate, p. 78.

> No apology is necessary for assuming that this country is ruled by The Times. We all know it, or if we do not know it, we ought to know it.[1]

Criticism of the power wielded by The Times increased and led in part to a repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855. The tax which had been required of all newspapers had favoured The Times since free postage was included in the payment. Provincial papers were forced by the tax to sell at the same price and did not use the mails. When the tax ended, they were able to lower their price and successfully compete for The Times country readership.

London papers benefited as well, since their price was no longer artificially inflated by the tax. They could not match The Times in size or news coverage for a quality market, but could now, at a lower price find an alternative buying public. The field of journalism became open to competition and the lower and middle class readership became its focus. The Daily Telegraph, for example, was able to cut its price to a penny in the year of the repeal, and by using what The Times History called "sensational New York journalism"[2] was able to double the circulation of The Times within six years.

Technological advances further hindered the near-monopoly of news The Times had once held. Extension of the telegraph gave other papers access to foreign news that once would have been the property of The Times alone - equipped as it was with its large staff of foreign correspondents.

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1. quoted in Williams, Dangerous Estate, p. 92.

2. Williams, Dangerous Estate, p. 110.

The competition of the growing penny press led John Walter III to increase printing capacity by introducing the rotary press, though on the whole, The Times resisted any change of editorial approach. The newspaper which was presented to the public every morning at the turn of the century was expensive (three pence), bulky (often up to 24 pages), and disorganized (with no recognizable format). One staff member catalogued the faults of the paper at the time:

> It had no Principal News Page upon which was set forth, as in a shop window, the outstanding news of the day; it had no News Editor charged with the duty of following up the events of the day and of anticipating the news of the morrow - there was no day staff on duty in the Editorial Department except the Editor's secretary, and the whole paper was infamously made up...The position of the leader page was fixed, and the Foreign News page was properly made up...but the remainder of the news was put together by the foreman printer upon no settled plan.[1]

It was a paper that was difficult to read, full of small print forming long grey areas, though the relief of subheads had been introduced in the 1890's. A table of contents had finally been included on the leader page to serve as a guide through the jungle. However, as the History points out, the prevailing faith at Printing House Square was that The Times would continue to exist and a certain section of the public would prefer it as they had "preferred to taste Twining's tea and Fortnum and Mason's hams."[2]

Given this stable, though small, elite readership, The Times would not have predictably been harmed by the press

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1. F. Harcourt Kitchin, Moberly Bell and his Times (1925), pp. 150-152.

2. History of the Times, Vol III, p. 13.

revolution of the nineties, as Williams points out.[1] However, The Times found itself in grave difficulties at the beginning of the century. Its prestige and finances had been damaged by the scandal of the Parnell letters, and circulation fell when subscribers objected to a marketing scheme for the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The seeds were already sown for the ownership crisis of 1908.[2]

Despite the internal problems of the newspaper, long established tradition kept The Times still clinging to its unique position as a journal of record and gauge of opinion. Though the opinion it gauged was not necessarily a broadly based one, it represented the views of many who considered themselves - and were considered - important in British society.

> It was the leading paper still. Important people who wanted to make their views or grievances known wrote letters to it rather than to any of its rivals. When Kipling was delivered of Recessional, he posted it without hesitation to The Times. Foreign diplomats all over the world still believed that it was the organ of the British Foreign Office, although the belief had no truth in it.[3]

Commenting on the late victorian press, one historian said The Times "always had a small circulation.../but/...its influence was out of all proportion to that circulation."[4] Proponents of women suffrage, like other interest groups, would predictably respect the opinions of The Times as significant and certainly influential.

But the tradition of The Times was unlikely to favour such a radical cause as women's suffrage, and the primary controllers of the paper, responsible for upholding that

1. Williams, Dangerous Estate, p. 158.
2. Hamilton Fyfe, Sixty Years of Fleet Street (1949), p. 90.
3. Fyfe, p. 90.
4. L.C.B. Seaman, Victorian England (1973), p. 421.

tradition, were just as unlikely.

C.F. Moberly Bell, manager of The Times since 1890, who was desperately trying to hold the paper's head above water financially via his Britannica and Times Book Club manoeuvres, was hardly a likely candidate for support. According to the Dictionary of National Biography, Bell's view of The Times complied with its customary stand against any social upheaval:

> The Times soon grew with him to be a religion. He was proud of its power and influence and of its long record of public service, and he had a deep conviction of the importance of upholding its best traditions and so maintaining its efficiency as a regulating force in English public life.[1]

Moving from the general to the particular, it seems fair to attribute at least a share of his resistance to female suffrage to his wife Ethel. She

> ...understood him in every mood, and could interpret other people to him and him to other people. It is not too much to say that the work he did for The Times is as much hers as his;...she was intellectually his complement. He consulted her on every important decision he had to make, and in discussion with her, cleared his own mind.[2]

Mrs. Bell was a noted anti-suffragist and her obituary states:

> Till the war began, she largely spent her energies in opposing woman suffrage, cooperating there with her friend Mrs. Humphrey Ward and other distinguished women.[3]

George Earle Buckle, editor of The Times since 1884 seemed as unlikely as Bell to support women's suffrage. At

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1. DNB.

2. 1933 23 January 14 d; obituary of Ethel Moberly Bell, written in part by her daughter, Enid.

3. It is interesting to note that Mr. Humphrey Ward was a leader writer for The Times since 1881, and his wife's influence in the cause of women's suffrage led John Walter IV to question the effect on the newspaper's treasured impartiality.

Printing House Square, his opposition to change was notorious. He wanted no secretary or telephone. Hamilton Fyfe describes his "lethargy and temperamental blocking of changes" and characterizes him as a "King Log, all for a quiet life and no disturbing reform."[1]

The Dictionary of National Biography is less damning on Buckle, but also states:

> His general attitude towards innovations was that they were probably dangerous...His tastes were those naturally formed by a boy of his upbringing, and they remained those of the man; a preference for the well-established and a cautious welcome to the new.

Coupled with his view of The Times' tradition as giving support, general but critical to the government of the day"[2] it follows that Buckle would guide his leader writers to approach a subject such as women's suffrage with some resistance.

In this view, the Walter family, who were still the chief proprietors of The Times, were likely to concur. Arthur Fraser Walter, who dutifully came into the business after the death of his elder brother, had become chief proprietor of The Times in 1894. His relationship with the editor is described in the History as friendly. "Buckle possessed qualities of mind and character that had always strongly appealed to him," and he entrusted the daily executive duties implicitly to Bell.[3] Like Buckle, Walter became known as an opponent of new ideas and, like Bell, he was

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1. Fyfe, pp. 87-89.
2. DNB.
3. Times History, p. 109

thoroughly dedicated to preserving The Times in its station as the respected commentator on and guardian of the welfare of the country. In The Times obituary,[1] which praised Walter as the essence of a "country gentleman," he was given a tribute which hinged on the character of the paper itself:

> As the chief of an undertaking which has never advertised its private affairs or divulged its arcana imperii, he followed the unbroken tradition of his family and was content to efface his own personality in the corporate anonymity of The Times.

This "corporate anonymity" one press commentator has retermed the "office line."[2] He describes how each paper has one different from all others. Explaining its evolution, he catalogues the various influences on a paper, including tradition, readership, character and circulation, contact with readers, and experience, background and sense of responsibility of the staff. By studying the development of The Times - its powerful conservative tradition, small elite readership, wide influence and contact evidenced in its letters, and the strong sense of public duty in its editorial staff, we can see that the character of The Times in 1900 was a microcosm of the British establishment, conscicus of its stature as an institution and standing firmly in support of the other existing institutions of British society.

B. Women's Suffrage

In marked contrast to the respectable and solid nature of The Times was the revolutionary cause of women's suffrage -

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1. 1910 23 February 10 a

2. Donald McLachlan, "The Press and Public Opinion" in British Journal of Sociology Vol. 6 (1955), pp. 159-168.

especially as put forward by the militant suffragettes in the early years of the century.

But the women's movement was not a new one. Halévy, one of the few historians to examine the theme as a significant influence in modern British history, finds its roots in the "advanced ideas of eighteenth century enlightenment, the philosophy of the French revolution.../and/ the revival of these ideas and this philosophy in the great individualist and liberal movement which...marked the years around 1860."[1]

Mary Wollstonecraft, William Thompson and Caroline Norton were among the early theorists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but they were concerned not specifically with the demand for votes but with the larger question of social and legal equality. When examining the past for an understanding of the narrower suffrage issue, one must begin in the 1860's when the theories began to bear fruit and, as Mrs. Fawcett wrote, the inclusion of women in government entered "the phase of practical politics."[2]

Parliament was once again considering representational reform. John Stuart Mill was elected to Parliament in 1865 with the plank of female suffrage in his platform. In 1867, he introduced, as an amendment to the Reform Bill of that year, a motion to omit the word "man" and insert the word "person", thereby enfranchising women on the same, albeit limited, grounds as men. These qualifications still were

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1. Elie Halévy, History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. VI: The Rule of Democracy 1905-1914 (1934), pp. 490-491.

2. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Women's Suffrage: A Short History of a Great Movement (1912), p. 15.

those of property and were the root of the political problem that Constance Rover explores in her study of the suffrage question within the party system.[1] Briefly, nearly all Liberals, though nominally favouring extended suffrage, were afraid of losing the votes of the propertied women to the Tories. The Tories, though standing to gain at the polls, were opposed to the principle of female suffrage. This confusion and the resulting political machinations were to plague the cause until the First World War when party loyalties had partly broken down.

In 1867, however, Mill's bill, though defeated, had carried 80 votes with it, greatly encouraging the proponents of women's suffrage. Organizations were founded to press for female enfranchisement in London, Manchester and Edinburgh and formed a loose federation - the National Society for Women's Suffrage. The NSWS aimed only at enfranchisement within the existing laws. That meant only votes for householders who were single women and widows - married women could not hold property of their own at that time.

Like the party problem, this narrowness of the demand caused difficulties for the suffragists at times fostering internal wrangles. On the whole, though, the late sixties and early seventies were a period of growing activity for the suffragists. Andrew Rosen points out the similarity of the suffragists tactics to those used by the Anti-Corn Law League - travelling lecturers, indoor public meetings, hand-

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1. Constance Rover, Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain 1866-1914 (1967).

bills, tracts and a multitude of petitions to Parliament.[1]

The first of these petitions was presented to Mill in 1866 with 1499 names of women householders. In 1869, 255 petitions were presented to the Commons with 61,475 signatures. In 1874, the number of petitions totalled 1,273.

During the seventies, parliamentary activity increased and private members bills were introduced every year but one, though they made little progress. There had been steady advancement in the other facets of sex equality - women ratepayers were awarded the municipal franchise in 1869, the Married Women's Property Act was passed the following year, along with the eligibility for women to serve on the newly-established Education Act school boards. In 1872, the first woman poor law inspector was appointed. These advances, though peripheral to the suffrage itself, were heralded as precursors to it, demonstrating the ability of women to participate in public life.

But when representational reform was again contemplated in the 1880's, suffragists' hopes were disappointed. Gladstone opposed the inclusion of women in the extension of the franchise, on the grounds that the bill already included "as much as it could safely carry...Woman's suffrage would overweight the ship."[2] Mrs. Fawcett, tersely carrying forward the Prime Minister's nautical metaphor, said "He accordingly threw the women overboard."

This pattern of events, whereby many of the declared

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1. Andrew Rosen, Rise Up, Women: The Militant Campaign of the Women's Social and Political Union 1903-1914 (1974), p. 9.

2. Fawcett, Women's Suffrage, p. 28.

parliamentary supporters of the female franchise were dissuaded from pursuing their course by the exigencies of politics, was to repeat itself again and again.

After the major defeat of 1884, the agitation for women's suffrage went into a decline, kept alive only by Lydia Becker, a much mocked Manchester woman, who edited the Woman's Suffrage Journal, lectured, supervised the parliamentary work, and guided the NSWS. Roger Fulford writes: "The history of the decades from 1860 to 1890 - so far as woman suffrage is concerned - is the history of Miss Becker."[1]

Lydia Becker died in 1890 and with her died much of the enthusiasm for the cause that had started with such promise thirty years before. One factor contributing to the slump was the foundation of the two women's political auxilaries - the Primrose League in 1885 and the Women's Liberal Federation two years later - diluting somewhat the complaint that women were excluded from politics.[2]

Despite continued parliamentary misfortunes in the 1890s and flagging hopes, some work continued. In 1897, the old NSWS which had split for various reasons, was reformed under Millicent Garrett Fawcett as President of the new National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). Mrs. Fawcett, succeeding Lydia Becker in the forefront of the suffrage cause, brought her own style to it. Josephine Kamm comments that to Mrs. Fawcett "the conversion of public

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1. Roger Fulford, Votes for Women: The Story of a Struggle (1957), p. 78.

2. Fulford, p. 53 and Josephine Kamm, Rapiers and Battle-axes: The Women's Movement and its Aftermath (1966), p.137.

opinion... was just as important as winning the vote"[1] by purely parliamentary means. Till the activities of the militants overshadowed all other methods after 1906, Mrs. Fawcett's brand of persistent, constitutional, and educational strategy characterized the movement.

As Kamm points out, nearly 1400 public meetings and demonstrations were held between 1866 and the founding of the militant suffrage movement in 1903, but their effect was relatively small. Rosen attributes this fact not only to the narrow nature of the demand and the prevailing apathy of most women, but primarily to the failure of the movement to catch the public eye. The societies, he says,

> ...employed means of publicity that were simply too conventional to stir prolonged and heated public debate. As long as public opinion was not stirred, Parliament was not really interested in women's suffrage on any franchise.[2]

C. Synthesis

Participants in the women's suffrage movement understood the importance of the public opinion which remained unmoved by their nineteenth century activities. Stirring of the public in those days of limited mass communication, for the most part depended on the press which, except for a few notable renegades like the Manchester Guardian, was unsympathetic to female enfranchisement.

Mrs. Fawcett, the leader of the newly-formed NUWSS, wrote that her organization by 1900

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1. Kamm, p. 138.

2. Rosen, p. 13.

> ...had become quite accustomed to holding magnificent meetings in support of the women's franchise with every evidence of public sympathy and support, and to receive from the Anti-Suffrage Press either no notice at all or only a small paragraph tucked away in an inconspicuous corner.[1]

Lord Brockway, in his preface to Constance Rover's study of the suffrage movement, seems to agree with Mrs. Fawcett, commenting:

> The agitation for women's enfranchisement did not become a compelling political force until a decade before the First World War. The constitutional suffrage movement led by Mrs. Fawcett was already exerting an important influence; then came the militant suffragettes led by Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel. They caught the headlines and no one could avoid the issue.[2]

Lord Brockway thus links the onset of militancy with new treatment on the part of the press, but also implies that previously, conscious attempts had been made to avoid the issue. Rover makes this charge more specific by saying that suffrage activities were "subject to a partial boycott by the press in the years before the First World War."[3]

Commentators writing shortly after the events emphsize their distrust of the press as the only available journal of record and warn readers not to trust in the impartiality of newspapers but to treat its barometric readings with reservations.

Elizabeth Robins denounced a "conspiracy in the Press"[4] in her account of the militant movement. Annie Budgett's

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1. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, What I Remember (1924), p. 179.
2. Rover, p. v.
3. Rover, p. xi.
4. Elizabeth Robins, Way Stations (1913), p. 339.

WSPU leaflet, published in 1906,[1] is devoted to refuting alleged misrepresentations in various newspapers and presenting the militants' view of the first arrests at Westminster. A.E. Metcalfe, who wrote what is perhaps the most detailed chronological account by a contemporary of the 1900-1914 events, wrote that her purpose was "largely...filling in the gaps left in the record of events supplied by the daily press."[2]

In her work, Metcalfe, besides noting the omissions of the newspapers, reports on the extensive use made of the press by the militants through letters sent and announcement published.

Perhaps the most revealing comments on the militants' relationship with the Press come from Christabel Pankhurst, the shrewd WSPU tactician, who saw the Press as a valuable tool:

> Never lose your temper with the Press or the Public is a major rule of political life. We never made that mistake. We like the public. We even liked the Press. At any rate, the journalists who interviewed us or reported our meetings seemed to us to be quite sympathetic and we suspected that their copy was touched up in newspaper offices by those who had no first hand knowledge of the movement, and that they themselves were perhaps under instruction 'not to encourage it.' Yet even exaggerated and distorted reports, which made us seem more terrible than we really were, told the world this much - that we wanted the vote and were resolved to get it.[3]

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1. Annie Budgett, "Facts Behind the Press."

2. A.E. Metcalfe, Woman's Effort: A Chronicle of 50 Years Struggle for Citizenship (1917), p. vii.

3. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled: The Story of How We Won The Vote (1959), p. 70.

She recounts a story in which she and Mrs. Pankhurst asked for the publication of a leading article on a Women's Suffrage Bill in the pre-militant days. They went to the editor of "one of the most important newspapers in the country." The Editor was away but an associate received them, listened to their request, then explained that in his twenty years with the paper "its practice had been as far as possible, to ignore the woman suffrage question."[1]

The paper of the anecdote is unnamed, but its attitude could easily be that of The Times. Certainly the newspaper seemed to carry little about the movement for the female franchise. Roger Fulford calls The Times "a worthy and enduring adversary of the women's vote,"[2] and the Times History explains:

> Before the 1914 war The Times held the view, consistent with much of its thinking, that until public opinion was convinced of the women's case, the reform would be premature.[3]

Both descriptions imply that the paper was part of what Mrs. Fawcett termed "the Anti-Suffragist Press," though the mildness expressed by the History may suggest that editorial opposition was not strongly exhibited. Neither source implies that news was editorially suppressed.

Indeed, it would seem contrary to Times heritage to do such a thing. One staff member, defending the "imperishable traditions" of the paper under Buckle's charge wrote:

> The leading article which expressed the opinions of Printing House Square were one thing; the articles and telegrams, reports and paragraphs, which gave the

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1. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 55.
2. Fulford, p. 70.
3. Times History, Vol. IV, p. 69.

> news of the day, at home and abroad, were another thing, wholly separate and distinct. There was no collusion whatsoever between the editorial opinions and the news columns of The Times. The opinions of the Editor's Room were never in my time permitted to colour or to influence, by omission or selection, the presentation of news as it was seen and understood by those correspondents, wherever they might be and whoever they might be, whose duty it was to report upon it and elucidate it for publication.[1]

These varying statements - charging boycott or denying it, or admitting opposition by the press - give rise to several questions concerning the attitude of journalism to the women's suffrage issue.

How was opposition communicated by a newspaper of the stature of The Times to its day-to-day reading public? Were some events purposely ignored to reduce public exposure? Were the news items actually printed fairly or were they coloured adjectivally or by placement?

Most important were the leading articles, since they were the rightful purveyors of "the central conviction of the office."[2] How were they handled? Can consistent arguments be traced through them revealing an underlying Times policy or were they designed to respond only to the specific episode which prompted them? Answers to these questions can only be determined by careful examination of the papers that appeared on the newsstands daily.

Tracing the treatment of the women's suffrage movement from 1900 to 1918 can serve a twofold purpose, first to clarify The Times' treatment of a contentious subject, and second, to amplify the historical data about women's suffrage.

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1. Kitchin, p. 53.

2. Times History, Vol. IV, p. 35.

CHAPTER II

1900-1906

A. Preface to Militancy 1900-1905

To examine thoroughly the treatment of the militant women's suffrage movement by The Times, some assessment must first be made of the coverage of the pre-militant activities.

By 1900, the movement itself was in a decline. One suffragist, looking back to the turn of the century, comments:

> The women had lost heart. You could not get a suffrage meeting that was attended by members of the general public. We used to have about twenty-four adherents in the front row. We carried our resolutions and heard no more about them![1]

Josephine Kamm lends support to this diagnosis of dwindling energy in the suffrage movement and adds "Press coverage was dwindling accordingly."[2]

Part of the reason for the press neglect of the suffrage question was surely the movement's loss of momentum, but other events helped squeeze the topic out of the papers. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the accession of her son to the throne filled the columns of The Times with various tributes to the late queen and the coronation of the new king. But the most compelling news of the time came out of the South African War (1899-1902). Even Mrs. Fawcett, whose characteristic optimism both denied the slump within the suffrage movement, and went so far as to say that the increased consciousness of discrimination against the Uitlanders in

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1. Antonia Raeburn, Militant Suffragettes (1973), p. 16.

2. Kamm, p. 139.

South Africa actually "nourished" the cause, was forced to admit that "the main interest of the nation was concentrated on that struggle until it was over."[1] But Kamm takes a very different view of the outcome. She writes:

> During the war, which unleashed so much bitter feeling, the Press clamped down entirely on the women's suffrage issue; and it was in this climate of frustration that militancy was bred.[2]

Of the 33 entries under the topic "Women" in Palmer's Index to the Times for the year 1900, only two concern the subject of suffrage. The others, mostly modest reports of charitable endeavours, underline the heavy emphasis placed on the recognized sphere of women in local government, school, and health bodies where their home experience might be utilized.

The first Times report of suffrage activity in the new century was of the annual council meetings of the Women's Liberal Federation in June.[3] A motion was carried in favour of women's suffrage, urging the Liberal party to include the measure in their platform. However, a motion that would have lent real weight to the suggestion was defeated. The motion read:

> That no parliamentary candidate should receive any assistance from women at election times unless they are known to be in favour of the political enfranchisement of duly qualified women.

The second mention of suffrage activity was another account of a meeting - this time of the annual convention

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1. Fawcett, Women's Suffrage, p. 58.
2. Kamm, p. 140.
3. 1900 13 June 7 f.

of the NUWSS.[1] The report in The Times described the society's ongoing work in its characteristic unsensational manner. At this point, and until the onset of militant activities, The Times was journalistically justified in the scant coverage it gave the suffrage movement. It offered the same newsworthiness as ongoing church and charitable work, and was treated in the same way, with minute print and page-bottom placement.

Again in 1901, most Times articles about women centred around their traditional roles in charitable work. However, in this year and in the next few following, some political agitations - albeit on a polite, drawing room scale - break the surface. These concern female participation on the local government level in education, sanitation, and poor law administration. The gradual recognition of women's usefulness in this area by The Times is especially interesting in view of Mrs. Pankhurst's repeated avowal that much of her own militant zeal for the vote had its roots in her experience as a Manchester poor law guardian. Indeed, participation on this level had long been regarded as a justification for female suffrage. Disraeli, as long before as 1848, had said:

> ...in a country governed by a woman - where you allow women to form part of the other estate of the realm - peeresses in their own right for example - where you allow women not only to hold land, but to be a lady of the manor and hold legal courts - where a woman by law may be a churchwarden and overseer of the poor - I do not see, when she has so much to do with the state and the church, on what reasons, if you come to

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1. 1900 14 December 9 f.

right, she has not a right to vote.[1]

The Times' coverage of such topics, though not specifically related to women's suffrage, kept women's activities somewhat in the public eye during the early years of the century.

As for women's suffrage proper in 1901, it was a quiet year, as stated before, much overshadowed in the press by wartime activity. The Women's Liberal Federation once again rejected a resolution witholding support from non-suffragist Liberal candidates.[2] In July,[3] The Times briefly reported the annual ladies' night debate of the Hardwicke Society - a group of barristers. The topic was women's suffrage and the interesting point about an otherwise insignificant article is its notably light tone. It was treated purely as an intellectual exercise with no basis in serious practical politics. This was the first instance in which any colouring of the news can be detected, and remained the only instance until 1905 and the advent of militancy. The articles that did appear in The Times seemed balanced in their presentation, though so short that little room was left for interpretive shading.

The first leading article of the century directly related to women appeared on 7 September. Significantly it appeared on a Saturday - women's day in The Times, as it devoted its fashion, and other specifically women's features to Saturdays, including in 1910, its Woman's Supplement.

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1. Ray Strachey, The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain (1928), p. 43.

2. 1901 9 May 12 e.

3. 1901 1 July 15 b.

The 1901 leader[1] was untitled, as were all leaders at that time in the sedate and unbroken layout of the page. It began by commenting that a recognizable change had taken place in the status of women in "modern times" and attributed this "emancipation" to the higher standard of education beginning to be available. The Times applauds the change and even when it humorously refers to the female cyclist, shows no "chauvinism" towards the sex. However, no political aspect is mentioned. The article appeared à propos of no specific event, simply, it seems, The Times was fulfilling its traditional responsibility of noting a trend and commenting upon it.

In 1902, the participation of women in local government began to receive more attention than charitable activities.

On the topic of women's suffrage, little enthusiasm was evident. In March[2], the Parliamentary Committee for Women's Suffrage held an "At Home" built around the prospects of a private member's bill to be introduced that session.[3]

The Chairman of the Committee - Atherly Jones - was less than optimistic, even in these early stages of the bill. The Times quotes him as saying the "Women's Suffrage movement did not show the vitality it had done in past years. As soon as Parliament could be persuaded that public opinion was favourable to Women Suffrage, it would open its mind..."

Another speaker at the meeting expressed the view that

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1. 1901 7 September 9 d.

2. 1902 27 March 9 e.

3. The M.P., Galloway, was unlucky in the draw for a place, and the bill got no further.

women did not show "sufficient energy in the matter" and suggested meetings and distribution of literature as a remedy.

To The Times readership, the topic of suffrage must have seemed nearly defunct. Even Mrs. Fawcett, the outstanding adherent of the cause, was only quoted during the year in her Liberal Unionist guise, promoting unionist policies regarding Ireland and defending the British soldier against the charges of atrocities in the Boer War.

Causing the only stir in the suffrage movement was the threat of an Education Act which proposed to abolish the school boards on which many women had seats, and transfer their functions to the County Councils for which women were ineligible. Despite the opposition of many women's groups reported in The Times and many letters of feminist condemnation printed in the paper, the act was passed. Halévy called the act a "serious setback to the cause of feminism."[1] Opposition to the Bill may have prompted the Women's Liberal Federation finally to pass a resolution giving its official assistance only to parliamentary candidates pledged to women's suffrage - the same meeting passed a condemnation of the Education Bill.[2]

In 1903, feminist opposition to the Education Act continued and was featured in many Times reports of meetings and in correspondence printed. Much of the letter-writing and meetings of protest were orchestrated by members of the

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1. Halévy, f n. p. 513.

2. 1902 8 May 11 b.

Women's Local Government Society. In many cases appeals by this society, urging participation of women in local government, were emphatically dissociated from participation on a national or imperial level.

The Times quoted Lord Reay addressing the society:

> ...While confessing himself opposed to women in Parliament /he/ said he was in entire agreement with the aims of the association, not because women were equal to men, but because they could do certain things better than men could do them.[1]

A week later,[2] Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman responded in much the same way to a demand for women's suffrage presented to him by the Dunfermline Branch of the British Women's Temperance Association who viewed the vote as a means of reforming the licensing laws. Campbell-Bannerman was reported as saying that he found their arguments "strong" but he was "not quite convinced." Instead, he said he hoped for more power for women locally.

The discovery of this small though indicative article illustrates the difficulties involved in using Palmer's Index. No mention was made of its existence under the headings, "suffrage," "women," or "votes." It was mentioned only under the heading "Campbell-Bannerman".

More importantly, the lack of cross references buried the only Times report of the year on NUWSS activity under the heading "Civic." The NUWSS held a convention on defence of the civic rights of women,[3] in which much discussion was

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1. 1903 14 March 12 d.
2. 1903 28 March 13 f.
3. 1903 19 October 13 b.

prompted by the Education Act. A motion was passed which demanded the parliamentary franchise to protect women from further loss of rights.

Apart from these articles of political significance, the Times reports on women were still predominantly about charitable endeavours. However, one spate of letters and reports occasioned quite a discussion about women in the medical profession. A young woman doctor was found dead and the event prompted comment on the strain of casualty rooms being too much for female stamina. The Times was scrupulously fair in printing both sides of the question, and when it was finally revealed that the woman died of a congenital heart disease, the matter dropped from the pages, leaving the contemporary reader with a more positive view of women in medicine, and certainly no hint of anti-feminism on the part of the newspaper.

One event that did not appear in the pages of The Times was the formation of the Women's Social and Political Union in October of 1903. This is an understandable omission.

The organization began with a small meeting in Mrs. Pankhurst's Manchester home, and continued for some time with membership and finance organized informally. Some indication of the scant attention paid to the new organization is evidenced by the fact that although Keir Hardie was acquainted with Mrs. Pankhurst, and was an ardent suffragist, the founding of the WSPU was not even mentioned in the Labour Leader which Hardie edited.[1] So it was hardly to be

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1. Rosen, p. 32.

expected that it would be mentioned in The Times. Its existence was not noted by the paper for some time, also understandably. The activities of the WSPU in its first two years were confined to propaganda work in Lancashire, within the Labour movement, though, in Mrs. Pankhurst's words:

> We soon rivalled in popularity the Salvation Army and even the tooth-drawers and patent-medicine pedlars.[1]

With militancy still in the future, the coverage of women's suffrage in The Times was still in the form of reports of the constitutionalists' meetings and deputations.

Both the influential M.P. John Morley and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman were approached by representatives of the Women's Liberal Federation and the Scottish Liberal Federation.[2] The Times reports that both men seemed favourable to the parliamentary suffrage, but neither committed the Liberal party to parliamentary support. Instead they dwelt on the value of women in local government. One interesting aspect of The Times report was that only the replies of the two men are quoted or summarized, not the remarks of the women in the deputations, including Lady Aberdeen, Lady Trevelyan, and Lady Carlisle.

This treatment was repeated in the next month in a report on the Women's Tariff Reform League.[3] The league had recently been formed to support Joseph Chamberlain's concept of Empire Free Trade, and the article marked the first

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1. Fulford, p. 119.
2. 1904 26 January 7 b.
3. 1904 15 February 12 d.

public meeting. Though it was given one and a quarter columns in The Times, the most space on any women's subject thus far in the century, no women were reported as speaking, and were only mentioned as seconding motions or in the catalogue of attendence. It seems not unfair to observe that, since the subject was not an obviously feminine province in the view of The Times, it was therefore accorded much more journalisitic attention than a women's suffrage meeting.

Both the above articles illustrate the tradition of near-silence about women at mixed political meetings that Antonia Raeburn describes.[1] The initial militant act of the WSPU in the next year broke this tradition. This was significantly the action which gained press coverage for the suffrage demand.

But in 1904, women's suffrage was not news. No leading article appeared concerning the three-hour Parliamentary debate on Sir Charles MacLaren's Enfranchisement Bill[2] which ended with a second reading majority of 114. The bill itself got no further, but joined the many others doomed to ultimate failure by lack of party or governmental sponsorship. The psychological victory of the vote was cited at the council meeting of the Women's Liberal Federation[3], the report of whose activities were, for the most part, the only regular account in The Times of the suffrage movement. Of course, the Federation was not based only on the suffrage cause, and

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1. Raeburn, p. 19.
2. held on 16 March.
3. 1904 1 June 6 a.

it seems likely that The Times' diligence in reporting its meetings stemmed from its affiliation with a major political party.

For the remainder of 1904, The Times reported only the usual religious or charitable functions, except for one surprisingly well-placed article in November.[1] It was an account of a public meeting in favour of women's suffrage, led by Mrs. Fawcett. Though still in very small print, it filled nearly the whole column and appeared directly under a daily feature - a small selection from the paper of 100 years before. The article was much more likely to catch the eye of the reader than any previous one. Mrs. Fawcett was described as speaking on the encouraging aspects of constitutional suffrage activity during the past year, including the Parliamentary majority of MacLaren's bill, granting the female franchise in Australia (1902) and New Zealand (1893) and 40 years of progress at the local level. This article also reported the attendance at the meeting of Christabel Pankhurst, (in her pre-militant days, an organizer of Lancashire working women).

The year 1905 began with suffrage articles treated by The Times in the usual way. Early in the year, under the heading "Women's Suffrage", a meeting of the Westminster Local Committee of the Central Society for Women's Suffrage was reported.[2] Again the emphasis in the speeches was on women's special qualifications in the reform of temperance, sanitation, and welfare, and it was again put forward that only good

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1. 1904 28 November 2 f.

2. 1905 21 February 14 f.

effects had accompanied the female suffrage exercised in New Zealand. It was a very typical meeting and a very typical report, but one sentence seems to stand out at the end of the tiny six point article.

> It was announced during the meeting that a demonstration in support of the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women would be held...for which a limited number of reserved seats are obtainable.

This sentence seems to capsulize the conduct, attitude, and reserve which characterized the movement at this time. Mannerly, even formal, it seems an odd ancestry for the hatchets, chains, jailing and violence which was soon to replace it.

The demonstration itself, held in the Queen's Hall, under the auspices of the NUWSS, was reported[1] as crowded, and several M.P.'s spoke against the "retrograde" Education Bill and for the Parliamentary franchise. Again it is interesting to note that except for mention of thanks and seconding, no women were reported as speaking. Did they not speak or were they not quoted by The Times reporter?

Sylvia Pankhurst, who attended the meeting, said that Mrs. Fawcett did speak, as did "other ladies...with brief utterances, in nervous, high-pitched voices"[2] unaccustomed to addressing big meetings at that time. She also commented on the low key conduct, calling it "very polite and very tame; different indeed from the rousing Socialist meetings of the North."

Both at this demonstration and at the annual council

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1. 1905 15 March 11b.

2. E. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement (1931), p.182.

meeting of the Women's Liberal Federation,[1] the focus of support was the private member's bill for female enfranchisement to be debated in the Commons in May. Despite the Women's Liberal Federation's acclamation of "the growth of suffrage feeling", the bill, introduced by Bamford Slack, was doomed. It was effectively talked out - a method of Parliamentary manoeuvre by which the debate on the preceding subject is artificially prolonged so as to leave no time for the last item on the day's agenda. Slack's measure was scheduled after what was expected to be a perfunctory discussion of a Vehicle Lights Bill, but for four hours, anti-suffragists M.P.'s, led by Henry Labouchere, extended the debate with much amusement. The Times parliamentary reporter[2] punctuated his article with parenthetical notation of "laughter", and, at one point, "ministerial cheers".

Especially interesting, from the point of view of historical journalism, was the event not reported in the paper the next day. After the debate, the members of the various societies, including the WSPU, indignant at what they thought was scandalous trickery, crowded out of the Ladies' Gallery and the lobby and held an impromptu meeting in the street. Mrs. Wolstenholme-Elmy, whose ringlet curls and 71 years characterized her as one of the movement's pioneers, began to speak, but was immediately stopped by the police, since meetings of any kind are forbidden outside the House while Parliament is in session. The women tried again near the statue of Richard Coeur de Lion, but were again stopped since they were

1. 1905 19 May 3d.

2. 1905 13 May 6b.

blocking the entrance to the House of Lords. Finally, they were joined by Keir Hardie, and escorted by the police to the Broad Sanctuary nearby where a short meeting was held and names were taken by the police. Fulford analyses the incident:

> Thus mildly and obediently began the first act of militancy. The meeting was perhaps hardly as effective as one of the drawing room meetings organized by Miss Becker...The world outside was unmoved and... broadly speaking, the oratory of the ladies was unnoticed - and not even The Times referred to the episode.[1]

B. Editorial Response to New Tactics 1905-1907

The first incident of militancy very likely went unreported in The Times for purely journalistic reasons. It seemed devoid of any significance, if indeed, it was even noticed by a reporter. However, as from October 1905, increasingly serious incidents were ignored and there is some evidence to suggest that this was more deliberate.

With the fall of Balfour's government likely in the near future and Sir Edward Grey a probable member of the new Liberal cabinet, the WSPU wrote to him a few days before his speech in the Manchester Free Trade Hall, asking if he would receive a deputation from the society. No answer was received, and on the evening of the speech, October 13, Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney went to the hall determined to ask the Liberal leader about the party's stand on women's suffrage. They did not expect an answer to their questions, and planned, after being refused, to create sufficient disturbance to get themselves arrested. The WSPU

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1. Fulford, p. 123.

was not content with the press treatment accorded the old constitutional societies and determined to bring publicity to their cause.[1]

Events transpired exactly as expected: they were first ejected, and then, following a scuffle with police, were arrested. The next day they appeared at the Town Hall, were found guilty, and, declining to pay their fine, were imprisoned in Strangeways Gaol. That evening, nearly a thousand people gathered to protest against the conduct of Sir Edward Grey and the subsequent treatment of the two women.

In The Times' account of the Free Trade Hall meeting[2], no mention was made of the disturbance. This might have been explained if all events of the evening went unreported, but The Times' account treated the speeches in some detail. In the various descriptions of the incident,[3] it seems unlikely that any reporter could have missed the uproar, and therefore, the omission seems a conscious one.

Other newspapers certainly noticed and commented. The Evening Standard deprecated the behaviour of the women as better suited to "children in the nursery," and the Daily Mail said the cause of female enfranchisement had been damaged, coining the title "suffragettes" for the agitators.[4]

Mrs. Fawcett said press reaction was widespread and

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1. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, pp. 48-52.

2. 1905 14 October 10 c.

3. See Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, pp. 189-190, Strachey, pp. 293-295, Fawcett, What I Remember, pp.177-178, Rosen, pp. 50-52, and Fulford, pp. 127-128.

4. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 190.

created a "sensation." She adds:

> Instead of the withering contempt of silence, the Anti-Suffrage Papers came out day after day with columns of hysterical verbiage directed against our movement.[1]

Both Mrs. Fawcett and Sylvia Pankhurst describe heckling at political meetings as part of traditional political behaviour[2] but point out that it had been exclusively the province of men. Women engaged in such vociferous political activity was news, as Christabel Pankhurst had prophesied. Her comment on the result was:

> We had certainly broken the Press silence on votes for women, that silence which, by keeping women uninformed, had so largely smothered and strangled the movement... Suffrage meetings, however large, were affairs of words, and the words of voteless women were not 'news'! But militancy was news, was current history, and as such must have place in the Press.[3]

The Times, as we have seen, initially denied the story a place; but by 16 October, even The Times carried the s tory. However, the way in which the story was presented is interesting. Unlike the Manchester Guardian, which not only included the suffragette incident in its report of Sir Edward Grey's meeting, but later carried a transcript of the trial and a WSPU policy statement by Theresa Billington,[4] The Times presented the following limited report to its readers:

> Disturbance at a Political Meeting
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> At Manchester City Police Court on Saturday, Miss Pankhurst and Miss Kenney, two prominent upholders of

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1. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 179.

2. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 176, and Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette (1911), pp. 32-33.

3. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, pp. 55-56.

4. Rosen, p. 53.

> women's rights, were summoned for obstructing South Street in the city. On Friday evening, the ladies were ejected from the Free Trade Hall, where a meeting was addressed by Sir Edward Grey, M.P., for creating a disturbance.../An/ assault consisted of spitting in the face of a police superintendent and a police inspector and hitting the latter in the mouth. Outside the Hall, the two ladies insisted on addressing a crowd, and they were arrested...
>
> The defendants did not deny the offence.../and/... added that, as they were denied votes, making a disturbance was the only way they could put forward their claim to political justice. Miss Pankhurst said she was only sorry that one of the persons she attacked was not Sir Edward Grey...

The report goes on to cover the conviction, the fine, and the refusal to pay, and then ends:

> An open air meeting of protest against the action of Sir Edward Grey in declining to answer a question on women's suffrage was held in the evening. Mrs. Pankhurst, mother of one of the defendants, said she was proud that her daughter had taken so courageous a stand. The Liberal Party, she added, desired to keep this question in the background. These noble girls had undeceived the Liberal women as to the intentions of the Liberal Party.[1]

It must be noted that this report is far from the "hysterical verbiage" mentioned by Mrs. Fawcett. Indeed, it is a model of dispassionate reporting. Up to this point, also, it is not so much obvious bias in The Times reports that is important, but the selection of news to be printed at all.

Despite the militant tactics and other newspapers' attention to them, The Times, for a while at least adhered to its pre-militant response. Under the heading "Women's Suffrage Societies",[2] the paper published an account of the annual NUWSS convention in characteristically mild terms. The convention apparently followed its normal constitutionalist course, with its reports and resolutions, and its

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1. 1905 16 October 4 d.

2. 1905 21 October 12 b.

private daytime sessions chaired by women and its more important, public, night session chaired by a male M.P. To the end of the convention story was tacked a very small account of a meeting in the Free Trade Hall at Manchester held to protest at the treatment of the two women held in Strangeways Gaol. Once again, despite the lack of prominence of the entire article (which may be a reason for Palmer's listing it only under the unlikely heading "National") it was a fair and balanced report of the facts.

On the same day, however, just four pages away in the obituary column,[1] the possible effect of militancy on The Times' view of the women's movement is indicated. In a notice announcing the death of Emilia Jessie Boucherett, who had been identified with women's suffrage and legal rights, The Times reads:

> /She/...was almost ludicrously unlike the popular conception of a "woman's rights" woman. She was a delicate, highly-bred looking old lady, with a considerable sense of humour, great courtesy, and knowledge of the world, and a passionate fondness for the country. As a girl she had been a keen rider to hounds.

The next few months were uneventful for the militants. Christabel Pankhurst, enrolled at Owens College,[2] was threatened with expulsion if she continued disturbances. No other member of the WSPU sought arrest at this point, and the suffragette subject faded from comment in The Times. Indeed only two reports of women's activities found their way into the paper until mid-December.

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1. 1905 21 October 8 b.

2. now Manchester University.

When the Conservatives resigned on 4 December, the WSPU began to send hecklers to meetings of their Liberal successors, but the first few incidents went unreported.

The first report of militant heckling appears in the account of a speech by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Queen's Hall.[1]

> At the conclusion of Mr. Asquith's speech a lady rose from one of the front seats in the area and exclaimed, "I want to know whether the Liberal government will give women their votes." As Mr. Asquith ignored the question, his interrogator repeated it with some insistence and finally was only persuaded to resume her seat by an assurance on the part of the stewards that an answer would be given later... At the close of Mr. Langdon's speech another lady from the back of the platform demanded to know from the chairman /Asquith/ whether the Liberal government would give women a vote - a question which, when reiterated by a third lady in the body of the hall, provoked some impatient protest and cries of 'Turn her out' from the rest of the audience...
>
> During /a later/ speech, the interrupting lady in the gallery, who had been ejaculating more remarks about Home Rule, was thrown out and at the end of Mr. Money's speech, the lady at the back of the platform and the lady in the front row of the area seats renewed their questions about women's suffrage. But they were shouted down...
>
> The lady in the front seats again interrupted... However, the proceedings then terminated without any opportunity of interrogation being given to the ladies anxious for information on the subject of Liberal policy and the women's suffrage question.

This report of events is notably restrained. The women are consistently termed "ladies" and no indication of a reporter's opinion appears to slant the account. However, in the companion leading article,[2] one sentence seems to show that the editorial line on disturbances was a deprecating one, probably influenced by unreported events.

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1. 1905 20 December 10 c.

2. 1905 20 December 9 b.

> Mr. Asquith was environed by such a genial atmosphere of mutual satisfaction in the Queen's Hall last night - disturbed only by the now inevitable lady interrupter - that it seems almost a sacrilege to venture on any criticism of his remarks.

The phrase "inevitable lady interrupters" reveal awareness of similar occurrences between October and December, not mentioned in the pages of The Times.

At an even larger Liberal election rally two days after Asquith's, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman made his first public appearance as Prime Minister and the WSPU was again in attendance. The Times[1] chronicled the Prime Minister's speech on Liberal policies and stopped twice to record interruptions:

> (A lady in the balcony here asked - "What about the vote for women" which was met with cries of "Order" and "Turn her out".)...(The women in the balcony again cried out, amid laughter, "Will the Liberal Party give women the vote.")

The speech was concluded without Campbell-Bannerman making any reference to the suffrage question and the article concluded with a final reference to the interrupters, who unfurled their "Votes for Women" banner upside-down, were derisively cheered, and finally ejected "not without protestation and resistance" after "persuasion failed to quiet" them.

No leading article commented on the interruption this time. As Fulford points out,[2] the drawn-out fall of the Conservative government attracted enough attention to overshadow the feminist rumblings, and the events at the Albert Hall "made about as much impression as a church mouse."

However, it was evident that the country was beginning

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1. 1905 22 December 7 a.

2. Fulford, pp. 129-130.

to be sensitive to the militants. Ray Strachey reports that "hecklers were everywhere expected, and the arrangements for throwing them out of the halls were carefully rehearsed."[1] The Times report of the Albert Hall rally, though still scrupulously fair, stops referring to the interrupters by the deferential term "ladies" and begins to call them merely "women."

Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, in his short work attempting the justify the militant campaign, writes:

> In 1905, before the commencement of the militant tactics, the Press had almost entirely ceased to report any women suffrage meetings or to print any letters upon this question.[2]

Certainly after the militant events of the year, though The Times had not begun a widespread coverage of the suffrage movement, the paper began slowly to recognize the news value of the militants, in this way perhaps bearing out the practical validity of the new tactics.

When, during the General Election of January 1906, the Manchester-based WSPU concentrated its disruptive influence on the meetings of Winston Churchill, then seeking election in the north-west part of the city, The Times paid some attention to its actions. In two reports of Churchill's election speeches, interruptions were mentioned, with some indication of disapproval. The first[3] described "a great disturbance" in which one woman suffragist "harangued the audience" and

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1. Strachey, p. 295.

2. Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, Women's Fight For The Vote (1911), p. 75.

3. 1906 5 January 10 d.

was ejected. The other[1] referred to "a disorderly scene" and Churchill's remark that, though he had been a supporter of women's suffrage, he refused to be "henpecked" on the issue. But these were passing references in brief notices. As Sylvia Pankhurst concedes,[2] the real issues of the election were Free Trade, Tariff Reform, and the Taff Vale reversal.

But 1906 changed the WSPU from a small provincial society. The sweeping Liberal victory drew the organizers to London to focus their efforts on the new Parliament's activity , and to attract the attention of the national newspapers.[3]

In late February, the WSPU made its first attempt at orchestrating a large demonstration in London. It was planned to coincide with the King's Speech opening Parliament. The Union arranged for over 300 East End women to march to the Caxton Hall, wait for a report of the speech, and if no mention was made of the suffrage, to proceed to the House of Commons. This was done, but on arriving at Westminster, the women were informed that only twenty at a time would be allowed to lobby the members, while the rest stood in the rain.

Rosen points out that no results came of the lobbying, but the newspaper publicity resulting from the demonstration attracted many new members, including Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, who became the Union's treasurer.[4]

Papers such as the Daily Mirror found the event news-

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1. 1906 6 January 6 d.
2. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 193.
3. Ibid., p. 198, and Fulford, p. 139.
4. Rosen, p. 61.

worthy enough to warrant a photograph, but The Times report[1] was a small one, though again scrupulously factual (except for a typographical error placing the number of demonstrators at 3,000 instead of 300).

The report of the next WSPU action was as low-keyed. Sylvia Pankhurst had written to the new Prime Minister for an interview, and he refused. The society determined to send a deputation anyway. The Times reported the first deputation,[2] which was abortive due to Campbell-Bannerman's illness, and also the subsequent one[3] a week later, which was more insistent. When the women, who were refused admittance, began knocking on the door, "a small body of police... requested them to move." When one of the deputation began to address the other demonstrators, the police cleared the street and, according to the report, "Three ringleaders" were taken to the police station and cautioned.

The brief account ends with a statement by the Central Association of Women's Suffrage Societies - a constitutional group - disclaiming connection with the demonstration and voicing "strong disapproval of such methods being employed". The Times, it must be noted, had made no distinction between the militants and the constitutional suffrage advocates. News concerning both was often combined under one heading such as "The Women's Suffrage Movement." The Central Association's statement, then, was the first indication to Times readers that

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1. 1906 20 February 10 d.
2. 1905 3 March 6 f.
3. 1905 10 March 9 c.

militant activity was confined to only a part of the suffrage supporters. No mention had been made of the WSPU by name, and the paper, throughout all the years of the campaign, rarely referred to the women as "suffragettes", though this was the most common popular term. After numerous letters were printed over the next few years expressing the same sentiments as the Central Society, The Times began to use the term "militant suffragists", but Mrs. Fawcett laments the damage that confusion did to her society and writes:

> The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies endeavoured to steer an even keel...Personally it was to myself to the most difficult time of my forty years of suffrage work.[1]

The pattern of low-profile coverage which The Times had accorded the militant activities at their inception continued through most of 1906. Even the first incident which prompted arrests in London, the disturbance in the Ladies Gallery during the April debate of Keir Hardie's enfranchisement resolution, was treated in The Times[2] with seeming detachment. Sylvia Pankhurst charged the press with "berating"[3] the women, but this attitude was not in evidence in The Times account. The assertion made by a militant character in a suffrage propaganda play,[4] that after the event, "Every newspaper reader in Europe and America knew there were women in England in dead earnest about the Suffrage," was possibly apt, but those who

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1. Fawcett, Women's Suffrage, p. 62.
2. 1906 26 April 9 c.
3. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 210.
4. Elizabeth Robins, Votes for Women (A Play in Three Acts), (pub. circa 1906), p. 40.

read The Times imbibed little detail and less excitement.

The joint constitutional and militant deputation received by Campbell-Bannerman in May was indeed described in The Times[1] in one and one-half columns of print - the largest space the paper had given the suffrage subject thus far in the century, but the report made no mention of what was said by the women, though the Premier's reply to them was treated in full. The leader which appeared that day[2] was much more important. It was the first full length statement of The Times' opposition to the suffragist case, and criticized Campbell-Bannerman for his "whole-hearted personal support" of the women's claim. The leader made special reference to the "immense political influence" which women already had, and argued that the problem was "much more fundamental than a simple question of franchise". It was "a fundamental question of the two sexes."

Despite editorial distaste, The Times' columns were gradually opened to news of militant activities, as their incidence increased. Articles began to appear under the "Police Courts" heading about "women agitators" harassing Asquith at his home and in his East Fife constituency. On Mondays during the summer months, tiny paragraphs regularly reported the Sunday WSPU gathering in Hyde Park, without details. Though The Times' coverage of militant activity was to grow, one aspect remained almost unnoticed, the consistent by-election policy of the WSPU which fought Liberal candi-

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1. 1906 21 May 7 c.

2. 1906 21 May 9 c.

dates from 1906 to 1914. Metcalfe writes:

> As in the case of other constitutional work on the part of the suffragists, the Press on the whole sought to render it ineffective by ignoring it.[1]

This is obvious in the reporting of two by-elections held in 1906. In the 12 references to the Suffolk, Eye Division contest, no mention was made of suffragette activity, though the WSPU's formidable "General" Drummond, was in constant evidence.[2] As for the Cumberland, Cockermouth Division, which marked Christabel Pankhurst's re-emergence as a WSPU leader,[3] only two vague references were made to "women suffragists" in the twenty-one reports of the election carried in The Times. Sylvia Pankhurst offers as proof of the success of the by-election policy of the Union a selection of extracts from various newspapers and journals[4] with The Times noticeably missing. The paper, though it had begun to treat the subject of women's suffrage in a small way, held it at arm's length. In a fictionalized view of the situation in late 1906, one novelist writes:

> Up until now Frances had taken a quiet interest in Women's Suffrage. It had got itself into the papers and thus become part of the affairs of the nation. The names of Mrs. Palmerston-Swete and Mrs. Blathwaite had got into the papers...The spectacle of a frantic Government at grips with The Women's Franchise Union had not yet received the headlines accorded to the reports of divorce and breach of promise cases and fires in paraffin shops, still, it was beginning to figure, and if Frances' Times ignored it, there were other papers that Dorothy brought home.[5]

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1. Metcalfe, p. 112.
2. Fulford, p. 139.
3. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 220.
4. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 251
5. May Sinclair, The Tree of Heaven,(1917), p. 118.

CHAPTER III

1906-1911

A. Start of "The Great Days" 1906-1908

The Times' attitude of detachment partly broke down in late 1906. Ray Strachey calls the period beginning then, and lasting until the destruction of property in the two years before the war, "The Great Days."[1] She points out that the suffrage cause, prompted by militancy, became "one of the main political subjects of the time." Roger Fulford comments on the journalistic shift:

> The newspapers had formerly treated the Union members as a lark: they provided, to the perceptive eye of an editor, much the same type of copy as a rag by "varsity chaps" on rugger night in Leicester Square. This changed.[2]

Strachey agrees, writing:

> Day after day, as the militants provided fresh headlines for the papers, the breakfast tables of England resounded with the debate...[3]

The militant action that prompted the change, reflected in The Times by page-top, double-deck headline coverage reserved for important news, was the WSPU demonstration on 23 October. Union members marched to the Commons on the day that Parliament opened, asked for a promise from the Prime Minister to consider women's suffrage before the end of the session and when refused, mounted seats in the lobby and made protest speeches which the police could only stop by

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1. Strachey, pp. 302-320.
2. Fulford, p. 151.
3. Strachey, p. 303.

arresting the ten leaders. The Times report[1] headed "Woman Suffragists at Westminster - Disorderly Scene," contained a commentary from the paper's Parliamentary correspondent who called the incident "something of a tumult." His description was immediately followed by an account by a press agency stating:

> During/the/ process of ejection several of the excited women shrieked hysterically, and one or two who had to be carried out kicked with extreme vigour.

The report said that "force had to be used by the Police," but no indication was given that the force was excessive, as the suffragettes charged later. The agency account also contained a paragraph which quoted Mrs. Pankhurst and gave the WSPU version of the day's events.

The leading article[2] which was published two days after the event, commented not only on the incident at Westminster, but also the proceedings the next day at the police court. The tone of the leader was one of strong disapproval, calling the actions of the women at the Commons "unseemly and disgraceful," and in the court "outrageous." The article continued:

> They shouted and gesticulated, declared that they did not acknowledge the authority of that or any other Court, and appeared to have taken leave both of common sense and of good manners.

The leader called the imposition of a fine "lenient" and when the women in question refused to pay and went to prison, the article concluded:

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1. 1906 24 October 11 b.

2. 1906 25 October 9 f.

> It is all excessively vulgar and silly, but it offers a very good object-lesson upon the unfitness of women to enter political life...It is to be hoped that Ministers will take to heart this timely reminder of the essential disabilities imposed by the feminine organization, which gives so many compensative advantages in its own proper sphere, and endows women with so much real power when they are content not to try to be men. The worst of mob rule is the rule of a feminine mob; and we trust that /no/ minister will allow himself to be a party to the utter debasement of political life that would be involved in yielding to the clamour of such a mob.

This leader, the first expressly reacting to a militant action, revealed The Times' strong opposition to the principle of female suffrage. While still not taking militancy very seriously, the leader expresses strong editorial opposition contrasting with the polite comment that met the previous year's peaceful deputation to the Prime Minister.

Annie Budgett, who responded to the press treatment of the incident in a pamphlet,[1] charged that newspapers had treated the events as "a hysterical outburst, but few have realized the truth of the matter, or the strength of the new movement." She set forth the actions as "part of a regularly organized, deliberate plan of campaign." Her primary aim was to warn newspaper readers against forming opinions based solely on accounts appearing in the press, as, she explains, the facts are often distorted. Sylvia Pankhurst was equally angered by press accounts, calling them "mendacious untruths."[2] But Mrs. Fawcett, who wrote to The Times a few days after the event,[3] condemned only the sensational

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1. "Facts Behind the Press," (1906), 8 pp.
2. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 229.
3. 1906 27 October 8a.

"reptile" press, and seemed to excuse The Times itself from gross exaggeration. Her letter is also interesting in that it expressed sympathy with the militants, and still showed some solidarity within the movement. She wrote:

> I hope the more old fashioned suffragists will stand by them...far from having injured the movement, they have done more during the last 12 months to bring it within the region of practical politics than we have been able to accomplish in the same number of years.

The Times also printed a spate of letters protesting about the imprisonment of the women in Holloway as ordinary criminals in lieu of the First Division treatment reserved for political offenders. This question of imprisonment was to arise again in the paper's columns throughout the militant campaign, especially as it became evident that the participants were women of the upper classes, not working women who

> were not apt to write letters acceptable to The Times nor sign cheques for a hundred pounds.

Letters themselves were an important facet of The Times coverage of the militants. It is evident, by their content, that they responded to points in leaders, items in news stories, and statements in other letters. The correspondence columns of The Times were, of course, a means of communication in influential circles and taken to be an indication of public opinion by many, including Mrs. Fawcett, who wrote shortly after the Parliamentary incident:

> Evidence of the progress of the movement is the correspondence on the subject in The Times. There had been a column or more of interesting correspondence on woman suffrage in that journal for the past week and very little opposition had been

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1. Rosen, p. 77.

expressed.[1]

The two sections of the movement were possibly at their closest at this time. Leading members of the old suffrage societies banqueted the militant prisoners at the Savoy on their release in December. By that time, another set of prisoners joined them after a second raid on Parliament in November. This was followed by three more raids, and the pattern continued. As Rosen points out,[2] during the end of 1906 and all of 1907, WSPU demonstrations changed little in form, but greatly escalated in frequency and size. Sylvia Pankhurst put the total of suffragette imprisonments at 191 weeks in 1906-7 and 350 weeks in 1907-8. Other activities increased proportionately such as membership drives, fund raising, meetings, election work and heckling.[3]

The Times, though reporting most of the arrests and releases and giving consistent, if small space to the constitutional suffragists, did not repeat its October 1906 emphasis of the issue. Despite the many skirmishes outside the Commons, the leader which capsulized the "Session of 1906"[4] made no mention of the incidents. Indeed, no leading article on the subject appeared in 1907 until March when W.H. Dickinson's Enfranchisement Bill came up for a second reading. The Times seems to have invested the outcome of the bill with some importance as it published the leader

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1. 1906 1 November 2 f.
2. Rosen, p. 79.
3. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 275
4. 1906 22 December 9 b.

which reiterated its anti-suffrage arguments, on the morning of the bill's discussion.[1] The article made two passing references to militancy: one, a veiled mention of "the subject, still too fresh in the public memory" and the other, while expressing respect for some advocates, witheld approval of those "who engage in fisticuffs with the police."

The following day, another leader appeared[2] discussing the fate of the bill. Like others before, it had been talked out. The Times seems to approve of this result, since, the article says, the change in the electorate would be too far-reaching to be enacted after such a short debate and without government backing. The leader goes on to enumerate its reasons for opposing women's suffrage, especially the possibility of female parliamentarians governing the empire:

> It is hard enough to carry on the administration of such dependencies, as it is, by a democracy. What would be the case if our democratic government were also, in a large degree, the government of women?

With this statement, The Times emphasizes its intrinsic distrust of women's capabilities in government and seems to have had an exaggerated notion of the extent to which women would participate - sentiments shared by much of the population at the time.

John Walter IV, son of the proprietor and intensely interested in the welfare of the paper, noted this tone in the leader and wrote to the editor:[3]

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1. 1907 8 March 9 d.
2. 1907 9 March 11 c.
3. This undated fragment is in the archives of The Times and seems to belong to 1907, since the 9 March leader is the only Saturday article which would fit Walter's description.

My dear Buckle,

You remember my criticizing the other day the attitude of the Paper towards female suffrage? Well Saturday's second leader was an excellent illustration of the case. The second half of it seemed to me to be full of prejudice, certain to annoy all suffragists who read it, and unlikely to convince any of that neutral multitude who are doubtless sitting on the fence.

/middle page of letter missing/

...sides of the question, that the time has come when we should examine the thing seriously, and not merely anathematize and jeer at it.

If you have decided upon Ward in preference to Shadwell for the proposed series of articles, would it not be as well to warn him against following too closely in the wake of his wife. Mrs. Ward's painfully expressed views appear to have exercised a considerable influence upon the tone of our leader writer, who I think scarcely realizes that the movement has gone too far to be killed by abuse alone.

Yours sincerely,

J.W.

There is no indication in biographical sources[1] that Walter favoured the suffrage; in fact one would expect him to follow the traditional conservatism of his family and disapprove of the innovation. However, his plea for greater objectivity and fairness in handling the topic is curiously close to Mrs. Fawcett's statement:

> At the outset...papers made the mistake of supposing that the Suffrage movement was capable of being killed by the batteries which were opened against it. If abuse and misrepresentation could have killed it, it most assuredly would have died in the early years of the twentieth century.[2]

Walter's letter, backed by whatever opinion, seems to have been primarily prompted by his continuing concern for the sense of fair play and balanced argument of which The Times had long boasted. The paper had printed a lengthy letter

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1. eg, Times obituary 1968 12 August 8 fgh.

2. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 179.

by leading anti-suffragist Mrs. Ward the previous day. The leader of 8 March had extensively referred to it with approval and to the author with praise. Walter's suspicion of marital influence, though, is undercut by the evidence in The Times editorial diaries[1] which cite a succession of leader writers[2] composing the continuing anti-suffrage articles. The office line, it seems, was unaffected by Walter's rebuke.

For the remainder of 1907, leaders on the topic continued to be relatively infrequent and accounts of suffrage activities few and generally brief. In October, the WSPU launched its own newspaper edited by the Pethick-Lawrences. One suffragist observed that the new Votes for Women was

> designed to give the public that information which Suffragists had looked for vainly in the Press; information not only about the more sensational side of the propaganda, but about the steady, ceaseless education work that was being done, as well as general information bearing on the political status of women.[3]

Suffragists hawked their paper with the cry "The Truth for a Penny,"[4] and viewed it as a necessary supplement to the established press. A contemporary Arnold Bennett novel contains a succinct exchange illustrating the situation.[5]

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1. Available in The Times archives, and contains exact authorship of all leading articles.

2. For example, the 9 March leader in question was the work of Arthur Sidney MacDowell, leader writer from 1902 to 1907.

3. Robins, Way Stations, p. 43.

4. Raeburn, p. 58.

5. Arnold Bennett, The Lion's Share (1916), p. 114.

After hearing of the arrest and prison treatment of one militant, the novel's rather naive heroine exclaims to her:

> "But I never saw all this in the papers!
> "No paper - I mean no respectable paper - would print it. Of course, we printed it in our own weekly paper.
> "Why wouldn't any respectable paper print it?
> "Because it's not nice...

The Times was, above all, respectable, and most of the 3,000 meetings and assorted other activities which Elizabeth Robins reports in the time between May and October[1] went unreported.

Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence characterizes the end of 1907 and the beginning of 1908 as:

> Five months of intensive educational campaign throughout the country...yet, in the absence of any militant activity, the newspapers began to speak of the movement as 'dead'. It was not agressive enough to command their attention and respect.[2]

The year 1908 began with some newsworthy militancy. On 17 January, Mrs. Drummond and four other women padlocked themselves to the gate of 10 Downing Street and were arrested. The next month saw the opening of Parliament, and, as the year before, a Women's Parliament was arranged by the WSPU to coincide with it. A deputation was formed to march to Westminster where the protestors were arrested. Two other deputations had been tried in the previous few days and all met the same fate. As a result, a total of 60 women served sentences in Holloway. Despite this activity, which had attracted much newspaper attention (the Daily Graphic had

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1. Robins, Way Stations, p. 44.

2. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, My Part in a Changing World (1938), p. 180.

devoted a full page to Mrs. Drummond's exploits[1]), The Times seemed determined to comment editorially only on the strictly political aspect of the suffrage agitation. A short leader appeared in January, after a NUWSS deputation to Asquith,[2] in which patience was advised by the paper but "For our own part, we cannot affect to hope that their patience will be rewarded in the end." In February, after the second-reading debate of Henry Stanger's enfranchisement bill, another Times leader appeared.[3] The bill was passed with a majority of 170 which the article terms "startlingly great." The Times ascribes to the debate a "serious character," but applauds the Commons' decision to refer the matter to the Committee of the Whole House. This effectively blocked further progress on the bill.

The Times and the country found other topics of discussion around Easter when Campbell-Bannerman announced his resignation. No leading article followed the 19 March meeting of the WSPU in the Albert Hall, which, the Union claimed, was the largest meeting of women held under one roof.[4] In May however, when Asquith, the new Prime Minister, issued a statement on his and the government's stand on female suffrage, The Times commented unfavourably.[5] Though Asquith refused government facilities for the progress of Stanger's Bill, he

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1. Rosen, p. 98.
2. 1908 31 January 11 f.
3. 1908 29 February 9 d.
4. Rosen, p. 100.
5. 1908 21 May 11 f.

"banged no doors" on the possibility of amending a proposed electoral reform bill to include women. The Times argued that:

> the permission by a government to allow an amendment which has already received the deliberate sanction of the House to be inserted in their own Bill is tantamount to adopting it.

However, the article gratefully noted that Asquith first demanded "an overwhelming declaration in favour of the suffrage...from the women of England," and opined that this could not occur, despite "Miss Pankhurst [who] to judge from a letter we publish this morning, intends to resume drastic measures."

Both the constitutional and militant factions responded to the suggestion by Asquith and others that some indication of a mass desire for the suffrage existed. The constitutional suffragists staged their procession on Saturday, 13 June and the leader which followed on Monday[1] was full of praise for the beauty of the banners and the "dignity and reserve" of the participants. The leader went on to dissociate the women marching with Mrs. Fawcett from the "recent noisy group of agitators", but devoted three-quarters of the article to arguing against the suffrage. When the WSPU followed the next week with a much larger parade to Hyde Park, The Times leader[2] was less complimentary. The event was termed a "demonstration" not a "procession" and the estimated crowd of a quarter million was attributed mostly to onlookers, "some merely curious and some openly hostile."

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1. 1908 15 June 11 e.

2. 1908 22 June 11 e.

Again commendation was given for organization, but half of this shorter leader repeated arguments against the suffrage, perhaps to offset a public opinion that might be "unduly swayed by large crowds." The article then suggested that some public opposition to female suffrage should be shown.

It seems evident from the comments published during the early part of 1908, that The Times, though still exercising selectivity on suffrage news events, had given up the editorial posture which had characterized the subject as insignificant.

B. The Times in Transition.

The year 1908 found the fortunes of The Times at their lowest financial ebb. Circulation had fallen to 38,000 - dangerously low even for such an elite journal. The sales of the popular press were rising and figures for the Daily Mail were reaching the 800,000 mark. One Times staff member lamented

> the conspicuous fact that The Times...was not worth threepence a day to readers who could get the Daily Telegraph or the Morning Post for one penny daily... It was still set by the obsolete Kastenbein machine, still printed with an inner and outer sheet, still so irregularly made up that regular faithful readers howled with exasperation whenever they tried to find the columns which they sought.[1]

Moberly Bell's encyclopaedia and book scheme could not refurbish the paper's revenues, flagging since the turn of the century. Talk about the paper's difficulties was a Fleet Street commonplace.[2]

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1. Kitchin, p. 205.

2. Pyfe, p. 124.

The Times was owned by nearly three hundred shareholders, many of them relatives of the Walter family who had acquired bits and pieces. Hamilton Fyfe cites one example: the Births, Marriages and Deaths column had been apportioned as a wedding gift in the nineteenth century.[1] The business organization of the paper was haphazard, and the chief proprietors - the direct descendants of the first Walter - acted without consultation with the minority partners. Since there was no provision for limited liability and the paper seemed in financial danger, some lesser shareholders took complaints to the Court of Chancery and were successful. The Times was reconstituted as a limited publishing company with the Walters functioning as only titular heads.

Ownership of the paper was purchased early in 1908 by Lord Northcliffe, the Alfred Harmsworth who had sparked the press revolution with his mass audience periodicals and with the foremost popular daily, the Mail. The rather cloak and dagger sale of The Times is minutely documented in the official history.[2] Northcliffe's eventual victory over other competitors, including C.A. Pearson of the Daily Express, was primarily engineered by C.F. Moberly Bell who respected the press lord and especially appreciated his assurances that the character of the paper would remain unchanged.[3] Viscount Camrose, in assessing the change of ownership,[4] quotes the

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1. Fyfe, p. 126.

2. History of the Times, Vol. III, pp. 509-572.

3. Fyfe, p. 128; William Dodgson Bowman, The Story of The Times, (1931) p. 316., and History of The Times, p. 554.

4. Viscount Camrose, British Newspapers and their Controllers (1947) p. 23.

announcement of the change in the 17 March issue of The Times:

> There will be no change whatever in the political or editorial direction of the paper, which will be conducted by the same Staff on the independent lines pursued uninteruptedly for so many years.

He adds:

> ...the ordinary reader of the paper was entitled to assume on reading the official announcement that there had been no changes of any kind except of a purely formal character.

For at least a year, this was the case. Northcliffe dealt only with the business and mechanical side of the newspaper and modernized both. Gradually, however, he involved himself more and more with the editorial aspect of The Times, studying the paper daily for faults, omissions, and errors of judgement. These were pointed out to Bell or Buckle in terse bulletins from the "Chief."[1] His legacies to the paper from his years as chief proprietor include the innovation at Printing House Square of clearer format, office efficiency, greater numbers of features and the light fourth leaders. Many of these gradual changes can be detected by daily examination of the paper from 1908 onwards, and so can some hints of the radical journalist Northcliffe overshadowing the traditional reserve of The Times as war approached.

Staff changes also were evident within five years of the transfer of ownership. The continual criticism of Buckle took its toll and when it was "informally conveyed to him that his resignation would be welcomed"[2] in August 1912

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1. Bowman, pp. 318-321 and Fyfe, p. 156.

2. DNB, Buckle, p. 117.

he tendered it.

Bell had died the previous year. His heart failure was hastened, it is implied,[1] by the pressure of Northcliffe's constant criticism and a sense that he, Bell, had failed to protect his beloved paper from a change of character. Kitchin says that the Old Guard was gone and was replaced by a man who failed

> ...to comprehend what its purpose was in view of those who loved and served it...There was this of merit about the later Walters - who in other respects let down the poor old Times so disastrously - that they did understand its purpose far more clearly than ever did Lord Northcliffe.
>
> The Times had always been a newspaper conducted by educated people for educated people...The Times was a caste newspaper and Lord Northcliffe did not belong to the caste.[2]

Evaluation of Northcliffe's general effect on the paper varies from the unstinted praise of one commentator for the man "who at a critical season had saved the great paper from shipwreck and energized it from his own abundant store of vitality,"[3] to the terse reference by the historian R.C.K. Ensor "to the partial eclipse of The Times under Northcliffe."[4] The Times' official history, while crediting him with transforming the paper from a "bankrupt nineteenth century relic into a flourishing twentieth-century property,"[5] nevertheless records his growing interference with the paper's editorial

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1. Kitchin, pp. 260-298.
2. Kitchin, p. 263.
3. Bowman, p. 336.
4. R.C.K. Ensor, "The Press" in The Character of England (1947), p. 357.
5. Times History, Vol. III, p. 586.

conduct.[1] Francis Williams echoes the History's verdict but tempers it with the comment

> ...The Times never became in any true sense his paper as...others were and as the Daily Mail especially was. The ghosts were too strong for him. The paper's traditions were theirs, not his, and were more powerful than he, who liked to make his own traditions.[2]

Even the most important change he effected, that of the editor, was perhaps undercut by this sense of prevailing tradition. Geoffrey Robinson (who later changed his name to Dawson on coming into an inheritance) was an Etonian and a Fellow of All Souls. He began his association with The Times in South Africa after the Boer War and came to the London office in 1911 when Northcliffe noticed him. Dawson was cautioned by Buckle on his accession to the editorship.

> There is no need to advise you to keep up our old tradition of fairness in reporting speeches directed against the policy advocated by The Times, and in printing reasonable letters from all quarters. This is the ABC of The Times spirit, and must already be in your blood...
>
> I have no doubt you will gradually and insensibly get into the habit of regarding all public questions, not from your own personal point of view, but from an impersonal Times standpoint. "WHAT OUGHT The Times, with its history and traditions, to say about this?" has always been in my mind. So is the continuity preserved, which...is, I think essential to the interests of The Times in the present day.[3]

Continuity in Dawson's years seemed initially to be preserved. When Northcliffe's interference and mental instability threatened his editorial responsibility, Geoffrey Dawson resigned at the end of the year in 1918. He only returned to edit The Times when Northcliffe was dead and the paper

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1. Times History, Chapters XVIII, XXI, XXIV.

2. Williams, p. 142.

3. John Evelyn Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times (1955), p. 85.

passed to other hands.

Judging by biographical sources, Dawson would seem unlikely, on the subject of women's suffrage, to deviate from the views previously expressed in The Times leaders. Wrench cites his respect for Asquith's policies (excepting his abilities as war leader)[1] and the DNB notice on Dawson mentions that he "upheld the great tradition of The Times of giving general support to the government of the day, while maintaining a position of independence and never refraining from criticism when criticism seemed called for."[2]

Despite Dawson's clashes with Northcliffe, women's suffrage might have been one area of tacit agreement between them. Northcliffe's official biographers write that he "resisted the notion of women's suffrage"[3] and Mrs. Fawcett says he was "one of our chief opponents in the Press."[4]

One commentator accuses The Times in the Northcliffe years of being "skittish",[5] but from 1908 until the outbreak of war, the paper offered a consistent opposition to the suffrage movement and its manifestations of militancy. When the war began in 1914, and Northcliffe's erratic touch became more evident in the pages of the paper, even then the editorial stand taken toward suffrage was a predictable and reasonable product of The Times long standing policy of

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1. Wrench, p. 458.
2. DNB.
3. Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, Northcliffe, (1959), p. 518.
4. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 240.
5. Kitchin, p. 139.

adherence to educated opinion.

C. "The Stone Age" 1908-1911.

The Times policy of serious opposition to women's suffrage becomes increasingly evident in the latter half of 1908 when WSPU militancy resumed. Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence wrote that the government remained obdurate, a meeting larger than the Hyde Park demonstration of 21 June would be impossible, and "Nothing but militant action is left to us now."[1]

The first action under this new policy was planned for 30 June. The WSPU organized a deputation to the Prime Minister and invited the public to assemble and show sympathy with the demonstrators. Parliament Square was crowded with people, not all sympathetic, and scuffles both in the crowd and with the cordon of police surrounding Palace Yard led to suffragette injuries and twenty-five arrests.

Two protestors went from the scene to 10 Downing Street and smashed two of Asquith's windows. The WSPU had not authorized this action and, at the time, Christabel Pankhurst dismissed the incident as only

> ...a very trifling damage to property, and was of importance only as an indication that the patience of women suffragists may in the future prove to have its limits.[2]

However, the WSPU tactician would later view the occasion as "women's first use of the political argument of the stone."[3]

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1. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence quoted in Rosen, p. 106.
2. quoted in Rosen, p. 106.
3. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 97.

Metcalfe saw the episode as the start of a new era in the militant movement, "The Stone Age."[1]

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence wrote[2] that much of the press "blossomed out into leading articles dealing with suffragette doings," but The Times carried no leader. The paper did deal with the event in great detail in two news columns,[3] for the most part highly shaded by comment. For example, the crowd that gathered was said to have come

> ...merely for a cheap evening's entertainment, and they had about as much sympathy with the women whom they came to see run in as the people who flocked to the Roman amphitheatre had with the wretches who, for their diversion, were thrown to the lions.

The demonstration itself was termed "extremely futile."

Outdoor meetings continued through the summer months and each release from Holloway was accompanied by a brass band parade, but The Times made no editorial comment. Instead, its next substantial treatment of women's suffrage was to publicize and support the formation of the Women's Anti-Suffrage League. Two columns were devoted to an account[4] of an "enthusiastic meeting" on 21 July and the manifesto of the new society. The accompanying leader[5] praised the sentiments expressed by two of the founders, Mrs. Humphrey Ward and Lady Jersey, and recapitulated the anti-suffrage arguments which The Times had used since its first anti-suffrage leader in 1906.[6]

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1. Metcalfe, p. vii.
2. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, p. 187.
3. 1908 1 July 14 de.
4. 1908 22 July 14 cd.
5. 1908 22 July 13 de.
6. 1906 21 May 9 c.

These recurring arguments are catalogued in Constance Rover's study of the political bases of the movement.[1] She points out that

> ...like the arguments for women's suffrage, most of those against their enfranchisement were repeated endlessly during the whole of the campaign.

The arguments appeared in Times leaders in ever-changing combinations and with a variety of emphases, but may be summarized thus:

- Women already possessed indirect influence.
- Women's interests were already represented by men.
- In the carousal which traditionally accompanied an election, it would be indelicate for women to participate.
- The economic life of the nation depended solely on men.
- No mandate existed from the present electorate.
- No mandate existed from the majority of women.
- Female enfranchisement would lead to dissension in families and a wife neglecting her domestic duties.
- Women could be unduly influenced by the clergy.
- To those opposed to full adult suffrage, women suffrage would provide the "thin edge of the wedge" toward it.

Three additional arguments are those perhaps cited most often by The Times leader writers. Firstly, the physical force argument, also noted by Halévy,[2] states that ultimately government privileges hinge on the ability to serve in the military. As The Times phrased the problem,

> For what, after all, is the means by which in the last resort human societies are held together? It may be uncomfortable to have to confess it, but we

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1. Rover, Chapter V.

2. Halévy, p. 513.

know that they are held together by force.[1]

Given this premise and the fact that in Britain, women outnumbered men, The Times constantly stressed the danger to security that would occur if women made policy which only men would have to enforce.

Another frequently repeated argument was that female participation would introduce a hysterical element into politics. Hysteria had only been accepted as a legitimate psychological complaint in the late nineteenth century and despite some early work by Freud on prevalent male hysteria, the disorder continued to be thought predominantly confined to women.[2]

The Times made special emphasis of this argument in a leader late in 1908,[3] entitled "Hysterical Enthusiasm." The article is a peculiar one and does not seem to be printed in connection with a specific suffragette incident. Indeed, since it is only indexed in Palmer under its title, it could not be traced to suffrage and was only found by chance. The leader begins by affirming that

> One need not be against woman suffrage to see that some of the more violent partisans of the cause are suffering from hysteria

but continues for three-quarters of its length by discussing fanaticism in a general way with no reference to the suffrage agitation. As militancy escalated, however, the term hysteria found its way frequently into leaders which deplored the suf-

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1. 1907 9 March 11 bc.

2. Ernest Jones, Sigmund Freud: Life and Work, Vol. I (1953) pp. 245-254.

3. 1908 11 December 11 e.

fragettes' conduct.

The last and perhaps most recurrent reason which appeared in The Times leaders is one which Rover implies is more prejudice than argument.[1] It states that "men were men and women were women and therefore men should vote and women should not." The Times rephrased this concept in many ways, such as:

> It is no mere begging of the question but the most effective and truest argument to say "No; because you are women and not men."[2]

and

> The real reason why women ought not to have the political franchise is the very simple reason that they are not men.[3]

All of these points were still repeated, but as militancy grew, The Times added a vehement reaction to violence and disorder to its repertoire. By the height of militancy in 1912-1914, this new argument was constantly used as self-evident proof against the women's claims and tended to overshadow the reasoned arguments in the leaders.

The article which appeared even before the next Parliamentary raid expressed this disapproval of the more violent tactics. The WSPU had issued a handbill inviting the public to "rush" the House of Commons and Mrs. Pankhurst, her daughter Christabel and Mrs. Drummond were summoned and arrested on the day of the demonstration for attempting to provoke a breach of the peace. The account[4] reporting this development

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1. Rover, p. 38.
2. 1908 15 June 11 e.
3. 1908 22 July 13 de.
4. 1908 13 October 8 cd.

was evidently unbiased, but the leader[1] entitled "Riotous Woman Suffragists" applauded the "steady application of the law." Further, the article held

> It is not easy to conceive how the suffragists could have proved themselves more ingrained with incapacity for the exercise of the constitutional privileges which they demand than by their unscrupulous or unthinking resort to an alliance with such unruly and criminal elements as they can collect...from the streets and slums of the capital.

Despite the arrest of the three WSPU heads, the demonstration was held and The Times, in a two and a half column report[2] described the "extraordinary scenes" again in dispassionate detail under subheads which included "Police Precautions," "The Arrests," and "Police Court Proceedings."

The accompanying leader was less generous in the space alloted to the demonstration. Entitled "In and Out at Westminster,"[3] it began with criticism of the suffragettes' agitation outside the house, but continued with the proceedings that went on inside. The leader pronounced the riot "an ignominous failure" though it later said the continuing disorder was "an intolerable state of affairs /and/ means must be found to prevent its reoccurrence."

Similar sentiments were expressed towards the actions of the Women's Freedom League[4] later in the month. Three members had chained themselves to the grille of the Ladies'

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1. 1908 13 October 9 ef.

2. 1908 14 October 9 cde.

3. 1908 14 October 11 cd.

4. A group which had split from the WSPU in 1907 over the Union's refusal to submit its policies to a democratic review of the members.

Gallery, part of which had to be removed to extract them from the chamber. The short leader[1] began

> The House of Commons and its precincts were yesterday once more the scenes of those childish demonstrations which silly women think clever.

This tone of continuing annoyance reflects the point which Rosen makes concerning the end of 1908 and the first half of 1909. The months were "marked by the virtual ossification of militancy into forms that had become predictable through familiarity."[2]

The October trial[3] of the three WSPU defendants attracted some newspaper publicity[4] since Christabel Pankhurst, acting as the group's counsel, was able to subpoena as witnesses Herbert Gladstone and Lloyd George. The Times carried full reports of the trial, but placed them under the heading "Police Courts," and no leader appeared to comment on the proceedings ~~on~~ or the eventual conviction and imprisonment of the trio.

When militants heckled Lloyd George at the Albert Hall in December, a leader called the scenes "repulsive"[5] but until June of 1909, despite various WSPU activities, The Times did not devote many leaders to the issue. One commented favourably on "a crowded and earnest meeting"[6] of the Women's

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1. 1908 29 October 9 f.
2. Rosen, p. 114.
3. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, pp. 106-112, and Fulford, Chapter XX.
4. Rosen, p. 111.
5. 1908 7 December 11 e.
6. 1909 27 March 13 ef.

National Anti-Suffrage League incorporating into the article the well-used anti-suffrage arguments. Another[1] remarked briefly on the abortive Houses of Parliament Bill that was to control further suffragette disturbances.

During 1909, whether or not the suffrage issue was avoided because of familiarity, Times commentary was more concerned with other issues facing Britain like Lloyd George's People's Budget and the subsequent constitutional crisis. When the WSPU organized another deputation and demanded to be received by Asquith, The Times commented wryly

> Even sufferers from the Budget would hardly carry revenge so far as to place such an intolerable burden upon the Prime Minister[2]

but then spoke more sternly regarding the militant's "assaults on the police" during the accompanying demonstration in Parliament Square.

Mrs. Fawcett wrote[3]

> At first...up to 1908, no physical violence was used by the suffragettes, though much violence was used against them.

The 29 June assaults on the police were, by most suffragist accounts,[4] technical ones - light face slapping to provide quick arrest and avoidance of prolonged and bruising scuffles. More window breaking occurred and over a hundred women were arrested. Hunger striking led to the release of many and, by August, became the normal practice of imprisoned suffragettes.

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1. 1909 21 April 11 f & 12 a.
2. 1909 30 June 11 d.
3. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 183
4. Rosen, pp. 119-120, and Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 131.

By September, the WSPU was using more daring tactics than face-slapping. Asquith was to speak in Birmingham and minute precautions against the suffragettes were recorded in The Times.[1] Women were entirely excluded from the meeting and a secret passage from the railway station was used to ferry the Prime Minister to the Bingley Hall. The accompanying leader,[2] however, confined itself to comment on Asquith's speech and referred to the elaborate precautions only as a safeguard against "the instrusion of unsympathetic elements." It was later reported that WSPU members, equipped with axes, climbed onto the hall roof and hurled slates at the police and at Asquith's car. One suffragette in the crowd outside the hall admitted to assaulting policemen. She added

> I had the opportunity, had I chosen to take it, of seriously injuring Mr. Asquith. I am now sorry I did not do it. As he will not listen to words I think it is time that blows should be struck.[3]

Later that month, The Times carried a short notice[4] reporting that the imprisoned suffragettes at Birmingham were being "artificially fed" and were breaking windows in their cells.

Forcible feeding - feeding by mouth or nasal tube of hunger-striking prisoners - prompted a flood of letters to The Times. The paper's own stand on the issue appeared first in a leader[5] which deplored "misguided sympathy with... women /who/ conspired to use, and actually did use, violence

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1. 1909 18 September 7 a.
2. 1909 18 September 7 a.
3. 1909 23 September 10 c.
4. 1909 25 September 5 b.
5. 1909 29 September 9 f and 10 a.

of the most culpable kind." The article argued that artificial feeding against the prisoner's will was necessary to avert suicide on the part of those for whom the state was responsible and predicted dangerous consequences "if any evildoer who chooses to refuse food for a few days is to be let loose on society." The article concluded that no widespread desire for the vote existed among women and even if there were

> ...most of us desire something or other which we have not got, just as strongly as, and perhaps more reasonably than some women desire a vote; but we do not therefore take hatchets and wreck people's houses, or even shriek hysterically because the whole course of government and society is not altered to give us what we seek. These notoriety hunters have effectually discredited the movement they think to promote. Public interest in their proceedings is dying, and is being replaced by public disgust.

Despite The Times approval of forcible feeding, it still remained the outlet for letters from people opposing it - the legacy of fairness that Buckle had bequeathed to Dawson. Perhaps the most interesting of the letters was one from H.W. Nevinson and H.N. Brailsford,[1] leader writers on the Liberal Daily News, announcing their resignation from that paper because of its editorial approval of forcible feeding. Though their connection was with the other paper, a letter to The Times was the best opportunity available for an immediate appeal to informed and influential opinion.

More women threw stones in October and in November, one suffragette assaulted the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, with a riding switch,[2] but The Times' only editorial comment in late 1909 was prompted by dislike of the action of three

1. 1909 5 October 8 c.
2. Rosen, p. 126, and Fulford, p. 195.

Women's Freedom League members who threw hair-dye into ballot boxes in the Bermondsey by-election.[1]

Parliament was dissolved in December, following the Lord's rejection of the Budget. During the subsequent campaign, militancy subsided though public meetings and hecklings continued. One notable exception to the slowdown of militancy was the case of Lady Constance Lytton, who, sure she had received preferential treatment in her last arrest, disguised herself as a working woman, threw a stone at a Liverpool jail to protest against conditions inside, and was arrested and imprisoned. She was forcibly fed, though during her previous imprisonment prison doctors considered this unwise because of her weak heart. As Jane Warton, though, Lady Constance was not medically examined. The Times published the facts of her case without comment[2] in spite of the furore reflected in many letters.

When the election results demonstrated that the Liberals had lost their overall majority and legislation would ~~not~~ now depend on the support of more than one party, H.N. Brailsford and Lord Lytton (Lady Constance's brother) formed the Conciliation Committee to draw up a new suffrage bill. The WSPU declared a truce, which was to hold for the entire year, reinforced by the spirit of cooperation fostered by the King's death in May. During the first half of the year, no leaders at all appeared on the suffrage question, and the news reports which were printed were similar to those of 1900-1905,

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1. 1909 29 October 8 c.

2. 1910 24, 25 & 26 January

in tiny print and on page bottoms. This seemed to indicate that, without militancy, fortunes of the suffragists escaped The Times' attention, and further illustrates the publicity value of the militant activities.

In June and July, two large peaceful demonstrations were held and The Times covered them,[1] though with less space and headlines than previous militant ones. In response to the June demonstration, the first leader of the year on the subject[2] expressed the opinion that though the procession was "interesting and picturesque," it did not convincingly prove a majority of women desired the vote. The article concluded with preliminary disapproval of the newly-drafted Conciliation Bill.

It is evident that The Times attached some significance to the fate of the bill, since leaders ran on the subject for four consecutive days at the time of the second reading. The leader which preceded the first session of debate[3] emphasized the seriousness of admitting women to the franchise, and reiterated the editorial argument that it was a change not desired by most women. The leader[4] printed the second day of debate, reacted to some favourable speeches in the Commons the night before by expressing the hope that "members of Parliament will display some real sense of the magnitude of the question before them," and not jeopardize the future of

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1. 1910 20 June 10 ab & 11 July 11 d.
2. 1910 20 June 11 e.
3. 1910 11 July 13 de.
4. 1910 12 July 13 de.

the country and the empire by placing both under the control of women. The article emphasized the physical force argument and the danger to the "social fabric" by altering the place of women in it. When the majority of 109 for the Bill was reported the next day, the accompanying leader[1] disparaged the result on the grounds that it was a smaller majority than previous women suffrage bills had commanded. Since the bill was referred to the Committee of the Whole House and therefore effectively halted, the leader correctly predicted that it would go no farther and concluded with evident relief that Britain had escaped

> ...a revolution /which/ would not only disturb and subvert the State but it would also disturb and subvert the family on which all States are based as their origin and their foundation.

The tone of relief continued on the next day when a leader entitled "After the Suffrage Debate"[2] continued the analysis of the political situation of the bill.

Throughout 1910, though militancy had abated, The Times continued its active support for those opposing female enfranchisement. In July, a leader[3] capsulized and approved an appeal that had been issued by the National Anti-Woman Suffrage League, commenting that "The busiest of readers cannot have failed to notice the remarkable list of names appended to it, and to be impressed by them." The article claims the suffrage demand "has little body to it" though "we have no desire to represent the case unfairly or to

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1. 1910 13 July 13 de.
2. 1910 14 July 11 de.
3. 1910 22 July 11 ef.

underrate the real strength of the movement." The article warns, however, that women's suffrage is rapidly becoming a serious political question and urges on the public the need of more visible opposition.

A few days later, a report of another peaceful march to Hyde Park[1] seems disparaging:

> The assemblage in the park was not very imposing... /and/...The nature of the speeches may easily be guessed.

In August, a leader[2] which disapprovingly discusses Lloyd George's suffragist leadings, openly declares The Times policy for the edification of the faithful:

> Now to those who, like ourselves, are opposed to woman suffrage root and branch...

Concluding the article is perhaps the underlying reason for the policy, the tradition of reflecting informed public opinion:

> What may happen, if and when the nation changes its mind, it will be time enough to consider when it does.

The quiet handling of suffrage activities continued even when the WSPU briefly resumed militancy in November. The government had refused further facilities for the Conciliation Bill and a raid on Parliament - the twelfth in the militant campaign - was planned. The event was reported in a factual manner[3] though no mention was given to charges of police brutality which caused the suffragettes to refer to the

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1. 1910 25 July 12 d.
2. 1910 13 August 9 e.
3. 1910 19 November 10 c.

incident as "Black Friday."[1] When the 116 people arrested were released on the advice of the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, The Times reacted angrily against lenient treatment of "suffragist brawlers," and hinted that Churchill was electioneering. This veiled accusation was amplified a few days later after rioting took place in South Wales. The Times complained, "Mr. Churchill lets it all go on."[2] The leader also condemns the Prime Minister's promise in the House that a suffrage bill would be discussed if the Liberals were returned.

> That is an electoral concession, but it is not good enough for the women, who indeed seem more hysterical than before. The Prime Minister himself was assaulted and the window of his motor broken; and Mr. Birrell [Chief Secretary for Ireland] had his hat jammed over his eyes and his shins kicked by the aspirants to a share in the blessings of civilization.[3]

In the perspective of the year, however, The Times made little of the suffragist disturbances. In a leader which described the events of the Parliamentary session up to the time of dissolution,[4] the major points covered were the situation in Ireland, the Budget and the constitutional crisis, and the death of the King. Under the "Miscellaneous" subhead, a deprecating description of the disturbances at Westminster was made, giving ground for suspicion that the subject

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1. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 165, and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, p. 250.

2. 1910 21 November 11 f and 23 November 11 de.

3. The incident took place on 22 November and was called by the suffragettes, "The Battle of Downing Street," during which more windows were broken and 159 women were arrested.

4. 1910 28 November 11 de.

was studiously ignored. A month later,[1] when a more detailed leader was printed to analyze the events of the entire year, in and out of Parliament, many of the same topics treated before appeared again, and much foreign news commentary was added. This time, no mention was made at all of the suffrage activities and it tends to prove that suffragettes out of sight were out of mind - at least as far as The Times was concerned.

The truce was renewed for the election, and in 1911 the Conciliation Bill was redrafted to admit amendment. Asquith had offered facilities, and the good will of a coronation year prevailed.

As in the previous year, little attention was paid to the continuing non-militant activities in the pages of most papers. Fulford wrote:

> At /this/ time many suffragists lamented that clamour and hysterics were news, whereas reasoned argument was not. The Times, at this period always very spiteful against the women, adopted this lamentation and carried it further by arguing that the militants had only harmed the cause with public opinion.[2]

Some sense of spite might be detected in the leader which commented on the second reading majority of the Second Conciliation Bill.[3] The majority had grown to 167 but The Times warned:

> ...the cause has so often reached this stage and got no further that too much should not be built upon yesterday's success.

The leader continued that the "question has never yet been

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1. 1910 31 December 9, 10, 11, 12.

2. Fulford, p. 238.

3. 1911 6 May 11 e.

taken seriously by the general public" and in the debate

> ...nothing new was said, and the question stands just where it did.

In a leader published before the debate[1] the point that militant tactics had harmed the cause was stressed.

The high point of the Coronation Truce was the two and a half hour June procession of both militant and constitutional societies, both confidently urging the adoption of the Second Conciliation Bill. The account in The Times[2] was detailed and commendatory, praising the "pageantry" and "stateliness" of the five miles of marchers, though no mention of the event was made in the accompanying coronation leader.

It was at this time that optimism for the suffrage victory was at its highest. Fulford wrote:

> The weight of opinion gave the impression that only a few months separated the women from their goal. The vote was round the corner.[3]

Mrs. Pankhurst, lecturing in America, was asked when would English women vote and she replied "with perfect conviction, 'Next year.'"[4]

A letter to The Times in 1911 noted a new attitude towards women even in a paper pledged to oppose female enfranchisement.

> All unbiased observers of the confused struggle of which the ultimate issue will decide the position of women in the state must agree...that the increased attention now paid by The Times to all female activities is a hopeful sign for the future. The question

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1. 1911 17 March 9 de.
2. 1911 19 June 33 f.
3. Fulford, p. 241.
4. Emmeline Pankhurst, My Own Story (1914), p. 199.

> is one in which the responsibilities of the Press are second only to those of Parliament, and just now the world is watching both with some anxiety. This is why we look to our leading journal for wise counsel in the present crisis.[1]

Throughout "The Stone Age," Saturday issues of the paper had continued to carry feature articles on fashion, stylish travel and other topics associated with women readers. On 1 October 1910, a women's supplement was launched. Though it was a short term project, first planned for the London season and then postponed on the death of the King, the supplement indicated a new awareness on the part of The Times of a female readership. Whether the journalistic trend was one of those changes prompted by Northcliffe, or whether The Times was continuing to mirror its society by recognizing the new "Ann Veronica"[2] element in Britain is uncertain. The fact remains that, despite its editorial stand on women suffrage, The Times attitude toward women in general had perceptibly changed. However, the opposition to female enfranchisement seemed implacable - how could this be neutralized should the hopes of the suffragist be realized in 1912, as seemed so probable?

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1. 1911 5 April 10 c.

2. The archetypal new Edwardian woman in the H.G. Wells novel of the same name, published in 1909.

CHAPTER IV

1911-1914

A. "The Women's Revolution" Begins 1911-1912

The Times did not have to face up to the fact of female enfranchisement, and thus decide on an altered editorial course, as soon as was expected. In November 1911, the Conciliation Bill was "torpedoed."[1] Asquith made a surprise announcement that the government intended to introduce a manhood suffrage bill, next session, which could be amended to include women. The Conciliation Bill would have enfranchised only a limited number of women property holders and might have passed the Commons, but, as The Times Parliamentary correspondent wrote:

> ...few believe that the House of Commons would accept at present an amendment which would institute /full/ womenhood as well as manhood suffrage - an amendment that is to say, which by a stroke of the pen, would make the majority of the electors in the country women.[2]

The leading article on Asquith's move commented:

> There is dismay and wrath among the woman suffragists, who see a mine exploded under the so-called Conciliation Bill.[3]

In Votes for Women a few days later,[4] Christabel Pankhurst wrote that "War is declared on women!" by the government's treachery. Even Mrs. Fawcett, the constitutional advocate, resented the tactics used, and later wrote:

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1. Descriptive phrase used by Lloyd George at Bath on 24 November which became common usage among the suffragists, quoted in Metcalfe, p. 187.

2. 1911 8 November 8 ab.

3. 1911 8 November 9 cd.

4. quoted in Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p.357.

> If Mr. Asquith desired to revive a violent outbreak of militancy, he could not have acted differently or done more to promote his end. We were furiously angry...[1]

The WSPU truce was ended, and Mrs. Pankhurst cited the "torpedoing" of the Conciliation Bill as the beginning of "The Women's Revolution."[2]

The WSPU began organizing another militant demonstration. In the meantime, Asquith received a joint deputation from nine suffrage societies, including the WSPU and the NUWSS. He assured the women that a wide Franchise Reform Bill would not damage the enfranchisement of women, and was able to placate the anger of the NUWSS who accepted Asquith's promises and retained their coronation year optimism. The WSPU remained unconvinced. Rosen points out that "even the anti-suffragist The Times was dubious" and quotes the leader which accompanied the report of the deputation:

> We confess to some difficulty in gathering with any certainty what the Government's real intentions are, and experience warns us against interpreting Mr. Asquith's words in their plain and obvious sense. These alone are sufficient reasons for thinking that the National Union has rushed somewhat hastily to a sanguine conclusion /and/ the Social and Political Union's diagnosis of the situation is surely the more correct.

Surprising words from a paper that had lost no previous opportunity for denouncing the WSPU but, in view of the increasing criticism The Times had been levelling at the Liberals since the People's Budget, not totally out of keeping. The leader's conclusion was more in character. It demon-

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1. Fawcett, What I remember, p. 202.
2. Emmeline Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 206.
3. 1911 18 November 11 bc.

strated The Times' criticism of the government's machinations while still retaining the paper's unswerving opposition to female enfranchisement:

> From our own point of view, which is opposed to Woman Suffrage altogether, we cannot pretend to regret the turn that events have taken; but we must admit that the Suffragists have some reason to complain of their treatment.

The militant complaint was put into action a few days later, when the WSPU members met at the Caxton Hall and then marched to Parliament Square led by Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, since Mrs. Pankhurst was still abroad. The Times report[1] observed:

> The demonstration followed on lines similar to others in times past...Its result was also much the same. The ranks of the deputation were broken and the members scattered into small groups almost as soon as they left the hall, and afterwards a series of scrambles took place in Parliament Square.

Window breaking occurred in government buildings and a few shops and offices, this time with the WSPU's official consent. The Times news story did not draw special attention to the relatively new tactics, only mentioning that it was "evidently a preconcerted arrangement." The total of arrests was over 220.

Christabel Pankhurst wrote; "We were a good deal denounced by some newspapers for our renewed militancy..."[2] However, no Times leader comments on the events - perhaps because, as the report stated, it seems not very different from demonstrations that had preceded it. The militant activities for the remaining months of the year also used pre-truce tactics such as heckling speeches by Lloyd George

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1. 1911 22 November 8 c.

2. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 193.

and Asquith. Christabel Pankhurst had worried about this "monotony"[1] at the time of the Conciliation Truce and the fact that it might make militant activities less newsworthy. She hoped the truce would

> ...give time for familiarity to fade, so that the same methods could be used again with freshness and effect.

But her other reason for halting militancy gave a hint of the tactics that would be used if the old ones failed:

> Our women were beginning to revolt against the one-sided violence which they experienced in the course of the attempts to petition the King's Prime Minister.

One WSPU member took matters into her own hands. Emily Davison, without the Union's approval, set fire to three pillar boxes - the first case of suffragette arson, and "a precursor of a new and terrible struggle."[2] Christabel Pankhurst wrote, "The year that opened in sunshine ended in storm."[3]

While the WSPU spent the first two months of 1912 secretly preparing its next demonstration, and dropped from the pages of The Times, the paper concentrated on publicizing the anti-suffrage movement. A new surge in the opposition dated from the previous December when Asquith received a deputation of the National League for Opposing Women Suffrage. In its report of the deputation,[4] The Times foresaw a "new opposition crusade," and the accompanying leader[5] chided

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1. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 153.
2. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 362.
3. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 195.
4. 1911 15 December 9 abc.
5. 1911 15 December 11 cd.

the Prime Minister on his reluctance openly to fight women's suffrage instead of merely expressing his personal distaste and repeating the "arguments against it which have been held conclusive by the common sense of mankind at large."

The Times published frequent laudatory reports preliminary to an anti-suffrage meeting planned for late February. One notice[1] detailed the "Many men and women distinguished in /various/ walks of life" who would attend, and another[2] reported "daily receiving fresh evidence of the support which is forthcoming for the great meeting." A leading article in January[3] which warned that the woman suffrage issue was dividing the cabinet and "threatens to provoke an acute political crisis," suggested that a referendum might be an advisable means of determining public opinion on the subject, as well as noting the Albert Hall meeting the following month. The Times made no secret of its opinions, stating

> ...we, as convinced and steady opponents of woman suffrage on principle, are glad to see the accumulating evidence that the great majority of women are themselves against the change.

When the meeting of anti-suffragists was held, The Times leader[4] contrasted it with a suffrage rally the week before. The paper accused Lloyd George, the speaker at the suffragist meeting, of trying to "cheat the democracy" by pushing a suffrage measure through Parliament without consulting the electorate. The anti-suffragist speeches which employed

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1. 1912 29 January 10 a.
2. 1912 16 January 8 b.
3. 1912 13 January 9 cd.
4. 1912 29 February 9 cde.

the well-known arguments, were, on the other hand, termed "weighty and well-reasoned."

Two other speeches in February were given little prominence though they were greatly to influence the militant campaign. On 16 February, Mrs. Pankhurst, just returned from America, spoke to released suffrage prisoners about the next demonstration:

> We don't want to use any weapons that are unnecessarily strong. If the argument of the stone, that time-honoured official political argument, is sufficient, then we shall never use a stronger argument.[1]

The same day a cabinet minister, D.E.H. Hobhouse, addressed anti-suffragists in Bristol and cited the property destruction which had preceded the 1832 and 1867 Reform Bills. He said no "comparable ebullition of popular feeling"[2] had so far come from the female suffragists. Sylvia Pankhurst said the effect of his speech was "like a match to a fuse."[3]

The suffragette demonstration came unexpectedly early and took the public, the authorities, and The Times by surprise. The paper's report[4] was headlined "Suffragist Outrage," instead of the usual "Disturbance", signifying a recognition of a new seriousness in the tactics. Women, armed with hammers had smashed shop windows throughout the West End, and panes at 10 Downing Street and government offices. No attempt at objectivity was made in the news story. The windows were reported as "shamefully broken",

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1. Metcalfe, p. 194.
2. Metcalfe, p. 194.
3. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 373.
4. 1912 2 March 8 b.

the destruction called "wanton", and the reporter commented:

> Were it not for the calculated and determined manner in which this work of devastation was carried out one would suppose it to have been wrought by demented and maniacal creatures; and even as it is, a survey of the scene suggests that the mischief was done by people of unstable mental equilibrium. Whether, as seems not improbable, the more irresponsible of these women were infuriated by the great success of the anti-suffragist meeting /on/ Wednesday evening, or whether they have been suddenly seized by temporary insanity, it is impossible to say.

The accompanying leader, "Suffragists and the Law"[1], echoing the censure of the news report, begins:

> Mrs. Pankhurst and her maenads have produced their answer to Wednesday's great meeting at the Albert Hall. It takes the now stereotyped form of broken glass, but on what must be regarded, we suppose, as a particularly convincing scale, since the damage amounts to some thousands of pounds.

The article suggests that the tradespeople affected should recoup their losses from the treasury of the responsible suffragette group, and condemns the "act of wanton and hysterical self-advertisement at a moment when the mind and conscience of the nation are bent upon the gravest industrial controversy that ever threatened its life." The labour crisis had been commanding most of The Times' attention since the beginning of the year.

Two days later, a leader[2] appeared amplifying the charge of hysteria. The article, entitled "The Tragedy of Enthusiasm," is similar to the one published in 1908. It begins by designating the suffragettes as "monopolized and magnetized /by the/ project of the vote forever on the brain," and then continues by condemning fanaticism in more general terms.

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1. 1912 2 March 9d.

2. 1912 4 March 9 de.

When mass window-breaking was soon repeated in Knightsbridge, a report entitled "Further Suffragist Outrages"[1] described in detail the "wilful damage" of "bands of zealots." The accompanying leader[2] claimed, "The suffragist maenads have been at their work again," forcing the "ugly experience" of posting police at exposed plate glass. The article linked the suffragist rioting with the trade disputes and advocated rigorous application of the law in both cases.

Sterner measures were taken that day. The Clement's Inn office of the WSPU was raided by police, the Pethick-Lawrences arrested, and Christabel forced to escape to France where she continued policymaking. The next day's Times' leader[3] stated:

> We welcome this action of the Government as a proof that they mean to deal as it deserved with a conspiracy which has shocked and angered the nation.

The leader also prophesied defeat for the Conciliation Bill which had won a place through the private members' ballot. The leader charged that "a wave of feeling against woman suffrage" had swept the Commons since the most recent demonstrations.

The next week, commenting on a meeting of West End tradespeople held to protest against suffragette property destruction, a Times leader[4] said that public opinion, as well as that of the House had swung against the suffragettes.

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1. 1912 5 March 8 ab.
2. 1912 5 March 9 e.
3. 1912 6 March 9 de.
4. 1912 12 March 9 de.

For the rest of March, leaders appeared regularly urging opposition to the Conciliation Bill. One[1] states strongly, "The main point at present is to ensure that the Bill may be defeated on the Second Reading." The leader[2] published on the morning of the debate condemned the Bill as a measure that would "profoundly alter the Constitution of the country," The leader also recapitulated the arguments regularly used by anti-suffragists, this time emphasizing the "immutable difference" between the sexes. In this argument, the article referred to the "very ably treated" discussion of the sex difference in a vituperative letter to the paper by Sir Almroth Wright, the eminent bacteriologist. The letter[3] occupies three columns and attributes mental aberrations to most women and to suffragists in particular:

> No doctor can ever lose sight of the fact that the mind of woman is always threatened with danger from the reverberations of her physiological emergencies. It is with such thoughts that the doctor lets his eyes rest upon the militant suffragist. He cannot shut them to the fact that there is mixed up with the women's movement much mental disorder...

Fulford writes that "to some extent The Times had provoked the letter by publishing, at the time of the window breaking, a leading article headed "Insurgent Hysteria."[4] That leader much resembled the previous ones in 1908 and the one published earlier in the month in its semi-clinical analysis of a segment of the women's movement ostensibly prone to "some

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1. 1912 22 March 9 cd.
2. 1912 28 March 7 cd.
3. 1912 28 March 7 f.
4. Fulford, p. 260, refers to Times leader 1912 16 March 9 e.

form of hysteria or morbid moods akin thereto." Almroth Wright's letter was to provoke widespread comment, bringing on a defence of women even by anti-suffragists in The Times' correspondence columns. Mrs. Humphrey Ward was to write severing herself from its "bitter and unseemly violence."[1] Fulford added to his analysis of the physician's letter:

> Perhaps the most curious aspect...is that The Times should have published it. The Editor gave it to the world on the morning of the debate on the Conciliation Bill.[2]

The letter itself was cited several times in the Conciliation debate that ended in defeat for the bill - a further illustration of The Times' readership among the people of influence. The leader[3] which commented on the fate of the bill analysed the debate:

> There is no question that the weight of argument yesterday was all against the measure...,

and further cited the defeat as a victory for public opinion.

The extent of the heat that the events of March had generated was evidenced by a leader in early April.[4] It admitted:

> There has been a good deal of heated exaggeration on both sides - so much, indeed, that some of us have been set wondering whether the disputants have ever lived in the world we know...One might suppose that some of the men on one side and the women on the other had never known the other sex, except as strange creatures encountered in railway carriages...We really must get back to sanity in our general conceptions of sex relationships...

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1. 1912 12 April 15 a.
2. Fulford, p. 261.
3. 1912 29 March 9 cd.
4. 1912 9 April 7 de.

In May, after providing steady coverage of the Old Bailey conspiracy trial of the Pethick-Lawrences and Mrs. Pankhurst, a leader,[1] while applauding the convictions, again stated a wish for a return to amity:

> It is to be hoped that we have now heard the last of window-breaking and the like militant follies.

But The Times' hope of seeing the end of mass violence may have obscured its attention to the consistently escalating evidence of militancy since March, which included hunger strikes and forcible feeding in prison, a £10,000 fighting fund collected at a WSPU rally, and attempted arson. For the most part, these were given small notices, if any. Beginning in June, when sporadic window breaking began again, The Times gave coverage to militant actions and reaffirmed its editorial stand[2] on stern punishment. In the same leader, The Times condemned

> ...the foolish and unmannerly exhibition, which Mr. /George/ Lansbury made in the House yesterday

and characterized it as

> ...one of the manifestations by which the friends of the extreme suffragists are preparing for the forthcoming Franchise Bill.

Lansbury who, along with Keir Hardie, consistently complained about the cruelties to hunger strikers, had caused an uproar by striding up to Asquith and denouncing him as "the man who tortured innocent women" and one who should be "driven from public life."[3]

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1. 1912 23 May 9 cd.
2. 1912 26 June 9 de.
3. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 390.

Reginald McKenna, who had taken over from Churchill as Home Secretary the previous year, was also attacked for the prison treatment of women. The Times reported[1] an attempt by his critics to lower his salary in a symbolic protest, and, while defending McKenna in a leader,[2] expressed the wish that he would continue to be firm with the "window smashers."

Outside the House, cabinet ministers were constantly interrupted at speaking engagements, and more serious incidents began to occur. On 14 June, Asquith was seized by a woman at the King's Birthday reception[3] but no mention was made of the incident in The Times' report[4] of the festivities. The next month, however, another incident rated leading article comments.[5] Asquith was driving through Dublin on a State visit and the suffragette Mary Leigh tossed a hatchet through the window of the carriage, wounding Irish leader John Redmond, and provoking The Times demand for

> ...more stringent and steady enforcement of the law /or the fanaticism/ will not expend itself before it has led to some dire consequences.

The article also referred to Mary Leigh's attempt to set fire to Dublin's Theatre Royal the same day, and the discovery, a few days earlier, of an attempt to burn Nuneham House, the residence of the anti-suffrage cabinet minister Lewis Harcourt.

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1. 1912 29 June 8 ab.
2. 1912 29 June 9 d.
3. Fulford, p. 269.
4. 1912 15 June 10 d.
5. 1912 20 July 9 bc.

In September, when suffragettes heckled Lloyd George at his Llanystymdwy constituency, a hostile crowd assaulted them, and, Rosen writes,[1] the day's events resulted in "some rather lurid publicity" and photographs of the scene. The Times, always more subtle than the popular press, reported[2] only that the hecklers "were treated with much harshness." In the accompanying leader,[3] the incident was treated as proof of the growing public opinion against the militants:

> ...the indulgence once extended by popular gatherings to the unseemly proceedings of militant suffragists is wearing out...Contemptuous toleration of their interference with the ordinary rights and liberties of other people is fast giving place to disgust and a disposition to abate the nuisance by the methods of which we had a sample on Saturday.

The Times continued this line of argument throughout the rest of the year. Commenting on the defeat of George Lansbury at his Bow and Bromley seat which he had decided to contest on the suffrage issue, a leader concluded:

> ...the experience of those who went about among the people appears to show that on Mr. Lansbury's chosen issue the trend of popular opinion was distinctly against him.../and/ the result of the contest is a victory for common sense and political sobriety.

The paper gave the same verdict when it noted[5] the split of the WSPU in October[6] and also registered the suspicion that

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1. Rosen, pp. 171-172.
2. 1912 23 September 6 c.
3. 1912 24 September 5 cd.
4. 1912 27 November
5. 1912 22 October 7 e.
6. The Pethick-Lawrences were ousted by Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel in a power struggle in which the Pethick-Lawrences objected to even more violent methods planned for the WSPU.

the Pankhurst contingent had "devised some new and fearful form of public outrage." The article continued

> There is no saying to what lengths the influence and example of militant suffragism may not yet drive some irresponsible mind.

Despite this dire prophecy for the future, The Times continued to treat the manifestations of the suffrage question with relatively little coverage. The last months of 1912 were full of tax resistance, East End demonstrations, public heckling, mutilations of golf greens, and destruction of letters in post boxes, in addition to the work of the constitutionalists. These events received either small articles or no mention at all in the paper. An illustration of this tendency is the leader which appeared on the last day of the year.[1] It referred to the upheavals in Europe and "domestic worries" including the Insurance Act, the coal strike, and even the unseasonable weather, but the women's agitation that had become an almost daily occurrence was not even mentioned in the perspective of the year's events.

B. "Guerilla Warfare" 1913-1914

The Times' prophecies of worse outrages were unfulfilled for the first month of 1913 and the paper accordingly carried little information about the suffragists' activities during that time. The WSPU had announced a cessation of militancy until the fate of the government's reform bill was determined and in a one paragraph report,[2] The Times carried

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1. 1912 31 December 7 d.

2. 1913 14 January 12 e.

a summary of a speech that set out WSPU policy:

> Mrs. Pankhurst said...they had done their work right up to the eleventh hour and left nothing undone that they could think of. They would hold their hands for a few days /though/ they were more firmly convinced than ever that the women's franchise amendments were foredoomed. She declared officially on behalf of the Union that there would be no more militancy until the last amendment was defeated.

The week before the debate, a Times leader appeared[1] urging the defeat of the woman suffrage amendments, saying that their passage would be "yielding to a pernicious agitation," and once again enumerating the objections to female enfranchisement. During the week the Commons debates on the Bill were to take place, The Times again expressed its opposition[2] and its disapproval of Asquith's announcement to allow a free vote in the House despite his personal antipathy. The leader cited the previous day's anti-suffrage speeches and agreed that passage of the Bill would introduce "a revolutionary change in the basis of our electoral system." Once again, The Times cited as the source of its views the responsibility it felt towards the country and public opinion:

> We do not ourselves believe that the country would gain any advantage from extending the franchise to women. But we readily admit that the thing would have to come, and women for the first time would have a right to the vote, if it were decided by a genuine and incontestable majority of the British people that they ought to have it.

But the prospects of the franchise bill changed drastically during the week. Bonar Law asked the Speaker of the House, J.W. Lowther, to consider whether the bill must be withdrawn if amendments were made that would materially alter its

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1. 1913 18 January 7 cd.

2. 1913 21 January 7 cd.

form, such as the inclusion of women. The Times devoted an entire page to the various aspects of the development,[1] and the Parliamentary correspondent predicted that the speaker's considered ruling would indeed force the withdrawal of the bill. The accompanying leader[2] agreed with the prediction and charged that the government's lack of foresight led to "a situation of very doubtful fairness and sense." Echoing its reaction to the torpedoing of the Conciliation Bill in 1911, in which sympathy was expressed with the thwarted suffragists, The Times commented:

> We feel with [the suffragists] that they have something to resent in the curious turns of the Parliamentary wheel...but we trust that it will not be allowed to accentuate the bitterness which the question has already aroused.

Finally, on 27 January, the Speaker officially announced his ruling, and though Lloyd George promised that the government would assist a private member's female suffrage bill, Keir Hardie accused the government of breach of faith and prophesied "real militant tactics."[3] The Times leader[4] commented next day that "militancy and annoyance are once more being preached by the extremist wing" but "we sincerely trust that on reflection wiser counsels may prevail."

They did not. The counsel that did prevail among the militants was that given by Mrs. Pankhurst the day of the Speaker's ruling:

We have gone through various stages in this movement;

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1. 1913 24 January 8.
2. 1913 24 January 7 cd.
3. Metcalfe, p. 239.
4. 1912 28 January 7 c.

> we have allowed ourselves to be battered by police, as they carried out the Government's orders, and by hooligans whom the Government are quite willing should have the vote. Now, if we wish to succeed, we must take to guerilla warfare.[1]

Her challenge was taken up the next day and the day after, a Times headline read "Suffragist Violence, Government Offices Attacked, Disturbance in Parliament Square" and the report[2] began

> The threats of the militant leaders of the woman suffragists that violent measures would be adopted as a protest against the decision of the Government with regard to the suffrage question were carried into operation last night, when there was a renewal of window breaking at Government offices and much disorder was created by the attempts of a deputation of women to enter the House of Commons.

This parliamentary raid was similar to the sort practised before, but the first quarter of 1913 saw the inauguration of a widespread destruction of property, including arson, that had been heralded only by isolated acts. Nearly every day, The Times, printing small factual notices, reported various incidents of damage. Telegraph and telephone wires were cut, 'Votes for Women' was burnt with acid into golf greens, the orchid house at Kew was wrecked and the tea pavilion set on fire, and two railroad stations were burnt down. Window breaking also continued. In some of the small notices, the growing hostility of the crowds was emphasized.[3]

In this new campaign, the suffragettes no longer courted arrest; they avoided it. The Morning Post of 14 April

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1. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 238-239.
2. 1913 29 January 7 f.
3. 1913 24 February 4 c and 1913 3 March 5d.

listed only four occasions of arrest out of thirty-two "graver crimes."[1] One of these crimes was the fire-bombing of a house under construction for Lloyd George at Walton Heath. Though Mrs. Pankhurst had not known beforehand of the explosion, she repeated her claim to responsibility for all deeds connected with the militant movement[2] urging the perpetrators to escape. She was arrested, and her trial set for 1 April. In the meantime, militancy escalated. Palmer's Index for the second quarter of the year ceases to enumerate the incidents and instead, under the heading of "Suffragette, Violence", is the direction "see each day's paper."

The state of affairs had become nearly a fulfilment of the situation set out in a play by Shaw in 1909,[3] in which he satirically dramatized events in a full scale war between government and suffragettes. Interestingly, his imaginary events were ostensibly "compiled from the editorial and correspondence columns of the Daily Papers."

The correspondence columns of The Times in 1913 were full of reaction to the militants. Some writers suggested punishments which ranged from birching to deportation; others violently objected to the cruelty of forcible feeding in prison. The editorial voice of The Times, though silent on the individual incidents of militancy spoke out for stronger curbs on the suffragettes. When McKenna, the Home Secretary, introduced his Temporary Discharge for Ill Health Bill -

1. cited in Metcalfe, p. 243.
2. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 240.
3. George Bernard Shaw, Press Cuttings (1909).

providing for the short term release of a hunger striker and rearrest without a warrant - The Times applauded. The leader[1] concluded that forcible feeding had become "utterly repugnant to the public sentiment," somewhat reversing the paper's original stand on the matter but continuing its long standing advocacy of adequate punishment for suffragettes. The leader held that McKenna "ought to have introduced his Bill long ago," and expected that it would enable

> ...the authorities to release a prisoner when his health requires it without thereby losing their hold upon him altogether...Our own impression is that a hunger strike on the proposed terms will lose most of its charms, since it will neither offer a chance of martyrdom, nor make a picturesque appeal to sentiment nor evade the decreed punishment.

The measure, which came to be known as the Cat and Mouse Act, passed into law within the month.

One of the first hunger strikers temporarily released under the act was Mrs. Pankhurst, who had been found guilty at the Old Bailey the same day the Cat and Mouse Bill was introduced. The night of Mrs. Pankhurst's conviction, Annie Kenney urged the WSPU on to greater militancy and her call was heeded. Rosen estimates that the damage attributable to suffragettes during April was double that of March, totalling over £14,000.[2]

The government had responded to the militant acts by first arresting Annie Kenney, then General Drummond and George Lansbury, and also raiding the Lincoln's Inn offices of the WSPU. But Christabel continued to plan strategy from Paris

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1. 1913 3 April 7 d.

2. Rosen, p. 192.

and Grace Roe stepped into Annie Kenney's place as chief orgnizer in London. Rosen illustrates the persistent enthusiasm of the suffragettes by quoting a speech made in the Albert Hall at the time:

> The powers of darkness pluck away our leaders one by one, but they only incite all the rest of the rank and file to greater action,

and estimating the damage in May as double again that of the previous month.[1]

Mrs. Humphrey Ward was spurred by the actions in 1913 to interpret them in an anti-suffrage novel. One passage, though fictional, is a very accurate picture of the view taken by the nation's most respected newspaper:

> "Have you seen The Times this morning?" Winnington nodded. It contained three serious cases of arson, in which Suffragette literature and messages had been discovered among the ruins, besides a number of minor outrages. An energetic leading article breathed the exasperation of the public, and pointed out the spread of the campaign of violence.[2]

One notably energetic leader[3] was that which accompanied the defeat of the private member's woman suffrage bill introduced in place of the withdrawn government reform bill. The defeat was expected, as The Times explained, because as a measure that would enfranchise wives of householders, it was too wide, and because militancy had alienated friends of the movement. The leader ended by expressing the hope that the new Cat and Mouse Bill would be

> successful...in saving women who can no longer be considered sane from their own madness.

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1. Rosen, p. 196.

2. Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Delia Blanchflower (1915), p. 109.

3. 1913 7 May 9 cd.

No government measure was to punish or save one suffragist - Emily Wilding Davison - who threw herself in front of the King's horse at the Derby and died a few days later, the first martyr to the cause. The Times initially listed its report[1] of the incident under the heading "Sport" and included the description of the race, and the social notes on the royal party in addition to the account of "The Suffragist Outrage." The accompanying leader[2] condemned the action as "reckless fanaticism" adding that

> ...we may possibly learn from the offender herself what exactly she intended to do and how she fancied that it could assist the suffragist cause.

But Emily Davison died a few days later without regaining consciousness. No leader mentioned this event; the major news of the day was Home Rule and a relatively brief report[3] seemed to play down the news of her death. This point was implied in an announcement[4] of the WSPU's funeral preparations. A spokeswoman said Emily Davison challenged

> the very head of this country, the Government and the Press with an act that could not be kept out of the papers.

The report[5] of the funeral procession of six thousand mourners was a factual one, but again no leader accompanied it. Indeed no leader specifically dealing with women's suffrage was to appear for nearly a year. Only passing references

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1. 1913 5 June 8 abc.
2. 1913 5 June 9 cd.
3. 1913 9 June 8 c.
4. 1913 10 June b.
5. 1913 16 June 5 c.

occurred in leaders such as that dealing with "Woman's Part in Life" as discussed at the Church Congress[1] or a general analysis of public opinion[2] at the time.

News reports of varying size appeared throughout the rest of 1913. Metcalfe lists 42 cases of arson from April to December.[3] The list, she writes,

> ...taken almost haphazard from the pages of The Times, gives some idea of the extent of the campaign, and of the amount of damage done through arson alone. It must be borne in mind that it is by no means exhaustive, even as far as this one paper is concerned.

She describes other, lesser acts of militancy which continued; ministers continued to be harrassed (a bag of flour was thrown at Asquith in the House and he was attacked with a horsewhip while motoring). Attempts were made to petition the king, and protests took place in theatres, restaurants and even churches.

Disruption and violence continued into the new year, though The Times "Outlook for 1914"[4] made no reference to the suffrage agitation, constitutional or militant, but outrages continued to be reported regularly during the first half of year. For the period from January to July, Metcalfe gleaned 141 instances of "outrages" from the country's daily papers[5] and emphasized that the number "is probably an understatement, for doubtless, many cases were never reported in the press at

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1. 1913 3 October 7 cd.
2. 1913 24 September 7 e.
3. Metcalfe, pp. 288-289.
4. 1914 1 January 9 c.
5. Metcalfe, pp. 306-319.

all." Punctuating the outrages were the constant ins-and-outs of suffragettes from prison under the Cat and Mouse Act, most notably Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Sylvia, now conducting militancy separately from the WSPU at her East London Federation.

The Times correspondence columns were full of letters deploring the slashing of the Rokeby Venus and the vandalism in Birmingham cathedral in March. Occasionally, peripheral aspects of the suffrage campaign would be noted, such as "Fashions and the Vote"[1] in which the hobble skirt of the period was deemed a "hindrance to /the/ cause" by a correspondent. Day after day, more museums and stately homes were announced as closed to the public. When reporting the precautions against suffragette disturbances for the 1914 Derby, The Times account[2] read:

> The blight of the militant suffragist has fallen upon this as upon other national amusements.

The official voice of the "Thunderer" was silent until a woman suffrage bill was considered by the Lords.

The leader [3] expressed satisfaction that the bill had been defeated by a solid majority, and then went on to ascribe not only the expected defeat but also a perceptible hardening of public opinion to "the reckless and senseless crimes committed in the name of women." The article condemns the militants:

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1. 1914 11 April 11 e.
2. 1914 26 May 7 a.
3. 1914 7 May 9 bc.

> Excessive preoccupation with politics has unhinged their minds, and the absence of moral balance has led them to methods of gaining their ends which would disintegrate society if tolerated.

The Times clearly expressed its own tactics in a leader printed a week later,[1] prompted by the arson of a parish church. Commenting that the act was

> the latest of a long series of outrages which are to be deplored even more on account of their futility than for the actual damage wrought by them,

the article reported the charge of the militants:

> that the Press, of set purpose, ignores their meetings and misrepresents their earnestness, and that they have no other means of making their aspirations known but by declaring guerilla war upon society.

Countering this claim, and producing its first published statement of policy on coverage of the militants, The Times explained:

> We report the crimes of suffragists as we report other crimes which are part of the news of the day; but we have little space for the restatement of arguments for or against a cause which is not urgent. Among public affairs of the moment the question of woman suffrage is, comparatively, unimportant...there is one paramount issue, of far greater importance than any other occupying the time and taxing the wit of all parties in Parliament, which must be settled both now and finally. To this issue all minor ones must give place.

The issue was the situation in Ulster, bearing out The Times' prophecy in February, when a leader[2] stated "Ireland will necessarily dominate the session."

Despite The Times' exclusion of militancy from its leaders, little attempt was made in the June news stories to hide bias. The report[3] of one disturbance began "militant suffragists

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1. 1914 2 June 9d.
2. 1914 9 February 7 d.
3. 1914 8 June 48 a.

gave Brompton Oratory their unwelcome attention yesterday", and another account[1], following a suffragist's disruption of a court function, read:

> The long tale of disorder and sabotage by militant suffragists has exasperated public sentiment acutely, and the authorities have decided to take effective action.

Prospective action by the authorities prompted the last three leading articles on the militant campaign, deviating somewhat from The Times' avowed inclination to neglect the topic. The first[2] explored the various suggested solutions to "The militant problem" including deportation and flogging, but advocated two "calm and judicial" answers to the question. The first was to prosecute contributors whose names were discovered in the last raid on WSPU headquarters in May and also to appropriate the Union's funds to pay for damages. In The Times' opinion

> ...if the financial resources behind the movement were drawn upon to compensate for the damage done, a decided check would no doubt be given to the campaign.

The second remedy was focused on the convicted suffragette prisoners who, after release under the Cat and Mouse Act, often eluded rearrest and continued to practice militancy. The Times questioned the efficacy of the act and asked, regarding the hunger strikers:

"Why not let them starve if they choose to do it?"

The leader termed this course "the common sense view... endorsed by public opinion" and suggested that an act of

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1. 1914 5 June 9 f.

2. 1914 6 June 9 bc.

Parliament be passed to release prison officials from the responsibility of keeping their capitives alive. Christabel Pankhurst, interpreting this leader, wrote[1]:

> The Times had...proclaimed to the nation and to the world that the only alternative to votes for women was death to the advocates of votes for women.

Three days later, another leader[3], commenting on incidents during the previous weekend in which suffragettes suffered reprisals from an angry crowd, again put forward

> the need of checking this campaign of violence and crime...by lawful and authoritative means

and called the matter "pressing" despite its statement less than a week before that the question of woman suffrage was relatively unimportant.

The last of The Times' anti-suffrage editorials[3] was occasioned not specifically by the militants themselves, but by a statement by McKenna suggesting greater discretion on the part of the press in dealing with militancy. He told Parliament:

> I hope the Press of all Parties might be induced not to give headlines to these matters (cheers), and I am sure that the immediate effect of the denial of all advertisements of militancy would do more to stop their actions than anything the Government can do (Renewed cheers).[4]

The Times' reply to the Home Secretary's request was a restatement of its traditional independence. Despite evidence that might suggest some internal suppression, the

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1. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 277.
2. 1914 9 June 9 b.
3. 1914 12 June 9 b.
4. 1914 12 June 114 ab.

leader asserted that no external pressure would be permitted to determine Times policy. The article cited the previous day's explosion in Westminster Abbey which damaged the coronation chair, and said, "a thing of that sort cannot well be ignored by the Press." While agreeing with McKenna that the main object of the militant outrages was publicity, the leader asserted

> ...the function of newspapers is, after all, to supply news and tell the public what is going on. Regard for ulterior consequences may be carried too far.

The article reiterated the two proposed solutions to the problem - legal action against subscribers and a "let them starve" attitude toward hunger strikers. The leader concluded with a comment that expressed the seriousness of the problem and turned out to be The Times' last fighting words on the militant campaign, "the thing is becoming a nightmare."

Christabel asserted that, during the summer of 1914, "Suffragette activity was at its greatest height...the war between the Government and women had come to the climax."[1] Halévy, in assessing the strength of the suffrage agitation pitted against the government's attempts at control, asked whether it was possible

> to exhaust by patience this strange frenzy, unprecedented in the history of modern England? Was it certain that it would be exhausted? The evil certainly showed no sign of diminution in July 1914. Never had acts of violence and incendiarism been more frequent.[2]

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1. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 286.

2. Halévy, p. 527.

CHAPTER V

1914-1918

A. "Women's Armistice" and World War 1914-1916

Sylvia Pankhurst, in describing the events of July and August 1914, wrote:[1]

> Events were moving fast...the war was approaching. Hostilities between Austria and Servia had already begun. The Press was suggesting that we might be on the brink of a European conflict in which Great Britain might be involved. The Times was declaring our readiness to fight.

Irene Clephane, commenting on the national temper, declared:[2]

> The whole nation concentrated its attention on the one great problem of war. Ireland, tariffs, labour disputes, party politics, the suffrage campaign ceased to have any significance.

It is evident that The Times fell into this single-minded war effort. Most items in the paper are related in some way to the conflict. Column space was curtailed by war exigencies and the number of pages was reduced to 18. Leading articles tended to be shorter, news was pared down to essentials, and some items that before the war would have commanded coverage, were omitted entirely.

In the early years of the war, the predominant themes in leading articles, besides running commentary on military events, were: advocacy of compulsory national service, the need for a smaller and more efficient cabinet, increasing criticism of Asquith's government, and unstinting praise of Lloyd George.[3] In the spring of 1915, The Times was to take

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1. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, pp. 589-590.
2. Irene Clephane, Towards Sex Freedom (1935), p. 191.
3. Wrench, Chapter XI; and Times History, Vol. IV, pp. 271-306.

part in Lord Northcliffe's exposure of the shells shortage scandal which resulted, in some quarters, in accusations of sensationalism and unpatriotic conduct.[1] But whatever its ethical or journalistic values at this period, The Times could not be accused of taking the war lightly.

The suffragists, too, were swept into the flood. Militant and constitutional organizations alike, with the exception of Sylvia Pankhurst's pacifist East London Federation,[2] turned their attention toward contributing to a national victory. The WSPU declared a halt on militancy for the duration of the war - Christabel Pankhurst calls this action a "women's armistice," and quotes her mother as saying, "What would be the good of a vote without a country to vote in!"[3] Suffrage activity came to a standstill, and even if The Times was willing to cover such a topic, there was virtually nothing to cover.

Palmer's Index correctly mirrors the situation. In its guide to Times coverage during the second quarter of the year, the index again directs those interested in tracing "Suffragists, Outrages by" to "see every day's paper." The index to the third quarter lists only five "outrages" - all before the outbreak of war. In the index to the last quarter of 1914, the topic "suffrage" was not even listed - it was as if the issue never was.

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1. Fyfe, p. 180

2. Sylvia Pankhurst's The Home Front (1932) describes the war's effect on the East End in an emotional but carefully detailed manner.

3. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, pp. 287-288.

In late 1914, not only women's suffrage, but the entire subject of women's activities dropped from the pages of the paper. Only one leader appeared in The Times dealing in any way with women.[1] It commented on the unemployment of dressmakers and others dislocated in the first months of war panic and suggested means of alleviating distress. In this leader and the next month in a news item[2], no mention was made of the possibility of women being utilized in war work. In a speech by Mrs. Pankhurst, reported in December,[3] the patriotic duty of men to enlist was stressed and only a passing reference was made that women might be recruited to fill the jobs left vacant.

In the early months of the war, the services of women were not sought, indeed they were discouraged. The government refused offers of help from the organized suffrage societies and left them to conduct welfare work on a private basis. One telling illustration of the government's attitude is reported by Mrs. Fawcett.[4] She writes that Dr. Elsie Inglis asked the head of the Scottish Royal Army Medical Corps how she might best put her skills to use. Mrs. Fawcett records the reply of the "wiseacre" - "Dear lady, go home and keep quiet." The Times seemed to hold similar opinions. In a leader entitled "Women and Farm Labour"[5] in which a current

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1. 1914 20 October 9 c.
2. 1914 20 November 10 f.
3. 1914 1 December 5 f.
4. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 219.
5. 1915 29 January 9 bc.

suggestion that women might be employed on the land was discussed, The Times remarked that

> ...what farmers want just now is essentially man's work - plowing and sowing, the handling of horses and machines, and the care of animals...little can be expected of /women/ at the moment...the most effective help in the present emergency is undoubtedly to be obtained from boys.

This leader was the only comment on the subject of women in early 1915, though several news reports appeared from February detailing "new professions for women"[1] including medicine, railway clerical work, carriage cleaning, grocery clerks, motor driving, banking and accountancy.

In July, however, the reluctance of both the government and The Times to include women in the war effort came to an end. The shell shortage had been revealed to the public and it had become evident that the war was going to be a more demanding and lengthy conflict than initially imagined. Rosen mentions a £2,000 grant from the ministry of munitions to the WSPU to finance a procession demonstrating women's desire to serve.[2] Christabel Pankhurst, in describing the preparations for the procession writes:

> Newspaper help was needed for the success of the procession, to tell the women of the invitation to join it. This help was generously given. Lord Northcliffe took a deep interest in the procession. An anti-suffragist before the war, he had been impressed by Mrs. Pankhurst's truce to militancy... He liked the brisk, efficient ways and earnest spirit of the Suffragettes whom he now knew for the first time. It was the end of his opposition to votes for women. He promised his support and that of his newspapers when the time of the votes for women settlement should come.[3]

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1. 1915 8 March 11 b, typical of many other reports.
2. Rosen, p. 252.
3. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 290.

In The Times, the procession was regularly announced several days before it took place, and received a large headline and two columns of description on the day following.[1] The report stated that the deputation to Lloyd George was led by "Mrs. Pankhurst and other ladies notable in public life" but no reference was made to exactly how Mrs. Pankhurst had achieved her notoriety. There was no mention of previous militant suffrage activity, though in the account of Lloyd George's speech, humourous references to "other occasions" were reported. The accompanying leader mentioned the past suffrage agitation only to contrast it with the "new and valuable" determination evidenced by a desire to serve the country. The article concluded:

> We are glad that Mr. Lloyd George gave the deputation a sympathetic hearing, and that his speech to the procession sounded the note of confidence and encouragement.

Women's entrance into war industries began, as Arthur Marwick points out,[2] not from feminist agitation but from "economic necessity and the dilution clauses of the Munitions of War Act." Mrs. Fawcett describes the reaction to the work that women began to do:

> The newspapers about this time began to be full of articles praising up to the skies the "wonderful", "amazing", "extraordinary" mechanical capability of women.[3]

Though Marwick attributes part of this early focus on women workers in the press as an exaggerated substitute for the censored hard news,[4] he demonstrates with skyrocketing figures

1. 1915 19 July 7 bc.
2. Arthur Marwick, The Deluge (1965), p. 90.
3. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, The Women's Victory - and After (1920), p. 112.
4. Marwick, p. 90.

the increase of women in industry after the advent of conscription in 1916.

More important than numbers, the national viewpoint on women was changing. Mrs. Fawcett had quoted a parodic ditty in the heat of the suffrage struggle five years before:

> It's woman this and woman that,
> And woman cannot fight.
> But it's ministering angel
> When the wounded come in sight.[1]

The prophecy of the rhyme was grimly realized when Nurse Edith Cavell was executed by the Germans in October and praise for her - and other women involved in war work - surfaced in The Times. The leading article[2] was a personal tribute to her bravery. In the next month Asquith amplified the praise:

> She has taught the bravest man amongst us a supreme lesson of courage; and in this United Kingdom and throughout the dominions of the Crown there are thousands of such women, but a year ago we did not know it.[3]

George Bernard Shaw carried the praise of The Times and of Asquith for Nurse Cavell to the next logical step, which in the first year and a half of war's turmoil, had been forgotten:

> What we can do is very simple. We can enfranchise her sex in recognition of her proof of its valour. The Bill might gracefully be introduced by McKenna /the Home Secretary who inaugurated the Cat and Mouse Act/ in the Commons and Viscount Gladstone /the Home Secretary who began forcible feeding/ in the Lords. If this proposal is received in dead silence, I shall know that Edith Cavell's sacrifice has been rejected by her country.[4]

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1. Parody of Rudyard Kipling's "Tommy" quoted in 1910 15 June 6 cd.
2. 1915 22 October 9 ab.
3. 1915 3 November 14 d.
4. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Home Front, p. 268.

B. Suffrage and the Shift of Opinion

In the two and a half years during which women's suffrage went from an idea to a reality, The Times intensified its coverage of women in war work. The volumes of Palmer's Index, under the topic "Women", contain from one to two full columns of references under titles such as sheep clippers, hop pickers, organists, vergers, bellringers, chimney sweeps, and gravediggers besides the large sections under nurses, doctors, munitionettes, and the newly formed women's branches of the armed services. Most of these accounts were exercises in praise for the women in the new fields.

One of the most widely publicized aspects of women's work was in medicine. Dr. Elsie Inglis had not gone home and kept quiet as she was advised but, backed by NUWSS funds, had established the Scottish Women's Hospitals and worked with the Belgian, French, Russian and Serbian armies. Two former militants, Drs. Flora Murray and Louisa Garrett Anderson, also initially rebuffed by the British government, worked with the French Red Cross, and, with Dr. Inglis, were finally recognized and praised by British authorities.[1]

But in 1916, The Times demonstrated no change in its editorial stand on women's suffrage - no leader referred to the question. However, news reports began to reflect the growing possibility of female enfranchisement. In January, a commentary on "The New Woman"[2] praised

> ...this new and glorious creature, truly emancipated by the stern hand of war,...justifying her claim to an equal share of the nation's burden.

1. Strachey, pp. 347-348.

2. 1916 6 January 11 c.

On a more mundane level, an appreciative report appearing later in the month on "Women Tramway-Car Drivers"[1] in Glasgow concluded that:

> ...the women were a very great success...Woman had justified herself so far as the city was concerned, and it would be a very difficult matter any longer to refuse her a voice in its control.

Strachey comments on the shift of the national opinion towards women based on war work:

> It was wildly illogical to be converted to Women's Suffrage because a girl who had been a good milliner could also be a good lift attendant; but so it was. The whole atmosphere and feeling of the country became enthusiastic...[2]

In 1916, The Times indeed expressed its enthusiasm but without reference to suffrage. Urging the subscription of funds for the YWCA, a January leader[3] read:

> We owe it to our women workers, no less than we owe it to our soldiers and sailors, that their leisure hours should be made comfortable.

In March, another leader[4] urged employers still reluctant to employ women in industry to "wake up, [and] adjust themselves to the novel conditions." The leader singled out for blame some farmers, who maintained "deep-rooted and tenacious conservatism" toward women on the land and were slow in making "the mental effort required for a new conception." That The Times itself had made the mental effort is evident; in its leader of a year earlier, the importance of female farm workers was deprecated.

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1. 1916 13 January 11 b.
2. Strachey, p. 349.
3. 1916 19 January 9 bc.
4. 1916 8 March 9 b.

The topic of suffrage received the first stirrings of publicity the same month. A speech by Mrs. Fawcett was reported[1] in which she discussed the "future status of women." Among the postwar changes she projected was that "industrial men will demand even more insistently than before that industrial women have the vote." Less hopeful was the report in May entitled "Suffrage Meeting Broken Up".[2] Sylvia Pankhurst's pacifist Women's Suffrage Federation held a demonstration in Trafalgar Square for adult enfranchisement and against conscription. The report read:

> The police were unable to prevent the determination of the men in khaki /colonial soldiers/ to break up the meeting...

But the account indicated that the objections to the meeting rose more because of the Federation's pacifistic leanings and not to its suffrage claim. Sylvia Pankhurst records her mother's reaction to the demonstration, telegrammed to the WSPU war organ, Britannia, from America:

> Strongly repudiate and condemn Sylvia's foolish and unpatriotic conduct. Regret I cannot prevent use of name. Make this public.[3]

But neither industrial pressure nor suffragist agitation brought the franchise to the fore. Instead, as Strachey points out, "the immediate cause of the reappearance of Women's Suffrage in Parliament was the electoral situation of men."[4] The parliamentary register based on a residence

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1. 1916 29 March 5 b.
2. 1916 10 April 5 c.
3. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 595.
4. Strachey, p. 352.

requirement was rendered useless by the dislocation that accompanied the war, and in 1916 rumours began flying that a new register was contemplated. Mrs. Fawcett wrote that "there was a great deal of discussion socially and in the Press about the possibility of basing the vote on national service of some kind." She wrote to Asquith on behalf of the NUWSS[1] referring to the rumour, and said if legislation was planned merely to re-enfranchise the men taken away by war service, the female suffragists would not urge their claim, but if the whole basis of the parliamentary franchise was to be altered on the basis of national service, her organization urged that women also be considered. She wrote:

> An agreed Bill on these lines would, we are confident, receive a very wide measure of support throughout the country. Our movement has received very great accessions of strength during recent months, former opponents now declaring themselves on our side, or, at any rate, withdrawing their opposition. The change of tone in the Press is most marked...

Asquith replied that no wide electoral reform was contemplated, but Mrs. Fawcett comments that his reply was encouraging since he had written "if and when, it should become necessary to undertake it"the question of women's suffrage will be "fully and impartially weighed."

Despite Asquith's denial of the possibility of electoral reform the subject arose repeatedly in the House of Commons, advocated most strongly by the Ulster Unionist leader, Sir Edward Carson. The Times vigorously expressed its support for the measure. A May leader[2] termed the old register "obsolete" and the voteless status of some fighting men "a

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1. Fawcett, The Women's Victory and After, p. 126-128.
2. 1916 31 May 9 b.

gross and palpable injustice." The article continued its now-customary criticism of Asquith's government by condemning the "leisurely advance" towards a new register and hinted that unless the pace was accelerated, "the Government must expect some very strong and natural hostility."

No reference to women's inclusion in the electoral reform was made in this leader. Indeed, it was not to be advocated by The Times for the rest of the year.

The paper's attention to women in 1916, though highly appreciative, was confined to their performance as war workers and volunteers. In appealing for volunteers for the Red Cross, a leader[1] termed the work "essential to the winning of the war...[and] the woman's counterpart to the man's service in the field." In August, a feature article[2] appeared on the leader page discussing "Women's New Place in the World" but confined itself to analyzing lightly the "future of courtesy" towards them. In September a leader[3] urged that volunteer nurses be further trained and employed after the war and exclaimed, "the service rendered by nurses during the war has added lustre to a noble calling." An October leader[4] again appealed for women volunteers, this time for canteen work. During October, The Times published a three-part series on "Women and War Work"[5] and in an accompanying leader,[6] while commenting that many of the women employed in war-related

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1. 1916 29 July 9 bc.
2. 1916 25 August 9 d.
3. 1916 18 September 9 b.
4. 1916 2 October 9 b.
5. 1916 3-5 October
6. 1916 5 October 7 b.

industries would return to their homes in peace-time, nevertheless cited "discoveries" made through war experience that women had the capability to perform in a skilled and responsible manner.

No reference was made in any of the above instances to an advancement of the political status of women, despite the fact that it had once again surfaced on the parliamentary scene. Throughout the summer, pressure had been mounting on the government to reform the voting register. On 4 August, 14 suffrage societies wrote to Asquith echoing the May letter of the NUWSS - if an occupation adjustment was the only reform, they would stand aside, but if new qualifications were to be introduced, they again put forward their claim.[1] On 14 August, Asquith spoke against large-scale reform during the war, but made a surprising recantation of his opposition to votes for women. In what Marwick terms a "piece of ponderous Asquithian thinking-aloud"[2] the Prime Minister said he could not deny women who had served so effectively during the war a voice in Britain's reconstruction. Strachey wrote:

> The suffragists, when they heard this, held their breath with excitement. It seemed incredible...[3]

The Times leader next day[4] made no reference to the conversion of the most publicized anti-suffragist, but continued to urge speed in the revision of the register to facilitate the extension of the franchise which meets with universal

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1. Rosen, p. 258.
2. Marwick, p. 103.
3. Strachey, p. 354.
4. 1916 15 August 9 ab.

sympathy - the concession of the vote to the soldiers and sailors fighting in the war.

Two days later, The Times implied that women's right to the franchise was still in question and emphasized priority for the fighting men, saying "their case is different from that of all other claimants."[1]

The WSPU seemed to take the same view. Ironically, they did not join the other suffrage societies in rejoicing at Asquith's announcement. Mrs. Pankhurst complained that the Prime Minister, having previously attempted "to use the men to dish the women" was now "using the women to dish the men."[2] But as Rosen points out,[3] by 1916 the WSPU carried little weight in suffrage circles, as it concentrated its energy on urging the prosecution of the war. The Union's behaviour was exemplified by its summer procession,[4] formed, according to Sylvia Pankhurst, to urge the membership in the War Cabinet of W.M. Hughes of Australia whose "name had become the general slogan of extremist jingoism."[5]

Despite the preliminary joy on the part of most suffragists, the road to electoral reform was still rocky when the short Parliamentary recess was due in August. Then Walter Long, Colonial Secretary and another recent convert to women suffrage, suggested a multi-party conference headed by the Speaker of the House of Commons, J.W. Lowther. The conference,

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1. 1916 17 August 9 b.
2. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 601.
3. Rosen, p. 260.
4. 1916 24 July 5 d.
5. Sylvia Pankhurt, The Home Front, p. 363.

appointed in October, conducted its deliberations privately. No leaders on women's suffrage appeared in The Times for the rest of the year. The topic was represented in the paper by three letters in November characterized by wartime restraint on domestic contention. The first[1], over the signatures of Mrs. Ward, and Lords Curzon and Cromer, repeated opposition to female enfranchisement. The remaining two[2] signed by male and female suffragists respectively, presented a rebuttal.

Early in December Asquith resigned and, as A.J.P. Taylor puts it, "the backbenchers and newspapers combined in a sort of unconscious plebiscite and made Lloyd George dictator for the duration of the war."[3] Northcliffe, whose Times contributed to Asquith's fall, had been leaning toward women's suffrage for some time. Sylvia Pankhurst, recognizing his power, had appealed to him for support in 1915:

> I was surprised to hear him talking precisely like a leading article from one of his own papers, with pompous deliberation...He listened patiently, with the august airs of a super-Premier.[4]

In late 1916, while the Speaker's conference deliberated and a long time suffragist prime minister had replaced a half-heartedly converted one, Lord Northcliffe inaugurated a correspondence with Lady Betty Balfour. Mrs. Fawcett states[5] that Northcliffe deemed "the moment particularly propitious

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1. 1916 17 November 3 f.
2. 1916 22 November 11 c and 1916 24 November 10 b.
3. A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945 (1965), p. 73.
4. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 598.
5. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 238.

for a big step in advance" and his letter, beginning with the words "there is absolutely no movement anywhere for Women's Suffrage," suggested that Mrs. Fawcett organize a demonstration or large meeting. Sylvia Pankhurst, whose federation had been demanding wider suffrage throughout the war commneted wryly on Northcliffe's words:

> This was no doubt a convenient manner of stating that there was no agitation amongst the women whose political attitude on other matters met with his approval.[1]

Lady Betty forwarded Northcliffe's letter to Mrs. Fawcett asking for her comments. In her account of the exchange, Mrs. Fawcett "wrote back in a white heat to Lady Betty" recounting the suspension of the political endeavours of the suffragists while the women engaged in patriotic work to help win the War. She wrote that "because we broke no windows, and attempted no injury to anyone" Lord Northcliffe thought the women's suffrage movement was dead, and declared "I had no patience with people who could see nothing unless their heads were broken with it."[2]

Lady Betty forwarded these strong words to Northcliffe who replied directly to Mrs. Fawcett on Christmas day:

> I do not suggest window-breaking, but I do think some great meeting or united deputation is necessary.

He further promised to speak to Lloyd George the following day. When Northcliffe wrote to Millicent Fawcett again on 27 December, he said the Prime Minister "was very keen on the subject and practical, too." Northcliffe said the deputation would "give the newspapers the opportunity of

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1. Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, p. 602.

2. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 238-239.

dealing with the matter" and concluded:

> I shall speak to the Editor of The Times on the question today. I believe he is entirely favourable.*
>
> Yours sincerely,
>
> Northcliffe.
>
> *Have done so. He is.

Northcliffe's official biography states:

> "It marked a complete reversal of The Times policy."[1]

It is open to question whether the favourable receipt of the women's suffrage suggestion by both The Times and the government was as much due to Northcliffe's intercession as he seemed to think. Geoffrey Dawson, Editor of The Times, in writing the essay on the press lord for the Dictionary of National Biography stated that an "exaggerated sense of his importance...grew on Northcliffe during the war," which Dawson attributed to increasing ill-health. In the exchange with Mrs. Fawcett, Lady Betty Balfour had quoted a current witticism referring to Northcliffe's sense of self-importance. It told of the "latest political crisis: 'Northcliffe had sent for the King.'"[2]

Whatever the extent of his influence, Mrs. Fawcett records her own appreciation for Northcliffe's efforts:

> He was constantly talking to his friends on our subject. He, who had been a few years earlier, one of our chief opponents in the Press, was now reported to have said, "The women were wonderful. Their freshness of mind, their organizing skill, were magnificent. Men were making too great a mess of the world, and needed helpers without their own prejudices, idleness, and self-indulgence."[3]

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1. Pound and Harmsworth, p. 518.
2. Pound and Harmsworth, p. 518.
3. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 240.

In late January 1917, the Speaker's conference report was published and recommended parliamentary voting rights for single women on the Local Government register and wives of men on the Parliamentary register, suggesting that an age qualification of 30 be required. Then The Times' editorial shift came. It was not in the form of a recantation like Asquith's nor as effusive as Northcliffe's paean of praise quoted above. Instead, the leader[1] stated that the paper's change of heart was the result of the alteration of conditions in the country and the subsequent modification of public opinion:

> For our own part, as we have said before, we have always regarded Woman Suffrage as one of the changes which are inherent in the circumstances of the war, though these circumstances are far too seldom understood or expressed. Nothing, for instance, could be more insulting to the patriotism of women than the suggestion, which is often put forward, that the vote is a fitting "reward" for war-time work...The real case for their enfranchisement in these days rests on the palpable injustice of leaving women, who have become for the first time an essential factor in the national effort /without the vote/... their case rests, further, on the value of their help in maintaining those far-reaching social reforms - in such matters as drink control, child welfare, education, and housing schemes - which the war has already brought about as emergency measures. We doubt very much whether there is any great hostility left in this country to the principle of Woman Suffrage. Its advocates are almost forcing an open door.

These opinions were reinforced the next month when Asquith abandoned any remaining reservations and moved a resolution constructed on the recommendation of the Speaker's Conference. His resolution was accepted by a large majority. The Times leader next day[2] applauded Asquith's "frank and

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1. 1917 1 February 7 b.
2. 1917 29 March 7 b.

entertaining conversion to the cause" and said that on the eventual decision of Parliament "there can be little doubt." The leader reiterated the paper's own reasons for supporting women's suffrage and added:

> That case, let us repeat, rests neither on the triumph of agitation, for agitation has long been stilled, nor on the notion...that the vote is a mere reward for good behaviour.

The Times had finally joined what Mrs. Fawcett termed the "battalions" of leading newspapers converted to women's suffrage. She wrote, in addition:

> The Anti-Suffrage Press, which in earlier days had been such an obstacle in the way of our success, was almost wiped out.[1]

Another evidence of The Times' conversion was its treatment of the suffragist deputation to Lloyd George the following day. This was the deputation originally suggested by Northcliffe and represented not only the NUWSS, but also the WSPU, which by now had come round. The report[2] contained nearly two full columns describing with approval the various suffrage organizations represented. In the report, women were quoted - Mrs. Fawcett as fully as the Prime Minister. In keeping with its policy of presenting correspondence on both sides of the question, The Times published a lengthy letter from Mrs. Humphrey Ward in May[3]; but there was no more chance, as John Walter had feared ten years previously, of her opinions influencing The Times' stand. Even before the division in the House on the Reform Bill, the paper's

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1. Fawcett, What I Remember, p. 229.
2. 1917 30 March 3 ab.
3. 1917 23 May 9 e.

"Political Notes"[1] predicted "an overwhelming majority on a free vote on the House." In the account of the debate the next day[2] the reporter wrote:

> Members seemed to realize that the question was no longer an academic one, and that they were called upon at last to vote upon it as a living issue... The result was accepted throughout as a foregone conclusion.

The accompanying leader was starkly headed by the numerical result of the division, "385 to 55"[3] and earnestly applauded the outcome, giving reasons for the victory in Parliament that were the same for the paper's own support:

> Public opinion, manifesting itself in a hundred ways, has set more strongly than ever during the last few months to the side the suffragists...The suspension of "militant" tactics has given it a chance to develop. Above all, it has been strengthened by the one unanswerable argument that the new position of women in industry will demand such protection in the days of reconstruction as the vote may be held to afford. Beyond all question the change in the attitude of the House of Commons is an accurate reflection of the change in the country at large.

The powerful majority in the Commons virtually sealed the suffrage victory - indeed the WSPU in November changed its name to The Women's Party in anticipation of full political participation of women in the next election. In December, the entire Reform Bill was read a third time, and passed without a division. The news was tucked under the heading "Parliament"[4]. No leader accompanied this victory, as if the result was foregone and the subject no longer provoked

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1. 1917 19 June 7 c.
2. 1917 20 June 7 f.
3. 1917 20 June 7 b.
4. 1917 8 December 10 d.

comment. The Times had made no further observation on women's enfranchisement throughout the second half of the year.

The topic of women's suffrage re-emerged slightly at the beginning of 1918 when it was scheduled to come before the Lords. Ray Strachey writes that the suffragists approached the Upper House with trepidation.[1] It had long been the stronghold of the anti-suffragists, indeed, Lord Curzon, the leader of the House, was also the President of the Anti-Suffrage League. In its "Political Notes"[2] The Times described the situation just before the Representation of the People Bill entered the committee stage of the House:

> Signs are not wanting to show that the fate of the woman suffrage clause... is anxiously awaited by those who support and by those who oppose the enfranchisement of women.

The report told of a memorial to the Lords from the anti-suffragists asking for a referendum of women before suffrage was conferred and also of Mrs. Fawcett's counter argument that the Bill should stand unaltered.

The Bill entered the committee stage on 8 January and the "Political Notes"[3] recorded that the first three clauses were passed "without substantial alteration" and the women's suffrage clause would be taken up the next day. The report stated that "the result is awaited with interest, though without anxiety, by the supporters of woman suffrage."

A last minute fright went through the supporters when

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1. Strachey, p. 364.
2. 1918 8 January 7 b.
3. 1918 9 January 7 c.

anti-suffrage peers attended in large numbers during the first two days of the debate. The Times, in its "Political Notes"[1] the day before the division, published what can be construed as an exhortation:

> A night's reflection may convince the House of the urgent need of refraining from any step which might lead to a constitutional crisis... Nevertheless, there was a widespread feeling at Westminster last night that the position could only be made absolutely secure by the fullest possible attendance of peers in sympathy with woman suffrage during today's critical debate and division.

The leader[2] - the last The Times was to publish on the topic before women's suffrage became law - was a deferential request to the peers not to cause a "temporary suspension of a measure on which the great bulk of the nation are clearly agreed." The leader pointed out the "enormous" majority the measure had commanded in the Commons and quoted its own arguments on 1 February the previous year, then concluded:

> The time which has elapsed since those words were written has only served to strengthen the argument and to justify the inclusion of Woman Suffrage in the Bill.

The women's suffrage clause was accepted the next day by a majority of two to one. No leader appeared in The Times but a lively account of the debate was published[3] including a division list and a summary of the "remarkable speech" by Lord Curzon in which he reaffirmed his anti-suffragist stand but told of his decision to abstain in order not to provoke a "challenge to the House of Commons." The report ended:

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1. 1918 10 January 7 c.
2. 1918 10 January 7 b.
3. 1918 11 January 7 cd.

> The division was then taken, and the announcement of the figures was received with a round of cheering - an unusual manifestation in the House of Lords.

Aside from a last ditch attempt to provoke a referendum on the part of some peers[1] and a letter from Mrs. Ward supporting them,[2] the coverage by The Times of the women's suffrage issue was at an end. The February Royal Assent was only mentioned in the "Arrangements" column. In March, two small accounts of NUWSS functions were published; the first[3] was a council meeting in which "profound satisfaction" on the suffrage victory was expressed by the society, and the second[4] was on a celebration dinner at the Lyceum club.

Coverage of organized women's activities continued on a small scale for the remainder of the year. A strike of women's omnibus workers in August provoked a leader[5] which conceded women's right to equal pay in the specific instance, but raised the point that demand for comparable wages would "diminish the employment of women when the men return from the war." In October[6] The Times' "Political Notes" reported that "a domestic issue of considerable importance" was due to be considered the following week-the right of women to be elected to Parliament. The Parliamentary Correspondent noted the next day[7]:

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1. 1918 14 January 7 bc.
2. 1918 14 January 11 d.
3. 1918 13 March 3 e.
4. 1918 26 March 3 c.
5. 1918 21 August 7 b.
6. 1918 18 October 7 e.
7. 1918 19 October 3 e.

> The subject has remained in the background until lately for a very good reason. It seemed absurd to argue the case for women M.P.'s so long as the franchise was confined to men.

Reporting the 11 to one majority on the measure,[1] The Times observed "it was the natural corollary to the decision taken by Parliament earlier in the year to extend the franchise to women." The bill became law in November and in that month the standing of 16 women for Parliament (notably Christabel Pankhurst with a Lloyd George coupon) drew some Times coverage.[2]

In December, when peace had returned to Britain, The Times presented a leader[3] on "The Future of Women Workers" and their right to remain in post-war industry. The article posed the question:

> If you admit woman to the franchise, how can you logically keep up any artificial barriers to her employment in any industry...?

In this leader - the last on women in the period covered by this study - the question was rhetorical. In 18 years, the coverage of women's suffrage in The Times had passed from a reluctant journalistic exercise to acceptance of an historical fact.

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1. 1918 24 October 7 e.
2. e.g., 1918 20 November 10 d, and 1918 28 November 7 f.
3. 1918 7 December 9 ab.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

Reflecting on The Times and the women's suffrage movement between 1900-1918, one recalls the statement made by Northcliffe's biographers when they pointed out the paper's shift of editorial opinion towards the subject:

> For almost half a century the paper had opposed the women's cause and missed few opportunities of damaging it. 1

As a general evaluation applied to the nineteen years in question, the observation seems approximately true. The Times must certainly be ranked as a member of the anti-suffrage press for most of the period. However, a close examination of the newspaper for that time reveals the ways in which its opposition was made known.

In the first six years of the century, the charge of actively harming the suffrage movement is not completely valid. The Times did not energetically oppose suffrage, or even ignore it, since the movement itself was not compelling enough to demand much column space.

The allegation of damage rings truer after 1905. Injury seems to have been attempted by both omission and commission in news reports and leading articles.

News accounts of suffragist activities, while increasing in number with the onset of militancy, were either so brief as to seem relatively unimportant, or when longer, were often slanted. The traditional line dividing fact from

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1. Pound and Harmsworth, p. 518.

comment, which The Times' champions affirm, became increasingly fuzzy as editorial opposition mounted. By the time of the arson campaign, open condemnation was common in the reports of militant activity.

Often, statements of fact that were corroborated by participating suffragists and later historians were totally unreported. Rover's allegation of a "partial boycott by the press in the years before the First World War" seems justified when aimed at The Times. The paper may well have been, as Williams suggests, a "unique barometer" of its age, but its accuracy must be questioned and supplemented from other sources. As Lady Betty Balfour recommended in 1914, in a letter criticizing The Times for focusing only on the militant aspects of the suffrage campaign:

> ...if history is to be written from the columns of The Times, there should follow an article tracing the story of the suffrage movement, peaceful and law abiding, for the last fifty years, and in greater detail for the last ten years. [1]

In the leading articles, where Times editorial opinions were most evident, tactics ranged from ridicule in the years when polite deputations and mild militancy characterized the movement, to serious argument when substantive parliamentary measures were considered and property damage became increasingly frequent. On several occasions when militant action seemed to warrant comment, the paper published no leader and, in 1914,[2] attributed these omissions to the relative unimportance of the suffrage question.

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1. 1914 5 June 10 ab.
2. 1914 2 June 9 d.

However, The Times reveals much about its unique character by its apparent editorial sensitivity to parliamentary events and damage to property. The graphs in Appendix 3 illustrate this tendency. Of the four highest peaks indicating the number of inches, the first three represent the spates of editorial comment surrounding debates in Parliament. The fourth peak indicates the cumulative length of leaders demanding parliamentary action to prevent the spread of arson. Interestingly enough, the highest peak - nearly double the length of its closest rivals - occurs at the beginning of 1912, the time of the third conciliation bill and the first mass window-breaking raids. Perhaps its double length can then be explained by its combining The Times'dual interests.

In the areas of parliament and property, The Times was dealing directly with the political and economic concerns of its elite readership and designed its leading articles to influence the influential. The many cases of the paper being cited in the Commons when women's suffrage was debated,[1] indicate its success with this most prominent section of its readership.

The anti-suffrage arguments used by The Times' leader writers were those fashionable at the time, usually expressed with some restraint, befitting the respectable nature of the paper. Occasionally, however, arguments were taken to the extreme, and, as John Walter pointed out, might have hindered the intended purpose. Rover indicates that the publishing of Almroth Wright's letter (of which the paper approved)

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1. e.g., 1906 26 April 7 c and 1912 29 March 9 f.

"defeated its own object."[1] One leading article[2] clearly illustrates The Times' falling into reductio ad absurdum when discussing the physical force argument:

> ...the underlying assumption in the national franchise is that the voter, who has to decide on the well-being and even the existence of his country, can argue out his views for his country's good on equal terms with his fellow, and in the last resort can knock him down if he chance to be the better man. No such assumption could be possible were women to have the vote.

In the case of these contemporary arguments, it is difficult to determine the extent to which The Times led public opinion or was led by it. This question is still being debated in journalistic circles today. The confusion between influencing and being influenced caused The Times to embody one obvious and repeated flaw in its anti-suffrage leaders. Two conflicting arguments were juxtaposed - often in the same leader.[3] Here it was at first stated that the demand for women's suffrage was not a serious one, and not to be taken seriously by either legislators or public. Contrasted to that statement was the contention that agitation had reached a sufficient level to require governmental repression.

Despite these flaws in leading articles and erosion of objectivity in news reports, an underlying consistency seems to guide The Times' presentation of both fact and comment.

In the news items, colouring of facts can be explained by an understanding of the personal factors involved and

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1. Rover, p. 50, see pp. 86-87 above.
2. 1908 15 June 11 e.
3. e.g., 1911 6 May 11 c and 1912 13 January 9 cd.

the conventions prevalent at the time. McLachlan writes, "The business of producing newspapers and periodicals is a deeply personal one."[1] In the Report on the British Press, the study committee concludes:

> One of the most important internal influences on the treatment of news is the unconscious bias of the journalists who collect and write it up. This is largely the result of their education and training. 2

Surrounding the reporters, editors, and proprietors of The Times - those who controlled its content - was a world in which the concept of votes for women was novel and not widely accepted. It would be foolish to demand of these people a perspective which only historical distancing makes possible. Can Socrates be blamed for not using a paper cup?

In the leader articles, a consistent thread is especially apparent, running through the first mild rebukes to the serious opposition and even to the final shift of opinion towards women's suffrage. In keeping with Thomas Barnes' stated aims, "to foster, to guide and to ally himself with the feeling of the country," The Times continually reinforced its arguments with references to public opinion. Some of its statements have suffered under the scrutiny of time, like its discernment of a uniquely female hysteria in the militant actions. Other facets of its contemporary analysis have been proven accurate such as the conclusion that, by 1912, suffragette tactics had turned the British people away from

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1. Political and Economic Planning (PEP), Report on the British Press (1938), p. 20.

2. McLachlan, p. 159.

women's suffrage.[1]

In both these instances, The Times had responded with its considered view of the situation and geared its words to its estimate of civilized popular sentiments. Most revealing of the paper's sense of responsibility to educated opinion was its constant reminder, even in leaders voicing stolid opposition to female enfranchisement, that if the situation and sentiment were to change, its policy would too. In 1910, the point was phrased:

> What may happen, if and when the nation changes its minds, it will be time enough to consider when it does.[2]

In 1913, the newspaper, uncannily predictive, suggested that legislators, too, would be responsive should the climate of opinion change:

> Let woman suffragists once convert the country, and Parliament, we promise them, will respond before long to their claims. 3

When, in 1917, the alteration in the public's attitude towards women was obvious, and the report of the Speaker's Conference indicated that the legislator's were willing to recognize it (and at the same time extricate themselves from a prospectively sticky political problem), The Times expressed its agreement. The reason given was the same adherence to the general climate of opinion:

> ...we have always regarded Woman Suffrage as one of the changes which are inherent in the circumstances of the war. 4

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1. Rover, p. 82, Fulford, p. 255, and R.C.K. Ensor, England 1870-1914 (1936), p. 460.

2. 1910 13 August 9 e.

3. 1913 25 January 9 cd.

4. 1917 1 February 7 b.

As with Parliament, The Times' shift of opinion might have had an element of face-saving convenience in it, but must be regarded predominantly as a natural product of the newspaper's heritage of flexibility. It must not be entirely written off as hypocritical in the manner of two playwrights' view of the press in a 1909 suffrage fantasy:

> It's extraordinary how many...newspapers...have suddenly found out that they have always been in favour of woman's suffrage! 1

In the leading article characterizing The Times as an institution, with which this study began, the newspaper recognizes its strength in its flexibility - such as that demonstrated by its treatment of women's suffrage:

> It is the function of an institution to be the organization around an idea. All institutions find themselves having to change and what has to be changed is not the idea, but the organization. These periods of change, which can be revolutionary or evolutionary, or partly both, are the critical periods of the life of any institution. If there is a failure of adaptation, then the institution itself dies, as the Russian monarchy died in 1917. If there is successful adaptation, then it survives, as the British monarchy survived the constitutional changes of the last 300 years. 2

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1. Cicely Hamilton and Christopher St. John, How the Vote Was Won (1909), p. 24.

2. 1967 18 January 13 abc.

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APPENDIX I

Character of The Times' Readership

Commenting on choice of paper to carry advertisements, Francis Williams states:

> Although their total circulations were small, quality papers such as The Times read by business and professional groups with relatively high incomes could... command advertisement revenue out of all relation to circulation figures because each unit in their circulation totals represented considerable individual buying power. [1]

The following advertisement[2] recalls the affluence and elite nature of The Times' readership, as envisaged by the British Commercial Gas Association.

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1. Williams, Dangerous Estate, p. 179.

2. 1913 30 April 3 ef.

A Domestic Aid.

By having a Gas water-heater installed in your home, you can save work and worry—and friction between your servants—when it is the children's bath-time.

A Gas water-heater ensures an ample supply of hot water for baths at any hour of the day or night without irritating delay. It will render you quite independent of the kitchen range, and increase the comfort and convenience of the household.

Those who use Gas water-heaters are emphatic in their expressions of satisfaction—which is the surest proof of the value of this latest aid to domestic comfort and to the solution of the servant difficulty.

Pamphlet HW. 213 deals more fully with this question. Can we send you a copy, or serve you in any other way?

The British Commercial Gas Association,
47, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.

APPENDIX II

Suffrage and War Work

In late 1915, the importance of women's war work began to be recognized. The appeal for funds for the YWCA was supported by The Times the following January[1], a year before the paper's shift in editorial opinion towards women's suffrage.

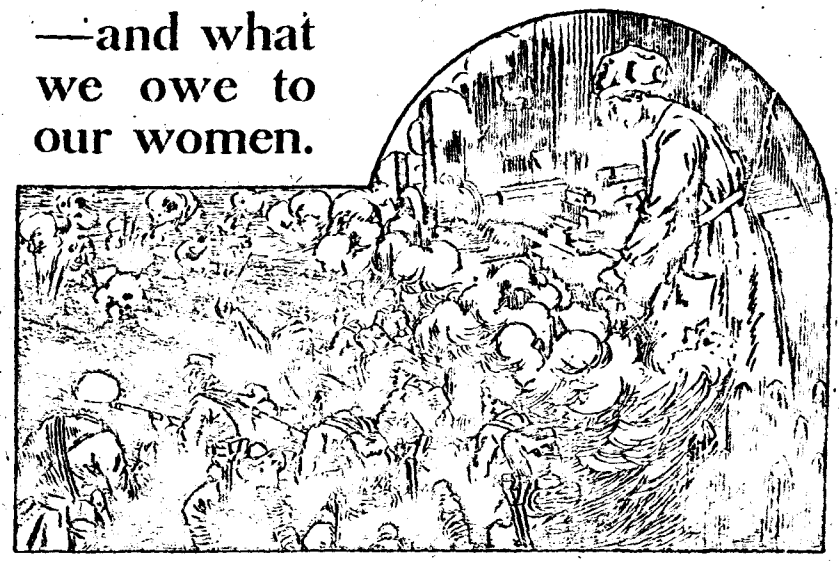
Mrs. C.S. Peel, in her domestic account of the war, wryly described the situation illustrated by The Times' editorial praise and the advertisement's[2] commendation of "our women" on the next page:

> By their work and their general attitude towards affairs, it was admitted that they might save the nation, but were they allowed to vote, they would surely ruin it. 3

1. 1916 19 January 9 bc.
2. 1916 13 July 3 def.
3. How We Lived Then (1929), Chapter 9.

The Great Offensive

—and what we owe to our women.



"The path to victory must be blasted through the enemy with artillery. . . . If the country now by any mischance or weakness slackens in its product of munitions the great battle abroad will check and sway back and forth, and at best there will ensue a miserable interval of suspense and feverish replenishment, and at worse, defeat. At all costs and all sacrifices the danger must be avoided. There cannot possibly be too lavish a supply of munitions. If the product were doubled it would not be too much."—*Morning Post*, July 12th.

The Men of the Empire are fighting—the Women of the Empire are Working

IF

the men are to go on fighting they must have munitions, munitions, and more munitions.

And they are getting them.

IF

the women are to work they must have Rest, Food, and Shelter.

And the Y.W.C.A. are providing them.

IF

the men are to have munitions the women of Britain must work.

And they are working.

IF

The Y.W.C.A. are to provide Rest-rooms, Canteens, and Hostels.

They must have money.

Will you give the Money?

Will you give all you can?

Will you give it to-day?

Stop Press Message from LORD DERBY—

The toil of the women of England is more than ever necessary to win the war: the Y.W.C.A. are helping the women workers, and I hope the people of England will help the Y.W.C.A.

(Signed) DERBY.

July 8th, 1916.

Fill in this form now and send it with your remittance to Lord Sydenham, 26, George St., Hanover Sq., London, W.

..... 19....

To LORD SYDENHAM,
Y.W.C.A.,
26, George Street, London, W.

My Lord,
I have pleasure in enclosing remittance value £.....
as a donation to the Women's War-Time Fund of the Young Women's Christian Association.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

£500 will provide a complete hostel.

£5 will furnish a cubicle.

£50 will equip a canteen.

£1 will provide a bed.

The Times, July 13, 1916.

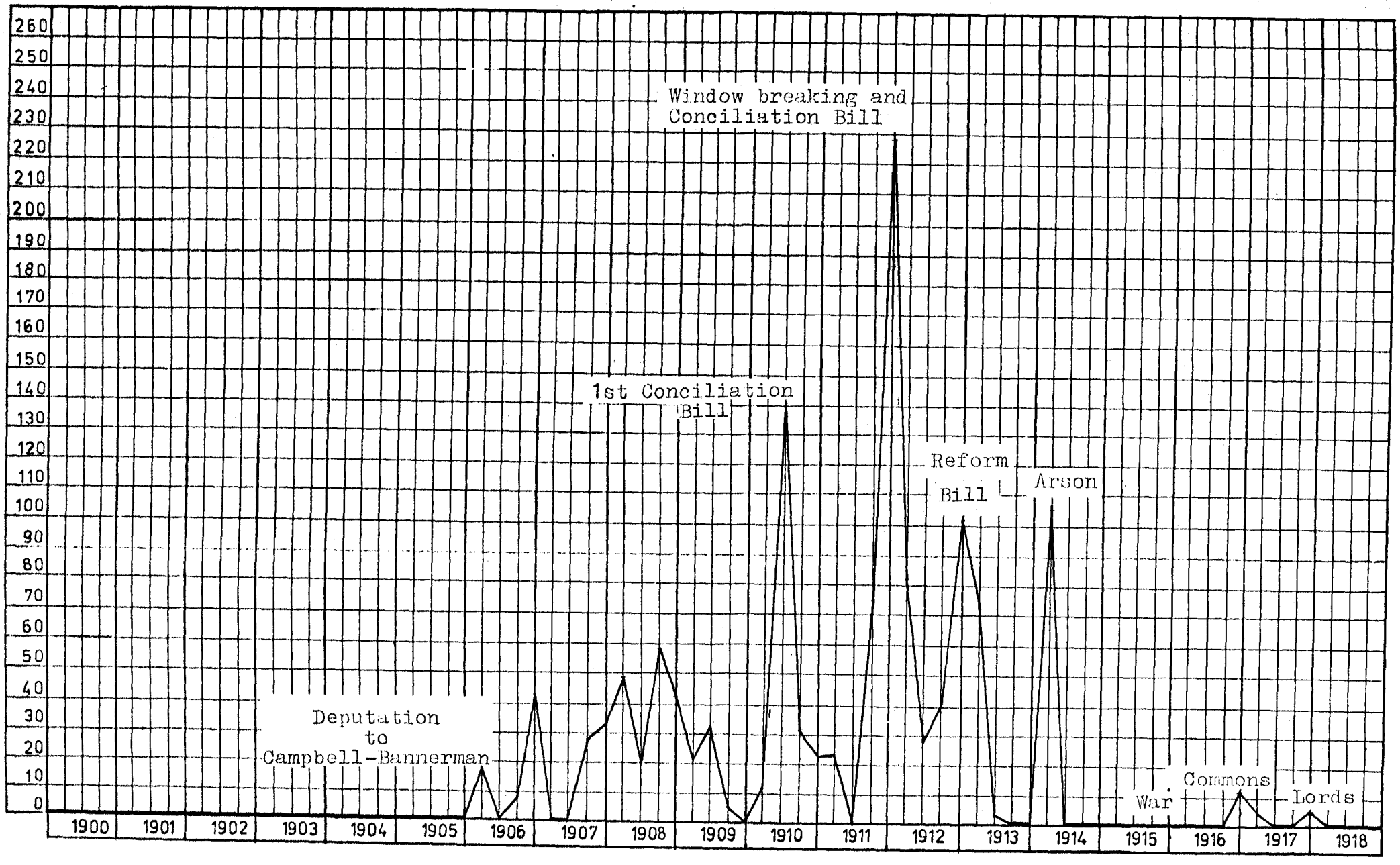
Send all you can, but remember that every little helps!

APPENDIX III

Graphs of Times' Coverage

The following graphs provide a visual record of the extent of Times' leading articles relating to women's suffrage during the years 1900-1918. However, they must not be regarded as more than an approximate illustration of The Times' editorial coverage of the topic.

Graph A shows the number of column inches of leading articles actually devoted to women's suffrage and Graph B shows the number of leading articles relating to the subject.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INCIDENCE OF VIOLENCE
Window breaking and Conciliation Bill
1st Conciliation Bill
Reform Bill
Arson
Deputation to Campbell-Bannerman
War
Commons
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1900
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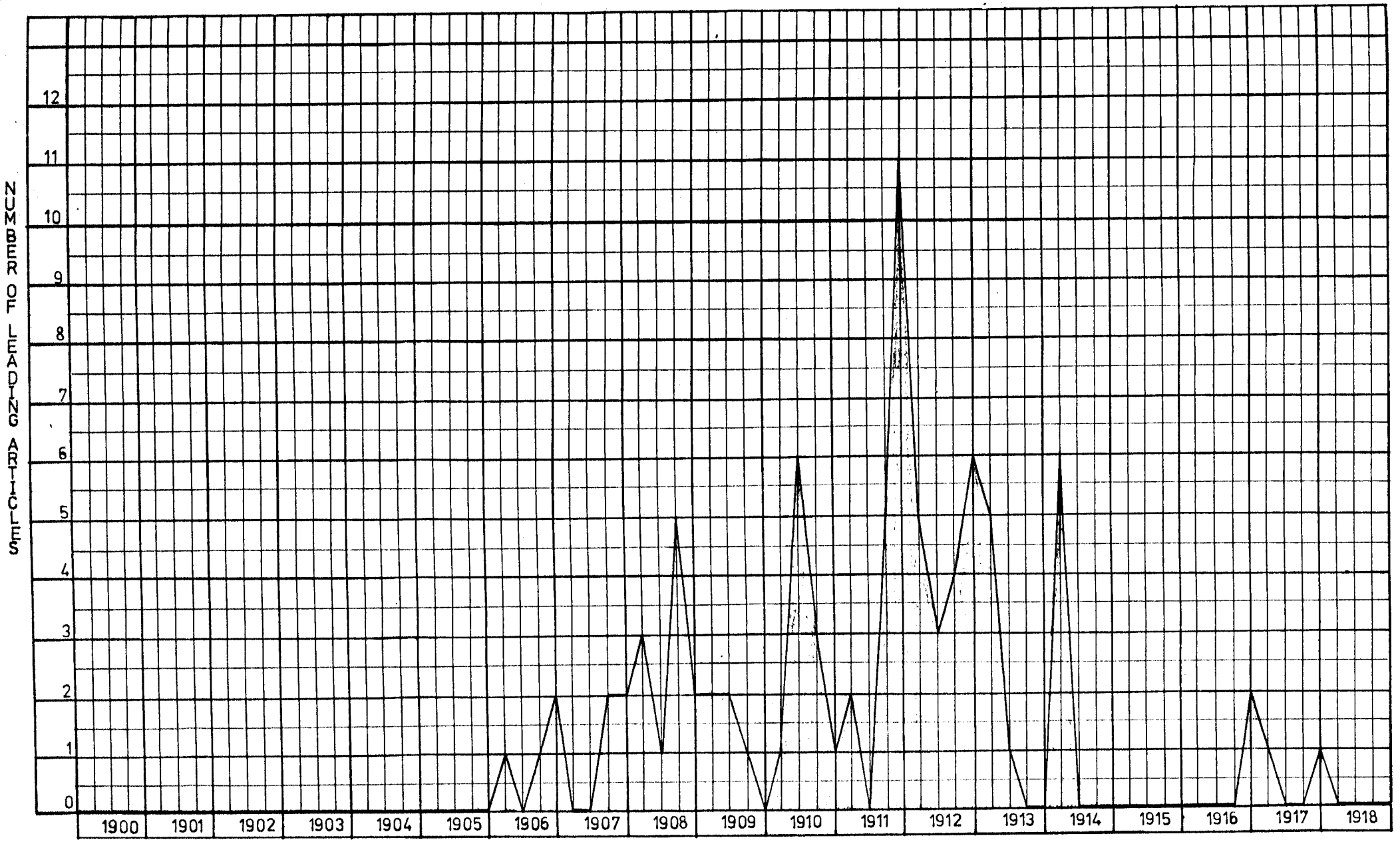
GRAPH A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GRAPH B