

LOBBYING THE LEAGUE:
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS
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D.Phil., Hilary Term 1992

This thesis is an account of women's international work at the League of Nations. While feminists' shift from the national to the international arena has been noted in studies on the inter-war women's movement, most often it has been interpreted as a reflection of the heightened salience of peace work in the aftermath of the First World War. This is an important observation but it overlooks the fact that women's activities at the League embraced the full spectrum of feminist causes: social reform, women's rights and peace. This thesis gives prominence to inter-war feminist activity played against the backdrop of institutional developments at the League which encouraged women to believe their goals could be advanced under its auspices.

One of the major goals of the Women's International Organizations was to establish a political role for women in international affairs. The first chapter describes the efforts of women's organizations to secure the representation of women in the League of Nations. Many recently enfranchised women in Europe and North America identified the League as an institution toward which they should direct their newly won political influence. This is assessed in the context of ideas that emerged in the aftermath of the First World War about the transformation of the international sphere through the infusion of female values.

The second, third and fourth chapters present a profile of the women's networks operating in and around the League. The study reveals a high level of interaction between the Women's International Organizations and women in official positions at the League. Chapter 2 examines the aims of the Women's International Organizations and exposes tensions between social feminist and equal rights feminist organizations that led to a struggle for influence at the League. The third and fourth chapters assess the impact of gender-stereotyping on patterns of appointments to the League. However much appointments to Assembly delegations and League advisory committees should have carried with them national allegiances, women delegates were often seen to represent *women* and this both positively and negatively affected women's participation.

The remaining chapters assess women's impact on the development of League activities with particular attention to the implications of the idea that women as women had a special contribution to make at the international level. Chapter 5 explores the extent to which the assertion of difference enhanced women's influence with regard to the League's social and humanitarian work in the 1920s and enabled them to have several gender-specific concerns placed on the agenda. The Depression and the rise of reactionary ideologies influenced feminists to call for more decisive League action on the status of women in the 1930s. Most member states of the League, however, did not view the status of women as a subject for international consideration. Chapter 6 looks at the conflict between social and equal rights feminists over what League initiatives would prove most effective for advancing the status of women and traces developments that ultimately led to the League sponsored Inquiry on the Legal Status of Women in 1937. The seventh chapter assesses the impact of traditional associations between women and peace on women's peace activities at the League. Cultural representations of women as peace-loving had political relevance in the context of League activities and the League attempted to bolster support in the 1930s by intensifying collaboration with women. Significantly, the Women's International Organizations responded by asserting that only with equality would women's influence for peace be fully available. The interplay between equality and difference permeated women's international work at every level and the conclusion evaluates the way in which this tension influenced women's participation in and contribution to the activities of the League of Nations.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

LOBBYING THE LEAGUE: WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

This thesis is an account of women's international work at the League of Nations. Women's international work was carried out largely by networks of friendship and cooperation that developed among Women's International Organizations and extended to include women with official positions inside the League system. While feminists' shift from the national to the international arena has been noted in studies on the inter-war women's movement, most often it has been interpreted as a reflection of the heightened salience of peace work in the aftermath of the First World War. This is an important observation but it overlooks the fact that women's work at the League embraced the full spectrum of feminist causes: social reform, women's rights and peace. Studies on the Women's International Organizations have been more likely to note that women's international work covered a broad range of activities. Little attempt has been made, however, to consider the work of the Women's International Organizations in the context of developments at the League which encouraged feminists to believe their goals could be advanced under its auspices.

The thesis gives prominence to inter-war feminist activity played against the backdrop of institutional processes and international developments at the League. It traces women's international work throughout the entire inter-war period in order to demonstrate how the League of Nations and the Women's International Organizations interacted with and transformed one another in significant ways. Because of its institutional focus this thesis is based primarily on the papers of the League of Nations and selected Women's International Organizations. The analysis of women's international work draws on ideas presented in the growing body of literature on gender and international relations. Inter-war feminists based their claims for participation at the League on the concept of difference between the sexes and the values and viewpoints that emerged from difference. One of the objects of this thesis is to examine the way in which women's international work was both fortified and circumscribed by the complex weaving of gendered roles and activities.

The first chapter discusses the initial efforts of the Women's International Organizations to secure the representation of women in the League of Nations. Through women's lobby efforts at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 Article 7 was included in the Covenant of the League of Nations stating that all posts in connection with the League would be open to men and women. Women's delegations to the Conference were quick to identify the machinery and institutional devices of the League as instruments for broad political and social reforms. Their proposals in the area of women's rights, however, were cautious. The gradualist approach adopted by feminists at the Paris Peace Conference was to characterize women's international work until the late 1920s.

One of the main thematic points which Chapter 1 addresses is the idea that women had a unique contribution to make to international affairs. In the years immediately following the end of the First World War women in many countries won the right to vote and the League of Nations was specifically identified as an institution toward which they should direct their newly won political influence. Women's International Organizations put much of their energy into establishing a political role for women in international relations. This move must be considered in the context of ideas that emerged in the aftermath of World War I about the transformation of the international sphere through the infusion of female values. The assertion of difference led to recurring demands for political, legal and social equality for women so that the special experiences and values of women could be brought to bear on international relations. Yet the tension between equality and difference was another characterizing feature of women's international work at the League. In spite of the assertion of difference, feminists were divided over the desirability of the creation of a special Women's Bureau at the League and it is necessary to consider the implications of the adoption of an assimilationist approach.

The second chapter begins the profile of the women's networks operating in and around the League. In this chapter the aims and activities of each of the groups known in League circles as the Women's International Organizations are explored with attention to the reasons for

their multiplication during the inter-war years. Following previous attempts to create a typology of the Women's International Organizations they are divided into four categories: feminist, professional, religious and peace. While each type of organization clearly had distinct goals and priorities, they all believed that the League of Nations was an important vehicle for social and political reforms, in particular, the advancement of the status of women. The profile of these organizations also illustrates the development of co-operative networks among them. Although forty-five million women were represented by the Women's International Organizations a leadership cohort of middle and upper-class British, Scandinavian and American women who met on a regular basis in London or Geneva co-ordinated women's international work. This enabled various consultative bodies to emerge through which the Women's International Organizations lobbied the League. These bodies not only served as a means of consolidating political influence; they also re-inforced the image of women as a distinct social group with interests and opinions that deserved consideration at the League. The profile of the Women's International Organizations reveals that their direct interaction with League officials was considerable. This is attributed partly to their success at making themselves known as "the voice of women" at the League.

While Chapter 2 illustrates the extent of the co-operative efforts among the Women's International Organizations, it also introduces major divisions which characterized women's international work at the League. When it became clear that the main objectives of equal rights feminists could not be accommodated by the Women's International Organizations operating in Geneva throughout the 1920s, a new group of Women's International Organizations emerged. The purely legalistic approach to advancing the status of women adopted by these new equal rights groups alienated the older organizations, as did their confrontational tactics. Without abandoning the insights of previous attempts to create a typology of the Women's International Organizations, Chapter 2 suggests that a distinction between social feminist and equal rights feminist organizations more accurately accounts for the conflicts that emerged in the late 1920s for control at the League.

The Women's International Organizations operated on the 'outside' as lobbyists at the League; it was essential, therefore, to have allies in positions of influence to promote their goals. The third and fourth chapters explore the workings of the women's networks by presenting a profile of women with official positions inside the League system. Biographical data have been compiled to map out the patterns of appointments in three areas: the Secretariat, the Assembly delegations and the League advisory committees. In each area the type of appointment and its potential role in policy development are evaluated. The profile also considers the influence of such factors as nationality, career patterns and contact with the Women's International Organizations. Given women's under-representation in official posts - only six per cent of delegates to the Assembly and eight per cent of top-level Secretariat posts - attitudinal and structural barriers to the appointment of women are examined. One of the main purposes of this survey is to explore the role of gender in patterns of appointments which emerged at the League.

Because few women had won recognition in the traditional fields from which appointments were made - national politics and the diplomatic service - they had to emphasize their skills and experience in other areas. One consequence was that appointments to League posts followed traditional divisions between male and female spheres of activity. Although women were employed throughout the Secretariat, Chapter 3 shows that few were able to influence the development of League policy beyond the social and humanitarian field. Significantly, the only woman who ever headed a division of the Secretariat was Chief of the Social Section. Chapter 4 explores ways in which gender divisions were reinforced at the Assembly and on League standing committees. It illustrates the extent to which women's participation was grounded in difference. However much appointments to the Assembly should have carried with them national allegiances, women delegates were often seen to represent *women*. They were not only expected to promote the interests of women; they were also called upon to provide "the women's point of view" on issues raised at the League. Such ideas were reinforced by the fact that at least half of the women delegates to

the Assembly and League advisory committees were members of one or more of the Women's International Organizations claiming to represent the "women of the world". While the idea that women represented a distinct social force helped to expand women's influence at the League, Chapter 4 raises questions about the limitation of difference as a form of empowerment for women.

After a profile of the key participants in the women's networks has been established in the second, third and fourth chapters, the remaining chapters turn to explore their activities at the League. The fifth chapter assesses women's involvement in the League's social and humanitarian work in the 1920s. There was no specific policy directing the League's activities in this field during the 1920s. This gave the Women's International Organizations some opportunity to influence developments. In general, they urged that the League's social and humanitarian work be placed on an equal footing with its peace-keeping activities. More specifically, they encouraged the League to take up gender-specific subjects such as the situation of women refugees in the Near East, the treatment of women in mandated territories, and various social welfare questions from prostitution to maintenance payments. Almost every initiative was at first resisted by senior Secretariat officials; only through the perseverance of the women's networks did each of these subjects find a place on the League agenda. Chapter 5 traces women's efforts to expand the League's social and humanitarian activities, with attention to networking between the Women's International Organizations and women in official League posts, in particular, the Chief of the Social Section of the Secretariat. One of the main purposes of this chapter is to compare inter-war discourse about the potential influence of women in this field with women's actual contribution at the League.

The study of women's international work in the 1920s reveals that women were able to have some impact on the development of the League's social and humanitarian activities largely because the doctrine of difference provided them room to operate. The identification of caring and co-operation as womanly values and women's long history of humanitarian work helped to secure a place for them in connection with the League's

social and humanitarian work. Because they were women and therefore, newcomers to the international arena, their tendency to call for League action in areas considered to be under national jurisdiction was treated with some tolerance by member states. These factors allowed women more freedom than men to give expression to the humanitarian ideals underlying the concept of international co-operation through the League. In this sense, women's contribution to the League's social and humanitarian work was vital. At the same time, they fostered an awareness of women as a group with specific needs that deserved attention from the international community. Chapter 5 shows that many of the gender-specific concerns placed on the League agenda would not otherwise have been raised at the international level by male diplomats, politicians and bureaucrats. At the same time it indicates that women's influence declined as the importance of the League's social activities grew.

During the 1920s questions concerning the status of women were raised indirectly in connection with certain aspects of the League's social and humanitarian work. Chapter 6 looks at the way in which the Depression and the rise of reactionary ideologies influenced feminists to call for more decisive League action on the status of women in the 1930s. Apart from the general agreement that international action was necessary there was little consensus among inter-war feminists over what League initiatives would prove most effective for improving women's rights. Yet the international campaign for women's rights was strengthened by contemporary moves to bring the protection of the rights of individuals within the scope of international law. The first equality issue inter-war feminists were able to raise at the Assembly was the nationality rights of married women. In an unprecedented move the Women's International Organizations were invited by the League Council in 1931 to form an advisory committee on nationality and the implications with regard to women's participation at the League are examined. The campaign for League action to support equality in nationality laws revealed that few member states were prepared to accept international intervention with regard to women's rights. One of the purposes of Chapter 6 is to trace the evolution of ideas about the international

dimension of women's rights which led ultimately to the formation of the League Committee of Inquiry on the Legal Status of Women in 1937.

All the Women's International Organizations were in favour of League sponsored conventions to improve the position of women. The essential point of controversy, however, was the Equal Rights Treaty proposed by equal rights organizations as a means to end all discrimination against women. Social feminist organizations opposed the Treaty mainly because it threatened protective legislation. Social feminists questioned whether the concept of equality adequately accounted for women's complex roles in society. Chapter 6 assesses their futile attempts to formulate alternatives to the Equal Rights Treaty. Their demand for a League sponsored investigation into the legal rights of women upon which future international action could be based was ultimately more successful. Unlike the equal rights organizations, the social feminist groups found some support for their goals inside the Secretariat. Chapter 6 highlights the impact of the tension between social and equal rights feminists at the League, suggesting that Inquiry into the Status of Women emerged as a compromise between the progressive demands of the equal rights feminists and the gradualist approach favoured by social feminists.

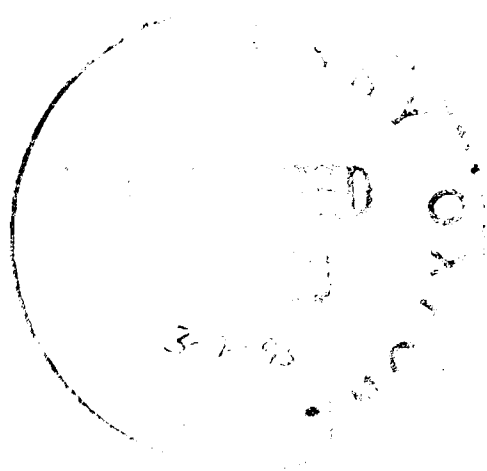
The main purpose of the seventh chapter is to assess the impact of traditional associations between women and peace on women's peace work at the League. Although women were active in the peace movement throughout the 1920s, this chapter focuses on their peace work at the League in the 1930s. It considers reasons why the Women's International Organizations' support for the League intensified rather than diminished as the League's popularity declined in the thirties. At one level, this was related to common humanitarian and internationalist ideals. Perhaps more important, however, was the reinforcement women's peace work received at the League. In the 1930s the League attempted to bolster support by intensifying collaboration with women. Chapter 7 compares cultural representations of women in different political settings and suggests that the image of women as pacifists was evoked in the context of League activities because it had political relevance. Yet while it encouraged the co-operation of

women, the League appeared to lack the political will to fully utilize women's supposed influence for peace. This raises further questions about the limitations of difference as a form of empowerment.

Chapter 7 also outlines the effects on the Women's International Organizations of the major international crises of the 1930s culminating in the outbreak of the Second World War. It reveals that women's disagreements over pacifism, sanctions and collective security paralleled divisions that broke apart the peace movement. In spite of conflicts over international policy, the women's peace lobby at the League remained united. There was a widespread conviction that women had a special influence to make to the cause of peace based on insights emerging from their experiences as mothers and their non-combatant roles, and yet the assertion of difference is particularly problematic in relation to claims about 'women and peace'. The study of women's peace work shows that the only unique response to the international situation articulated by the Women's International Organizations was the demand for equal rights: only with equality would women's influence for peace be fully available. In this context, Chapter 7 considers the way in which claims about women's special contribution to peace reinforced the demand for League action with regard to the status of women and paved the way for demands for women's participation in planning for post-war reconstruction in the early 1940s.

The conclusion analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the strategies adopted by inter-war feminists, in particular the consequences of the assertion of difference even by equal rights feminists. Ultimately the doctrine of difference (and the attendant assumptions about the special contribution to be made by women) appeared to legitimize women's presence at the League and to give them influence beyond their small numbers. Yet the emphasis on the benefits to the community that would accrue from the participation of women over the rights and dignity of women as individuals was not without repercussions. Women were often seen as a resource to be used by the League. At the same time, the conclusion points to specific ways in which women positively influenced the activities and development

of the League. They had a formative influence on its social and humanitarian work, and most importantly, they drew attention to the status of women. The contribution of both social and equal rights feminists in getting gender-specific issues on the League agenda is analyzed. Finally, reference is made to the way in which developments at the League laid the foundations for more comprehensive international action to advance the status of women after the Second World War.



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Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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St. Hilda's College
Hilary 1992

PREFACE

After completing my M.Sc. thesis on British feminists and the First World War, I wanted to know more about the post-war activities of these women. I knew that many of them became active in women's international organizations and that references to the League of Nations frequently appeared in the journals and newsletters of their organizations. It was not until my supervisor, Mrs. Janet Howarth, suggested that I investigate the League of Nations Archives at the United Nations Geneva and made me aware of the exchange program between St. Hilda's College and the Graduate Institute of International Studies (just a short walk from the UN) that this thesis began to take form: it was after my first trip to Geneva that I realized fully the importance of the League of Nations for inter-war feminists. Throughout the past four years Mrs. Howarth has generously shared her extensive knowledge of twentieth-century history, always ready with a reference to provide insight into some aspect of my work. She has patiently and conscientiously guided me through several drafts of my thesis and her interest in the subject helped to sustain my own.

The most important source for this thesis has been the League of Nations Archives. I am indebted to former Archivist, Sven Welanders, for directing me to collections and documents related women's activities. Assistant Archivist, A. Guindi, always went out of his way to bring to my attention references connected with my areas of interest. His colleague, Kyle Cobb, responded to my seemingly endless requests for documents with patience and humour. Anyone spending time at the League Archives benefits from the exchange of ideas and information with fellow-readers. In this connection I wish especially to thank Dr. Martin Dubin for his advice and encouragement. Frank Moorhouse shared my interest in Secretariat official Mary Craig McGeachy. He kindly provided information about her, including his interview with her shortly before she passed away in December 1991. He also put me in touch with her daughter, Janet Holmes, and it is with her permission that I cite Craig McGeachy's papers. All photographs included in this thesis have been reproduced with permission of the League of Nations Archives.

I am indebted to the archivists and staff of the Fawcett Library, London, the Headquarters of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Geneva, and the Headquarters of the International Federation of University Women, Geneva, for their cooperation and assistance. I thank Fernanda Perrone and Nancy Blakestad for exchanging ideas and references and for sharing with me their own experiences in the 'writing-up' process. Finally, thanks to my friends at St. Hilda's, especially Bonnie O'Brien and Susanna Boylston, for their moral support.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAWC	All Asian Women's Conference
AMSH	Association of Moral and Social Hygiene (Britain)
BDF	Bund Deutscher Frauen (Federation of German Women's Organizations)
CRWLN	Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations
ERI	Equal Rights International
IACW	Inter-American Commission of Women
IAWSEC	International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship; the title of the IWSA after 1926
ICW	International Council of Women
ICWG	International Co-operative Women's Guild
IFBPW	International Federation of Business and Professional Women
IFUW	International Federation of University Women
IFWMB	International Federation of Women Magistrates, Barristers and other Members of the Legal Profession
IUCWL	International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues
IWSA	International Women's Suffrage Alliance
LCWIO	Liaison Committee of the Women's International Organizations
LNU	League of Nations Union (Britain)
NCW	National Council of Women
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NUSEC	National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (Britain)
NUWT	National Union of Women Teachers (Britain)
NWP	National Woman's Party (USA)
ODI	Open Door International
PDCWIO	Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations
SJSPA	St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance
SPG	Six Point Group (Britain)
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WTUL	National Women's Trade Union League of America
WWCTU	World's Women's Christian Temperance Union
WWP	World Woman's Party
WUWIC	World Union of Women for International Concord
WYWCA	World's Young Women's Christian Association

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INTRODUCTION

The League of Nations provided an important stimulus for women's international work during the inter-war years. Women converged at the League to campaign for social reform, women's rights and peace. Networks developed among the Women's International Organizations that extended to include women with official positions inside the League system. These women's networks succeeded in placing on the League agenda gender-specific interests and concerns that would not otherwise have been raised at the international level by male diplomats, politicians and bureaucrats. Through a variety of institutional processes the Women's International Organizations and the League of Nations reinforced and transformed one another in significant ways.

Before discussing women's activities in connection with the formation of the League of Nations, some attempt must be made to define the way in which the term "Women's International Organizations" will be used in this thesis. The internationalization of the women's movement had begun in the late nineteenth century. The founders of the International Council of Women (ICW) in 1888 hoped that an international body of women might foster a sense of unity amongst women reformers divided at the national level between those who placed emphasis on purely political goals and those who had purely social goals.¹ In some ways this objective was achieved, yet it was soon discovered that differences could not be contained even at the international level. As a consequence, new international organizations emerged drawing together like-minded women from many countries who identified interests arising out of common experiences that transcended national boundaries. The leaders of national women's societies increasingly recognized the usefulness of exchanging information and of combining forces through cooperation with women's organizations from other countries.

The formation of the League of Nations gave a renewed impetus to the

¹Edith E. Hurwitz, "The International Sisterhood" in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p.329.

old organizations and stimulated the formation of new ones.² Prior to 1918 the international women's organizations were primarily communication and support networks. In the 1920s, their participation in League committees gave them a new, more official status. So too did the presence of several of their members on government delegations to the Assembly. Despite women's suffrage in numerous countries, many women continued to view voluntary organizations as an important means to exercise political influence. Of the fifteen groups identified in this thesis as 'the Women's International Organizations' seven were in existence prior to 1920 when the first League Assembly opened. The other eight were formed in the period between 1928-1931. Although the specific reasons for the formation of each group will be considered below, some generalizations can be made about their appearance at this juncture.

In the decade between the end of the Great War and 1928 numerous gains were made by women in many Western countries.³ In more than a dozen countries women won the right to vote and to stand for political office. In several countries new constitutions declared equality before the law for men and women. In these and other countries, public offices opened up to women. The decade also brought steps toward equalization in family and divorce law. By 1928, the principle of independent nationality rights for women had been recognized in the Scandinavian countries, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Certain groups of feminists, satisfied that legal equality for women was firmly established, turned their attention to different concerns including social reform and world peace. For other feminists, however, the piecemeal legislative victories were not moving women quickly enough toward equality. Still others discovered that equal rights to employment did not

²This pattern follows the general trend of formation of international groups after the Great War. Kjell Skjelsbaek, "The Growth of International Nongovernmental Organization in the Twentieth Century", *International Organization*, 25 (1971). The development of women's non-governmental organizations is described in Elsie Boulding, *Women in the Twentieth Century World* (New York: Halsted Press, 1977), pp.188-192.

³Gisbert H. Flanz, *Comparative Women's Rights and Political Participation in Europe* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Transnational Publishers, 1983). For a discussion of the limits of these achievements in Britain see Chapter 4 in Harold L. Smith, *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990).

necessarily end discrimination against women in pay and promotion. The economic depression marked the beginning of the second decade of the inter-war period, 1929-1939, which brought the rise of conservative and anti-feminist policies. In this atmosphere, further advances in the direction of equal rights for women became increasing difficult, particularly in the field of economic rights. The new international groups established in the late 1920s and early 1930s reflected these frustrations; in general, they were single-issue organizations working either for equal rights or to advance the interests of professional women.

Although individual women's organizations were often singled out by the League for attention there was a tendency on the part of Secretariat members and League delegates to group them together as the Women's International Organizations or the Women's International Associations. The women's organizations themselves sought to encourage the image of a united front of women: they formed various international consultative committees through which they lobbied the League. In fact, women's international work in the inter-war period was largely determined by the networks of friendship and co-operation among the women who converged at Geneva as members of the Secretariat, the Assembly, the League committees and of the Women's International Organizations.⁴

The few references made by historians to inter-war Women's International Organizations relate almost exclusively to the International Council of Women and the International Woman Suffrage Alliance.⁵ Most often their activities are seen as a continuation of pre-war work. Although these may have been the two most important societies, the activities of other international women's societies warrant consideration. Indeed, the multiplication of international women's organizations has been left unexamined by historians. Yet their existence and the extent to which organized women chose to pursue their goals through the League of Nations

⁴Discussion of the political significance in the inter-war years of a 'network' of American women is found in Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women and the New Deal* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁵See below, pp. 10-12.

is an important facet of the inter-war women's movement and had a lasting impact.⁶ Links forged with the League were to be sustained with the United Nations. In 1962 there were twenty-four international women's organizations holding consultative status with one of the branches of the United Nations: twenty of these were in existence during the inter-war period.⁷

As defined by Boy in 1936: "[u]ne association internationale féminine est un groupement de femmes de nations différentes, qui se réunissent dans un but pouvant intéresser les femmes de plusieurs pays".⁸

If one follows this definition, there were approximately forty international women's organizations in existence during the inter-war years (See Appendix 1). Several of these organizations were no more than regional organizations, taking liberties with the word international in their titles. This is especially true of several American societies. Moreover, many were small and inactive organizations. As noted above, there were also several consultative bodies created by the Women's International Organizations to co-ordinate activities. The first such umbrella group, the Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organizations for securing the appointment of women to the International and Expert Committees of the League of Nations was created in 1926. In 1931 a second group was formed, the Liaison Committee of the Women's International Organizations, with the aim "to secure intercommunication between the member organisations in cases where it is agreed that co-operation would be desirable".⁹ In 1936, the two committees were amalgamated under the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations to serve as a medium of intercommunication and co-operation between the member

⁶Of the forty-seven international women's organizations listed in Mary Buchanan, *World Directory of Women's Organisations* (London, 1953), forty were operating during the inter-war years.

⁷Committee of Correspondence, *Women's International Non-Governmental Organizations Directory* (New York, 1962).

⁸Magdeleine Boy, *Les Associations Internationales Féminines*, doctoral thesis defended before the Faculty of Law, University of Lyon, July 1936, (Lyon: Paquet, 1936), p.9.

⁹Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations, *An Experiment in Co-operation 1925-1945: The History of the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations* with foreword by Viscount Cecil of Chelwood (London, 1945), p.4.

organizations and to develop the influence of women in international affairs. The Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations was formed in 1931 to co-ordinate women's peace work.

These three committees brought together many of the international organizations of women to lobby the League and thus encouraged the tendency for the League to speak in terms of the Women's International Organizations. Still, it is difficult to ascertain exactly which groups may have been called to mind when the term "Women's International Organizations" was used by Assembly delegates or members of the Secretariat. According to mailing lists and other League documents, it appears most often to have been used to designate a smaller group of organizations that actively lobbied the League during the 1920s and 1930s. Appendix 2 gives details of fifteen women's organizations either listed on League committees as comprising the Women's International Organizations or members of the three liaison bodies of the Women's International Organizations active in Geneva during the period.¹⁰

While not comprising the entire international women's movement the organizations listed in Appendix 2 were the most active part of it; moreover, these societies consciously attributed to the League a primary role in their international work. Secretariat officials sometimes challenged the claim made by the liaison bodies to represent 'the women of the world' because they did not represent labor or Catholic women. This was not intentional. Labour women preferred to form women's sections of labor and socialist organizations and remained aloof from the other women's organizations. Nor did the consultative bodies represent socialist and communist women. These women had their own groups: the World Committee of Women against War and Fascism (1934) and the Women's International Matteotti Committee (To combat Fascism and assist its Victims).¹¹ Neither

¹⁰The decision to focus on these fifteen societies is an attempt to make the analysis more manageable. These societies have been systematically identified as those which were most likely to have been included under the rubric "Women's International Organizations".

¹¹No one at the Secretariat appeared to know anything about the Matteotti Committee, though one official believed that it was being used by Sylvia Pankhurst "to voice her own views on a number of subjects". League of Nations Archives [hereafter cited as LNA], Major Abraham, memo

actively lobbied the League.

The most important of the several Catholic women's organizations operating during the inter-war years was the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues (IUCWL) which in the 1930s claimed a membership of thirty-three million women. While it viewed inequalities between men and women as unjust, it was against extending any liberties to women which might risk the stability of the family. The President of the IUCWL was nominated by the Pope and the Union claimed to work in a spirit of complete submission to his directives. The IUCWL lobbied the League, primarily on questions of moral reform, but rarely participated in the activities of the other women's organizations.¹² There were other international societies, such as the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, the International Bureau for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and the Federation of National Unions for the Protection of Girls, which were either run entirely by women or in which women were actively involved. Like the IUCWL they do not appear to have been involved in the activities of the Women's International Organizations. Furthermore, when non-governmental organizations were invited to send assessors to sit on League social committees, each of these three groups sent their own representatives whereas the Women's International Organizations were jointly represented. While a few of the other women's societies may be mentioned in passing, this thesis focuses on those fifteen organizations identified in Appendix 2 as the Women's International Organizations. The term Women's International Organizations will be used here to refer to these specific groups as distinct from international women's organizations which is used more generally. While all these groups would now be referred to women's international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the inter-war usage has been employed throughout most of this thesis.

to A. Kallia, 31 October 1935, 50/20633/5681 R5669.

¹²Originally the assessors for the Women's International Organizations were intended to represent the IUCWL but the IUCWL soon demanded, and received, separate representation in order to put forward the Catholic point of view on questions coming before the committees. Boy (1936), p.80-88.

Some attempt must also be made to define the way in which the term feminism will be used in this thesis. Pfeffer distinguishes between equalitarians or feminists and social reformers, arguing that such terminology was employed in the inter-war period by members of the American National Woman's Party in the course of their international campaigns.¹³ Yet many of the women who were described by NWP members as social reformers, actually referred to themselves as feminists. This is true of many members of the IWSA. In general, the term feminist appears to have been used rather broadly in the inter-war years. The 1933 edition of the *Shorter English Dictionary* defined feminism as "[a]dvocacy of the claims and rights of women". At the League of Nations the terms feminist organizations and women's organizations were used interchangeably, as was feminist movement and women's movement. Yet some women who, by action or example, worked at the international level to improve the status of women did not see themselves as feminists. This was true of several Secretariat officials for whom the term feminist appears to have been equated with equal rights extremism.

There has been a tendency among historians to argue either for limiting the term to equal rights ideology or expanding it to include all activity to improve the situation of women in society.¹⁴ Given the different uses during the inter-war period, neither the narrow nor the broad definition of feminism can be entirely adequate. Indeed, it is difficult to find a definition that can accommodate the nuances of inter-war usage, as well as the needs of historical analysis. In general, a broad definition of feminism - denoting activity to change women's position in society - will be used in this thesis. This approach, however, does not presuppose an underlying unity of ideology or practice, but integrates the

¹³Paula F. Pfeffer, "'A Whisper in the Assembly of Nations' United States' Participation in the International Movement for Women's Rights from the League of Nations to the United Nations" in *Women's Studies International Forum* [hereafter cited as *WSIF*], 8, 5 (1985), pp.459-471.

¹⁴See Rosalind Delamar, "What is Feminism?" in Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakely (eds.), *What is Feminism? a Re-Examination* (N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1986); Philippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism 1850-1900* (London: Hutchison, 1987), pp. 14-18 and Chapter 1, "Configuring Feminism Historically" in *Levine's Feminist Lives in Victorian England Private Roles and Public Commitment* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

idea of a plurality of feminisms. The proliferation of international women's organizations in the 1920s and 1930s emerged from the identification of diverse goals and priorities amongst women. It is necessary, then, to confront the general lack of unity in the women's movement in the period.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to regard the movement as entirely fragmented. The process of splintering into single-issue organizations was countered by the formation of rather tenuous alliances made possible by a shared commitment to improving the status of women. Such alliances helped to ensure that single-issue societies became drawn into a wide variety of causes. One of the distinguishing features of the inter-war women's movement was the convergence of the causes of social reform, equal rights and peace on the agendas of the Women's International Organizations. Even avowedly equal rights organizations in practice were seldom able to adhere strictly to their equal rights platform, which is one reason why it is more useful to use feminism in the context of activity rather than equal rights ideology.

Despite the process of convergence, the Women's International Organizations faced irreconcilable differences regarding strategy. In the Secretariat the split was characterized as between 'moderates' and 'extremists'. A distinction between social feminism and equal rights feminism has been employed in this thesis. Social feminism designates an emphasis on advancing the status of women through the recognition of women's special needs and qualities, and as will be seen, does not necessarily exclude the demand for equal treatment for women if women's interests would thereby be best protected. In contrast, equal rights or equality feminism emphasizes women's similarity to men and the need for complete legal equality as the means to emancipate women. Taken together, the Women's International Organizations have been described as feminist, but every effort has been made to identify the distinct orientation of each organization. Whether they were more or less feminist has been judged not on the basis of their commitment to equal rights ideology but on their conscious activity to improve the status of women.

Women's international work during the inter-war years has been noted by historians but not explored in any detail. Evans describes "the growing enmeshment of international women's organisations in the international bureaucracy created by the League of Nations and its satellite organisations such as the International Labour Office" though his own research explores only the period up to 1920.¹⁵ Hurwitz claims that the League of Nations and its agencies offered great potential to Women's International Organizations for promoting their programs but by 1939, they had achieved no greater influence than "an advisory function".¹⁶ Hurwitz attributes this failure to the League's unresponsiveness to their claims. She considers the lobby efforts of only two of the dozens of groups operating in the period, the ICW and the IWSA and, as a result, has not uncovered the disagreements among women's organizations about the desirability of anything more than an advisory function. Moreover, although most women's organizations believed they could promote their programs through the League, the League itself was in some ways constrained by the fact that the Women's International Organizations placed conflicting demands before it.

The scholarship on British feminists of the inter-war period makes reference to feminists' internationalist work. Harrison notes that several of the women in his group-biography were involved with the ICW and IWSA. He contends that the diversion of feminist energy into international work contributed to the gradual decline of domestic feminism.¹⁷ However, he does not explore the significance of this shift for international feminism. Alberti also emphasizes the high priority attributed to international work by British feminists.¹⁸ She identifies the gradual

¹⁵Richard Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America, and Australasia, 1840-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p.241.

¹⁶Hurwitz (1977), p.341.

¹⁷Brian Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries Portraits of British Feminists between the Wars* (Oxford: OUP, 1987).

¹⁸Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage Feminists in War and Peace, 1914-28* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1989), especially Chapter 8 "International Feminism, 1921-28".

convergence of equal rights, social reform and pacifism as one of the features of inter-war feminism, and describes the problems this raised for some equal rights feminists in the IWSA when their organization embraced such a variety of causes. Alberti's observation is an important one, but she does not explore the way in which alliances with other women's international organizations and contact with the League of Nations contributed to the proliferation of the IWSA's causes.

Only Pfeffer examines directly feminist activities at the League of Nations.¹⁹ She traces the efforts of members of the American National Women's Party (NWP) to have an Equal Rights Treaty adopted by member states of the League of Nations, attributing their ultimate failure to the opposition from social reformers who believed that the improvement in the position of women would come through more gradual measures. She asserts that the feminists of the NWP supplied most of the leadership for the international women's movement. Yet in her emphasis on the NWP, Pfeffer underestimates the role played at the international level by other equalitarian societies such as the Equal Rights International. Moreover, Pfeffer is dismissive of the international activities of social reformers to improve the status of women through piecemeal legislative reforms; as a result, she presents a rather one-sided picture of women's international work at the League of Nations. Furthermore, she does not examine Secretariat documents for an understanding of the institutional processes at work that may have limited the effectiveness of equal rights activists. Similar criticisms can be made regarding other scholarship on the NWP, though in general, the work on the NWP provides some insight into the importance of the League of Nations for equal rights feminists.²⁰

What little research that exists on women's international work in the inter-war period tends to locate the analysis in feminism rather than in

¹⁹Pfeffer (1985).

²⁰See Introduction by Thomas C. Pardo in *The National Woman's Party Papers, 1913-1974: A Guide to the Microfilm Edition* (Sanford, North Carolina: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1979) and Susan D. Becker, *The Origins of the Equal Rights Amendment: American Feminism Between the Wars* Contributions in Women's Studies, Number 23 (London: Greenwood Press, 1981).

the context of international relations. But what is the significance of women's forays into the international arena via the League of Nations? Interest and support for the League was certainly part of the political culture of the 1920s, but Women's International Organizations' involvement with the League was strengthened rather than diminished as the League fell out of favour in the 1930s. It was the convergence of a number of factors that made the League of Nations particularly appealing to women. Disillusioned by the war, newly enfranchised women in many countries looked with hope to the League of Nations. They were convinced that the 'new' diplomacy heralded by the League would take international relations out of the hands of diplomats - almost universally blamed for the outbreak of the war in 1914 - and place them on a more democratic footing, open to the influence of public opinion. Precisely at the moment that women achieved the suffrage in many countries, international affairs seemed to offer a new field for public participation.²¹ Within this framework, it is all the more significant that from its formation, women had the right to serve in all positions in connection with the League, whereas women were excluded from the diplomatic services in most countries until after the Second World War.²²

The sustained interest in the League of Nations also stemmed from two major inter-war developments in international organization. Through its work to guarantee the rights and welfare of minorities and inhabitants of mandated territories, the League of Nations created a role for itself in the legal protection of human rights.²³ The concept that fundamental individual rights could be protected through international law had

²¹Florence Brewer Boeckel, "Women in International Affairs", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 143 (May 1926), p.231.

²²For a comparison of attitudes towards women in the League and the British Diplomatic Service see Carol Miller, "Women in International Relations? The Debate in Inter-war Britain" in Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (eds.), *Gender and International Relations* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991).

²³J.G. Starke, *Studies in International Law* (London: Butterworth's, 1965), especially Chapter 10, "The Contribution of the League of Nations to the Evolution of International Law"; and Chapter 3, "La compétence de la Société des Nations, en ce qui concerne la question féminine", Ki-Tcheng, *La Femme et la Société des Nations* (Paris, 1928).

particular relevance for advancing the status of women. Some jurists believed that the League's involvement in various questions concerning the status of women could lead to the codification of international law protecting the legal rights of women. If trends in this direction appealed to equal rights feminists, social feminists were encouraged by the League's expanding functions in the field of social welfare. From the early 1930s the League took on a new role as a co-ordinator of social and economic programs, from housing to nutrition to improving living standards.²⁴

This thesis gives prominence to inter-war feminism played against the backdrop of institutional processes and international developments at the League. In this context, it draws upon ideas presented in the growing body of literature on women and international relations.²⁵ International relations are not gender neutral; indeed, gender is a useful analytical concept for understanding women's international work. Introducing gender into the examination of international relations does more than raise questions about the marginalization of women. In much of this scholarship, women's claims for the right to assert their influence in international affairs are interpreted as offering alternative ways of thinking about international problems. By comparison with traditional 'male' thinking, women's approach to international relations is characterized as less State-centric, more likely to presuppose an interconnectedness among nations and generally without preconceived notions of a split between national and international authority: 'the personal is political' becomes 'the personal is international'.

Much of the recent work on women and international relations must be understood, in part, as a challenge to realist or neo-realist approaches

²⁴Martin D. Dubin, "Toward the Bruce Report: the economic and social programs of the League of Nations in the Avenol era" in *The League of Nations in Retrospect* (Berlin, N.Y.: Walter de Gruyter, 1983).

²⁵Recent works include "Women and International Relations" Special Issue of *Millennium Journal of International Studies* [hereafter cited as *Millennium*], 17, 3 (Winter 1988); Grant and Newland (1991), *Gender and International Relations*; Jean Bethke Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (eds.), *Women, Militarism, and War Essays in History, Politics, and Social Theory* (Savage, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1990); and Nancy Loring Goldman (ed.), *Female Soldiers - Combatants or Noncombatants? Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982).

of the post-Second World War period. This is important, for in some ways scholars are engaged in a process of reclaiming liberal notions about international relations which gained prominence earlier in the century. Moreover, like many feminists of this earlier period they interpret the absence of women from positions of power in the international arena as one of the major obstacles to establishing more just and peaceful relations between nations.

Nevertheless, empirical work in the field provides some evidence to support claims about a distinct women's approach to international relations. Crapol's collection of essays on the careers of eight women who sought to influence American foreign policy from the 1830s to the 1980s shows that women have traditionally operated as outsiders in questions of foreign affairs and as such they have tended to be more pacifistic than men.²⁶ In her analysis of the foreign policy views of American women at the turn of the century, Papchristous found that female foreign policy activists rejected the instrumentalist view of the state as an entity with a life and ethic of its own, perceiving it, instead, as a collection of individuals, each morally responsible for his or her actions. American foreign policy was viewed by women as an expression and reflection of the men in power, whose values of aggressiveness and competitiveness were inimical to women's values precisely because they were male values.²⁷

Of the research on gender and international relations, the empirical and theoretical writings on 'women and peace' are of particular relevance to this thesis because the stereotypical association of women with peace and men with war figured centrally in inter-war discourse on women in international relations.²⁸ For this reason, studies that do not consider

²⁶Edward P. Crapol (ed.), *Women and American Foreign Policy: Lobbyists, Critics, and Insiders* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987). See also Jason Berger, *A New Deal for the World: Eleanor Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

²⁷Judith Papachristous, "American Women and Foreign Policy, 1898-1905: Exploring Gender in Diplomatic History", *Diplomatic History*, 14, 4 (Fall 1990).

²⁸Along with works cited above, see Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pluto Press, 1983); Ruth Roach Pierson, *Women and Peace: Theoretical Historical and Practical Perspectives* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); and Janice Williamson and Deborah

the workings of gender have overlooked an important aspect of inter-war history. In his major work on the inter-war peace movement Ceadel does not consider the peace activities of women as a distinct historical phenomenon.²⁹ Ceadel's typology does not allow for the possibility of a distinct feminist pacifism.³⁰ Feminism is merely grouped with temperance and vegetarianism as one of many orientations of pacifists. No attempt is made to understand the way in which women's own experiences and analyses might have led them to peace work. Likewise, Whittick asserts that the fact that peace and disarmament were among the major concerns of mankind in the early thirties "was sufficient justification for all women's organisations to participate as fully as possible in the furtherance of such activities".³¹ Such analyses fail to consider the significance of the popular idea that women had a special role to play in the peace movement.

In the writings on 'women and peace' two distinct positions can be discerned. The first approach, known as feminist standpoint or feminist epistemology, is essentially a re-working of social feminism.³² It celebrates the positive power and knowledge flowing from women's experiences as women. Two inter-related lines of argument are pursued. Sometimes women's life-creating and nurturing roles are emphasized: the kind of labor performed by women as housewives, mothers and carers leads them to develop certain qualities of a pacific and co-operative nature. Alternatively, the focus is placed on women's traditional exclusion from the military. This exclusion gives women a special vantage point and special insights with which to assess the role of war in human relations.

Gorham (eds.), *Up and Doing Canadian Women and Peace* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1989).

²⁹Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945 The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

³⁰This argument is made in Naomi Black, *Social Feminism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp.147-48.

³¹Arnold Whittick, *Woman into Citizen* (London: Athenaeum with Frederick Muller, 1979), p.107.

³²This approach has been adapted by some theorists on women and international relations from discussions in Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

Thus, equipped with such qualities and experiences, women perceive not only human relationships but relations between nation states differently from men. Most important, they reject the assumption that international relations must be based on considerations of national interest and emphasize instead values of co-operation and interdependence.

This approach is essentially prescriptive, arguing for new (female) values to replace the (male) war ethic. The tendency to deduce an anti-war stance from women's non-combatant roles also figured centrally in inter-war discourse on 'women and peace'. Yet deriving a feminist stance on peace from women's roles as mothers and arguing for such an approach because women are normally excluded from the means of warfare are two distinct theoretical positions, the latter allowing the possibility of female militarists if women were placed in combatant roles.³³ Proponents of a feminist epistemology have come under criticism from equal rights feminists because they support and sustain traditional images of women.³⁴ The alternative feminist line holds that military participation validates women's status as equal citizens. This line was not taken up during the inter-war period, however, not even by Women's International Organizations of an equal rights orientation. The idea that women's subordination was perpetuated by association between women and peace was never directly addressed. In the context of the arguments about 'women and peace' even equal rights feminists were inclined to uphold traditional ideas about women, thus raising further questions about the power of the stereotypical image of women as pacifists.

Contemporary debates over feminist epistemology and its potential contribution in the field of international relations may appear to have little relevance in the examination of inter-war feminism. It is significant, however, that inter-war feminists also based their claims for participation in the international arena on the concept of difference, and

³³For analysis of the distinction between the two approaches see Ruth Roach Pierson, "Women in war, peace and revolution" in Sharon Macdonald, Pat Holden and Shirley Ardener (eds.), *Images of Women in Peace and War* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

³⁴See Janet Radcliffe Richards, "Why the Pursuit of Peace is No Part of Feminism" in Elshtain and Tobias (1990).

the values and viewpoints which emerged from this difference.³⁵ In doing so, they were inclined to speak of 'women' and 'peace' as if they were inseparably connected. If feminist epistemology lends some insight into ideas sustaining the 'women and peace' union, the de-constructionist approach provides an analytical tool for examining the ironies and counterpoints in discourse on 'women and peace'. In this second approach, women is not taken as a self-evident category (nor, for that matter, is peace) and thus all statements involving women, whoever pronounces them, must be treated critically.³⁶ History is seen as a narrative text which can be read by exploring the "diverse discourses and the political claims and social identities they sustain".³⁷ Within this framework, 'women and peace' is interpreted as a social, political and historical construct; the connection between women and peace has been imposed upon women along with their stereotyped roles and qualities and their traditional position as non-combatants. As such, the pacifist sentiment attributed to women can be easily undermined because it emerges from images of women cast as supporters of men. Women's opposition to war on behalf of their sons can quickly transform into women's support for the 'war effort' for these same sons, turned soldiers.³⁸ Indeed, these two phenomena co-existed during the inter-war years. The cultural images of women exhibited at the League of Nations bore little resemblance to those used to mobilize women in authoritarian states. This thesis seeks to illustrate the way in women's international work was both fortified, and at the same time circumscribed, by the complex weaving of gendered roles and activities.

A variety of sources exist on women's international work between the wars. The League of Nations Archives proved a surprisingly rich source on

³⁵For development of concept of 'difference' see Jane Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

³⁶See for instance, Berenice A. Carroll, "Feminism and Pacifism: Historical and Theoretical Connections" in Pierson (1987).

³⁷Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p.x.

³⁸Williamson and Gorham (1989), p.31.

women's international activities. Along with the official League documents relating to the questions concerning women, extensive correspondence survives between the Secretariat and Women's International Organizations. There are also detailed reports by Secretariat members who attended the conferences of Women's International Organizations. Each organization made a point of sending its publications, reports and newsletters to the Secretariat. Sometimes these documents are found in Secretariat files but a more complete set is located in the United Nations Library, Geneva, which took over the holdings of the League of Nations Library after the war.

For further insight into the relations among Women's International Organizations the papers of several of these organizations have been consulted. Because the Women's International Organizations referred to here represent a core of about twelve societies, the papers of some of the less important groups have not been examined, though some understanding of their activities can be acquired through published histories, documents that made their way into the League Library and correspondence with other societies and with the Secretariat. Moreover, the histories of some of the larger societies have been well-documented.³⁹ Though incomplete, the minutes of meetings of the various liaison bodies - comprising most of the Women's International Organizations examined here - are also an important source on inter-organizational relations. The numerous inter-war women's journals published either independently or by the Women's International Organizations have been consulted. It should be emphasized that the Women's International Organizations have been considered primarily in the context of their activities in connection with the League of Nations. As a consequence, the portrait of their activities presented here is

³⁹ICW: International Council of Women, *Women in a Changing World Dynamic Story of the International Council of Women* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966). IAWSEC: Adele Schrieber and Margaret Mathieson, *Journey Towards Freedom* (Copenhagen: International Alliance of Women, 1955); Whittick (1979) *Woman into Citizen*; and Mineke Bosch (ed.), *Politics and Friendship: Letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, 1902-1942* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990). IFUW: Edith C. Batho, *A Lamp of Friendship* (London: International Federation of University Women). WILPF: Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965; 1980), Anne Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women* (London: Pandora Press, 1985) and Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1989). WYWCA: Anna V. Rice, *A History of the World's Young Women's Christian Association* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1947).

incomplete.

Both the League and Women's International Organizations made an effort to recruit women from a wide variety of nationalities. The receptions hosted by Women's International Organizations at the time of the Assembly each year drew together the world's leading women. The careers of the prominent European and American women have been easier to trace than the Latin American women or women from non-Western countries. The papers of a few individuals who held official posts either at the League or in Women's International Organizations have been examined. It has been impossible, however, to provide more than brief biographical sketches of the women active in Geneva during the inter-war years (See Appendix 5). Reference has been made to autobiographies or biographies where they exist. The emphasis placed on British women in this thesis has been unavoidable. British women dominated the leadership of the major Women's International Organizations. Furthermore, Britain's influence at the League guaranteed a higher proportion of British women in official posts.

Women's international work in the inter-war years was by no means confined to the League, however. Women's activities in connection with the International Labour Office are only discussed where they intersect with topics addressed by the League Assembly, mainly for the reason that the ILO had its own secretariat and assembly, and as a consequence, its own women's networks; these networks deserve more consideration than can be given here. Women's activities in connection with Indian and colonial women have recently attracted historical interest, but will not be addressed here except in the context of the League's Mandates Commission.⁴⁰ The decision to cover women's international work during the entire inter-war period may seem at first ambitious. Yet the focus on women's activities at the League of Nations helps to define a manageable set of parameters for the study. By tracing women's activities in Geneva over the inter-war period, it is possible to demonstrate the way in which the League of Nations and the

⁴⁰Jane Haggis, "Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism", *WSIF*, 13, 1-2 (1990), pp.105-115 and Barbara N. Ramusack, "Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945", *WSIF*, 13, 4 (1990), pp.309-321.

Women's International Organizations interacted with and reinforced one another in important and lasting ways.

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE FORMATION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The first priority of the Women's International Organizations after the Great War was to secure the representation of women in the League of Nations and its subsidiary bodies. The Central Committee of the Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes, the French affiliate of the IWSA, called a Conference of Women to coincide with meetings of the Paris Peace Conference in the winter of 1919.¹ Delegates included feminists from Allied countries and the United States. In February, a delegation from this Inter-Allied Conference of Women Suffragists headed by the leader of the British suffragist movement, Millicent Garrett Fawcett (IWSA), met with President Wilson. Wilson supported the request that women's interests be represented at the Peace Conference. The Commission on International Labour Legislation was the first to receive a women's delegation. British feminist, Margery Corbett Ashby (IWSA) led the women's delegation. She had two months earlier stood unsuccessfully as a Liberal Party candidate in the first general election in which women could run for Parliament. Corbett Ashby and other members of the women's delegation asked that all posts in connection with the International Labour Organization (ILO) be open to men and women on an equal basis. Further requests regarding labor issues included equal pay for equal work, prohibition of child labor below the age of fifteen and paid rest at confinement.²

A few weeks later, at its final session of 10 April 1919, the League of Nations Commission received a delegation of sixteen women from the ICW and IWSA.³ According to the ICW, the women's delegation was described by President Wilson as representing "the mothers of the world".⁴ Lady

¹See Whittick (1979), p.70. The constitution of the League, known as the League Covenant, was adopted by the Conference in April 1919.

²Whittick (1979), p.71.

³ICW (1966), Appendix 7, "An Account of the ICW Delegation received by the Committee for the League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference", p.345.

⁴ICW (1966), p. 45.

Aberdeen, President of the ICW, also recounted words exchanged during the Peace Conference with General Smuts of South Africa who told her that if the world was to be rebuilt women would have to do it.⁵ Still, it had taken several months and numerous personal appeals to leading statesmen before the Commission was persuaded to give women a hearing, and then only on "matters which had a bearing upon the claims of women".⁶

According to Corbett Ashby, they met the Commission "in an atmosphere of curiosity, some indifference and some sympathy".⁷ President Wilson and his colleagues were informed by the women's organizations that it would "harmonise with our ideals to support the League of Nations".⁸ The delegation presented a 'Memorial of the Women' covering resolutions on five areas of specific interest to women. Women asked not only for equal representation at the League of Nations but that the Peace Conference and the League proclaim the principle of women's suffrage. Other resolutions dealt with moral, education and health questions. Those on the moral status of women urged League action to suppress the sale of and traffic in women and children and to establish the principle of women's liberty of choice in marriage.⁹

The issues raised before the two Commissions suggest that women were anxious to have subjects that interested them at the national level brought to the international level for consideration by the League and the ILO. Indeed, the Women's International Organizations were quick to identify the machinery and institutional devices of the League as instruments for broad political and social reforms. In this early move into the

⁵Story recounted in Isabel Willis, "The League of Nations Union", *Catholic Citizen*, 5, 8, 15 August 1919.

⁶12th Meeting of the League of Nations Committee, 24 March 1919, cited in David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, Vol. 2 (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1928) p.344.

⁷M. Corbett Ashby, "Enter Madame on The International Stage" in *Independent Woman* (February, 1929), p.54.

⁸Lord and Lady Aberdeen, "We Twa" *Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen*, Vol. 1 (London: W. Collins Sons & Co., 1925), p.305.

⁹"Memorial of Women" presented by Conseil International des Femmes and Conference des Femmes Suffragistes des Pays Allies et Des Etats-Unis, in David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, Vol.8 (New York: printed privately, 1928), Document 744.

international arena women were cautious, conciliatory and gained the respect of Wilson and other commissioners for presenting their arguments concisely and within the allotted time.¹⁰ The proposals they submitted can best be defined as gradualist. For example, the resolution on women's suffrage presented to the League of Nations Commission read:

"Que le bien fondé du principe du suffrage féminin soit proclamé par la Conférence de la Paix et la Ligue des Nations afin qu'il reçoive son application dans le monde entier aussi rapidement que le permettront le degré de civilisation et le développement démocratique de chaque nation".¹¹

The careful approach of the Delegation is best illustrated by its decision not to present the more controversial demands of 'The International Charter of Women's Rights and Liberties' which had been adopted by the Women's Conference.¹² Among other things, the Charter demanded equal nationality rights for married women, an issue which was to prove very problematic for the League when it was eventually placed on the international agenda in the 1930s. Moreover, the Charter specifically requested international intervention to eliminate social, religious and domestic customs which amounted to "Slavery in Marriage".

With regard to broader international issues Corbett Ashby (IWSA) asked that Germany be invited to attend the first meeting of the ILO and Lady Aberdeen (ICW) made a statement in favour of the control and reduction of armaments. But, in general, the topics that women addressed at the Peace Conference focused on questions which directly affected women. If women were to have a part in the rebuilding of the world, and their reception at the Peace Conference gave them some optimism about this, their vision of a juster, saner world was one in which the interests of women were taken into fuller consideration. Of course, the content of their speeches was largely determined by the topics on which they were invited

¹⁰Marjorie Pentland, *A Bonnie Fetcher* (London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd, 1952), p.139.

¹¹"Memorial of Women", reproduced in Hunter Miller (1928), *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, Vol.8, Document 744.

¹²"The International Charter of Women's Rights and Liberties", drafted by Nina C. Boyle and intended for presentation to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919 in LNA 11A/7086/7086 R3018.

to speak -"women's issues".

Although women's influence at the Peace Conference was limited, they succeeded in bringing attention to some of their concerns. Moreover, they were instrumental in having included in the Covenant Article 7 which provided that "all positions under or in connection with the League, including the Secretariat, shall be open to men and women". League Secretariat member E.F. Ranshofen-Wertheimer later claimed that the inclusion of Article 7 was already settled "before the feminist pressure groups caught President Wilson's ear".¹³ As evidence he pointed to the fact that on 26 March 1919, two weeks before the League of Nations Commission received the women's delegation, the Commission adopted an amendment moved by Lord Robert Cecil that women should be eligible for the personnel of the League.¹⁴ According to her biographer, however, Lady Aberdeen had approached Cecil immediately upon hearing that the Commission would grant the women's delegation an audience, explaining to him that her main point as head of the delegation would be that as half the people of the world were women, women should be equally eligible with men to serve in positions under the League.¹⁵ She was overjoyed when he promptly volunteered to introduce such a clause before the Commission himself.¹⁶

When the women's delegation eventually appeared before the League of Nations Commission, President Wilson could demonstrate good will by announcing that women had the right to all posts in connection with the League of Nations. Although the meeting was described by one member of the Commission, David Hunter Miller, as a "formality", the inclusion of Article 7 did suggest a general consensus that women had a role to play at the international level through the League of Nations. In contrast, most

¹³E.F. Ranshofen-Wertheimer, *The International Secretariat: A Great Experiment in International Administration* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945), p.366.

¹⁴Hunter Miller (1928), *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, Vol.7, Document 612.

¹⁵Pentland (1952), p.139.

¹⁶This account is supported by Corbett Ashby's article in *Independent Woman* and by Constance Drexel, "Woman's Part in the League of Nations", Article 11 in LNA 23/289/289 R1356.

foreign offices continued to block the appointment of women to diplomatic posts throughout the inter-war period.

It is doubtful whether Article 7 would have been included in the Covenant without the efforts of private interventions on behalf of Lady Aberdeen and her colleagues; furthermore, the Commission must have been influenced in its adoption of the amendment by the presence in Paris of women campaigning for such an end. The incident is an example of strategies adopted by women as political outsiders. Women often achieved their aims through personal petitions to friends and acquaintances who were political insiders. Lady Aberdeen was particularly adept at this form of manoeuvring and was able to exploit an impressive network of political and social contacts. Her father had been a Liberal M.P. and she grew up in the company of the Liberal Prime Minister and statesman, Gladstone. Her husband enjoyed a long diplomatic career culminating in his appointment as Governor-General of Canada in 1893. Lady Aberdeen continued draw upon her contacts at the international level throughout the 1920s, among them the first Secretary-General of the League, former British diplomat Sir Eric Drummond.

The Paris Peace Conference set the stage for relations between the League of Nations and women's organizations during the next two decades. However optimistic women may have been about references to their role in re-building the world after the war, the reality was that they were called upon mainly to advise on questions "touching on women's interests". They were treated with courtesy and even encouraged in their lobby efforts. Yet if women were to play an equal part in international affairs at the League it would take some persistence and a lot of patience.

The Women's International Organizations formed before and after the Great War shared many common elements of the liberal ideology upon which the League of Nations was founded. They believed that evolutionary progress and gradual reform through the spread of democracy, education and humane values - including justice for women - would give rise to a more

peaceful world.¹⁷ The middle-class philanthropists who founded the International Council of Women in 1888 sought to bring together women divided by religion, race, politics, class and nationality in search for a liberal consensus upon which to base reform politics. The official history of the Council proudly recounts the fact that from its foundation in 1888, the ICW had been engaged in international collaboration toward the ideals of peace and human welfare and that on different occasions three eminent statesmen - Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister Edward Beneš, British Foreign Secretary Sir John Simon and General Smuts of South Africa - had saluted the ICW as the 'mother' or forerunner of the League of Nations.¹⁸ The International Women's Suffrage Alliance, founded in 1904 by a splinter group of ICW members frustrated by the Council's unwillingness to place the women's suffrage at the head of its agenda, shared the conviction that peace would be nurtured by the spread of democracy and the enfranchisement of women. And the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) formed during the war as a result of the conflict among IWSA members over the centrality of peace to women's emancipation, was also a product of this liberal heritage. These organizations shared an optimism about the power of education and enlightened public opinion to reform the world. Furthermore, apart from a few revolutionaries in the WILPF, these organizations were committed to democratic means of effecting change internationally. The League Covenant held promise as the instrument of such change.

Shortly after the creation of the League, a pamphlet issued by the British League of Nations Union (LNU) urged women to "throw their energies into the League of Nations movement". The pamphlet claimed that it was "a great privilege and a great responsibility" that "on the very threshold of their wider life as citizens, women find this great work for Peace awaiting them!" It also predicted that it would become more and more common for men

¹⁷An interesting examination of the liberal values that underpinned the political analyses of certain inter-war feminists is found in Kathryn Dodd, "Cultural Politics and Women's Historical Writing: The Case of Ray Strachey's *The Cause*", *WSIF* 13, 1-2 (1990), pp.127-137.

¹⁸ICW (1966), p.46.

"to seek guidance from women in political matters where spiritual values are involved".¹⁹ In September 1919, less than six months after the League Covenant was adopted by the Paris Peace Conference, eighty delegates representing forty-three British women's organizations met at Caxton Hall, Westminster, to consider the representation of women in the League of Nations. Lady Aberdeen (ICW) sent a message to the delegates:

It appears to me there is no more important work before us at the present time than that of inspiring women in all countries with enthusiasm for the League of Nations and with the determination to use their newly acquired privileges in supporting its principles and making them truly effective.²⁰

Lady Aberdeen's statement is of particular significance in view of British women's predominance in the Women's International Organizations that lobbied the League in the early 1920s. The support women's organizations exhibited for the League follows the general pattern in inter-war Britain. International affairs were placed relatively high on the political agenda and almost everyone was 'pro-League'.²¹

Yet to explain the women's support for the League as a mere reaction to the political environment of the time would be to over-simplify. Women specifically identified the League of Nations as an institution toward which they should direct their newly won political influence. This decision must be considered in the context of ideas that had emerged in the course of the suffrage campaign about the transformation of the political sphere through women's participation. One of the arguments that lay at the heart of the suffrage campaign was the belief that the creation of a female electorate would promote social and political reforms linked to women's search for a more just and humane society. According to Holton the suffrage campaign in Britain was transformed far beyond an equal rights demand "to an assertion of the need for the cultural and political

¹⁹The League of Nations Union, *Woman's Part in the League of Nations* (By a Group of Women), LNU Pamphlets, Series 2, No.29, (n.d.), pp.4-6.

²⁰Letter read to delegates from Lady Aberdeen, "Conference of Women's Organisations to Consider the Representation of Women in the League of Nations", 4 September 1919 in LNA 23/1042/1042 R1356.

²¹On general support for the League see Donald S. Birn, *The League of Nations Union 1918-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

transformation of society according to a female value system".²² Millicent Garrett Fawcett, President of the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), said in 1889:

We do not want women to be bad imitations of men; we neither deny nor minimize the differences between men and women. The claim of women to representation depends to a large extent on these differences. Women bring something to the service of the state different to that which can be brought by men.²³

This approach became even more pronounced after 1914. Many suffragists attributed the outbreak of war to the absence of women's balancing influence at the level of international politics.²⁴ Given the post-war consensus that the world needed to be rebuilt on new principles, it is not surprising that suffragists identified the international arena as the area which could most benefit from the influence of this new group of voters. As newly enfranchised citizens, women could play an important role in transforming social and political conditions that prevented just relations between persons and states. In keeping with their suffrage heritage they did not seek merely to join this traditionally male sphere but wished to transform it through the infusion of female values. Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon, in her Presidential Address to the annual meeting of the British NCW in June 1919, stated that

the love of humanity and understanding that oversteps political and geographical boundaries should be able to reveal themselves more easily and unreservedly in women than in men, in virtue of the inborn protective instinct of motherhood in all women.²⁵

She urged that "the womanhood of the nations...be enabled now to assume with calm and dignity its due and proper share in the national and international counsels for re-construction and the betterment of humanity". She asserted also that the signing of the Peace Treaty marked the dawn of

²²Sandra Stanley Holton, *Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.18.

²³Quoted in Holton (1986), p.12.

²⁴Carol Miller, "British Women's Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War: A Critique of Feminist Standpoint Theory", unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, LSE, 1987.

²⁵National Council of Women (Br.), *The New Patriotism, Presidential Address of Mrs. Ogilvie Gordon, 25 June 1919* (London: NCW, 1919), p.3.

a period of recuperation and healing: "This is Our Day as Women, the day and time for tact and gentleness, patience, encouragement and faith".²⁶

It would be misleading to suggest that all women took this approach to women's international work or that the pattern of women's internationalism in all countries followed that of Britain. The former suffragettes of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), who had vigorously challenged ideas about women's inherent pacifism by responding to the outbreak of war with a pro-war platform to rival that of the most chauvinistic male citizens, were not particularly active in the Women's International Organizations immediately after the war. Though they attributed war to "the unnatural system of government by men only"²⁷ they were probably less enthusiastic about the creation of the League than the non-militant suffragists of the NUWSS because of their general lack of interest in constitutional means of effecting change. Nor were staunch equal rights feminists visible as a distinct group at the international level immediately after the war. Although the Women's International Organizations active in the early 1920s embraced both equal rights and social reform causes, social feminist ideas certainly were more prominent. Equal rights feminists entered the international forum in full force only in the late 1920s almost in reaction to the international work of social feminists.

The British women who led the ICW and IWSA delegations at the Paris Peace Conference were supported by like-minded American, French and Italian women. German women, however, had not been invited to attend. For several years German members of these women's societies were reluctant to participate in discussions regarding the League of Nations until Germany was admitted as a member state. Moreover, the idea held by certain WILPF members that the League of Nations was really a 'league of victors' guaranteed that all dealings with the League throughout the inter-war years would promote some degree of internal conflict. For WILPF the concept of

²⁶Ibid., p.8.

²⁷Statement by Christabel Pankhurst, June 1914, quoted in Wiltsher (1985), p.36.

equality extended to nations as well as to women; thus, shortly after the Conference of Women Suffragists from Allied Countries met in Paris, the WILPF held a peace conference in Zurich, where Swiss neutrality permitted German members to attend.²⁸ On the whole, however, from 1919 the Women's International Organizations were among the strongest supporters of the League of Nations.

Issues raised at the Paris Peace Conference about the representation of women at the international level preoccupied Women's International Organizations throughout the inter-war period. On the one hand, emphasis was placed on promoting the equal representation of women at the League "as one half of humanity". On the other, much was made of the idea that women had something special to contribute at the international level. This latter position drew upon the 'social' and 'maternal' feminist thinking that had been part of the suffrage campaign.²⁹ Thus, however much Article 7 may have upheld the principle of equality between the sexes, women's claims for representation at Geneva continued to be articulated just as often along the lines that women had a distinct contribution to make as women and as mothers. This line of thought was reinforced at the Peace Conference by eminent statesmen who agreed that a women's delegation should be entitled to speak on "women's interests". Implicit in this point of view was the belief that women had specific interests different from men's interests which could only be represented by women. This unresolved tension between the desire to minimize gender difference and the urge to assert it in women's favour remained at the centre of arguments about the representation of women at the League of Nations throughout the inter-war period. In order to understand the way in which women's international work developed, it is necessary to trace some of the ideas put forward in the 1920s about the participation of women in League affairs.

²⁸Bussey and Tims (1965; 1980), p.28ff.

²⁹See Holton (1986) especially Chapter One "'Feminizing Democracy': The Ethos of the Women's-Suffrage Movement".

After the Paris Peace Conference adopted the League Covenant in April 1919 and a skeleton League Secretariat was established, women's organizations immediately approached the Secretariat to discuss the most effective means of incorporating the participation of women. At first Secretariat officials tended to view women and women's societies mainly as potential resources for raising public support for the League. One of the first references to the women's groups appears in June 1919 when the Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond, advised the Under-Secretary General, Jean Monnet, that it would be wise "to secure a good woman on the Publicity Section through whom we can get in touch, for purposes of propaganda, with the various women's organisations".³⁰

Though happy to carry out propaganda work women's organizations considered it essential to secure women's direct participation in the League system. Apart from Secretariat posts, decisions concerning appointments to standing committees and League delegations were left largely in the hands of the governments of members states. In June, Drummond told a deputation of British women representing the ICW, the IWSA and the WILPF that

The real difficulty will be not that a woman is to be appointed, but how she is going to be chosen. Our main difficulty now is that we have not any Advisory Body who really represent the women of the world. The men are dealt with by the Government.³¹

Implicit in Drummond's statement was the assumption that women needed special representation as *women*, not just as spokesmen of member states. His suggestion was that women's organizations should band together and bring to the attention of governments names of women suitable for appointment to the various bodies of the League. Nonetheless, for several months the possibility of the formation of a permanent International Women's Office was discussed as a method of ensuring that women's voices would be heard.

In the summer of 1919 proposals for a Women's Bureau were outlined

³⁰LNA, E. Drummond to J. Monnet, 23 June 1919, 22/992/992 R1332.

³¹LNA, Report of meeting with delegation of women from the ICW, IWSA and WILPF, 21 June 1919, 23/99/84 R1356. The delegation included Maria Ogilvie Gordon, Margery Corbett Ashby, and Helena Swanwick.

by several British and American women's groups. One such plan, drafted by British lawyer Chrystal Macmillan, Executive Secretary of the IWSA, was for a permanent International Women's Office modelled on the International Labour Organization complete with an annual General Conference of Women. The plan set forth principles very similar to those which were eventually to guide the work of the United Nations Status of Women Commission formed immediately after the Second World War: "the status of women, social, political and economic, is of supreme international importance" and "social progress is dependent on the status of women in the community". The Women's Bureau was expected to be of a temporary nature "for ascertaining the views of women until throughout the world education, opportunities and economic independence for women have been sufficiently long established to enable them adequately to give effect to their views in the League of Nations through the ordinary channels of Government".³² Women's societies were to have a central role in this proposed organization: the General Conference of Women was to be composed of one government representative of each member state, a national delegation of women and one delegate from each of the major Women's International Organizations. Every delegate would be entitled to vote individually on all matters raised. The International Women's Office was to be directed by a governing body of government members and non-governmental delegates including representatives from Women's International Organizations. All the members of the Conference, the governing body and the International Women's Office would be women. Macmillan's draft also stated that the procedure to be taken for non-observance of conventions ratified by member states was to follow the model of the Labour Convention with the notable innovation that the commission of enquiry would be composed of women proposed by national women's organizations rather than governments.

In September 1919 Macmillan's proposal was discussed at the Caxton

³²"Draft Convention Creating a Permanent Organisation in Connection with the League of Nations for the Improvement in the Status of Women", by Chrystal Macmillan, May 1920, pp.1-2. Copy in LNA 23/5359/3554 R1356.

Hall Conference but received little support.³³ Dr. Marion Phillips of the Joint Standing Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations argued that the establishment of a special Women's Bureau would result in "the creation of a little corner where women would be kept, thus losing the opportunity to participate in larger issues".³⁴ This view was supported by Mrs. G. Morgan of the British NCW who declared that "it would be a very backward step for women to ask to be separated from the men. What they wanted was to work with men."³⁵

Undaunted by the reception at Claxton Hall, a delegation of NUSEC delegates, including Chrystal Macmillan, Margery Corbett Ashby and Eleanor Rathbone, the NUSEC President from 1919 to 1928 and leader of the campaign for family allowances, met with the Secretary-General to discuss the proposal. They urged the establishment of a International Women's Office with "the object of raising the status of women relative to that of men". They were opposed, however, to any women's committee as a body constituted solely for "the purpose of being consulted on what are sometimes called subjects concerning women". Women, they argued, were as much concerned as men about the issues addressed by the League; "the proper method of consulting women is to ensure that an adequate number of them be included on the various bodies set up in connection with the League".³⁶ Members of the NUSEC wanted equal representation for women on the various bodies of the League but believed that a special Bureau was needed to concentrate on the status of women.

The Secretariat's response to the proposal was not favourable. Objections were not raised on the grounds that the plan was unworkable, just that it was unnecessary. Dame Rachel Crowdy, Chief of the Social Section, stated:

³³See "Conference of Women's Organisations to Consider the Representation of Women in the League of Nations: Agenda", 4 September 1919 in LNA 23/1042/1042 R1356.

³⁴"Conference of Women's Organisations", p.5.

³⁵"Conference of Women's Organisations", p.6.

³⁶LNA, resolutions presented to E. Drummond, 16 February 1920, 23/1310/259 R1356. Members of this delegation included Eleanor Rathbone, Chrystal Macmillan, Eva Hubback, Ray Strachey and Margery Corbett Ashby.

I personally much hope that no women's section [will?] be formed as such...Women are being admitted into the League on a[n] Equal footing with men, but at once appear to me to weaken their position and lose their "equality" footing if they try to form a section...There is no "Man's Section" so why should we need one?³⁷

Members of the Secretariat tended to agree that it was most suitable simply to appoint a Secretariat official as liaison officer between the League and women's organizations.³⁸ The majority of women's organizations in contact with the Secretariat also opposed Macmillan's proposal. The International Council of Women informed the Secretariat that "[a]s the League of Nations has opened all its offices and Committees, etc., to women, surely another separate women's organisation is not required".³⁹

As an IWSA affiliate, the NUSEC was entitled to present the proposal in the form of a resolution at the Alliance Congress in June 1920. The Secretariat sent Florence Wilson, Chief Librarian, as League representative to observe the proceedings. Supporters argued that "Moral and Social questions which seemed to interest women more than men would not be adequately treated without a Women's Bureau".⁴⁰ While in earlier discussions the International Women's Bureau was intended to deal only with the status of women, over the months its proposed mandate extended to all social and moral issues and, in effect, to embrace the responsibility for "women's questions" which NUSEC members had previously rejected. The American President of the Alliance, Carrie Chapman Catt, stated that a Women's Bureau would only "weaken the position of women" stripping them of "the equality they had secured" through Article 7. Many women voiced the opinion that a Women's Bureau would perpetuate existing differences between the sexes.⁴¹ The resolution was defeated when put to a vote.

After the Alliance Congress, the supporters of the Women's Bureau

³⁷LNA, R.Crowdy, memo, 9 January 1920, 23/2668/1042 R1356.

³⁸LNA, R. Crowdy, memo, 29 April 1920, 23/3702/1042 R1356 and contents of file 23/5359/3554.

³⁹LNA, Lady Aberdeen to E. Drummond, 5 June 1919, LNA 23/311/259 R1356.

⁴⁰Quoted in Florence Wilson's Report to the Secretariat on the Congress, 23 June 1920 in LNA 23/5359/3554 R1356.

⁴¹Wilson's Report, p.4.

had little chance for success. Their sense of defeat was evident when they met with the Secretary-General in July 1920. They continued to push for an annual Women's Conference held under the auspices of the League, but backed down when Drummond argued that a Conference consisting only of women delegates might prejudice their cause with regard to getting women appointed as delegates to the Assembly. The deputation had to be satisfied with Drummond's assertion that "there was no reason why women should not have equal chances for posts on Commissions as well as having delegates appointed to the Assembly" and that information of particular interest to women could be collected by existing sections of the Secretariat.⁴² It was agreed that the best alternative to a Women's Bureau would be to appoint an officer in the Secretariat for liaison work with the women's organizations. This was the course the Secretariat eventually pursued, with Lithuanian Princess Gabrielle Radziwill, and later, Canadian Mary Craig McGeachy, working in this capacity in the Information Section.

The women's organizations took up the Secretary-General's original suggestion that they should promote the representation of women at the League by submitting names to their governments or directly to the League. This task was carried out consistently by women's organizations through the inter-war period. One concrete result of the Caxton Hall Conference was the formation of the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations (CRWLN). The Council monitored the League's performance on implementing the principle set forth in Article 7. The composition of the Council provides evidence of the League's power to unite women. More than twenty British women's societies were affiliated to the Council, among them the NUSEC, the Conservative Women's Reform Association, the Federation of Women Civil Servants, the Association of Headmistresses and the Women's International League.

Thus there was a general consensus among organized women that integration as equals into the League system was the most desirable course to pursue. Even so, the tension between equality and difference remained unresolved. Women continued to define their international work almost as

⁴²LNA, meeting of representatives of IWSA with E. Drummond, 16 July 1920, 22/5579/3554 R1356.

a women's mission: in 1920 British feminist preacher and pacifist Maude Royden urged that "this coming age must be the 'women's age'" and that women must "throw themselves with ardour into the building up of the League of Nations".⁴³ Often, the call was specifically to mothers. In 1924 Professor Gilbert Murray, Chairman of the British LNU, told members of several national and international women's societies gathered at a peace conference organized by the ICW: "we cannot any of us doubt that what the world needs at present is mothering rather than fighting".⁴⁴ The ICW often made its appeals on behalf of the mothers of the world. Lady Aberdeen's (ICW) address at the same Conference - "A Call to Mothers of All Races" - stressed the role of the mother in the self-preservation of the species. Ideas about the nurturing role of mothers made the leap from the family to all of the world. The educative role of women as mothers was also emphasized. Mrs. George Morgan (NCW) asserted that the great hope for the future was in the children to whom mothers could "teach the interdependence of nations".⁴⁵ In the same vein, Clara Guthrie D'Arcis, President of the World Union of Women for International Concord (WUWIC), believed that mothers could instil their children with values conducive to international understanding and co-operation.⁴⁶

Another striking feature of the arguments made by women's organizations is their emphasis on the role of the individual in international work, perhaps further evidence of the liberal values inspiring them. It was often stated that a change in attitudes through the development of a rational "international mind" was needed as much as the machinery of the League. And attitudes could best be changed at the individual level through education and development of personal contacts

⁴³Maude Royden, "Women and the League of Nations" *The Englishwoman*, 134 (February 1920), p.88.

⁴⁴Professor Gilbert Murray, "Women's Support of an All-Inclusive League of Nations" in *The Prevention of the Causes of War, Addresses delivered at the Conference held at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, May 2nd to 8th, 1924* (London: ICW, 1924), p.35.

⁴⁵Mrs. George Morgan, "Security against War" in *ICW, Co-operation for Security in International Life* (London, 1925), p.20.

⁴⁶Clara Guthrie D'Arcis, "Women's Influence Towards Peace" in *ICW* (1925), p.27.

with people from other nations, exactly the function of organizations constituted internationally by women. The International Federation of University Women (IFUW), founded in 1920, defined as its main objective "to promote understanding and friendship between the university women of the nations of the world, and thereby to further their interests and develop between their countries sympathy and mutual helpfulness".⁴⁷ Professor Caroline Spurgeon, the British co-founder of the IFUW, believed that women could do valuable work for international friendship:

Women tend naturally to go straight for the human side of things - the individual, the social side. We attack problems in the concrete, in detail, which is just what is wanted for this work. Each individual woman can do an amazing amount towards weaving those strands of friendship which should send people together all the world over...⁴⁸

A letter from the IFUW to the Secretary-General in October 1920 stated that the organization had come into existence "in order to promote the ideals of the League of Nations in as far as it possibly can, by interchange of university teachers and scholars and by international hospitality".⁴⁹

The IWSA also argued that women's international work could bring certain female values to bear on international relations. A resolution passed at the IWSA Conference in Rome in 1923 stated that something essential "had been missing in the Governments of the world by men alone":

that which we desire to contribute to by the power of the vote - is the intervention of the heart of women...as necessary to the affairs of the great family of mankind as in the individual family created by one man and one woman.⁵⁰

Later, Corbett Ashby (IWSA) gave her opinion of the reason for women's enfranchisement in so many countries since the war: it was as if "men had turned to women to help them in the terribly difficult task of recovery

⁴⁷Batho (1968), p.5.

⁴⁸Goals of the Federation cited from an article in *Manchester Guardian*, 2 June 1920, found in Caroline Spurgeon Papers, Bedford College Archives.

⁴⁹LNA, T. Bosanquet to E. Drummond, 27 October 1920, 13/7759/7759 R1008.

⁵⁰LNA, report of Dame Rachel Crowdy who attended on behalf of the Secretariat the 9th Congress of the IWSA, Rome, May 12-19, 1923, 13/27029x/27029 R1013.

from dangers and difficulties of war" with the hope "that the influence of women might do something practical to prevent the next war". Even more important from the President of an organization pledged to promoting equal rights was her assertion that "if the women who become citizens do nothing but double the number of voters in their country, then it will have been worth little to their countries to give them the rights of citizenship, valuable as these rights would be to the women themselves". Women, she stated, "hope that the acquirement of these rights will add something special to the political wisdom and practice of the world".⁵¹

Even the Women's Bureau proposed by British members of the IWSA had been intended "to give women the best opportunity to make their fullest and most characteristic contribution to the welfare of humanity".⁵² One of its supporters, Eleanor Rathbone, years later described the contribution women had to make as women and not just as equal citizens. She believed that whatever was the truth about the innate differences between the sexes,

it is unquestionable that their differences in function, especially the differences between the paternal and the maternal function and all its results upon social life and occupational groups, do bring it about that each sex tends to acquire a special kind of experience and to develop its own forms of expertise.⁵³

Rathbone intimated that women were more desirous of relieving human suffering and injustice, and she attributed this tendency, in part, to the nature of work usually done by women that sharpened certain of their faculties - work in "bearing and rearing, teaching, nursing, amusing, or otherwise serving [men]".⁵⁴ From this perspective the characteristics attributed to women were culturally determined and not necessarily inborn traits. They provided women with a unique orientation to the world which could be translated into political practice.

⁵¹M. Corbett Ashby, Chairman's Address to the Conference, ICW (1924), p.31

⁵²Draft Convention, p.2.

⁵³Eleanor Rathbone, "Changes in Public Life", in Ray Strachey, *Our Freedom and its Results* (London: Hogarth Press, 1936), p.73

⁵⁴Strachey (1936), p. 75.

Members of the WILPF shared this approach. The WILPF emphasized more than any other Women's International Organization that a permanent peace could be built only on the basis of equal rights. In 1919 it resolved that "if world problems are to be treated adequately, and solved on the broadest humanitarian basis, women must hold responsible positions on international bodies".⁵⁵ The WILPF was not particularly explicit in its explanation of what it was that women could contribute, though the implication was that women would approach world problems in a more humane way than men. One member, German trade unionist Lida Gustava Heymann, asserted that "womanly being, womanly essence are identical with pacifism".⁵⁶ On her return to London after serving as a substitute-delegate for Britain at the 1924 session of the League Assembly, Helena Swanwick, Chairman of the British section of the WILPF and writer on foreign affairs, puzzled over "how women were to make effective use of their experiences as women and of the specifically womanly bent of their temperament to complete the government of the world, still overwhelmingly manly".⁵⁷ Swanwick believed that "if women all the world over learnt to think as women, from the depths of women's experience of life, and if such authentic and free-minded women took their due place as one-half of humanity in the world's counsels, the attitude of humanity in relation to war would be completely changed".⁵⁸ Such ideas led to the recurring demand of Women's International Organizations that political, legal and social equality was needed in order to bring the special experiences and values of women to bear on international relations.

The Women's International Organizations were not alone in making

⁵⁵Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, *Resolutions of the Zurich Congress 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1919), p.26.

⁵⁶Quoted in Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser, *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present*, Vol. II (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.402. See also Heymann's contribution to the debate on 'Women and World Peace' in *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Geneva, 1926), pp.76-77.

⁵⁷Helena Maria Swanwick, *I have been Young* (London: Gollancz, 1935), p.414.

⁵⁸Helena Maria Swanwick, *The Roots of Peace* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), p.177.

predictions about the potential impact of women's enfranchisement. Much emphasis was placed on women as a new factor in political life partly because they joined the political sphere at a juncture when so many male citizens had been lost in the war.⁵⁹ The first issue of the feminist journal *Time and Tide* in May 1920 asked "[w]hat view will our new voters be likely to take on such matters as the great international questions which agitate the world to-day...?"⁶⁰ For those who believed that enfranchised women would vote as a block, this was a particularly important question. Organized women already were contemplating "how we may best use our recently acquired political power in order to secure more open and frank dealings between nations".⁶¹ Moreover, they were prepared to use the vote as a leverage point to secure women's participation at the international level. The NUSEC urged Prime Minister Lloyd George, in July 1920, to appoint a woman to the Assembly delegation as "such an appointment would...gratify the women electors of this country".⁶² The response was slow and it was not until 1922 that a woman joined the British delegation to the League. Yet as will be seen below, the idea that there was such a thing as 'the women's vote' and that this vote could be cast in favour of the League favourably influenced the Secretariat's treatment of the Women's International Organizations.

During the early 1920s the Women's International Organizations shared the belief that society, in the words of Vera Brittain, could be "redeemed and transformed" when "the masculine principle of power and tyranny" which had produced the war gave way to "the feminine principle of love and co-operation".⁶³ Re-conceptualizing the world as a family in need of the influence of women and mothers may have appeared, at first, to

⁵⁹LNA, Constance Drexel, "Woman's Part in League of Nations", 21 June 1919, 23/289/289 R1356.

⁶⁰Editorial, *Time and Tide*, 14 May 1920, reproduced in Dale Spender, *Time and Tide Wait for No Man* (London: Pandora Press, 1984), p.8.

⁶¹M. Ogilvie Gordon, Introductory Address, ICW (1924), p.4.

⁶²LNA, E. Macadam and E. Hubback to Rt. Hon. David Lloyd George, 31 July 1920 (copy), 26/5840/5836 R1359.

⁶³Vera Brittain, *Lady into Woman: A History of Women from Victoria to Elizabeth II* (London: Andrew Dakers, 1953), p.10.

provide a way into this public sphere hitherto restricted to men. One consequence of the assertion of difference, however, was that separate spheres of men and women's work were carved out within the international arena.

CHAPTER 2

THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

By the time the League came into official existence in January 1920 the Women's International Organizations had already begun to lobby for international action on issues raised before the Paris Peace Conference. Before discussing women's international work in any detail it is useful to develop a profile of the Women's International Organizations and the women who held official positions at the League. In the case of the Women's International Organizations this is a challenge, for the handful of organizations that existed at the time of the League's formation were joined in the 1920s and 1930s by many new societies, all vying for the League's attention.

Several attempts have been made to create a typology of the international organizations of women in existence during the 1920s and 1930s. The League of Nations *Handbook of International Organisations* published annually by the Secretariat made some effort to categorize the international organizations of women, although this was more an indexing question than any serious effort to understand the nature of these groups. For example, in 1938 twenty-six women's organizations were listed in the index of the *Handbook* under the heading "Feminism", while in the section of the same name only eleven organizations were included: the All Asian Women's Conference, the International Co-operative Women's Guild, Associated Country Women of the World, the Equal Rights International, the Inter-American Commission of Women, the International Association of Lyceum Clubs, the International Council of Women, the Open Door International, the St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, the European Federation of Soroptimist Clubs and the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship. The other Women's International Organizations were included in the following sections: "Peace": the World Union of Women for International Concord and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; "Religious, Humanitarian and Morals": the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union and the World Young Women's Christian Association; "Education": the International Federation of

University Women; "Law and Administration": the International Federation of Women Magistrates and Barristers; "Labour and Professions": the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. While the Secretariat made some effort to classify the women's organizations by their programs and platforms, such classifications were quite arbitrary and rarely consistent.

The first effort to create a typology of the international women's organizations was made by Boy in 1936. While admitting that the task was difficult, she attempts to group them by "leur objet et leur esprit".¹ She divides the organizations into five types. As "Feminist Associations" she includes the International Council of Women, the International Alliance of Women, the Equal Rights International, and the Open Door International. She describes these societies as wide in scope, non-denominational and non-partisan though all with primarily political objects. The category "Professional Associations" includes the International Federation of University Women, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, the International Co-operative Women's Guild and the International Federation of Women Magistrates and Barristers, all devoted to the defense of professional interests. As "Religious Associations" she lists the St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, the World's Young Women's Christian Association, the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the World Union of Women for International Concord are defined as "Pacifist Associations". Finally, there are the "Philanthropic Associations". This group includes several societies which are not examined here in any detail because they did not participate in the activities of other Women's International Organizations, among them the International Federation of Girls' Friendly Societies and the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women.²

While pointing to the differences among the organizations Boy argues that all of them are more or less feminist in the broad sense in which she

¹Boy (1936), p.39.

²See Introduction of this thesis, pp.5-7.

defines the term "feminism":

Un mouvement d'esprits qui a pour objet, plus ou moins lointain et aussi plus ou moins précis, d'établir, non pas l'uniformité, ce qui serait absurde, mais l'égalité ou une quasi-égalité entre les deux sexes, égalité d'instruction, égalité de droits, égalité d'accès aux métiers, arts et fonctions.³

She notes, however, that the organizations do not envisage the same means to these ends. Certain put social reform first, with the right to vote accorded a second place. Others believe that nothing could be obtained without the vote. Some support protective legislation to regulate the employment of women while others call for the abolition of all laws which restrict women's employment opportunities. Still, she emphasizes that despite the different approaches, these organizations share common aims and unite in order to support their causes with greater efficacy.

Another attempt to classify the international women's organizations is made by Bertram Pickard who had contact with most of the organizations during his term as Chairman of the Federation of International Organizations in the late 1930s.⁴ Pickard groups the non-governmental organizations connected with the League, and later the United Nations, into four categories based on the motivation for their activities: Social Alignments, Religious and Humanitarian Idealism and Ideological Drives, Common Technical Affinities, and Economic Interests. Though conceding that one or more of the international women's organizations could fit into each of the four categories, Pickard places them in the first group - Social Alignments. For Pickard "the deep political and ideological rifts" dividing the women's organizations are secondary by comparison with the "feminist slant" apparent in the organizations as a whole:

...the promotion of women's rights is the *raison d'être* of several of the organizations. Others do not share the extreme egalitarian faith of their sister organizations, yet owe their origin, and the mainspring of their action, to the great movement for emancipation in which the politically and socially conscious minority of one half of the human race has

³Emile Faguet, quoted in Boy (1936), p.18.

⁴Bertram Pickard, *The Greater United Nations: An Essay Concerning the Place and Significance of International Non-Governmental Organizations* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1956).

been engaged throughout this century and before.

Although the women's organizations are divided by varying interests and points of view, Pickard argues that "a considerable proportion of them can and sometimes do act together when specific women's questions are under discussion".⁵ While Pickard is correct to identify co-operative efforts among the organizations he remains vague on the political and ideological differences that divided them.

Boulding has developed a typology of women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the seventies. Of the forty-seven NGOs she examines, thirty-five were engaged in international work during the inter-war years; thus it is interesting to compare her typology to that developed by Boy. She divides women's NGOs into five categories: Professional, International Relations, Religious, Educational and Sports. In general, the organizations identified by Boy as professional and religious are also included under these categories in Boulding's typology. One exception, the Open Door International for the Emancipation of the Woman Worker (ODI), is identified by Boulding as a professional organization. Yet Boulding's assessment is problematic for the ODI was formed by middle-class feminists to push for equal labor legislation. Boy more accurately includes the group under "Feminist Associations". Boulding's decision to place the WILPF in the category "International Relations" is understandable in the sense that it is primarily engaged in lobbying for reforms in international political and economic relations. To identify the ICW as an educational organization is a fair judgment of the Council's emphasis on educating public opinion. However, the motivation for placing the IAWSEC under "International Relations", and indeed, for completely abandoning the category feminist, is unclear. Boulding avoids using the term "feminist" in relation to the women's NGOs. Instead, she states that along with increasing international co-operation and understanding, all these organizations have as their task the *"improvement of the life conditions of women"*. In addition, they have a concern for *"promoting the participation of women in society"*.⁶ What

⁵Pickard (1956), pp.33.

⁶Boulding (1977), pp.196-197.

Boulding's typology fails to account for is the fact that certain women's organizations place the advancement of women as their central priority, related to, but not necessarily subsumed by their professional, international, religious and educational interests.

Although not without limitations the typology set forward by Boy provides more insight into the activities of the inter-war Women's International Organizations. Perhaps the most important group with reference to women's international work at the League of Nations is that which Boy categorizes as "Feminist". Within this group, the ICW is described by Boy as the model international women's organization. Its importance derived to a large degree from its size: by 1938 the ICW claimed a membership of forty million women in forty-one countries. Few members of the ICW appear to have referred to themselves as feminists. The social and moral reform ethic was very strong in the Council and questions concerning the status of women were as often approached from a social reform perspective as an equal rights one. A consensus-oriented organization it always skirted contentious issues. Its objectives remained vague although this did not prevent it from coming out in support of specific policies or conventions. Nevertheless, it avoided taking a stand on issues which threatened the harmony of the Council itself. A typical example of this is the discussion on the minorities problem which took place at the ICW Congress of 1925. In the words of the Secretariat representative, Garbrielle Radziwill, the debate "waxed hotter and hotter" and the ICW President, Lady Aberdeen, intervened to insist that details of the issue be left to national councils who could each work in their own country to the best of their knowledge: "[a]ll the International Council had to stand for was that women did their share in working for mutual understanding".⁷

Although the ICW spread itself across a wide spectrum of activities it generally kept to the middle-ground on all issues and for this reason maintained its status as the most respected women's organization of the period; in fact, most of the women delegates to the League who were members

⁷LNA, G. Radziwill, "Note of the International Meeting of the ICW", 3 July 1925, pp.6-7, 13/43088/43088x R1022.

of Women's International Organizations were connected with the ICW. Secretariat official Mary Craig McGeachy's description of the way in which the NCW of Canada operated helps to explain this pattern:

The National Council of Women is, because of the method by which is [sic] is organised, the most comprehensive women's organisation in Canada. The smallest local council links up communicating work of every kind among women and the national organisation has made itself the advocate before members of the Government of questions affecting public health and social conditions.⁸

For this reason she believed its representatives had more influence with the federal government than other women's groups. National Councils of Women in other countries probably followed the same pattern. Radziwill described the ICW as "the most influential women's organization" and McGeachy, confirmed this, saying that it carried much power in Geneva.⁹

Questions directly concerning the status of women comprised only one part of the ICW program. Figures on the number of resolutions adopted by the ICW at its international meetings between 1919 and 1939 show the status of women as one of many concerns: social welfare (50), international relations and peace (49), mass media (38), laws and suffrage (35), women and employment (34), and the child and the family (30).¹⁰ Resolutions were also passed in other areas such as education, migration and health, though not with the frequency of those listed above.

The IWSA (IAWSEC after 1926) was created in 1904 by a splinter group of ICW members who desired women's suffrage to be at the top of the agenda instead of just one of many objectives; nonetheless, during the inter-war years it too became drawn into a wide variety of activities. Although defined by Evans as "represent[ing] radical feminism on an international level", the IAW's equal rights stance was never as strong as that of the equal rights groups formed during the late 1920s, and its agenda

⁸LNA, Report of M. McGeachy on mission to Canada, 26 May 1930, 50/17785/17785 R3587.

⁹LNA, G. Radziwill, memo, 20 March 1925, 13/43088/43088 R1022. "Women's Organizations Strengthen Efforts of the League of Nations", *Vancouver Daily Province*, 24 March 1930.

¹⁰"Resolutions adopted by the ICW from Foundation in 1888", unpublished document compiled by E.E. Munro, 1979 found in United Nations Library, Geneva [hereafter cited as UNL].

increasingly embraced social feminist policies.¹¹ Its members included several of those British women Harrison (1987) describes as "prudent revolutionaries". Indeed, the Alliance stood steadfast in its belief that the position of women could be improved through gradual political and legal reforms and that rational arguments for justice for women would not fail to convince those in power.

Originally formed on a suffrage platform, after suffrage was won in many countries in the early twenties, the IAW struggled to define its place in the women's movement. Its main objectives after the war were described as securing the enfranchisement of women of all nations and promoting other reforms "as are necessary to establish a real equality of liberties, status, and opportunities between men and women". In her Presidential Address at the International Congress of the Alliance in 1929, Margery Corbett Ashby expounded upon the particular contribution to be made by the IAW:

The Alliance embodies the political aspect of the movement towards responsibility and freedom. We are concerned primarily with governments and parliaments. In the battles of party politics the interests of women...are often forgotten. We exist to assure attention to these problems in the political arena. In this we are in strong contrast with the vast organisations of women which unite internationally many forms of welfare and educational work, and on the other hand, we equally contrast with specialised international organisations such as those of the co-operative women or the Federation of University Women.¹²

Whereas the ICW was primarily engaged in educating public opinion on moral and social issues, the IAW lobbied the League of Nations and national governments directly for specific changes in legislation and policies concerning women. For this reason it sometimes came into conflict with official bodies. In 1927 Radziwill advised Joan Howard, Private Secretary to the Secretary-General, to speak to her acquaintance, Corbett Ashby, identified by Radziwill as "one of the prime movers" behind publicized accusations that the League was not

¹¹Evans (1977), p.251.

¹²LNA, M. Corbett Ashby, "Presidential Address, Eleventh Congress of the IAWSEC, Berlin, June 17th-22nd, 1929", p.2, in 5A/7200/6500 R2181.

fulfilling the provisions of Article 7 concerning the equality of women in the Secretariat:

... the only aim is a demonstration; therefore no explanations will avail. I am afraid from what I see and hear that the more "advanced" women [sic] organisations have made up their mind to pre-war suffragette methods, and as they cannot come and chain themselves to the chairs of the Council members as they did to the benches in Parliament, they intend to make a noise in the press and on every occasion.¹³

In fact it was not until the 1930s that former suffragettes became really active at the international level, adapting their militant methods to the rather staid environment in Geneva. Until the late 1920s, however, the Alliance was the most radical of women's groups lobbying the League.

Like many other women's groups of the period the IAW soon became involved in a variety of activities, most notably in the peace and disarmament campaign. A debate on "What is the Alliance?" in the pages of the *The International Woman Suffrage News* provoked some sharp exchanges in the winter and spring of 1928. One member, Nina Boyle, the drafter of the Women's Charter presented to the Inter-Allied Conference of Women in 1919, accused the Alliance of joining forces with "the two most dangerous rivals and foes of Feminism - Peace and Social Reformers". Boyle contended that the Alliance's interest in the rights and liberties of women "has been subordinated to and smothered by this clamour for Peace". She continued:

If the Alliance is not what it claims to be and was meant to be; if its activities can be snaffled by outside agencies for alien purposes; if the Bureau allows its resources to be used for what is not only not Feminism but in the case of the Protective Legislators, actually anti-feminism; it is time indeed that it should be split into its component parts for a fresh and more wholesome allocation of its forces.¹⁴

Boyle's article elicited a strong response from the President of the IAW, Corbett Ashby, who argued that a feminist was no less a feminist because she became involved in peace-work: "[i]t is a fact which cannot be ignored that women are not only feminists in a perpetual state of protest against

¹³LNA, G. Radziwill, memo, 11 February 1927, 29/18166/18166x R1458.

¹⁴N. Boyle, letter to Editor, *International Woman Suffrage News* [hereafter *IWSN*], 22, 4 (January 1928), pp.59-60.

restrictions and disabilities, they are also to an increasing extent, keen citizens, peace workers, reformers and educators".¹⁵ Corbett Ashby did not have the final word. One member of the Alliance wrote to declare "*We are Pacifists BECAUSE we are feminists*".¹⁶ As a consequence, Boyle announced her departure from the IAW protesting that the women's movement had been betrayed and that the IAW had become a pacifist organization.¹⁷ Later she helped to found the Equal Rights International.

Carrie Chapman Catt, the former President of the Alliance, also made a contribution to the debate. In her view the divisions amongst feminists were a natural product of the success of the suffrage campaign: "[t]here was no longer a common focus for their vision". She argued that some "responded to the new victory and walked forward to claim the full citizenship now theirs with all its privileges and responsibilities; some remained where they had been - just feminists". Although claiming that she had "not ceased to be a feminist nor to be less sympathetic with protests against women's wrongs", Catt stated "I feel that I have personally moved on and become a humanist since the vote came to me".¹⁸ The "What is the Alliance?" debate provides one illustration of tensions abounding in inter-war feminism. There was little consensus when it came to defining the agenda of the women's movement. One result was the multiplication of women's organizations during the period.

The IWSA experienced similar internal conflicts during the inter-war years as one of its national affiliates, the British National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC).¹⁹ Many of the most active British feminists were also executive members or delegates to conferences of the IWSA: Margery Corbett-Ashby, Eleanor Rathbone, Mary Stocks, Maude

¹⁵"What is the Alliance?", *IWSN*, 22, 5 (February 1928), p.69.

¹⁶M. Stritt, letter to Editor, *IWSN*, 22, 6 (March 1928), p.87.

¹⁷N. Boyle, letter to Editor, *IWSN*, 22, 7 (April 1928), pp.106-7.

¹⁸"What is the Alliance?", *IWSN*, 22, 8 (May 1928), pp.117-18.

¹⁹A debate similar to the "What is the Alliance" debate caused a split in NUSEC. See Crystal Eastman, letter to Editor, *Time and Tide*, 18 March 1927, reproduced in Blanche Wiesen Cook (ed.), *Crystal Eastman on Women and Revolution* (New York: OUP, 1978), pp.223-225.

Royden, Elizabeth Abbott, Chrystal Macmillan and Ray Strachey. A divergence of opinion emerged over the implications of a strict equal rights platform. Divisions between proponents of 'new' feminism and 'old' (equality) feminism documented by historians of British feminism were mirrored at the international level.²⁰ A similar split took place in the United States between supporters and opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

The Alliance attempted to accommodate both those who urged the IAW to seek 'real equality' for women through reforms related to women's special social roles such as family allowances and protective legislation, and those who envisioned equality in terms of equal pay for equal work or equal employment and educational opportunities.²¹ The most contentious issue for the IAW during the 1920s was the question of special labor legislation. For many years Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the American League of Women Voters (LWV), succeeded in preventing the Alliance from issuing a policy statement on the question of protective legislation.²² In the U.S. the LWV led the campaign against the NWP's controversial ERA. The LWV worked for protective legislation for women in the areas of maternity leave, minimum wages, regulation of hours and restrictions from certain types of work. Supporters of the ERA saw women as individuals and wished to dislodge gender differentiation from all areas of law through 'blanket legislation' in the form of the ERA to make discriminations against women illegal. Those opposed to the ERA believed that the premise of mere equality did not sufficiently account for the realities of women's lives, especially in the labor market. Moreover, they believed that sex discrimination against women could be more effectively eliminated by specific legislation for specific problems than by means of 'blanket legislation'.²³ When the NWP applied to affiliate with the IWSA in 1925 it was certain that it would seek support for the ERA thus making

²⁰See Alberti (1989) and Smith (1990). Smith's article "British Feminism in the 1920s" is especially informative.

²¹See Crystal Eastman, "Equalitarian vs. Reformer", *Equal Rights*, 4 June 1927, reproduced in Wiesen Cook (1978), pp.229-230.

²²Becker (1981), pp.167-171.

²³Cott (1987), pp.126-138.

it impossible for the Alliance to avoid the issue of protective legislation any longer.

In 1926 the NWP's application was refused on the ground that its work was opposed to that of the Alliance.²⁴ Pfeffer maintains that after this point the international feminist movement was irreparably divided.²⁵ Immediately upon the refusal of the NWP's application, the British equal rights organization, the Six Point Group (SPG), withdrew its own application for membership thus ensuring that the two strongest equal rights organizations remained outside the Alliance. Margaret Rhondda of the SPG interpreted the Alliance's action as a sign of its rejection of passionate feminism.²⁶ She told members of the NWP that they made "the reformer shiver". Instead of "being allowed to potter away at welfare work...she will be forced to move swiftly towards [sic] complete equality of opportunity between men and women for which in her heart she is not yet ready".²⁷ From this point onward, the equal rights activists divided women and women's organizations into two groups: social reformers and true feminists.²⁸

In reality, both sides saw themselves as defending women's interests and the ensuing struggle hinged on questions of tactics. Indeed, the lines dividing the two groups were relatively fluid. Those organizations that supported family allowances or protective labor legislation were likely to be strong advocates of equality for women in other areas. They were not primarily interested in keeping women in traditional roles but in realistically addressing the needs of women who experienced life through these roles. Similarly, feminists who defined themselves as equalitarians were often referring to their strategy for the

²⁴LNA, G. Radziwill, report of IWSA Conference, 10 June 1926, 13/48861x/27029 R1013.

²⁵Pfeffer (1985), p.462.

²⁶Alberti (1989), p.206.

²⁷Speech by Lady Rhondda at NWP Luncheon, 2 June 1926, quoted in Pfeffer (1985), p.462.

²⁸These divisions are explored in Helen Archdale, "International Developments in the Woman's Movement", *Current History*, 29, 1 (October 1928), esp. pp.49-50.

emanicipation of women through the achievement of full legal equality. This position did not necessarily entail the belief in complete equality - in the sense of sameness - between men and women. Becker has pointed out that the logic of the NWP members' support for the ERA led them to emphasize the similarities between men and women but in reality, they were ambivalent: "[t]he NWP's concept of feminism frequently reflected the idea that women were not only different from men, but were in many ways superior to them".²⁹ Like the social feminists they disparaged some NWP members argued that women had a special contribution to make to society deriving from their maternal functions. Nonetheless, equality feminists worried that the tendency to consider women only within the context of gendered roles made it difficult for them to participate equally in society and to be seen simply as human beings. However deep the ideological rift between social feminists and equal rights feminists may have become during the inter-war period, the overt conflict was over matters of strategy. As will be seen, social feminists preferred 'half a loaf to none' while equality feminists abhorred gradualist methods toward the emanicipation of women.

Throughout the 1920s the Alliance struggled to search for compromise on the issue of protective legislation. Resolutions declaring that no special regulations for women's work different from regulations for men's work should be imposed were narrowly defeated whenever voted on, though more vague statements to the effect that "all avenues of work should be open to women" were passed without protest.³⁰ Such measures did not satisfy the demands of some IAW members. One result was the formation of two further Women's International Organizations. The Open Door International for the Economic Emancipation of the Woman Worker (ODI) was set up in 1929 after the Alliance refused to commit itself wholeheartedly to the opposition of all forms of protective labor legislation.³¹ A

²⁹Becker (1981), pp.49ff.

³⁰LNA, G. Radziwill, report on the IWSA Conference, 10 June 1926, 13/48861x/27029 R1013 and report of G. Radziwill and R. Crowdy on the IAWSEC Conference of 1929, 17 June, 1929, 5A/7200/6500 R2181. See also Whittick (1979), esp. Chapters 8 and 9.

³¹Alberti (1989), p.207.

similar split had taken place in the NUSEC when a group of equal rights feminists led by Lady Rhondda formed the Open Door Council (ODC) in 1926 to campaign exclusively for equal pay, equal status and equal opportunity for women workers.³² In 1929 the Board of Officers of the ODI included Chrystal Macmillan, as President, and Elizabeth Abbott, as Honorary Secretary, both also executive members of the ODC, as well as the German peace activist, Gertrude Baer, and the Czechoslovakian Senator, Františka Plamínková, who served on her country's delegation to the League in the 1930s.

Members of the ODC had taken a lead in the formation of the ODI "as it became daily clearer that the problems created by the work and influence of the International Labour Organization were a menace to women all over the world, and that nothing but an international organization would be in a position to combat its attack on the women worker".³³ The ILO was responsible for several conventions and recommendations restricting the right of women to work, including the Night Work Convention (1919) which prohibited the night employment of women in industry. The ODI campaigned vigorously against such conventions. By the mid-1930s the ODI Conference Reports were almost catalogues of special regulations introduced in numerous countries to curtail the opportunities of the woman worker, both married and unmarried.³⁴

Against an increasingly hostile environment, the ODI campaigned throughout the 1930s for the complete economic freedom of women which members identified as the key to women's emancipation. The organization was not opposed to the regulation of work for the protection of the worker provided that measures were applied equally to both men and women. In this context, the ODI found it difficult to deal with the issue of maternity. There was a growing body of national legislation forbidding a woman to work during a certain time before and after childbirth, and stipulating that

³²Smith (1990), p.59.

³³Open Door International, *Report of Conference held in Berlin, June 15th-16th, 1929* (London, 1929), p.6.

³⁴See Open Door International, *Report of the Fourth Conference in Copenhagen, August 19th-23rd, 1935* (London, 1935).

during this time she should receive paid benefits either from public funds or private insurance arranged through the employer; developments in this direction had been supported by the ILO's Childbirth Convention (1919). The ODI opposed such legislation on the grounds that it deprived a woman of her right to decide when she should work. They believed also that the special burdens placed on employers had the indirect effect of making women less desirable employees and thus more likely to be passed over in the recruitment process or subject to dismissal when pregnant. One solution offered by the ODI was to include maternity leave under accident or illness benefits so as to avoid special legislation for women.³⁵ Members of the group were primarily middle-class professionals, often criticized for failing to understand the needs of working women. While they can be criticized for attempting to fit women into male-defined structures and for ignoring the particular needs of women, the ODI was one of the few organizations to discuss the need for 'biological freedom' through birth control and 'equal education' of boys and girls with regard to manual work and housekeeping.³⁶

The ODI's sister organization, the Equal Rights International (ERI) was founded in 1930 by members of the SPG and the NWP "[t]o establish equal rights for men and women throughout the world", in part to protest the Alliance's rejection of a strict equal rights platform. Like many of the single-issue organizations that proliferated after the war, its membership was never large; but with a small group of active members it concentrated efforts on having the international equivalent of the Equal Rights Amendment - the Equal Rights Treaty - adopted, ratified and applied by the members states of the League of Nations. It was believed that all existing legal discrimination against women could be eliminated through such a treaty.

Although international in the sense that it had members from

³⁵Open Door International, *The Policy With Regard to Maternity of the Open Door International for the Economic Emancipation of the Woman Worker* (n.d.). The NWP had a similar approach, comparing mothers to disabled war veterans. See Becker (1981), p.125.

³⁶E[qual] R[ights] I[nternational] Papers, "Report of the ERI Delegate to ODI Conference, 1933", (n.d.), "Annual Reports"/330.

several countries the ERI remained dominated by British women. The Chairman of the organization, journalist Helen Archdale, was British. Several of the British executive members, including the Chairman, had been involved in the militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). The charismatic leader of the NWP, lawyer Alice Paul, had also received her tactical training from the Pankhursts during her years in Britain working with the WSPU³⁷; she was active in the ERI until it became clear that many members were reluctant to support her use of radical methods at the League. Many of the founding members of the ODI and the ERI had participated in the militant suffrage campaign. The battle that developed on the international front in the 1930s mirrored the pre-war struggle between constitutionalists and militants in the sense that a major conflict arose over strategy. From the perspective of the ERI, other women's organizations had been distracted from their feminist aims by non-feminist issues: "relations with other international organizations have been extended and are good, although the pre-occupation of many with subjects, such as disarmament, not specifically feminist make action on equalitarian lines regrettably slow".³⁸ The members of the ERI were self-consciously feminist, often bemoaning the fact that they "did not find any understanding of feminism" in many other women active in the women's movement.³⁹

When the question of creating a Women's Section at the League was raised once again in 1931, Gertrude Baer, an executive member of the ERI, wrote to Archdale asking "should we join knowing that such a Committee will scarcely represent our point of view?"⁴⁰ Baer recommended that they "stay outside and fight for our equalitarian point of view until we have gained more ground". Edith Rodgers, Geneva Representative for the ODI, made a

³⁷Dale Spender, *Women of Ideas* (London: Pandora Press, 1988), p.535.

³⁸ERI Papers, "Report of the Equal Rights International, 1932-33", (n.d.), "Annual Reports"/330.

³⁹ERI Papers, H. Archdale to Agnes MacPhail, M.P. (Canada), 26 November 1930, "Annual Reports"/330, in which she refers to Irene Parlby, League Delegate from Canada who was leader of a farm women's movement in Alberta. Also see H. Archdale, "Report on operation at Geneva in September 1929" regarding lobby of League delegates, same file.

⁴⁰ERI Papers, G. Baer to H. Archdale, 20 October 1931, "Spanish Resolution"/330.

similar point:

I still feel very strongly that the O.D.I. (also the E.R.I. do you not think?) can best do its work by keeping itself quite distinct from joint-committees so that its object may not be overshadowed by other issues, no doubt equally important, but not really concerned with our aims. I think we must continue to keep the O.D.I. and the E.R.I. somewhat apart from the other organisations, where our very distinct objects can be clearly seen. It would, I think, be disastrous to create the impression that all the women's organisations were agreed when really some of them are very definitely opposed to our separate policies.⁴¹

Rodgers suggested, however, that if the other organizations could be brought over to the objects of the ERI and the ODI "it would much strengthen our cause to have them affiliated".

Although equalitarian feminists often expressed concern about cooperating with other women's organizations where their views would be minority ones, they participated in activities and campaigns organized by these groups. The ERI even went as far as to join the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations. Social feminists on the Liaison Committee were "somewhat apprehensive" about the affiliation of the ERI because it worked only for equal rights.⁴² Contact with the Liaison Committee was, in fact, to prove more problematic for the ERI. Instead of radicalizing the other organizations, as Rodgers had suggested, the ERI was to a certain extent de-radicalized by its contact with the Liaison Committee. Some executive members, including Helen Archdale, soon came to favour the more gradualist approach to improving the status of women favoured by the other Women's International Organizations of the Committee. Other ERI members, among them the former WSPU activist Dorothy Evans, preferred the radical strategies put forward during the 1930s by Alice Paul. As will be seen, the result was that ERI members sometimes found themselves working at cross-purposes.

This outline of the organizations Boy classified as "feminist" should illustrate the difficulties of creating a typology of the Women's

⁴¹ERI Papers, E. Rodgers to H. Archdale, 7 October 1931, "ODI"/353.

⁴²M[argery] C[orbett] A[shby] Papers, C. Beresford Fox to A. Harrison, 2 July 1934, "Liaison Committee and Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations, 1934-41"/484.

International Organizations. Members of the ICW were in a large measure social reformers, though confirmed in the belief that raising the status of women would facilitate social reform. Other organizations espoused equal rights feminism, yet disagreed on tactics and priorities. Because of its reluctance to oppose protective legislation and its involvement in peace work the IWSA, though long connected with the equal rights campaign, found itself increasingly on the defensive against encroachments by new equalitarian groups. Conflict was temporarily contained, however, by the participation of these organizations in the consultative bodies of the Women's International Organizations.

Two other organizations not included in Boy's typology deserve mention: the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW) and the All Asian Women's Conference (AAWC). Although regional bodies, they were included in the League *Handbook of International Organisations* under the heading "Feminist Organisations". From the mid-1930s both organizations were involved in questions regarding the status of women as they were addressed by the League.

The IACW was a unique case among women's organizations examined here in that it was not a voluntary organization. It was created at the Sixth International Conference of American States in Havana in 1928 at the instigation of members of the National Woman's Party.⁴³ It functioned as an official body of the Pan American Union and members were appointed by governments of member states. The Commission was charged with the preparation of juridical information and data to enable the Conference of American States to consider the civil and political equality of women. One of the first areas examined by the Commission was the nationality of women. Members of the Commission soon arrived in Geneva to pressure the League to consider nationality problems faced by married women. The IACW's success at having two equality treaties signed by several Latin American countries inspired feminists campaigning for similar action by the member states of the League. Further, the Commission became an important point of

⁴³Francesca Miller, "Latin American Feminism and the Transnational Arena" in *Women, Culture and Politics in Latin America* edited by Seminar on Feminism and Culture in Latin America (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

reference in the campaign for a Women's Section at the League.

Information on the AAWC is scarce. According to the *League Handbook* (1938), it emphasized the common culture of Asian women, seeking "remedies for the defects at present apparent in Oriental civilization (ill-health, illiteracy, poverty and underpayment of labour, infantile mortality, marriage customs)" and attempting to "sift what is appropriate for Asia from the Occidental influences (education, dress, freedom of movement, cinemas, machinery)". Although members of the AAWC participated in activities organized by other Women's International Organizations it rarely lobbied the League directly, and even Secretariat members were unfamiliar with its activities, stating in 1937 that the Group had "always been a mystery" to them.⁴⁴

One feminist group that had not yet been created when Boy prepared her typology also deserves mention: the World Woman's Party for Equal Rights (WWP). The WWP came into official existence in Geneva in August 1939, just weeks before the outbreak of war. It had been constituted legally in November 1938 when, according to Alice Paul, the NWP decided to become international after having been "stirred by appeals from lands where the woman movement has been largely suppressed". Paul believed the new organization would "enable American women to stand shoulder to shoulder with the women of other countries who are losing the small measure of freedom they have won, and give them the support they so sorely need".⁴⁵ She emphasized the importance of establishing a new international equal rights group to serve as a counterforce to the authoritarian regimes in Europe in the process of stripping away gains made by women in the area of political, economic and civil rights. Dorothy Evans of the ERI informed Paul that her society adequately represented equal rights objectives and that a new international women's group was unnecessary.⁴⁶ In March 1939,

⁴⁴LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to M. Podestá Costa, 22 June 1937, 3A/19123/13900 R3755.

⁴⁵W[orld] W[oman's] P[arty] Papers, A. Paul, circular letter "To Friends", 20 December 1938, 1:VII:A /173.

⁴⁶N[ational] W[oman's] P[arty] Papers, opposition voiced by D. Evans to Mrs. Stephen Pell, 2 November 1937, 1:I/60.

Dr. Renée Girod (ICW), also warned Paul that a new group in Geneva was ill-advised:

Geneva has no longer the importance that it has had in the past years. The League of Nations is slowly dying, economies are cutting down even the social work, and as to the political action, you know as well as I do that it no longer exists.⁴⁷

Against such advice, Paul went ahead with her plans for a new group to lead the women's movement. The WWP had little opportunity to fulfil its aims. When the war broke out it joined social feminist organizations in refugee work.

The second group Boy identifies in her typology of women's organizations is "Professional Associations". This new group of women's organizations was substantially different from the others in the sense that members were not primarily dedicated to social and political reform but to advancing the professional interests of women as the professions increasingly opened up to them after 1918. A statement prepared by the ERI in 1932, outlines the significance of these groups:

Representing...a new generation, with a point of view based on practical, actual experience, they differ from the older organisations, whose point of view was necessarily more theoretical. The older opened a door into business and the professions for the newer and now look to the newer to clear away discriminations based on sex from the inside.⁴⁸

Boulding notes that since 1916 the main growth area in women's NGOs has been professional organizations.⁴⁹ This is important, for it reflects a shift in women's self-perception from 'women' to women lawyers, doctors and academics. Still, professional women could not escape the fact that being a woman meant suffering discrimination. At the first conference of the IFUW in 1920, Dean Virginia C. Gildersleeve of Barnard College, U.S.A., stated:

We feel that, though we wish to work as human beings and not as men and women in these great movements, yet the world is not yet quite so far advanced, the position of women is not

⁴⁷WWP Papers, Dr. Renée Girod to A. Paul, 24 March 1939, 1:VII:A/173.

⁴⁸ERI Papers, statement marked "For Kindness of Translation...", H. Archdale, 5 May 1932, "B&PW (Heneker)"/333.

⁴⁹Boulding (1977), p.189.

yet so definitely assured, that it is possible for us to do without a women's organisation of some sort.⁵⁰

Dean Gildersleeve expressed the view that as long as inequalities existed, women would be passed over in appointments unless there were organizations specifically designed to put forward their interests. It was the inequality of treatment and consequent lack of opportunity for women academics and graduates that drew the IFUW into wider activities to raise the status of women. Although Gildersleeve stressed that they were not "separatists or ultra-feminists" the IFUW recognized the need to further the interests of women as a sex and not simply as a professional class.⁵¹ As a member of the Liaison Committee, the Federation participated in the campaign for League action with regard to the status of women.

The IFUW was primarily concerned with furthering the interests of university women. At the same time it worked to promote an atmosphere of international understanding necessary for the success of the League of Nations.⁵² Members believed that their international exchanges and fellowships contributed to advancing ideals necessary for the League's success.⁵³ The IFUW also actively participated in the work of the League's International Committee of Intellectual Co-operation, which had aims and activities very similar to those of the Federation.

Neither the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW) nor the International Federation of Women Magistrates and Barristers (IFWMB) were particularly active in lobbying the League except as members of the women's consultative bodies. Both sought to promote good relations among women in the professions and to advance the professional interests of women. Both were relatively small organizations. In 1937 the

⁵⁰International Federation of University Women, "Report of the First Conference July, 1920" in [IFUW] *Bulletin*, 1 (1920), p.20.

⁵¹Address by Dean Gildersleeve, "Report of the First Conference July 1920", *Bulletin*, 1 (1920), p.19.

⁵²Address by Professor Caroline Spurgeon, "Report of the First Conference July, 1920", *Bulletin*, 1 (1920), p.13.

⁵³This list appears in League of Nations document [hereafter cited as LoN], Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace, Report by the Secretary General, 25 August 1932, A.10.1932., p.7.

IFBPW claimed a membership of 100,000 women.⁵⁴ Among other activities the IFBPW carried out investigations into the factors responsible for the handicapping of women in business and professions while the IFWMB examined other issues relating to the status of women: the opening of judicial positions to women, the internationalization of the offence of family desertion and the legal status of the international associations.⁵⁵ Both organizations contributed their findings to the League throughout the 1930s, especially as the League became increasingly involved in questions concerning the status of women.

The International Co-operative Women's Guild differed from other professional associations in its overtly political character. Its platform was anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist and it included amongst its members many socialists and communists. In 1931 the ICWG claimed to have many millions of members in about thirty countries.⁵⁶ For most of the 1920s and 1930s the ICWG was headed by Emmy Freundlich, a socialist member of the Austrian Parliament. While co-operative women's societies had existed in many countries since the late nineteenth century, the ICWG was formed in 1921 "to unite co-operative women" throughout the world. It became increasingly involved in disarmament and peace work throughout the 1920s and 1930s. A resolution on "The Prevention of War" adopted at the 1930 Conference illustrates this point:

Housewives and mothers for whom the International Co-operative Woman's Guild stands, are still feeling the results of the last War. No-one suffers from the effects of War as heavily as the mothers...Still the mothers are paying the price of the last War in increased cost of living, unemployment and economic need...⁵⁷

The resolution charged the ICWG with preparing the way for the victory of the Co-operative ideal of international collaboration and the

⁵⁴LoN, Status of Women, Communications Received from Governments and Women's International Organisations since September 1936, 17 September 1937, A.14(d).1937.V.

⁵⁵Information compiled from LoN, *Handbook* (1938) and from descriptions in various publications of the liaison committees.

⁵⁶LoN, *Handbook*, 1931.

⁵⁷LNA, amendments to resolution 'Prevention of War' at ICWG Conference, Vienna, 21-22 August 1930 in 5A/21115/21115 R2184.

transformation of industry "by never allowing women to forget the meaning and dangers of War so that they may become opponents of all force and all armaments" and by "urging all women to use their power as citizens and co-operators for the ensuring of Peace".

The program of the ICWG brings into question whether it was part of the labor movement or the peace movement rather than the women's movement. Like many of the other organizations examined here the ICWG embraced a variety of causes, all of which it viewed as interconnected in the aim of creating a more just and equitable world. Among these was the cause of improving the status of women; for instance, in 1930 the ICWG participated in efforts to have the League undertake an investigation into the legal status of women. Sometimes referred to as "The Mothers' International" the Guild took a maternal feminist approach, emphasizing the need for an improvement in the status of women that would allow women to contribute their special qualities of nurturing and co-operation to public life.⁵⁸ The organization tended to remain aloof from the activities of other women's organizations except on the question of peace and disarmament.

Organizations identified by Boy as "Religious" include two groups formed in the nineteenth century: the World's Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU). In 1931 the YWCA listed a membership of one million, while the 1932 figure for the WWCTU was 700,000 women in forty countries. Their members included social reformers and philanthropists primarily concerned with spiritual and moral issues. These groups had strong commitment to problems of young working women and the deserted, widowed or single woman, and contributed to the development of new approaches to community welfare and social justice.⁵⁹ Both organizations were involved throughout the inter-war years with the League's activities concerning the traffic in women and children and child welfare. They also became involved in a wider

⁵⁸Naomi Black, "The Mothers' International: The Women's Co-operative Guild and Feminist Pacifism", *WSIF*, 7, 6 (1984), pp. 467-476.

⁵⁹Boulding (1977), p. 189.

range of activities through their membership in the liasion groups of Women's International Organizations, among them the nationality and status of women. Like most of the other organizations they identified the pursuit of international co-operation among their aims.

The St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (SJSPA), on the other hand, was formed in 1931 as an equal rights organization of Catholic women, and could easily fit into the category "Feminist Organizations". It stood for political, social and economic equality between men and women of all races.⁶⁰ In the 1930s the Alliance became especially interested in the status of 'native' women. It carried out research on the subject and contributed its findings to various League committees. In contrast to the aforementioned International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, the SJSPU readily participated in the activities of other international women's organizations.

Finally, the Women's International Organizations which Boy classified as "Pacifist" must be considered.⁶¹ The most important of these was the WILPF, the history of which has been well-documented.⁶² A relatively small organization, in 1926 it claimed a membership of only 50,000 women in forty countries.⁶³ Its members were committed internationalists; despite the low membership level the WILPF was more active during the inter-war years than many of the other women's societies whose high numbers often reflected support for rather than active commitment to the cause.

Although members of the WILPF were some of the first to lobby Assembly delegates in 1920, the society always had ambiguous relations with the League largely because certain factions saw the League as protecting

⁶⁰LoN, Status of Women, Communications Received from Governments and Women's International Organizations Since September 1936, 29 November 1937, A.14.1937.V.Corrigenda, p.56.

⁶¹Two groups mentioned by Boy that are not considered here include The International League of Mothers and Educators for Peace and the World Committee of Women against War and Fascism. Boy (1936), p.49 ff. Neither actively lobbied the League.

⁶²Bussey and Tims (1965;1980); Wiltsher (1985); and Foster (1989).

⁶³Bussey and Tims (1965;1980), p.77.

the interests of victor nations.⁶⁴ They believed that the burden of the guilt for the war lay with unjust economic and political relations and not just with Germany. Nonetheless, among the women's organizations it was the WILPF that was the most interested in the full spectrum of international issues which came before the League. As well as discussing current international affairs, the WILPF included on its agenda such topics as disarmament, amnesty for prisoners of war and conscientious objectors, famine relief, treatment of deported women, colonialism, population problems, statelessness, minorities, mandates, and the nationality of married women.⁶⁵ It is easy to understand why Boulding includes the WILPF in the category "International Relations".

While primarily a peace society of women, the WILPF was willing to co-operate with other women's organizations because of its conviction that a permanent peace could be built only on the basis of equal rights. The WILPF was one of the first women's organizations to speak in terms of 'human rights' and to link the emancipation of women with just and equitable relations among all human beings. Although described by Ceadel as doctrinally "confused" in the sense that it had no clear policy and members were divided between internationalist and outright pacifist positions, this apparent lack of clarity did not hinder the WILPF's activism.⁶⁶ Indeed, Jane Addams, the American founder and President of the WILPF until 1929, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 and another member, Emily Greene Balch, won the Prize in 1946.

Information on the World Union of Women for International Concord is scarce. The Union claimed to have 25,000 members in twenty-nine countries, though it appears that the founder, Clara Guthrie D'Arcis, ran the organization almost single-handedly for almost twenty years. Founded in the same year as the WILPF the Union was, if anything, more doctrinally confused than its sister organization. Its objects were: "to establish

⁶⁴Bussey and Tims (1965;1980), pp.126ff.

⁶⁵This list is compiled from agendas of meetings in the WILPF Papers and from *A Venture in Internationalism* (WILPF, Geneva, 1938).

⁶⁶Ceadel (1980), p.61 and Appendix 1.

permanent peace; mutual education; [and] to develop humanitarian internationalism by establishing relations among women throughout the world". It remained vague about strategies for meeting these goals. The President, Guthrie D'Arcis, described the work of the WUWIC as:

...an effort to direct the dynamic force of Woman's separate and individual influence towards Peace, first by arresting her attention in regard to her responsibility and power and then to quicken into practical action her vague desire to help.⁶⁷

Like the IWCG, the WUWIC placed much emphasis on the role of mothers in peace work. While it was most active in connection with the activities of the Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations, the Union also participated in the campaign to have questions regarding the status of women placed before the League.

Attempts to create a typology of the Women's International Organizations illustrate the divisions among them, while at the same time demonstrating the existence of co-operative networks. Before turning to examine how these networks operated some generalizations can be made about the way in which the structure and organization of these societies facilitated co-operative efforts. Appendix 4 shows that taken together the Women's International Organizations represented women in seventy countries. With the exception of the regional IACW and AAWC, most often the executive members came from European countries, the United States, Canada or Australia (see column 2). But striking exceptions include Marthe Hekimi (Iran) who was an Honorary Treasurer of the Equal Rights International and Hada Charaoui (Egypt), the Fourth Vice-President of the IAWSEC. Both women held their posts in the late 1930s. Their prominence indicates that many of the organizations were at last becoming truly international.⁶⁸

Yet for most of the inter-war period those organizations defined by Boy as "Feminist" - the ICW, the IAWSEC, the ERI and the ODI - were led by British women. Apart from the WILPF, the WWCTU and the IFBPW, (and, of

⁶⁷Clara Guthrie D'Arcis, "Women's Influence Towards World Peace" in ICW (1925), p.25.

⁶⁸LoN, *Handbook*, 1938.

course, the AAWC and the IACW) all the other organizations were headed by European women (See asterisks, Appendix 4). Moreover, upon the resignation of Jane Addams in 1929 the WILPF decided to appoint three co-chairman of equal responsibility, one from America and two from Europe. Although one of the features of the inter-war women's movement was the growth of women's societies in what are now described as 'Developing Countries', the movement remained decidedly Eurocentric. Indeed, the development of women's organizations in these countries and consequent patterns of affiliation to the Women's International Organizations often appears to have emerged from colonial influences.⁶⁹

With the formation of the League of Nations, Geneva became the centre for the international women's movement. Consider, for example, the geographical location of the headquarters of the Women's International Organizations (See Appendix 2). With the exception of the AAWC and the IACW which were regional organizations, only the IFBPW and the WWCTU were based outside Europe (although they set up offices in Geneva and London, respectively). The headquarters of most of the other organizations were either in London or Geneva and almost all those based in London had permanent or temporary offices in Geneva to co-ordinate their work in connection with the League of Nations. Even the IACW set up an office in Geneva. Many organizations also appointed members as special representatives to the League.

When the Women's International Organizations jointly presented their petitions to the League, as they did from 1919 onward, they could claim to represent approximately forty-five million women throughout the world. Each international organization (with the exception of the IACW) was made up of national branches, affiliated and corresponding societies and individual members. These networks proved particularly important for gathering data on the status of women throughout the world in the 1930s. Sometimes these societies were national branches of the international organization, such as the National Councils of Women. For many international societies there were no national branches, just affiliated

⁶⁹Boulding (1977), pp.195-6.

national women's organizations. This meant that there could be more than one affiliated group from any given country. For example, IAW affiliates from Britain included the NUSEC, the Women's Freedom League and St. Joan's Social and Political Union. Many of the Women's International Organizations were fraternal members of the other international societies. They even attended each others' conferences. For example, representatives from the ICW, ICWG, IFUW, WUWIC, WILPF and WYWCA attended the Eleventh Congress of the IAW in 1929.⁷⁰ Most often national societies were given a high degree of autonomy in their activities as long as they abided by the general principles as defined by the international organization.

Although forty-five million women were represented by the Women's International Organizations, the actual number of women who co-ordinated activities on their behalf was small. Hundreds of women were brought together at the international conferences held by most organizations every three or four years. Delegates to the conferences were usually appointed by member societies. At these conferences issues were debated, resolutions passed and strategies planned for the intervening years before the next international meeting. Most groups also organized smaller meetings on specific subjects held between the international conferences. The international organizations were in effect run by executive members who met on a regular basis, most often in London or Geneva, to oversee the general administration of their organizations, to plan conferences and public meetings and to lobby the League. Some executive members held offices or were members of several international organizations at the same time and many were members of Assembly delegations and League committees. Appendix 4 indicates that League member states with a high number of affiliates to Women's International Organizations were most likely to include women as part of their delegations to the League. No doubt, this was because women's organizations pressed their governments to appoint women delegates.

That some women were members of several organizations can be

⁷⁰LNA, provisional list of members included in report of R. Crowdy and G. Radziwill, "25th Anniversary International Women's Suffrage Alliance, June 17, 1929", 5A/7200/6500 R2181.

explained by the fact that many of the executive posts were honorary positions, and did not carry with them many duties: high-profile women simply lent their names to the cause. Although most active in the Alliance, Czechoslovakian Senator Františka Plamínková was also on the executive of the ODI, the WILPF and the IFBPW. Chrystal Macmillan was a founding member of the WILPF and sat on the executive of the IAWSEC, the IFUW and the ODI. Simultaneous membership in several organizations did not necessarily entail a conflict of interest, especially when many of the organizations themselves were fraternal members of other organizations. Moreover, most executives met only a few times a year, although several had standing committees on particular issues which met and corresponded more regularly to collect and disseminate information. The IAWSEC, for instance, had five permanent international committees by 1938: the Committee for Equal Moral Standards and against Traffic in Women; the Committee for Equal Conditions of Work for Men and Women; the Committee for Peace; the Committee for Equal Legal Status for Women; and the Committee on Suffrage and Elections. The ICW with its wider range of activity had twelve standing committees. Organizations such as the ODI or the IFBPW tended to focus on specific questions and therefore were organized on a much smaller scale than the ICW or the IAWSEC.

Most of the Women's International Organizations were financed by annual subscriptions from affiliated organizations and from donations or private bequests. Although members were predominantly upper and middle-class women, the organizations often found themselves in financial difficulties; women's organizations were especially hard hit during the Depression. As one publication of the Peace and Disarmament Committee stated:

It is unfortunately true that the majority of women's organisations are handicapped by not being adequately financed and it is sometimes hard for business men accustomed to liberal budgets to realize with what restricted means these great organisations have to contend.⁷¹

As Treasurer of the Committee, Clara Guthrie d'Arcis devised a plan in the

⁷¹Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations, *The Peace-Roll of Industry: History and Development Declarations from Leading Industrial and Financial Organizations in the U.S.A.* (Geneva: PDCWIO, 1937), p.46.

mid-1930s aimed at securing financial contributions from American industrialists. Although the initial response was encouraging, funds raised in this manner were limited. One of the greatest expenses faced by the organizations was the publication of official journals. These journals (listed in Appendix 2) helped to keep members up-to-date with the activities of their organizations and on international questions of particular concern to them.

As the Women's International Organizations often shared members in common, attended each others conferences and had from 1919 formed joint delegations with which to lobby the League, it is not surprising that they conducted a large proportion of their activities through liaison bodies. Although the creation of such groups was expressedly for the purpose of communication and co-operation, another motivation was the desire to unify the international women's movement. This had been one of the reasons for the formation of the first international women's organizations at the turn of the century, and with the multiplication of new women's organizations at the international level in the 1920s and 1930s, the desire to create a sense of unity was strong, not least because a unified women's movement could wield greater influence at the League of Nations. The new, single-issue organizations represented a challenge to the authority of the older, broadly-based Women's International Organizations which were in some ways inhibited from action by the need for consensus. It is not surprising to discover that the first liaison committee was formed at the instigation of the ICW in 1926: the Council had been created almost forty years earlier with the aim of creating unity in the women's movement.⁷² On several occasions the ICW proposed an amalgamation with the IAW, although ventures in this direction were not appreciated by the Alliance.⁷³

Both the Joint Standing Committee and the Liaison Committee were based in London. During the sessions of the League Assembly the committees met in Geneva. A deputation of the Liaison Committee to the

⁷²LCWIO, *An Experiment in Co-operation 1925-1945* (1945).

⁷³See Resolutions adopted in 1922, 1929, 1930 listed in Munro (1979). See also report of the 1929 meeting of the IAW, R. Crowdy and G. Radziwill, July 1929 in LNA 5A/7200/6500 R2181.

Secretary-General in 1932 included thirteen women, at least eight of whom were British.⁷⁴ General Secretary of the ICW, Elsie Zimmern, who was the sister of the British international relations scholar, Professor Alfred Zimmern, served until 1946 as the Honorary Secretary of the Liaison Committee. Attending a meeting of the Liaison Committee in 1932, former suffragette Flora Drummond (ERI) expressed concern that while calling itself an international organization the "same little group" of British women, whom she identified as "the old Constitutionals", dominated the committee.⁷⁵ Among the members of the British representatives on Committee were Lady Aberdeen (ICW), Margery Corbett Ashby (IAW), and Kathleen Courtney, former Secretary of the NUWSS and co-founder of the WILPF.

The Joint Standing Committee was primarily engaged in the task of collecting and forwarding to the League names of women qualified to sit on advisory committees. It closely monitored the appointments made by the League and protested when it felt women had been passed over. The Liaison Committee, on the other hand, co-ordinated the activities on a wide range of topics upon which affiliated societies were able to agree on either a common expression of opinion or joint action.⁷⁶ Among the topics so construed were: codification of international law, mandates, peace and disarmament, native women, nationality, status of women, slavery, minorities and refugees.⁷⁷ By the mid-1930s the Liaison Committee co-ordinated the activities of the majority of the Women's International Organizations in Geneva and though affiliates included the IAW and the ERI, it generally supported a social feminist platform. As was to be the case

⁷⁴LNA, "Note of Reception by the Secretary-General of a Deputation of Representatives of Women's Organisations, 29 September 1932", 50/39080/31137 R3604.

⁷⁵ERI Papers, F. Drummond to H. Archdale, 13 June 1932, "Mrs. Flora Drummond"/331.

⁷⁶W[omen's] I[nternational] L[eague for] P[peace and] F[reedom] Papers, Memo on formation of the Liaison Committee: "Communication between Women's International Organisations regarding any plans of work or proposed conferences likely to be of common interest and suitable for joint action or demonstration", (n.d.), IV:273/109.

⁷⁷LCWIO, *An Experiment in Co-operation 1925-1945* (1945).

with most consultative bodies, the Liaison Committee expanded its co-ordinating tasks to function as a sort of spokesgroup for all its affiliates, often eliciting criticism from the individual societies when their names were used to support policies that they did not favour. This happened despite the fact that affiliates had joined the Committee on the agreement that they would retain complete autonomy and the freedom to dissociate from any given project.

Despite the diversity of programs and priorities of each organization co-operative networks were sustained throughout the period. Certainly there was an element of political pragmatism involved in the patterns of mutual support which emerged: the co-operative efforts represented a means of consolidating political influence both at the national and the international level. The larger organizations sensed a threat to their own authority in the emergence of single-issue societies and made every effort to draw them together through complex organizational affiliations and international liaison committees. And with faith in 'strength through numbers' smaller societies were often keen to link themselves to other organizations as long as their autonomy was not threatened. But the co-operative networks would have been impossible to sustain if not for certain shared assumptions about the need to improve the status of women and the importance of the League as a vehicle for social and political reforms.

Two other joint committees also deserve consideration: the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality and the Status of Women Group. The Women's Consultative Committee was formed at the invitation of the League Council in January 1931 to advise on matters concerning the nationality of women. Although originally comprising nine women's organizations, half of these later withdrew when it became clear that Alice Paul and other supporters of the Equal Rights Treaty were using the Committee to forward their goals. The Status of Women Group was formed in the late 1930s by eight Women's International Organizations from the Liaison Committee to put pressure on the League for an International Convention on the Status of Women designed as a gradualist alternative to the Equal Rights Treaty. In effect, members of the Status of Women Group set themselves up as a counterforce to the Women's Consultative Committee.

Until about the autumn of 1933, the Women's International Organizations succeeded in presenting themselves to a League as 'a united front'. As Clara Guthrie d'Arcais (WUWIC) stated in 1931:

It is my opinion that these busy statesmen do not differentiate between the numerous women's organizations, but consider us collectively as a real force, and that our united and unanimous action simplifies their dealing with us and gives us an influence and an importance in their eyes.⁷⁸

A few years later "united and unanimous action" became almost impossible. The consensus of the 1920s was challenged by the formation of the ERI, the ODI and the IACW. Indeed, what Boy fails to consider in her typology of international women's organizations is the fact that by the early 1930s these organizations had divided into two camps: social feminist and equal rights feminist. During the 1930s a battle was waged at the international level over the best means to advance the status of women. Divisions over policy were exacerbated by conflicts over tactics. In particular, members of the Liaison Committee disapproved of the confrontational approach adopted by equal rights activists from the NWP. They were afraid of jeopardizing the good relationship built up with the League and, as will be seen, their fears were not unfounded.

Finally, some generalizations can be made about the way in which the Women's International Organizations lobbied the League. The extent to which women's organizations were able to interact directly with Secretariat officials and Assembly delegates was considerable. The Secretariat's policy of sending representatives to international congresses held by the women's organizations helped to sustain good relations, as did the appointment of Radziwill as Secretariat liaison officer with the Women's International Organizations. Women's organizations benefitted from the fact that the League was organized on a small enough scale to make personal contact possible. Although they were able to get some of their members into positions as 'insiders' as delegates to the Assembly and League advisory committees, the women's organizations operated primarily on the 'outside' as lobbyists. For this reason it was essential to extend their

⁷⁸WILPF Papers, C. Guthrie d'Arcais to C. Drevet, 3 March 1931, IV:193/105.

networks to League delegates and Secretariat officials.

The strategy of petitioning individual delegates could mean anything from arranging private meetings to accosting them in the corridors outside the Assembly Hall, though the latter practice came to an end when the League transferred to its new headquarters in 1937 and passes were required to obtain access to the lobbies. Apart from well-connected women like Lady Aberdeen, women's greatest "handicap", as Helen Archdale (ERI) pointed out, was that they were "always outside, having to catch delegates and similar responsible persons in corridors and odd corners".⁷⁹ Some organizations were reluctant to use this approach. Dorothy Heneker (IFBPW), writing in 1934 to Archdale about proposed activities in connection with the ILO's Night Work Convention, stated that action taken by professional and business women's groups should be separate from that of "feminist bodies" such as the Alliance: instead of bothering the delegates in the lobbies, Heneker suggested that it would be more professional to invite delegates to discuss women's demands for the Convention's revision over lunch.⁸⁰

From the early 1920s women's organizations in Geneva had adopted the practice of hosting receptions and dinners every year for Assembly delegates and Secretariat officials. Perhaps one of the most remarkable outcomes of Lady Aberdeen's networking efforts was a reception in June 1927 hosted by the Secretary-General for the executive members of the ICW. This was followed by a dinner offered by the ICW to the President and members of the League Council during which speeches were made by British Foreign Minister Austen Chamberlain and Czechoslovakian Prime Minister, Eduard Beneš.⁸¹ In September 1931 an Equal Rights Treaty Dinner was hosted by the ERI. Diplomat Orestes Ferrara, member of the Cuban delegation, Anna Szelagowska, Assembly delegate for Poland and a member of the ERI, and

⁷⁹ERI Papers, "Notes on Talk with Madariaga of Spain", 17 February 1932, "Annual Reports, Corr. 1931-32"/330.

⁸⁰ERI Papers, D. Heneker to H. Archdale, 18 January 1934, "Night Work for Women Convention"/332.

⁸¹ICW (1966), p.58.

Eduard Beneš, spoke in support of equal rights for women.⁸²

Mary Craig McGeachy of the Secretariat Information Section believed, however, that women's organizations invested too much energy at the international level:

Too often...delegates in Geneva are urged to take some action in the name of women when they have had no indication whatever that the women of their own country would be interested in such action.

She pointed out that any delegation worked out the main lines of its policy before coming to Geneva and thus "if women are to cooperate to carry out the purposes of the League their influence ought to be consistently and constantly exercised in their national and local organisations as well as through international executives".⁸³ Although most Women's International Organizations were not quite as out of touch with their national groups as McGeachy suggested, in general, the international executives were certainly the most active lobbyists on international questions. Moreover, equal rights groups tended to represent only a small number of women in each member country, but they were perhaps more successful at attracting attention at the international level than the larger societies whose democratic but slow-moving structures meant that they took into consideration views of their national affiliates. Yet all activities were not centred in Geneva. During the year pressure was placed on foreign offices to gain national support for women's demands before delegations arrived in Geneva. Once Assembly delegates had been appointed, they could expect to receive petitions from national women's groups.

The Women's International Organizations interacted with League delegates and Secretariat officials in order to have specific resolutions on questions concerning women introduced before the Assembly or to inform them of women's opinion on questions coming before the League. League procedure dictated that communications from international non-governmental organizations were merely acknowledged in the *Assembly Journal*; as a

⁸²ERI Papers, report on The Equal Rights Treaty Dinner, "Annual Reports 1929-33"/330.

⁸³LNA, M.McGeachy to A. Sweetser, 24 November 1931, 50/32957/31137 R3603. Evans (1977) also claims that international officers had little connection with women in their own countries, p.241.

result, women's organizations had to take more decisive action if they wished to gain support for their goals. As the League became more involved with questions concerning the status of women in the 1930s special arrangements were made to circulate the recommendations of Women's International Organizations directly to the Council and the Assembly. According to one member of the WYWCA this made the previous system of lobbying of delegates to get certain questions on the agenda "unnecessary", but in reality the old methods were not abandoned.⁸⁴ If anything, lobby efforts intensified in the mid-1930s when social feminists and equal rights feminists fought for influence at the League.

Thus the international societies which joined together to lobby the League as the "Women's International Organizations" shared certain common characteristics that facilitated co-operation. The rather loosely-knit organizational structures made it possible for networks to emerge among the societies. Moreover, the leadership cohort was a small group of women who regularly met as members of liaison committees of the Women's International Organizations and sometimes in official positions at Assembly meetings or on League committees. Although members included women of many nationalities, classes, religions and political persuasions, the predominant influence was liberal, anglo-saxon and upper or middle class. Of the labor and socialist women who were active in the Women's International Organizations, mainly in the IWCG or the WILPF, most were committed to democratic change.

Before the arrival of equal rights feminists on the international scene, the Women's International Organizations were able to present a united front at the League. Previous attempts to create a typology of the Women's International Organizations have failed to note the split of the international women's movement into two camps during the 1930s. As will be shown below, women's international work at the League was fundamentally influenced by this split. Efforts were made, however, to sustain the image of unity, and social and equal rights feminists struggled to identify

⁸⁴MCA Papers, C. Beresford Fox to E. Luxmoore, A. Harrison, M. Dingman and R. Woodsmall, 4 February 1935, "Liaison Cttee and PDCWIO 1934-41"/484.

common goals. But by the mid-1930s compromise became almost impossible. Yet on certain issues there was no disagreement: the importance of the League of Nations to the objectives of the Women's International Organizations and the necessity of getting women into positions of responsibility and influence in connection with the League.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN IN THE LEAGUE SECRETARIAT

In order to advance their goals throughout the 1920s and 1930s the Women's International Organizations interacted with women officials at the League. This chapter presents a profile of women employed in the League Secretariat. Although Article 7 of the Covenant provided that "all positions under or in connection with the League, including the Secretariat, shall be open to men and women" the representation of women in official positions at the League was a disappointment to those women who had campaigned at the Paris Peace Conference. Throughout the period women's international organizations persistently lobbied the League and its member states for greater official representation of women in the activities of the League. They believed that the League was not adhering to the spirit of equality set forward in the Covenant, nor was it accommodating women's special contribution to international affairs. The League responded with numerous resolutions reminding member states that under Article 7 competent women should be appointed to Assembly delegations, technical committees and to higher posts in the Secretariat.¹ Yet by the late 1930s the situation had worsened rather than improved for women in the Secretariat.

Although women were under-represented at the League, especially in high-ranking positions, their presence in official capacities represented a real achievement for women. While most countries were still deliberating over the suitability of women for the diplomatic service, women were already at work in Geneva. Undeniably, the conditions in Geneva were different than most diplomatic postings but at least women were given some opportunity to make a contribution at the level of international politics as 'insiders'. Yet if women were to make a contribution it depended not only on their numerical representation but on the type of women appointed, their capabilities and their convictions. Assumptions concerning women's role at the international level and expectations of their performance

¹LoN, Collaboration of Women in the Work of the League, Report by the Sixth Committee to the Assembly, 10 October 1932, A.49.1932.IV. See also below, p.96.

played a significant part in patterns of appointments that emerged.

The greatest numerical representation of women at the League was found in the Secretariat: in some years more than half of the employees were women. In 1921, for instance, two hundred of the three hundred and forty-seven Secretariat members were women.² By 1931, when the total staff of the Secretariat had risen to 718, the highest level reached during the League's history, women made up forty-seven per cent of the staff.³ However, few of the women employed by the Secretariat held positions of influence; nor could the work of most women be considered 'international' except by virtue of the fact that they were employed as typists, clerks and telephone-operators for an international civil service. While all persons employed in the Secretariat were considered international officials, only the members of the First Division and a small proportion of the Second Division were considered to be engaged in international activities.⁴ Within these parameters the total number of women engaged in international work was approximately seventy for the entire period.

Little has been written about the Secretariat apart from various publications by E.F. Ranshofen-Wertheimer, a member of the First Division of the Secretariat between 1920 and 1940.⁵ He argues that "[g]enerally speaking, women encountered probably fewer obstacles and prejudices within the League administration than in any other public administration, not excluding the British civil service".⁶ While Ranshofen-Wertheimer's

²Data about the nationality and representation of women and the figures listed in Tables 1-3 have been compiled from "Staff Lists of the Secretariat" the League of Nations *Official Journal* [hereafter cited as *OJ*] June 1921 (May 1921), *OJ* January 1926 (1 Dec. 1925), *OJ* October 1930 (15 Oct. 1930), *OJ* October 1935 (October 1935), *OJ* October 1938 (October), *OJ* Nov.-Dec. 1939, Part 1. Figures do not include locally recruited staff.

³These figures include the Latin-American staff, thus explaining the discrepancy between my figures and those of Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.242.

⁴According to Ranshofen-Wertheimer for most of the 1920s and 1930s this group constituted about half of the Secretariat staff. Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.243.

⁵Ranshofen-Wertheimer was a Member of Section, First Division, 1920-1940 and later a member of the Secretariat of the United Nations.

⁶Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.367.

assessment of the status of women in the Secretariat is undoubtedly accurate, it is useful to examine the question of the employment of women in more detail.

The highest grade of the Secretariat, the First Division, was in the words of the Secretary General, "the staff which directly gives effect to the resolutions of the Assembly, the Council and the organisations of the League and carries out the preparatory work on which their decisions may be based".⁷ There was a total of twenty-two women included among the members of the First Division. Table 1.1 shows which posts they held.⁸ The First Division included Directors or Chiefs of Sections, as well as a category defined as Members of Section who represented the backbone of the League's international administration. These posts required high educational qualifications and qualities of initiative and resource.⁹ In addition, Members of Section were expected to "be acquainted with public opinion in their own countries, so that they may, as far as possible, contribute to the common stock the conceptions prevalent in the various parts of the world".¹⁰ The Secretariat's précis-writers, translators and interpreters were also members of the First Division and in recognition of their high qualifications and the importance of their duties, in 1930 officials of this category were assimilated to Members of Section.¹¹

Only one woman ever headed a department of the Secretariat, Dame Rachel Crowdy, who was Chief of the Social Section of the Secretariat between 1919-1930. Nancy Williams, former Private Secretary to various officials at the British War Office, was head of Personnel, a Second Division post when taken up by Williams in 1926.¹² Throughout the 1920s

⁷From the Report of the Committee of Thirteen, quoted in Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.279.

⁸Secretariat figures were not published until 1921. The figures for six years have been selected to show the changes during the entire period.

⁹Quoted in Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.281.

¹⁰LoN, Noblemaire Report, 1921, quoted in Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.282.

¹¹Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), pp.282-3.

¹²OJ, January 1927, p.80.

the position grew in importance and in 1927 the post was raised to the status of Member of Section.¹³ During the League's history women held First Division posts in only six of the eleven Sections that made up the General and Special Organizations of the League: Information, Minorities Questions, Communications and Transit, Health, Intellectual Co-operation and Social Questions. Women were never represented in the First Division of the Political Section, the Legal Section, the Economic and Financial Section, the Mandates Section and the Disarmament Section. Seven of the twenty-two women represented in the First Division were interpreters or translators. Lady Blennerhasset, widow of a British Commissioner for the Central Provinces in India, was head of the English Précis-Writing, Interpreting and Translating Service from 1931 to 1937. Dr. Gertrude Dixon, former lecturer in Biology at King's College for Women, London, served from 1923 to 1938 as Editor of the *Official Journal*, the main general publication of the League of Nations, a post which from 1929 was assimilated to Member of Section.

Given that women were excluded from serving in the diplomatic and consular services of most countries during the inter-war period, the First Division posts held by women at the Secretariat represented some of the highest official posts held by women at the international level. Yet women never made up more than a small proportion of the members of the First Division. In 1921 women made up about six per cent of the division, and in 1930 about eight per cent. If women constituted almost half of the staff of the Secretariat, it was because they were disproportionately represented in the Second Division and in the Third Division which included office-keepers, telephone operators and multigraph operators.¹⁴

Members of the Second Division were responsible for the secretarial and routine administrative duties of the Secretariat. Its staff included senior assistants, secretary-shorthand-typists, copyists and clerks as well as the category Intermediate Class which comprised the top-ranking members

¹³OJ, January 1928, p.73. The Personnel Office was part of the Administrative Internal Services of the Secretariat.

¹⁴By comparison, in 1923 women made up 16 per cent of all federal employees in the U.S. See Becker (1981), p.137.

of the Second Division. The Intermediate Class, created in 1923, was the highest class available to members of the Second Division with outstanding service records and sometimes provided a stepping-stone to the First Division for junior officials possessing the educational qualifications.¹⁵ The Second Division was the largest Division of the Secretariat and in this Division, at least, women outnumbered male employees. The ratio of female to male employees of the Second Division in 1930, for example, was approximately three to one.¹⁶ Of the small group of Second Division officials who could be described as being engaged in international work more strictly defined, or were members of the Intermediate Class, there were in total approximately sixty women.¹⁷ Table 1.2 shows the posts held. Table 1.3 shows the combined total of women in upper-level posts. It is difficult to calculate the exact number of women members of the Intermediate Class as positions assimilated to the grade often differed from year to year. A process of standardization took place in the 1930s and in order to get a picture of the entire period the figures in this chapter include those pre-1930 posts cited after 1930 as belonging to the Intermediate Class.¹⁸

Women employed in the top-ranking posts of the Second Division were distributed more evenly throughout the various branches of the Secretariat, probably because the duties were less responsible than those of First Division posts. Many served as Private Secretaries or as Secretaries of Sections. Several held posts as chiefs of various of the Internal Services

¹⁵Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.284.

¹⁶*OJ*, October 1930.

¹⁷Even using the Intermediate Class (IC) as a guide to those members of the Second Division who were engaged in international work is problematic. For example, the head of the Multigraphers Service, though classified as a IC, was not primarily engaged in international work. As many of those IC were engaged in international work the entire IC had been included.

¹⁸Using the standardization which took place in 1930 as a measuring stick may introduce an element of error into the calculations, as it is sometimes not absolutely straightforward whether or not a post was always equivalent to the IC or whether it grew in importance and therefore was later assimilated to IC. In most cases, the former case appears to hold true. It was necessary to adopt this approach in order to standardize and present the data.

such as Duplicating, Pool of Typists or Stenographers Branch. When the Intermediate Class was first created in 1923 it enabled the administration to make certain appointments to relatively responsible administrative posts at lower salaries than those paid to Members of Section and placed staff members in position for promotion to the First Division.¹⁹ Ranshofen-Wertheimer notes that in the late 1930s about seventy-five per cent of the women employed in the First Division had been promoted from the Second.²⁰

By comparison, only about five per cent of the male officials in the First Division had climbed from the Second Division.

Women employed by the Secretariat were rarely public figures and thus it is difficult to obtain much information about them. The fact that the Personnel Files of the Secretariat for the most part remain closed makes the task even more difficult. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some generalizations about women at the Secretariat based upon the information provided in the Staff Lists of the *Official Journal* augmented with material from the League Index of Secretariat Personnel.²¹ Furthermore, women's journals of the period often carried articles about women at Geneva that profiled women in the Secretariat. There was a section on women in the Secretariat in D.M. Northcroft's popular pamphlet *Women at Work in the League of Nations*.²² The publication was described by Crowdy as "extremely good" and as "fill[ing] a want long felt".²³ The Secretariat purchased 300 copies of the 1923 edition of this pamphlet, some of which were sent by Dame Rachel to the women candidates standing in the British election of that year.

The seventy-one women who were members of either the First Division or the top ranks of the Second Division represented only thirty per cent of the countries at one time states-members of the League (Tables 2.1, 2.2

¹⁹Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.283.

²⁰Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), pp.369-370.

²¹This Index is found at the League of Nations Archives, Geneva.

²²This lengthy pamphlet appears to have gone through several editions. In 1926 it was in its 4th Edition.

²³LNA, R. Crowdy to P. Baker, 30 November 1923, S156 "Outgoing Letters November 1923".

and 2.3).²⁴ The policy of the Secretariat was to achieve as wide a representation as possible of the nationalities making up the League of Nations. Such a policy had inevitable consequences for the employment of women. The status of women in the majority of member states did not allow them sufficient opportunities to obtain requisite qualifications and experience for employment in the Secretariat. In 1921, twenty-seven nationalities were represented in the Secretariat: women represented only eight of these nationalities. And in 1930, women represented only fifteen of the forty-eight nationalities found in the Secretariat.²⁵

In the same year, a League Committee investigating the structure and staffing of the Secretariat (The Committee of Thirteen) noted that "in spite of the provision in Article 7 of the Covenant concerning equal rights for both sexes, only very few women are included among the holders of the higher posts in the Secretariat". The Secretary-General insisted that regarding appointments no preference was given to male candidates and that, on the contrary, "in view of the limited number of women he would be very pleased to appoint female candidates whenever possible".²⁶ He pointed out, however, that as a result of the nationality quotas it was often necessary to select officials from among the nationals of certain countries where candidates to be considered included no women with the necessary qualifications.²⁷ In the First Division the maintenance of "a strictly international character" was of prime importance.²⁸ In contrast, the question of nationality played only a minor role in the Second Division and none in the Third. This seemed to work in women's favour and thus the lower two divisions were staffed primarily by British, French and Swiss

²⁴This figure is based on the full sixty-two nations at one time members of the League. Ranshofen-Wertheimer notes that eighty-five per cent of all member states were never represented in the Secretariat by a woman in a responsible position. Presumably he means by this those represented in the First Division. Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.369.

²⁵OJ, June 1921 and October 1930.

²⁶LoN, Draft Com.13/33, Report of the Committee, Chapter V, Staff of the First Division, 28 June 1930, p.31.

²⁷LoN, Draft Com.13/33, p. 32.

²⁸From the Report of the Committee of Thirteen, cited in Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.355.

women.

Predictably, the women employed by the Secretariat came from countries where the status of women was relatively high. By the beginning of the twentieth century many European and North American universities had admitted women for higher degrees and by the 1920s employment opportunities for women had expanded so that in many countries there was only a handful of professions from which women were excluded. In Britain, for example, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 allowed women to exercise any public function, to be appointed to or hold any civil or judicial office or post and to assume or carry on any civil profession or vocation.²⁹ Of the nineteen countries represented by women at least fourteen had granted women the vote by 1920. Excluding the women from the United States, Canada and Australia, all the women employed in the higher ranks of the Secretariat were from European countries (Table 2.1). Figures for 1919 to 1939 place British women as the largest group represented in the higher positions of the Secretariat, eight women members of the First Division and twenty-two of those in the top ranks of the Second Division. British women were followed by the French, with three in the First Division and nine in the top ranks of the Second Division. The relatively high representation of British and French women in the Secretariat compared with other nationalities reflects the influence of the two main European powers over the activities of the Secretariat. This is especially important for understanding the representation of French women for throughout the period France remained behind most other European countries regarding the status of women. If taken together, the Scandinavian countries rank third, followed by Switzerland and the United States. Women in Scandinavian countries enjoyed a relatively high status, those in Switzerland much lower but were employed in part because of their proximity to the League. The American women were originally employed in the belief that the United States would be a member of the League but were not appointed to posts after 1921.

Although the women members of the Secretariat may have benefitted

²⁹Two exceptions were the clergy and the diplomatic service. See discussion on the impact of this Act in Strachey (1936), p.133ff.

from the opening-up of educational opportunities, there were still few women who had reached positions of responsibility or had experience equivalent to the men appointed to high-ranking Secretariat posts. In some ways the appointments procedure in the First Division may have disadvantaged women. Except for posts in the lower bracket of the First Division, such as Interpreters and Translators, examinations were never standardized as a basis for appointments. Although a university education was considered a pre-requisite, more consideration was given to other factors such as the knowledge of languages, preparedness to expatriate oneself permanently and a positive attitude toward the aims of the League of Nations.³⁰ There were probably many women who possessed such qualifications but stumbled on the fourth requirement - experience. Moreover, the political character of appointments to the First Division should not be underestimated. Although Secretariat employees were expected to set aside national allegiances for a more international outlook, they were nonetheless required to liaise with their national governments on subjects under the jurisdiction of the Secretariat; hence the League could not afford to appoint *persona non grata*. In fact, appointments to the First Division were made in consultation with the governments of Member States. Thus, even if there were women who possessed the necessary educational qualifications for Secretariat posts, few had obtained the experience or the reputation which served as pre-requisites for the appointment to top-ranking posts.

Many of the male officials of the First Division had civil service experience, most notably in the foreign office of their home country. Few women advanced through such posts as women were rarely found in high-ranking civil service posts. Like a great number of male members of the First Division, many women also had a background in the academic profession (Table 3). Those women appointed directly to posts in the First Division (not promoted to them from the Second) had most often distinguished themselves in social and relief work. This was the case with Dame Rachel Crowdy, made Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in

³⁰Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), pp.323-331.

1919 in recognition of her activities as Principal Commandant of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VADs) in Belgium and France during the war. She had qualified as an apothecary in 1910 and was a lecturer and demonstrator with the National Health Society until the beginning of the War.³¹ The Lithuanian Princess, Gabrielle Radziwill, Member of Section of the Information Section and later, of the Social Section, had worked with the Russian Red Cross on the Russian-Persian front during the Great War.

Women members of the Intermediate Class had most often been employed as clerks or private secretaries in their national civil service before joining the Secretariat. Appointments to the Second Division were almost exclusively made on the basis of examinations. The nature of the work carried out by Second Division employees necessitated that the majority of the posts be filled with persons whose mother tongue was either English or French.³² Although the information on educational qualifications of the women employees is sketchy, records concerning posts held prior to their joining the Secretariat would suggest that many had received some post-secondary education (Table 3). Unfortunately there is very little information available about the employment of women upon leaving the Secretariat. Where records do exist, the majority went on to work for other international organizations such as the UN or the ILO, or returned to national civil service posts. Crowdy served on several parliamentary commissions in the 1930s and during the Second World War worked as a Regions Advisor for the Ministry of Information, visiting and reporting on conditions in bombed cities.

The women employed in the higher divisions of the Secretariat were undoubtedly 'career women'. The average age of women when their work commenced at the Secretariat was thirty-seven for the First Division and thirty-six for the Intermediate Class of the Second Division. Of those women for whom records of previous careers are available all were employed

³¹An account of Crowdy's work with the VADs is found in the autobiography of her co-worker in the VADs and life-long friend, Dame Katharine Furse, *Hearts and Pomegranates* (London: 1940). Furse was an assessor on the League Child Welfare Committee and regularly spent time in Geneva with Crowdy.

³²Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.333.

for several years before joining the Secretariat. Eighty-six per cent of women employed in both the First Division and the top ranks of the Second Division were single (Table 4). Only three women appear to have married during their careers in the Secretariat, although it is possible that some employees may have left upon marriage. There was no marriage bar, however, and maternity leave with full pay was available for six weeks before and after the birth of a child. Women also received equal pay in the Secretariat. Women enjoyed similar rights in only a few countries before the Second World War. In the British Civil Service women were paid at a lower rate than men and had to resign upon marriage. In Germany women were employed only in the lower grades where they received equal pay but could not retain their posts upon marriage.³³ Women could hope to receive a relatively high salary in the Secretariat by comparison with the British Civil Service, for instance. In 1933 Chief Women Officers in the Foreign Office earned a maximum of £510 per annum, while the salary of a lower ranking First Division employee was between £550 and £930.³⁴

If the women employed in the Secretariat can best be described as career women, it is also true that the conditions in Geneva demanded a degree of commitment of a different nature than many other careers. It is difficult to know how many women lived up to the expectations of the League for creating an international staff with a distinctly international outlook. Only about six appear to have displayed their "internationalism" through active participation in Women's International Organizations although some may have been involved in other international organizations. Several women went in private capacity to speak about the League at the meetings of voluntary associations. For example, British Nina Spiller,

³³*Women, Their Professional Status: A World Survey* compiled from ILO Publication, *The Law and Women's Work* (Geneva, 1939) and issued by the British Federation of Business and Professional Women (London, 1947). From the survey it appears that in countries where women had not generally been mobilized into the workforce, there were fewer discriminatory laws. This deserves further consideration, but cannot be covered here. See also Meta Zimmeck "Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919-1939" in *The Historical Journal*, 27, 4 (1984), pp.901-924.

³⁴See Dorothy Evans, *Women and the Civil Service* (London: Pitman & Sons, 1934), p.152 and contents of file 18A/1779/1779 LNA R5382.

Secretary of the Political Section of the Secretariat, was active in the IWSA. Although not officially representing the League at the 9th Congress of the Alliance held in Rome in 1923, Spiller was instrumental in framing two resolutions concerning the League passed at the Conference and was later congratulated for her efforts by both Crowdy and the Secretary-General.³⁵

In conjunction with her position in the Secretariat Dame Rachel Crowdy was as actively engaged in propaganda work for the League after office-hours as during them. Between 1919 and 1930 Crowdy gave hundreds of addresses to audiences throughout Europe, the United States and Canada on various themes including the League's social and humanitarian work and women and the League. Declining an invitation to speak for the Ottawa Women's Canadian Club in 1929, she explained: "[y]ou will understand this...when I tell you I have made over a hundred speeches on behalf of the League during the last fifteen or sixteen months".³⁶ As well as giving lectures, Dame Rachel wrote numerous articles on the social and humanitarian work of the League, made radio broadcasts and even, it appears, a recording concerning her international work.³⁷

Women in less responsible posts showed as much enthusiasm for spreading the ideals of the League. American Florence Wilson, Chief Librarian of the League Library, published a documentary history of the drafting of the League Covenant.³⁸ Canadian Mary Craig McGeachy, a junior

³⁵LNA, report of R. Crowdy, 28 May 1923, 13/27029x/27209 R1013.

³⁶LNA, R. Crowdy to the Ottawa Women's Canadian Club, 5 February 1929, 11A/4463/4463 R3018. During the period articles about Dame Rachel and her work at the League appeared frequently in newspapers and women's journals. One example is Joan Woollcombe's interview with Crowdy "Women Citizens of the League of Nations", *Daily Telegraph*, 17 September 1929.

³⁷Rachel Crowdy's publications while employed at the Secretariat include: "The Humanitarian Activities of the League of Nations", *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* (May 1927) and "The Opium Traffic and the Work of the Social Section of the League of Nations", *Problems of Peace, Second Series* (London: OUP, 1928). In April 1927 she spoke on the BBC about her work and there was talk in 1928 of her making a recording for the International Education Society. See LNA, S164 Outgoing Letters May 1927 and Correspondence November 1928, 11A/4463/4463 R3018.

³⁸Florence Wilson, *The Origins of the League Covenant: Documentary History of its Drafting* (London: Hogarth Press, 1928).

staff member in the Information Section who took over Radziwill's duties as liaison with the Women's International Organizations, was also responsible for her Section's contacts with Canada.³⁹ On her own initiative she organized a five-week speaking tour of Canada in 1930, giving over ninety lectures in fifteen towns. It was not so easy for women to establish themselves as experts on international affairs. The Winnipeg Branch of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs allowed this "unknown representative of womankind" to lead a round table discussion only "with some hesitation". Craig McGeachy was the first woman ever to speak to the Institute and members were not only relieved to discover that she was not "a dud", but were genuinely impressed: "it was the most constructively interesting and informative Institute meeting that we have had in connection with League affairs".⁴⁰ On other trips to Canada Craig McGeachy met with the Prime Minister and key members of the Department of External Affairs to discuss League matters.⁴¹

A few months before her death in December 1991, Craig McGeachy described her years with the Secretariat:

Everything in my life was connected - there was no separation of work and life. Every waking moment went to the League. We were conscious of making the image of the League...It was an experiment. There were no precedents...We were all intense and we had a sense of mission. Especially, the British.⁴²

In spite of the general acknowledgement of her wide range of knowledge and maturity of judgement, she was not promoted within the Secretariat. If she felt any resentment she buried it in her commitment to the League. In 1940 she left the League to join the British Ministry of Economic Warfare and in 1942 she was appointed First Secretary at the British Embassy in Washington, thus becoming the first woman to hold diplomatic rank in the

³⁹As a junior staff member she is not included in the sample used in this Chapter.

⁴⁰McGeachy's performance lauded in letter from E.J. Tarr of the Institute to H.R. Cummings, a senior member of the Information Section, 3 April 1930 in LNA 50/17985/17985 R3587.

⁴¹Richard Veatch, *Canada and the League of Nations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), pp.47-48.

⁴²Frank Moorhouse, "A Short While Toward the Sun: meetings with Mary Craig McGeachy, surviving member of the League of Nations Secretariat from the twenties", unpublished record, November, 1991, p.12.

British Diplomatic Service. Although her appointment was temporary - a matter of war-time expediency when male recruits were unavailable - it helped prepare the way for the official admission of women to the Diplomatic Service after World War II. As a result of Craig McGeachy's official relationship with the Women's International Organizations in the Secretariat she later joined the ICW and served as its President in the 1960s.

According to Craig McGeachy women officials were well-treated by the League and for this reason there was no need for a women's caucus in the Secretariat.⁴³ She never seems to have identified with equal rights feminists, partly because she disapproved for the confrontational methods they adopted. Like many women of her generation she valued good relations with her male colleagues; indeed, it was said of her that "[s]he has not the kind of personality that puts men on the defensive...and if there is any modern phrase [she] dislikes it is the term 'career woman'".⁴⁴ Yet the Secretariat's record as one of the first equal opportunity employers was not untarnished. Other officials doubted the League's commitment to Article 7 and if no women's caucus was created to give expression to these doubts, perhaps it was because women officials could count on the constant support of women's organizations, in particular, the Council for Representation of Women in the League of Nations and the Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organizations. Both groups monitored the treatment of women in the Secretariat throughout the inter-war years.

In response to an inquiry into the status of women in the Secretariat in 1926 by Mrs. C. Hoster (CRWLN), Crowdy wrote:

I think you will be likely to get far more accurate information by talking to people here than by anything we can write to you! You ask me whether I receive full recognition due to me in connection with my work in the League. As far as I personally am concerned, I have for 6 1/2 years done the work of a Director with the rank of Chief of Section which, of

⁴³Moorhouse (1991), pp.14-15.

⁴⁴Elizabeth R. Valentine, "Britain's First Woman Diplomat", *New York Times Magazine*, 11 April 1943.

course, is paid at a much lower rate...⁴⁵

Dame Rachel's point of view on the status of women at Geneva, often reiterated in her letters to various women's organizations was: "I think women in the Secretariat have an equal opportunity for work with men, though not necessarily an equal opportunity for the position which should go with the work".⁴⁶ In a letter to Jessie Wall of the British Home Office, Crowdy was more explicit: "[i]t is true that men and women have equal pay at the League, but equal official position for equal work is undoubtedly not given to women".⁴⁷

Hoster took up Crowdy's suggestion and visited Geneva on several occasions between 1926 and 1931 to conduct inquiries on behalf of the CRWLN. While emphasizing the fact that the proportion of women holding administrative posts was exceedingly small compared to the number of men, she admitted that the nationality quotas increased the difficulty of appointing women.⁴⁸ She pointed out that there were not enough women in League member states who had qualifications and experience comparable to that possessed by the male Directors and Chiefs of Section. It appeared that in terms of higher posts the ILO offered greater opportunities to women than the League Secretariat. Hoster gave two reasons for this: first, in contrast to the Secretariat the ILO appointments were made almost entirely on the basis of examinations and second, the ILO dealt chiefly with conditions of labor and labor questions - areas with which women were more familiar by comparison with the broader questions of international politics under consideration by the League.⁴⁹

As early as 1919 the Secretary-General had advised members of the Secretariat that a statement made at the Caxton Hall Conference by Mary

⁴⁵LNA, R. Crowdy to C. Hoster, 26 April 1926, S157 "Outgoing Letters April 1926".

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷LNA, R. Crowdy to J.I. Wall, 20 February, 1930, "S159 Outgoing Letters February 1930".

⁴⁸Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, *Annual Report 1928-1929*, p.4.

⁴⁹Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, *Annual Report 1931*, p.4.

MacArthur, Secretary of the British Women's Trade Union League, should provide the principle to be followed in Secretariat appointments: "no women should be appointed to any office simply because she was a woman, but on the other hand, no woman should be excluded from any office for the same reason".⁵⁰ This was the position ostensibly adopted by the Secretariat and, in general, women's organizations were in accord. They were fully cognizant of the "dearth of women with first class qualifications and adequate experience to enable them to be placed in the higher administrative posts in the Secretariat". Thus the Joint Standing Committee reminded national women's groups of "the constant need to encourage the younger women to prepare themselves by the study of languages and economics and by University and business training for the possibility of work under the League".⁵¹ In the meantime, they forwarded to the Secretary-General lists of women they believed to be qualified for Secretariat posts and on every possible occasion reminded officials that more women should be employed.⁵²

By 1933, when women were losing their civil service posts as the anti-feminist tide swept through Europe, a women's delegation to the new Secretary-General, Joseph Avenol, proposed that a sort of affirmative action policy be adopted for the employment of women. The delegation, led by Corbett Ashby, admitted that women were not able to gain the same administrative experience as men in their national civil service; therefore, "if women are to be employed, a somewhat different, though not necessarily lower, qualification must be sought and more emphasis laid on ability which women possess than on experience which they cannot obtain". The quota system was identified as a major handicap for women. Members of the delegation claimed that because of the quota system the Secretariat was undoubtedly forced to select the less able man if he was of the right

⁵⁰LNA, E. Drummond, memo, 8 September 1919, 23/1042/1042 R1356.

⁵¹WILPF Papers, meeting of Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organizations, 19 November 1929, IV:89/101.

⁵²See LoN, Collaboration of Women in the Organization of Peace, Report by the Secretary-General, 25 August 1932, A.10.1932. and LoN, Collaboration of Women in the Work of the League, A.49.1932.IV.

nationality; they suggested that "perhaps the same reasoning might be applied in giving an opportunity to a less experienced woman to give effect to the principle of co-operation".⁵³

But it was not only the quota system that proved an obstacle to women's promotion. An article in *The Evening Standard* in 1926, appearing in response to Hoster's original inquiry on women in the Secretariat, bluntly stated:

in point of fact...large numbers of women, particularly English women, on the Secretariat has always prejudiced it as a serious body in the eyes of many states, and this prejudice has hampered the League's work from its foundation.⁵⁴

The claim was no doubt exaggerated but inside the Secretariat some men resented serving under women. Others came from countries where women had not entered the civil service, and thus were unaccustomed to working with women. Dame Rachel noted difficulties with one man who worked under her in a temporary appointment, and attributed the problem to the fact that "he had not previously worked much with women".⁵⁵ Members of the Joint Standing Committee claimed that Crowdy, as the only woman in a senior post, "has aroused jealousy among her colleagues" and that "there is a great keenness among men at the Secretariat to have her position".⁵⁶ The women's organizations realized that the difficulty lay not in the Secretariat itself but with the governments and men of "backward nations...quite unaccustomed to seeing women in prominent places". Nonetheless, they asserted that "the administrative methods of the League might justly be expected to lead, rather than to keep pace with those of the less progressive nations".⁵⁷

⁵³LNA, deputation from the Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organization to J. Avenol, 16 February 1933, 18A/1779/1779 R5382.

⁵⁴"Women and the League", *The Evening Standard*, 30 November 1926.

⁵⁵LNA, R. Crowdy to I. Himes, 24 September 1925, "S157 Outgoing Letters September 1925".

⁵⁶WILPF Papers, International Secretary to Elsie Zimmern, 14 November 1928, IV:88/101.

⁵⁷LNA, M. Ogilvie Gordon to E. Drummond, 17 November 1926, 29/18166/x R1458.

According to Ranshofen-Wertheimer after 1933 when the leadership of the Secretariat had passed from Drummond to his French successor, Joseph Avenol, "the administrative rôle and importance of women officials deteriorated slowly but steadily".⁵⁸ He cites as evidence the change in the character and importance of the work entrusted to women as well as the slow decrease in the number of women employed in the First Division (Table 1.1). Some lower-rank posts to which women had been appointed that subsequently grew in importance were also lost to women. Crowdy had warned against this trend in 1929. At an annual dinner of women Assembly delegates hosted by Joint Standing Committee, she claimed that a strong tendency was arising in the Secretariat of replacing by men the women who had developed small posts into great administrative offices because these posts had become too important for women.⁵⁹ At this time Crowdy was uncertain about the renewal of her own contract. In 1929 it had been renewed for one year. In spite of the campaign by Women's International Organizations for the further prolongation of her contract⁶⁰ she was replaced in 1930 by a male Swedish diplomat. At that time her former post was raised to the status of Director with the corresponding rise in salary. Nancy Williams, Chief of Personnel, was succeeded in 1936 by a male official and this post, too, was elevated to the rank of Director. After Dame Rachel's departure no woman was ever again appointed to such a responsible position.

Ranshofen-Wertheimer also contends that even those First Division posts retained by women during the mid to late 1930s were generally in the lower brackets of the division.⁶¹ Certainly the numerical representation

⁵⁸Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), pp.368-69.

⁵⁹"International Feminism" in *Time and Tide*, 13 September 1929. See also Vera Brittain, "Women at Geneva", *Time and Tide*, 6 October 1922.

⁶⁰See WILPF Papers, International Secretary of WILPF to E. Zimmern, 14 November 1928, IV/88/101. Women's organizations lobbied the British Foreign Office for the prolongation of Crowdy's contract in 1928 and 1929 though few of these documents have been saved: PRO FO/371/13394 (W9234/931/98) and FO/371/14126 (W208/208/98). See also "Report on League of Nations Business", IAWSEC, *Report of the Eleventh Congress, Berlin, June 17th to 22nd, 1929* (London, 1929), p.94.

⁶¹Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.369.

of women gradually declined during the 1930s (Table 1.3). This in part was a consequence of the attempt to reduce the preponderance of British officials in the Secretariat. Moreover, the rise of anti-feminism in the 1930s made it even more difficult for the Secretariat to find women qualified for higher administrative positions. As many highly trained women lost their positions at home, the League could not afford to consider them *persona grata* while their countries were states members of the League.⁶² The policy of retrenchment the League was forced to follow in the mid to late 1930s also helps to explain the decrease in posts held by women. Whereas in 1931 there were over 700 members of the Secretariat, by 1936 the figure had dropped to 660 and in December 1939, to 450.⁶³

Thus although women benefitted from the relatively progressive attitudes at the Secretariat, there were structural barriers to their appointment. Women fortunate enough to be employed in the higher ranks of the Secretariat tended to be clustered in certain departments where they could have little influence on high-level international policy. There is little evidence to indicate that there was an explicit policy to place women in certain posts simply because they were women, though the decision to appoint a woman to the post of Chief of the Social Section rather than some other section was a conscious one.⁶⁴ As an article in *Time and Tide* put it, "the founders of the League were more ready to hand over to a woman her traditional sphere of mercy and reform than to offer her opportunities of a newer type".⁶⁵ In spite of the tremendous efforts of the Women's International Organizations to increase the representation of women throughout the League system the reality was that women's training and experience at this time qualified them only for certain posts.

Given that many women's organizations placed social and humanitarian

⁶²Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.368.

⁶³Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.242.

⁶⁴LNA, See correspondence between E. Drummond and Raymond Fosdick, August 1919. Both agreed that there ought to be a woman at the head of the Social Section. LNA 12/687/687 R637.

⁶⁵"Personalities and Powers: Dame Rachel Crowdy", *Time and Tide*, 9 September 1927.

issues high on their agendas, they were fortunate to have Dame Rachel in a position to turn their demands into concrete policy initiatives. When Crowdy left the Secretariat in 1930, it was Gabrielle Radziwill who became the most important ally for the women's organizations. As a member of the Information Section throughout the 1920s her main function as liaison officer with the Women's International Organizations was to supply them with material for propaganda purposes. In 1931 she moved to the Social Section where she was able to play a greater role in policy-formation. If anything, her contact with the Women's International Organizations intensified during the 1930s and she became a strong advocate for greater League action concerning the status of women. In 1935 she told Elsie Zimmern, Secretary of the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations:

I shall always be ready to do what I can to help and further the aims and wishes of the women's organisations - even when I do not see eye to eye with them! though of course in such cases I try to convince them that the steps they wish taken are not the best for the interests they are defending.⁶⁶

Both Crowdy and Radziwill acted as unofficial advisers to women's organizations and indeed, sometimes even as mediators between them. At the same time, it was not uncommon for women officials to call upon the support of Women's International Organizations in order to push forward their own goals within the Secretariat. Although they did not always "see eye to eye", the Women's International Organizations and Secretariat officials established networks which served to strengthen the position of women at the League and made it possible for them to have a greater impact on League affairs.

⁶⁶LNA, G. Radziwill to E. Zimmern, 28 September 1935, 50/569/568 R5668.

TABLE 1.1

Women in First Division of the Secretariat 1921-1939 (Numbers)

Position	1921	1925	1930	1935	1938	1939
Chief of Section	1	1	1	-	-	-
Member of Section	1	2	12	16	12	8
P.T.&I.	2	2	+	-	-	-
Total	4	5	13	16	12	8

N.B. P.T.&I.: Precis-Writer, Translator or Interpreter; + marks those posts which were assimilated to Member of Section. The post of Librarian has been included as Member of Section although until 1928 it was classified separately.

TABLE 1.2

Women in Second Division of the Secretariat 1921-1939 (Numbers)

Position	1921	1925	1930	1935	1938	1939
Personal Assistant	3	-	-	-	-	-
Section Secretary	-	10	8	8	*	-
Private Secretary	8	3	3	-	-	-
Chiefs of Section	4	5	*	-	-	-
Heads of Personnel	1	2	+/*	-	-	-
Assist. Librarians	2	1	+/*	-	-	-
Intermediate Class	-	4	18	16	25	21
Document Officer	1	*	-	-	-	-
Archivist	1	1	*	-	-	-
Total	20	26	29	24	25	21

N.B. Table includes only members of top-ranking Second Division posts. + marks those posts which were assimilated to Member of Section; * marks those posts which were assimilated to Intermediate Class.

TABLE 1.3

Women in Higher Levels of Secretariat 1921-1939 (Numbers)

Division	1921	1925	1930	1935	1938	1939
First Division	4	5	13	16	12	8
Second Division	20	26	29	24	25	21
Secretariat Total	24	31	42	40	37	29

TABLE 2.1
Nationality of Women Members of the Secretariat 1919-1939 (Numbers)

Nationality	First Division	Second Division*	Combined
British	8	22	27
French	3	9	11
Swiss	-	5	5
American	2	3	4
Polish	3	1	3
Swedish	2	2	2
Italian	-	2	2
Danish	-	2	2
Irish	-	2	2
Dutch	-	2	2
German	-	2	2
Norwegian	-	2	2
Hungarian	1	-	1
Lithuanian	1	1	1
Finnish	1	1	1
Belgian	1	-	1
Czechoslovakian	-	1	1
Canadian	-	1	1
Australian	-	1	1
Number	22	59	71

*This total includes those women who later moved to the First Division. They have been counted only once in the combined figures.

TABLE 2.2
Nationality of Women Members of First Division
Yearly Breakdown (Numbers)

Nationality	1921	1925	1930	1935	1938	1939
British	2	2	7	6	4	2
French	1	1	1	2	1	1
American	1	1	1	1	1	1
Swedish	-	-	-	1	1	-
Hungarian	-	-	-	1	1	1
Lithuanian	-	-	1	1	1	-
Polish	-	-	1	2	2	2
Finnish	-	-	1	1	-	-
Belgian	-	1	1	1	1	1
Number	4	5	13	16	12	8

TABLE 2.3
Nationality of Women Members of Second Division
Yearly Breakdown (Numbers)

Nationality	1921	1925	1930	1935	1938	1939
British	11	13	13	10	10	9
French	1	3	4	5	5	5
American	3	2	-	-	-	-
Swiss	1	3	3	3	3	1
Swedish	-	1	1	-	-	-
Lithuanian	-	1	-	-	-	-
Polish	-	-	1	-	-	-
Irish	1	1	1	-	-	-
Italian	1	-	1	-	-	-
Danish	-	-	-	-	1	1
Czechoslovakian	-	-	1	-	-	-
Dutch	-	1	1	1	1	1
German	-	-	-	2	2	1
Canadian	-	-	1	1	1	1
Norwegian	1	1	2	2	2	2
Australian	1	-	-	-	-	-
Number	20	26	29	24	25	21

TABLE 3
Previous Occupation of Women Members of the Secretariat 1919-1939
(Numbers)

Occupation	First Division	Second Division*	Combined
Lecturer/Research	7	4	9
Social/Relief Work	5	5	7
Teaching	4	3	5
Librarianship	2	4	5
Translator/Interpreter	2	1	3
Private Secretary	1	8	7
Sec. Voluntary Assoc.	-	4	4
Clerical Work	1	9	9
Verbatim Reporter	-	3	3
Civil Service	2	8	8
Foreign Service	1	5	6
Journalism	-	1	1
Nursing	1	-	1
Apothecary	1	-	1
None	1	1	2
Unknown	3	17	20
(More than one occup.)	(9)	(14)	(20)
Number	22	59	71

*These figures include those women who subsequently became members of the First Division. They have only been counted once in the combined figures.

TABLE 4
Marital Status of Women in the Secretariat 1919-1939 (percentage)

Marital Status	First Division	Second Division	Combined Total
Single	86	86	86
Married*	9	12	12
Widowed	5	-	1
Unknown	-	2	1

*Those who married while employed by the Secretariat have been included.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN ON ASSEMBLY DELEGATIONS AND LEAGUE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The League Assembly met for several weeks annually between 1920 and 1938, usually in September or early October.¹ The governments of member states had full responsibility for the appointment of their delegations. Although the question of the representation of women was sometimes discussed by the Assembly, the League could do little more than remind member states of the principle embodied in Article 7 and encourage governments to include women in delegations sent to the Assembly. Many of the women Assembly delegates appear to have been appointed as a result of pressure from women's organizations. As Margery Corbett Ashby commented at the Annual Meeting of the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations in December 1930, one of the aims of the Women's International Organizations was "to get women into such positions of responsibility and influence in connection with the League" as should enable them to "contribute their own special point of view" on topics discussed at Geneva, and "to have some prospect of getting their thoughts carried into action".²

In June 1920 two Scandinavian women represented their countries as substitute-delegates (Table 5).³ By 1930 there were three women as full delegates and eight as substitute-delegates. There were approximately 250 delegates and substitute-delegates at each Assembly; on average between twelve and fifteen of them were women. In 1938, for instance, when the total number of delegates and substitute-delegates was 236, there were fifteen women delegates (six per cent). Even if other female members of delegations (experts and secretaries) are included in 1938 there were only

¹Occasionally there were also special meetings of the Assembly but the discussion here is limited to the regular meetings.

²Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, *Annual Report, 1929-30*, p.5.

³Data regarding the women members of delegations to Assemblies found in Tables 5-9 have been collected from the Records of each of the Meetings of the League Assemblies, published separately from 1920-1922 and thereafter published in Special Supplements to the *Official Journal: OJSS* No.16 (1923) to *OJSS* No.191 (1938).

thirty-one women out of the total of 406 members of delegations at the Assembly (approximately eight per cent). For the entire period there was a total of sixteen women as delegates to the Assembly and one hundred and sixty as substitute delegates. Many women represented their countries on several occasions, thus the actual number of women who served as delegates or substitute-delegates was only sixty-seven with another twenty-three serving as Experts (this group is the sample for Tables 5-9).

Though the number of women delegates was small, the number of nationalities represented by them was much higher than in the Secretariat (Table 6). Sixty per cent of member states of the League of Nations at some point included a woman as part of their delegation. If only women who served as delegates or substitute-delegates are counted the figure drops to thirty-nine per cent. British women were most frequently present at the Assembly in the capacity of delegate or substitute-delegate, with a total of nineteen for the entire period, followed by Norway and Romania, each with eighteen, Australia with seventeen, Sweden and Denmark, each with sixteen and the Netherlands with thirteen. Apart from Britain, the pattern of representation differs greatly by comparison with the nationalities represented by women in the Secretariat. The most notable disparity concerns the representation of French and Swiss women. Their complete absence as delegates/substitute-delegates to the Assembly in contrast to their representation in the higher levels of the Secretariat may be a more accurate reflection of the status of women in France and Switzerland during the inter-war period. The proximity of French and Swiss women to the seat of the League of Nations and the language requirements for appointments in the Secretariat may have proved favourable to their employment, but when it came to government appointments to Assembly delegations there was no place for women.

Whereas British, French and Scandinavian women predominated in the Secretariat, women from a broader range of countries were present at the Assembly. Not only was there a more balanced representation of women from other European countries and from Australia and Canada, but there were also women delegates from Chile, Columbia, Iran, Mexico, Turkey and the Soviet Union. Women in the Soviet Union benefitted from equality of the sexes

declared under communist rule. The case of Turkey is surprising but must be seen in the context of reforms made by President Mustapha Kemal for the modernization of the country, including the emancipation of women.⁴ Women in Latin America were engaged in their own struggle for women's rights, as will be discussed below.

Those countries reluctant to send women as delegates often appointed them as Experts and Advisers, allowing their contribution to the debate without conferring upon them voting privileges. Women from China, France, Germany and Switzerland were present in such a capacity along with experts from most of the other countries that sent women delegates. Many countries also included women on their delegations as secretaries, attachés and interpreters. It is unlikely that these women would have had the opportunity to carry out anything other than administrative functions, although it is noteworthy that two British women attending the Assembly in such a capacity subsequently became substitute-delegates: Blanche Dugdale (Assembly 1927)⁵, a cousin of Lord Cecil and niece of Lord Balfour, and one M.P., Ellen Wilkinson (1930). In contrast to the Secretariat, the representation of women on delegations remained relatively stable throughout the 1930s, at least with regard to the number of delegates.

Unlike women members of the Secretariat, women delegates and experts to the Assembly were usually prominent figures in their countries. Some information is available for the majority of women delegates.⁶ Women members of parliament or the equivalent in other countries made up fifteen (twenty-two per cent) of female delegates/substitute-delegates and five

⁴Under the Civil Code of 1926 the principle of legal equality was established. Women voted for the first time in national elections in 1935. Employment opportunities opened up for women and by 1938 women employees constituted 9.5 per cent of the civil service. The long-term effects of his reforms were limited. Flanz (1983), pp.95-6.

⁵Hereafter the year(s) in which a woman was member of an Assembly delegation will be listed in brackets after her name.

⁶Information on backgrounds of women delegates, etc., comes from a variety of sources. The List of Delegates included in the Assembly Records sometimes states the occupation or organization to which they were affiliated. Northcroft's *Women in the League of Nations* is useful for biographical details. Some passing comments are made about delegates in Secretariat files. Minutes and publications of women's organizations indicate which delegates, etc., were members.

(twenty-two per cent) of the experts (Table 7). Next came women academics and civil servants. Although no figures exist concerning the backgrounds of male delegates, most appear to have been members of parliament, even prime ministers, or members of the civil service, especially the foreign office. Many male academics also were members of their country's delegation, among the most well-known, the Oxford classical scholar Gilbert Murray. Although information available on the occupations of delegates indicates many similarities between male and female delegates and experts, there are some fundamental differences not immediately evident. For example, women delegates were often expected to offer "the women's point of view" on questions coming before the League. Whatever their background and qualifications, women were considered primarily as experts on women or women's questions, which generally translated into social and humanitarian questions at the international level. This appears from the pattern of appointments made by governments as well as from the topics upon which women delegates addressed the Assembly.

As is to be expected, appointments were often made by governments with a view to political patronage. Women delegates to the Assembly from Great Britain included several women M.P.s: the Duchess of Atholl (1925), Mary Agnes Hamilton (1929, 1930), Susan Lawrence (1930), Florence Horsbrugh (1933, 1934, 1935), Marjorie Graves (1936) and Irene Ward (1937, 1938). Women politicians also came to the Assembly from Canada, Spain, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Australia and Turkey. Several delegates who were not politicians had connections with political parties, as for example, Helena Swanwick (1924, 1929), who was an adviser on foreign affairs to the Labour Party. Women civil servants who were part of their countries' delegations may also have had political connections, though it is more likely that they were appointed for their expertise on some matter to be addressed by the Assembly. For example, Polish delegate Wanda Woytowicz-Grabinska (1934, 1937-1938), Assistant Head of Division of the Ministry for Social Assistance, participated in debates on child welfare and other social questions. Apart from members of foreign offices, most held civil service posts related to social or labor questions. A few women delegates had foreign service postings, perhaps the most colourful, Alexandra

Kollantai (1935-1938), the Russian revolutionary, feminist and politician. Stalin removed her from the centre of activity in the Communist Party by making her Minister to Norway (1923-5), Mexico (1925-7), Norway (1927-30), and then Sweden (1930-45). She became Ambassador to Sweden in 1943.⁷

Out of the sixty-seven women delegates and substitute-delegates there were twenty-six women who were either politicians or members of the civil or foreign services of their countries. Of these at least eleven were active in women's organizations at the international or national level and another two published on women's questions. The Czechoslovakian senator, Františka Plamínková (1931, 1932), as noted above, was an executive member of the ICW, IAWSEC and the ODI, as well as a member of WILPF and IFBPW. Kerstin Hesselgren (1928, 1930-1938), a Swedish senator, was Vice Convenor on Trades for the ICW. Canadian M.P., Agnes MacPhail (1929), was a member of the WILPF. And, Mary Agnes Hamilton (1929, 1930), British Labour M.P. between 1929 and 1931, although apparently not an active member of any women's organizations, frequently contributed articles to *Time and Tide* and in 1941 published *Women at Work*. Alexandra Kollantai, as well, appears not to have been involved in any women's organization but was committed nonetheless to improving the status of women. In 1908 she published *The Social Basis of the Women's Question* and in 1923, *Love of Worker Bees*, with its controversial approach to sexuality, children, and the place of women in the economy. Immediately after the Russian revolution she served as director of the *Zhenotdel*, the women's section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.⁸

Another twenty-seven women of a variety of occupational backgrounds were involved in national and international women's organizations and in many cases their appointment to League delegations appears to have been in recognition of their work in these organizations. At least thirteen were active in their countries' National Council of Women; in fact, several had founded these organizations. They frequently represented their National Councils at the meetings of the ICW. Henni Forchhammer, a

⁷See C. Porter, *Alexandra Kollontai* (London: Virago, 1980).

⁸Flanz (1983), p.101.

member of the Danish delegation from 1921 to 1937 was the President of the Danish NCW and a Vice-President of the ICW. Irene Moss of Australia (1927) was active in the NCW of Victoria and later became the first President of the NCW of Australia. She was also a Vice-President of the ICW from 1928 to 1948. Another five women were executive members of the IAWSEC. Helena Swanwick was President of the British Section of the WILPF and was also involved in the IAWSEC. Other Women's International Organizations represented by women delegates at the Assembly included the IFUW, IACW and ERI. Of the remaining delegates several may have been members of women's organizations but without greater biographical information it is difficult to know for certain. For nine women absolutely no biographical details are available and for many others only occupation is listed in the records of the Assembly.

Some of the delegates and experts were noted for being 'firsts'; that is, women who made a name for themselves by moving into political space formerly reserved for men. For instance, Mrs. S.M. Allan (1924) of Australia was in 1890 the first woman in New Zealand to begin a law course. She worked to have legislation amended so that women would be allowed to practice as barristers and solicitors. Agnes MacPhail (1929) was the first Canadian woman to be elected as a member of parliament. Mrs. M.A. Holman (1930) was the first Labour woman parliamentarian in Australia. And Kollontai (1935-1938) was the only woman in the first Bolshevik government and one of the first women in the world to serve as a foreign diplomat and later as an Ambassador. It is interesting to note that few of the delegates appear to have been appointed solely on the basis of family connections. The husband of Countess Apponyi (1929-1937) of Hungary was also an Assembly delegate, but rather than being appointed in his place the couple served together for several years. Apponyi had long been recognized as the leader of the moderate wing of the Hungarian feminist movement through which she was connected with the ICW.⁹ Substitute-delegate for Norway, Martha Larsen Jahn (1925-1927), was the wife of the Chairman of the Nobel Committee. She had established a reputation for herself as founder and

⁹Richard J. Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism and Pacifism in Europe 1870-1945* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1987), p.8.

President of the Norwegian Section of the WILPF.

Of the eleven women experts who were politicians or members of the civil or foreign service of their countries, at least six were involved in Women's International Organizations. Dr. Gertrude Bäumer, President of the *Bund Deutscher Frauen* and member of the IAWSEC, was the first women member of the German National Assembly and a member of the Reichstag from 1920 to 1933. Dr. Bäumer was Technical Adviser to the German Delegation (1926) on matters concerning infant welfare, child labor and the treatment of young offenders. Anna Westergaard (1935, 1937), higher degree civil servant in Denmark and a member of Genhofhe Municipal Council for the Radical Left Party, was involved with the ODI. Of the other experts at least seven were involved with women's national or international associations. Alexandrine Cantacuzène (1929, 1931) of Romania, was President of the NCW of Romania and a Vice President of the ICW. Germaine Malaterre-Sellier of France (1932-1938) was an executive member of the IAWSEC and was active in the Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes. And linguist Henni Forchammer (1920-1922, 1924), who subsequently became a substitute-delegate to the Assembly, was for several years a Technical Adviser to the Danish Delegation on Women's Questions. As mentioned above she was President of the NCW of Denmark and a member of the executive of the ICW.

Although women appointed to Assembly Delegations represented a variety of occupational backgrounds, many shared a common interest in social questions. Moreover, through their activities in connection with women's national and international organizations they demonstrated a special concern for the status of women. Although these interests and connections often recommended them for appointments, it is more than likely that some countries included women on their delegations in a gesture of support for the spirit of Article 7, a provision they could little afford to ignore without protest from women's organizations. Britain had perhaps the best record as regards appointments, yet the Foreign Office often came under fire from women's organizations.¹⁰ In 1932, in response her letter

¹⁰See "Women on Delegations 1924" in PRO FO/371/10575 W6342/3771/98. Letters the women's organizations listed in the Index to Foreign Office Most files do not appear to have been saved.



Scandinavian Substitute-Delegates:
Kristine Bonnevie (Norway), Anna Bugge Wicksell (Sweden)
and Henni Forchhammer (Denmark)

concerning the representation of women at Geneva Maria Ogilvie Gordon, President of the CRWLN, was reminded by the Foreign Office that

We have given earnest appreciation of the collaboration of women by appointing a woman to our disarmament delegation (Mrs. Corbett Ashby) and to our delegation for the Assembly (Mrs. Dugdale) and this has been our policy now for some time.¹¹

Sometimes women's organizations were dissatisfied when women appointed were not organized women, but having 'a' woman often was enough to content them.¹² It is significant, nonetheless, that so many of the delegates were in some way connected with national and international women's organizations.

Whatever the background of women delegates to the League, the range of issues they debated at the League was for the most part confined to social and humanitarian questions¹³; the influence women had in the direction of the League's work in this area will be examined below. Table 8 shows the questions upon which each woman delegate, substitute-delegate or expert spoke at the sessions of the Assembly. Each subject has been counted only once for committee meetings and once for plenary meetings regardless of the number of occasions upon which a delegate spoke on that subject per Assembly. The five most common topics debated by women in Assembly Committees were: the Traffic in Women and Children (115 delegates), Child Welfare (104), Opium Traffic (71), Refugees (47) and Intellectual Co-operation (39). Taken together topics dealing particularly with women rank highest (204): Traffic in Women and Children (115), Nationality of Married Women (22), Deportation of Women and Children in the Near East (17), Prostitution and the Abolition of Licensed Houses (18), the Status of Women (15), the Cooperation of Women in the Organization of Peace (13) and the Employment of Women Police (4). Women very infrequently spoke

¹¹PRO FO/371/16455, minutes page, Ashly Clarke, draft letter to Mrs. Gordon from Sir John Simon, Foreign Secretary, 27 July 1932, W8685/1008/98.

¹²See below, p.143.

¹³Similar conclusions are reached in the examination of the activities of women M.P.s in British Parliament, Brian Harrison, "Women in a Men's House: The Women M.P.s, 1919-1945", *The Historical Journal*, 29, 3 (Sept. 1986), pp.655-675.

at the Plenary Meetings of the Assembly. In fact, one hundred and forty-one women delegates, substitute-delegates and experts never addressed the full Assembly. Those women who did address Plenary Sessions spoke most often on the following questions: Traffic in Women and Children (17), Intellectual Co-operation (11), Nationality of Married Women (8), Opium Traffic (7) and the Deportation of Women and Children in the Near East (6).

Women spoke only rarely or not at all on many of the other subjects which dominated the Assembly debates: Reduction and Limitation of Armaments (0), Arbitration, Security and Pacific Settlement of International Disputes (3), International Law (4) and Minorities (1), to name a few. Moreover, when Helena Swanwick, substitute-delegate for Britain, was invited to give the closing address on the 1924 debate on the Geneva Protocol she was asked to voice the views of "the women of the world".¹⁴ Swanwick began her address with a disclaimer:

There is always a danger, as every woman in this hall knows, of people saying, when a woman speaks, that she speaks for all her sex. We differ, gentlemen, as much as you do, though perhaps no more!¹⁵

Nevertheless, in her address Swanwick announced that she was "not afraid to speak as a woman" and made reference to popular themes about women, peace, and war which probably conformed to the expectations of her audience. As much as some women delegates would have liked to make contributions based upon their experience and expertise, the inclination to speak on behalf of women or to express "the women's point of view" was irresistible. This was only encouraged by the tendency of many delegates, male and female, to refer to the presence of women at the Assembly in such terms. Speaking on the question of the employment of women police in 1923 Dame Edith Lyttelton said:

Believe me, women know how best to deal with women...they know their own sex...and for this reason we women of the world ask for permission for women to

¹⁴Swanwick (1935), p.406.

¹⁵LoN, Records of the Fifth Ordinary Meeting of the Assembly, 28th Plenary Meeting, 2 October 1924, OJSS no.23, p.224.

deal with these subjects.¹⁶

Appeals were often made to female delegates as women. Addressing the Assembly on the question of Armenian refugees in 1925 Eleanor MacKinnon of Australia began with the words "[l]et me tell you one thing which will appeal to every woman here" and went on to describe the way in which children, arriving at refugee camps after having lived so long not knowing where their next meal would come from, saved a portion of their meal under their pillow each night.¹⁷ At the same meeting, the head of the French delegation asserted that "those delegations which do not as yet include women delegates are depriving themselves of a vast wealth of understanding and sympathy".¹⁸ Nevertheless, it was not until 1932 that France itself included a woman as an expert on its delegation (although from 1920 there were women secretaries), and it never appointed a woman as a delegate.

Women delegates were most frequently appointed to that committee of the Assembly which apparently could most benefit from the influence of this "understanding and sympathy" - the Fifth Committee (Table 9). Out of a total of two-hundred and eighteen women delegates, substitute-delegates and experts two-hundred and three were appointed to sit on the Fifth Committee which dealt with a variety of social and humanitarian questions. By comparison, forty-eight were appointed to the First Committee (Constitutional and Legal Questions), most of whom spoke only on the nationality of women or the status of women. Fifty women were appointed to the Second Committee (Technical Questions), the majority speaking on intellectual co-operation. Another four sat on the Third Committee (Reduction of Armaments), fifteen on the Fourth Committee (Budget and Financial Questions) and finally, fifty-two on the Sixth Committee (Political Questions and Refugee Problems). Although numbers fluctuated

¹⁶LoN, Records of the Fourth Assembly, 9th Plenary Meeting, 15 September 1923, OJSS No.13, p.52.

¹⁷LoN, Records of the Sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, 18th Plenary Meeting, 26 September 1925, OJSS No.33, p.152.

¹⁸Ibid., p.152.

from year to year and committee to committee on average there were approximately seventy members of each Assembly committee (delegates sat on several committees during each Session of the Assembly). A glance at the figures listed in Table 9 reveals that even on the Fifth Committee women delegates were in a considerable minority by comparison with male delegates. A woman delegate was elected as Chairman or Vice-Chairman on ten occasions, always of the Fifth Committee; the only exception was C. Kluyver (The Netherlands), a Director at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who in 1938 was the Vice-Chairman of the Fourth Committee. While women were clustered in certain committees, there does not appear to have been any spatial separation of women at the Assembly. No mention is made of a special lounge for women delegates. They sat with their national delegations during the Assembly sessions. The Assembly was held at the Palais Wilson, a former luxury hotel, which meant that facilities for women were already provided.

The Assembly records indicate that many of the women appointed to certain of the committees did not participate in the debates and may not even have been present. This may help explain an anecdote recounted by Irene Moss, a substitute-delegate for Australia in 1927: though several women are listed as having been members of the Fourth Committee prior to this year, when Moss found herself in the position of delegate on the occasion of the absence of one of her male colleagues and took her place among the forty-nine "amazed and horrified" men on the Fourth Committee the Chairman was said to have politely asked "[h]ave you lost your way, Madam?"¹⁹ Swanwick found the marginalization of women at the League Assembly particularly objectionable. A specialist on disarmament and political questions she despaired at the fate which awaited her at the Fifth Assembly in 1924, saying:

I knew that, as a woman, I was predestined for the Fifth Committee, a sort of rag-bag of miseries and forlorn hopes...A woman, it appeared, was assumed to be well-informed about Opium, Refugees, Protection of Children, Relief after Earthquakes, Prison Reform, Municipal Co-operation, Alcoholism, Traffic in Women. I did know something about this last, but of the other questions I was as ignorant as - the rest of

¹⁹"The Only Woman", *Westminster Gazette*, 11 October 1927.

the delegation.²⁰

Yet many women would have felt that their knowledge and experience best prepared them for work in the social and humanitarian field. Often women experts appear to have been appointed to the delegations in order to address specific topics, as for instance, the question of the legal status of women discussed by the Assembly in 1935 and 1936 in response to the growing anti-feminism across Europe. The pattern of committee appointments also helps to explain the clustering of debating topics of the women delegates.

Although from a variety of nationalities and occupational backgrounds women members of Assembly delegations shared certain common interests. As will be seen, women delegates were strong advocates for the League's social and humanitarian activities. Many came to the Assembly representing not only their countries but the interests and causes of a variety of national and international voluntary organizations. Of the women delegates and substitute-delegates at least half were in some way involved with various women's organizations affiliated to the Women's International Organizations. However much appointments to the Assembly should have carried with them national allegiances, women delegates were often seen to represent women. This was as true for women M.P.s and civil servants as it was for the women delegates and experts who owed their presence at the Assembly to their positions as executive members of women's organizations. There was some concern in the Secretariat over the tendency for women delegates to have dual loyalties. In 1935 the Legal Adviser to the Secretariat, Hugh McKinnon Wood, expressed the hope "that one day the Governments will put an end to the system by which delegates are induced to act as representatives of international women's associations for the purpose of obliging the Assembly to discuss and promote the objects of these bodies".²¹ As the Women's International Organizations had no other means to establish their legitimacy as actors in the international arena,

²⁰Swanwick (1935), p.384.

²¹LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to Central Section, 22 August 1935, 3A/18945/13900 R3755.

there was no change in this situation during the inter-war years.

The common interests shared by women delegates described above must not be over-emphasized. Swanwick's cautionary words - "we differ, gentlemen, as much as you do" - should be heeded. For instance, the political and moral ground dividing Anna Bugge-Wicksell (Sweden) and the Duchess of Atholl (Britain), both substitute-delegates in 1925, was immense. The Duchess of Atholl, a Conservative M.P., has been described as a decided anti-feminist,²² while Bugge-Wicksell, a lawyer, was very much involved in the women's movement in Sweden and at the international level. As a matter of principle Bugge-Wicksell had lived for nineteen years and had several children with her husband before marrying him.²³ Two substitute-delegates for 1938, Kollantai (Soviet Union) and McClung (Canada), although both could be called feminists, were located at the extreme poles of feminist thought. McClung's feminism was rooted in traditional views of female moral superiority and maternal responsibility, and the family remained central in her thinking about women and women's rights.²⁴ Kollantai, on the other hand, as Commissar for Public Welfare in the Bolshevik government, had campaigned for reforms in domestic life such as collective childcare, the simplification of divorce, and the acceptance of free love.²⁵

Given the sketchy biographical information available for all but a few of the women members of Assembly delegations, it is difficult to make further generalizations about them. Like Helena Swanwick, several British delegates demonstrated interest in international questions beyond those of a social and humanitarian nature. For instance, ninety per cent of Marjorie Graves' speaking career as Conservative M.P. in the British

²²Harrison (1987), p.13.

²³LNA, R. Crowdy to Mr. Warner, 1 May 1923, S156 "Outgoing Letters May 1923".

²⁴See introduction by V. Strong-Boag to Nellie McClung, *In Times Like These*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

²⁵See Porter (1981). Her friend and fellow-delegate, Isabel de Palencia (Spain), attempted to clarify Kollantai's meaning of 'free love' as "the right to love and to choose freely, and not an excuse for prostitution". See Isabel de Palencia, *Alexandra Kollontay: Ambassadors from Russia* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), p.158.



Substitute-Delegates to the Ninth Assembly, 1928:(left to right)
 K. Hesselgren (Sweden), H. Forchhammer (Denmark), Dame
 E. Lyttelton (Britain), H. Vacaresco (Romania), T. Hainari (Finland),
 Dr. I. Aas (Norway), Countess Apponyi (Hungary), C. Kluyver (Holland),
 Frau Lang-Brumann (Germany), E. McDonnell (Australia)

Parliament was devoted to foreign policy questions.²⁶ Blanche Dugdale was for many years head of the Intelligence Section of the British League of Nations Union.²⁷ Many of the delegates held strong political principles. Swanwick was an ardent pacifist and she, as well as others, could be described as internationalist. Moreover, in the late 1930s several of the women who had served as delegates were among the first victims of the dramatic political changes in their countries. Dr. Agnes von Zahn-Harnach, Expert for Germany in 1931, as President of the German NCW gave public lectures against anti-semitism and voted to dissolve the NCW rather than acquiesce to National Socialist demands. Moreover, she campaigned publicly in 1933 about the constricting employment opportunities for women in Germany.²⁸ Republican Isabel Oyarzabal de Palencia (1936) was forced into exile in Mexico when Franco defeated the Spanish Republic.²⁹ And Plamínková (1931-32), who visited Britain in 1939 to plead that the Government intervene on behalf of Czechoslovakian women social workers in danger from occupying German forces, died in a concentration camp in 1942.³⁰

While it would be very tempting to categorize the women members of Assembly delegations as 'stateswomen' or 'diplomats', such descriptions would be inaccurate except for a small group. Some women delegates distinguished themselves at the Assembly meetings, as for instance, Dame Edith Lyttelton, who along with Gilbert Murray, appears to have been a great success at the 1923 Assembly. Lyttelton was greeted with extended applause every time she mounted the platform to speak.³¹ Crowdy later wrote to her saying that "[y]ou have established for our sex a reputation

²⁶Harrison (1987), p.113.

²⁷Birn (1981), p.70.

²⁸Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1987), p.103 and p.146.

²⁹Porter (1980), p.460.

³⁰Jennifer S. Uglow (ed.), *Macmillan's Dictionary of Women's Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p.374.

³¹See LoN, Records of the Fourth Session of the Assembly 9th Plenary Meeting, 15 September 1923, OJSS No.13, pp.51-52.

for balanced diplomacy, wise judgement and good speaking which no woman delegate to the Assembly has yet done out here".³² Yet however skilled or unskilled in diplomacy or the art of public speaking, or however different in political allegiances or views on social problems, the tendency at the Assembly was for women to be called upon for "the women's point of view". Women delegates were not regarded simply as members of parliament, senators, civil servants or academics, but as *women* with particular values and interests. This tendency was only reinforced by the presence of so many representatives of women's organizations and by fact that female delegates often chose to speak "as women".

Women also held official positions in connection with the League's permanent or temporary advisory committees. The League Organization included many dozens of committees, sub-committees and commissions that considered specific questions under the League's jurisdiction. These committees were set up by the Council, acting on provisions of the Covenant or proposals from the Assembly. Committee members most often were selected by the Council in conjunction with national governments. The functions and structure differed from committee to committee but generally they studied particular international questions in co-operation with the Secretariat, advised the Council and the Assembly and sometimes drafted conventions for signature and ratification by national governments. The committees brought together experts from both governments and private bodies on a regular basis to discuss all kinds of international problems. Service on League committees was only rarely remunerated but many delegates must have considered it an honour to be appointed.

Because these committees were so numerous it is difficult to obtain an exact figure on the number of female members. Figures cited have been compiled using lists of women committee members drawn up by the Secretariat and from the reports of committees upon which women were most likely to

³²LNA, R. Crowdy to E. Lyttelton, 9 October 1923, S156 "Outgoing Letters 1923".

sit.³³ Although there may be some omissions it is probable that most women committee members have been included. Out of the numerous committees (at least one hundred) women appear to have been represented on only thirteen. These included in descending order of importance: the Advisory Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Traffic in Women and Children Committee, the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation (and its sub-committees), and the Health Committee (and its sub-committees). A few more were members of the Commission on Deported Women and Children in Asia Minor, the Permanent Mandates Commission and the Temporary Committee on Slavery.

It is perhaps surprising to discover so many American women on League committees given that their country never joined the League (Table 10). Diebal argues that the Secretariat attempted to entice the United States to join the League by encouraging its involvement in the less controversial aspects of League activities - that is, in the social and humanitarian field.³⁴ While it never became a member state, U.S. representatives from various government departments dealing with social welfare issues, including four from the Children's Bureau, travelled to Geneva as delegates to League advisory committees.

Women committee members represented a variety of careers. Many had demonstrated medical expertise or knowledge in their particular branch of the civil service (Table 11). Two American delegates to the Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children and the Child Welfare Committee, Grace Abbott and Julia Lathrop, had begun their careers in Chicago's Hull House settlement and later worked for the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor in Washington. Another delegate to these two committees was Dr. Estrid Hein, an oculist who had served on various government commissions

³³Reference is made here to the Minutes of the Annual Sessions of the Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children and the Child Welfare Committee (at one time called the Advisory Committee on the Protection of Children), amalgamated into the Advisory Committee on Social Questions in 1937.

³⁴Terry L. Deibel, "Struggle for Cooperation: The League of Nations Secretariat and Pro-League Internationalism in the U.S. 1919-1924", unpublished memoir presented for the Diploma of the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 1970, pp.115-142.

on social welfare issues. Polish delegate to the Assembly, Wanda Grabińska, was a member of three League committees: the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, the Child Welfare Committee and the Committee of Experts on Assistance to Indigent Foreigners and the Execution of Maintenance Obligations Abroad.

The number of women appointed as delegates to League committees because of their involvement in women's organizations was even greater than Assembly appointments discussed above. Many of these women served as assessors on the Traffic in Women and Child Welfare Committees, the only two committees where the participation of non-governmental organizations was encouraged by the League. For example, by 1930 the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children had twelve members appointed by governments and six assessors. Some women interpreted the creation of the category assessor as a means to provide the contribution of women's practical experience.³⁵ In the early postwar years one of the points women's organizations emphasized to Secretariat officials was that women had not the same opportunities as men for acquiring expert knowledge or experience for positions on the committees at Geneva and that women should be included for their "general knowledge": "[a]re not common sense and sound judgment equally valuable qualities and experience in dealing with public questions?"³⁶ In fact, the category of assessor offered one of the few opportunities for the direct participation of non-governmental organizations at the League: assessors could present reports and address the Committee but could not vote. They were nominated by particular organizations specified by the Council which included the International Bureau for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children and the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls. One assessor representing more than a dozen Women's International Organizations sat on each Committee; it was always difficult for these organizations to reach agreement on candidates who could represent them all.

³⁵Boeckel (1929), p.234.

³⁶LNA, memo, informal interview of Secretary-General with women's deputation, 21 June 1919, 23/99/84 R1356.

In total, there were at least seventy-six women delegates and assessors on League Advisory committees. Fourteen of the women who served on League committees were at some point also delegates or experts at the Assembly. Moreover, after leaving the Secretariat, Dame Rachel Crowdy became an assessor to the Traffic in Women and Children Committee and the Child Welfare Committee. At least thirty-seven of the women appear to have been involved in national and international women's organizations. Among them was Eleanor Rathbone, President of the British NUSEC, who served as assessor for the Women's International Organizations on the Child Welfare Committee for several years in the mid-1920s. Emmy Freundlich, who served in 1926 as the only woman on the Temporary Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Economic Problems, was the President of the International Co-operative Women's Guild. For over fifteen years Avril de Sainte Croix, the founder of the French NCW and executive member of the ICW, represented the Women's International Organizations as assessor on the Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and Children. She was also the first French woman to sit on a parliamentary committee. Dr Paulina Luisi of Uruguay, delegate to both the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children and the Child Welfare Committee, was one of the first women in Uruguay to graduate with a B.Sc. and to qualify as a doctor of medicine. She was the founder and president of the NCW of Uruguay as well as an honorary member of the IAWSEC. Julia Lathrop was a member of the two main social feminists organizations in the U.S.: the Women's Trade Union League and the League of Women Voters, the latter an affiliate of the IAW. Perhaps the most well-known woman to serve on a League committee was Mme. Curie-Skodowska, Nobel Prize winner for Chemistry and Physics. Curie sat on the International Commission of Intellectual Co-operation for several years.

Although most committees would meet once or twice a year in Geneva or in other European centres, the duties of each committee varied. One of the most demanding was the three member Commission on Deported Women and Children in the Near East constituted in February 1921, which included two women, Emma Cushman and Karen Jeppe. Cushman, an American, had served during the Great War as a relief-worker in Turkey. Jeppe, Danish by birth,

had worked for twenty years with children in Asia Minor by the time she was appointed to the League Commission, from 1915 onwards focusing her efforts on assisting Armenian women and children. As constituted by the Council, the Commission of Inquiry was charged to collect and co-ordinate information regarding the situation of deported women and children in Armenia, Asia Minor, Turkey and the adjoining territories. The seriousness of the situation quickly drew the Commission into work of a more active nature tracing and rescuing deported women and children.

Women's organizations constantly pressured the League and governments of member states to include women on the permanent and temporary advisory committees. On one occasion a member of the British Foreign Office described as "embarrassing" the competition for an appointment to the Commission on Slavery saying "besides the applications to us no fewer than four women's organizations have written to the Secretary-General of the League".³⁷ For several of the temporary committees created by the Council there was a clause suggesting that one or two of the members should be women. This was true, for instance, of the Advisory Commission on the Deportation of Women and Children and the Committee of Experts on the Status of Women of which four of the seven members were women.³⁸ On some committees the presence of women may have been merely a case of tokenism, but Cushman or Jeppe, for instance, with their commitment and years of experience, could hardly be described as token women. Nonetheless, there were certain committees upon which it was deemed appropriate for women to sit. A letter to the British Foreign Office in 1925 from the NUSEC urging that a woman be appointed to the re-organized Committee on the Protection of Children, drew the following comment from a member of staff: "I must say that if there is anything on which women should be represented, I should have thought that it was any body concerned with child welfare".³⁹ Even when it was generally agreed that a woman be appointed, members of the

³⁷PRO FO/371/11070, C.W. Orde, memo, 12 March 1925, W2108/300/98.

³⁸LoN, Third Meeting of the One-hundredth Session of the Council, 28 January 1938, OJ 19th Year, No.2, February 1938, p.91.

³⁹PRO FO/371/11070, R. Campbell, memo, 26 February 1925, W1547/300/98.

Council did not always see eye to eye on the nature of the appointment. For example, there was some protest on the part of the British member of the League Council when it came to the appointment of Eleanor Rathbone as assessor for the Women's International Organization to the Advisory Committee on the Protection of Children. The British reluctance to have Rathbone as a committee member was hinted at in correspondence between the Home Office and the Foreign Office in 1925:

We know Miss Rathbone well. She is the President of...the NUSEC...we at the Home Office, though on perfectly friendly terms with this Society, constantly find ourselves at issue with them. The prospect of having to sit in conference with this lady in the presence of representatives of other States who are always ready to make capital out of our domestic differences is, to put it mildly, disconcerting.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the lobby efforts of the women's organizations were successful. A circular letter went out to eighteen women's groups from the Secretary-General saying that the Council "has approved the appointment of Miss Eleanor RATHBONE M.P., in accordance with the wish expressed by several of the principal Women's Organisations"⁴¹

By comparison with many women members of the Assembly delegations, the women who sat on League committees often had a greater degree of practical knowledge and expertise in the questions covered by their committees. Grace Abbott, for example, a member of both the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, was Chief of the Children's Welfare Bureau in Washington from 1921 to 1934. After 1934, the new Chief of the Bureau, Katherine Lenroot, served as delegate to the Traffic in Women and Child Welfare Committees. Dame Janet Campbell, Vice-Chairman of the Health Committee 1929-1930 and a Expert at the Assembly in 1930, was a senior medical officer at the British Ministry of Health. Charlotte Whitton, Executive Director of the Canadian Welfare Council had been for many years involved in social and welfare work and had conducted research on immigration questions and child welfare before being appointed assessor

⁴⁰PRO FO/371/11070, J. Anderson to Sir Eyre A. Crowe, 1 April 1925, 2963/300/98.

⁴¹LNA, circular letter from Secretary-General to women's organizations, 17 March 1925, S157 "Outgoing letters, March 1925".

and after 1935, delegate, to the Child Welfare Committee. Many of the women serving as assessors for the voluntary organizations had experience and knowledge which they could contribute to the committee discussions, among them two British women, Annie Baker, Secretary of the International Bureau for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Eglantine Jebb, founder of the Save the Children Fund. Although many of the women committee members could be described as career women, and in some cases, perhaps, as internationalists, the most common characteristic was their experience in social and relief work and their commitment to improving legal, social and health conditions of women and children throughout the world.

One consequence of the growing importance of the League's social activities in the mid-1930s was the elimination of the category assessor. After 1936 the re-constituted Advisory Committee on Social Questions was made up of only government representatives. The non-governmental organizations formerly represented by assessors were retained as corresponding members.⁴² A few women who had previously served as assessors were invited to attend certain meetings as "experts" in their field.

Even if their numbers were not high, women had clearly established their presence at the League. It is difficult to know how the representation of women would have developed without the persistent efforts of women's organizations to secure the appointment of women. There was some disagreement, however, over the practice adopted by certain women's organizations of demanding the appointment of a particular woman to a League committee so that women would be represented. In 1926, Catherine Marshall (WILPF) stated her objection to this policy:

If there is no woman adequately qualified I don't want to urge the appointment of 'A woman' for the sake of having a woman on - I do not think it is sound policy to put anyone just because she is a woman any more than it is justifiable to keep anyone

⁴²LoN, Advisory Committee on Social Questions, Report of the Work of the Committee in 1937, C.235.M.169.1937.IV.

off just because she is a woman.⁴³

The following year Marshall complained of the Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organizations that "most members...did not mind what woman, standing for what policy, was on, so long as 'the' woman's point of view (hateful phrase!) was represented".⁴⁴ She believed that men needed to be taught "that women have just as much right to any number of different opinions as men have". Nonetheless, she went on to argue that "[a] woman's scale of values is generally slightly different (often radically different) even from that of the men who hold the same opinions as she does". As one example, she stated that women and men may agree on the same housing policy but women will place housing policy much higher on the party program than men. Indeed, it was just this sort of thinking that led her fellow members of the Joint Standing Committee to urge the fuller representation of women at the League. Even staunch equal rights feminists pushed for the representation of women in all official posts on similar grounds. The NWP, for example, believed that since men totally dominated politics, it was necessary to urge "the selection of qualified women, *just because they are women*, to make the balance true, to offset the latent dominant prejudice."⁴⁵

In 1929 the CRWLN, under the leadership of Maria Ogilvie Gordon, also the President of the Joint Standing Committee, presented to the League Council and member states an "Appeal for the More Active Participation of Women in the League of Nations". It represented the views of twenty-five British women's organizations and five Women's International Organizations. The Appeal stated that "there appears to be no intention to permit women to take that active and personal part in framing the policy and carrying out the decisions of the League, which was forecasted for them in the Treaty of Versailles":

We hold that there is no matter that concerns the peace and

⁴³WILPF Papers, C. Marshall to Miss Reimann, 15 December 1926, IV/88/101.

⁴⁴WILPF Papers, C. Marshall to M. Doty, 2 June 1927, IV/88/101.

⁴⁵Quoted in Becker (1981), p.104.

welfare of the world from which the woman's point of view should be excluded, and that it is essential to the success of the League that the special capacities not only of men but also of women should be freely employed...⁴⁶

The CRWLN continued to push this line. In 1932 it claimed that women's "familiarity with the trend of thought and opinion among the homes of the people in their own and other countries" constituted "a highly expert branch of political and economic information that is supplementary to the knowledge possessed by governmental departments" and should be utilized by the League.⁴⁷ Plamínková, President of the Czechoslovakian Council of Women and Substitute-Delegate for her country in 1932, went one step further: she told her fellow delegates that "the opinions expressed by Governments in replies to enquiries always reflected the opinion of the majority of the male population only".⁴⁸ In her view, the other side could be presented by the women's organizations.

Years later Marie Ginsberg, former assistant librarian of the League, assessed the impact of women in policy formation at the League. She claimed that "[t]he only women who really participated in making policy at the League" were Isabel de Palencia of Spain and Alexandra Kollantai:

They were able to play an important role because they had already proved their political competence at home and their positions with their own governments were such that their opinions were taken seriously.⁴⁵

During her years as Assembly delegate Kollantai was Soviet Minister to Sweden where she became close friends with de Palencia, appointed Spanish Ambassador to Sweden in 1936.⁴⁶ In contrast, according to Ginsberg, many women were sent to the League "to please (or silence) some woman's

⁴⁶Reprinted in CRWLN, *Annual Report, 1928-1929*, p.2.

⁴⁷LoN, *Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace*, Report by the Secretary General, 25 August, 1932, A.10.1932., p.18.

⁴⁸LoN, *Records of the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly*, Minutes of the Sixth Committee, Second Meeting, 29 September 1932, OJSS No.109, p.12.

⁴⁵Alice Myers, "World Posts for Women Must Be Earned Declares Former League Librarian", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 February 1945.

⁴⁶See de Palencia (1947) and Porter (1980), especially Chapter 17, "Exiled in Diplomats' Europe".

organizations beseeching its government to appoint a woman": few were politically qualified and therefore, had little if anything to do with policy-making. Her general assessment of the League women was that they failed to influence policy "not because they were women but because they were not the right women".¹

The chapters that follow aim to present a somewhat more positive assessment of women's impact at the League by shifting the emphasis from individuals to women's networks. Women delegates to the Assembly and League committees interacted with the Women's International Organizations and Secretariat officials in order to promote the goals of the inter-war women's movement. Whenever topics of interest to women's organizations were raised at the League, women delegates could be counted on to raise salient points. Although the social feminist/equal rights feminist split also manifested itself at Assembly sessions, compromise was usually possible because the resolutions ultimately voted on rarely dealt with contentious issues.

The most important point to have emerged from this profile of women in official positions at the League is their connection with women's organizations. Ginsberg interpreted this as one of the reasons for women's lack of influence at the League, but even women delegates who were politicians and civil servants displayed a certain detachment from the dictates of government policy. The number of women delegates who prefaced their statements with phrases such as "I speak as a woman" or "I speak on behalf of the women of the world" is quite remarkable and indicates the power of the idea that women delegates, especially members of women's organizations, could represent women's interests on issues coming before the League. Such ideas, however problematic, helped to reinforce the influence of the women's networks at the League. And it was through these networks that gender-specific interests and concerns made their way on to the League agenda.

¹Myers, "World Posts for Women Must Be Earned Declares Former League Librarian".

TABLE 5
Women on Assembly Delegations, Yearly Breakdown 1920-1938 (Numbers)

Year	Delegates	Substitute Delegates	Experts	Other*	Combined
1920	-	2	1	4	7
1921	-	3	1	5	9
1922	-	5	1	3	9
1923	-	6	-	3	9
1924	-	5	1	3	9
1925	-	6	-	5	11
1926	-	7	1	2	10
1927	-	7	2	5	14
1928	-	7	2	7	16
1929	1	10	2	12	25
1930	3	8	3	15	29
1931	2	13	4	14	33
1932	1	14	2	11	28
1933	2	8	3	10	23
1934	1	10	3	12	26
1935	2	11	4	3	20
1936	1	14	4	11	30
1937	2	10	5	15	32
1938	1	14	3	13	31
Period Total	16	160	42	153	371

*The category other includes women Attachés, Secretaries, Private Secretaries and Interpreters.

TABLE 6
Nationality of Women on Assembly Delegations, 1920-1938 (Numbers)

Nationality	Delegate	Substitute Delegate	Expert	Other*	Combined
British	1	18	2	27	48
Canadian	4	2	-	29	35
Danish	-	16	6	4	26
Australian	-	17	-	7	24
Dutch	-	13	-	9	22
Romanian	1	17	2	-	20
Swedish	3	13	3	-	19
Norwegian	-	18	-	-	18
South African	-	-	-	13	13
Soviet	-	4	-	9	13
French	-	-	8	3	11
Hungarian	3	6	1	1	11
German	-	-	10	-	10
Polish	-	9	1	-	10
Irish	-	-	-	9	9
Iranian	-	1	-	7	8
Columbian	-	1	-	6	7
New Zealand	-	1	-	6	7
Spanish	-	6	-	1	7
Belgian	-	-	-	6	6
Finnish	-	5	-	1	6
Siamese	-	-	-	6	6
Lithuanian	2	3	-	-	5
Austrian	-	4	-	-	4
Chinese	-	-	3	1	4
Czechoslovakian	-	2	2	-	4
Indian	-	-	-	3	3
Chilean	-	1	1	-	2
Italian	-	-	-	2	2
Mexican	1	1	-	-	2
Swiss	-	-	2	-	2
Turkish	1	-	1	-	2
Bulgarian	-	1	-	-	1
Ethiopian	-	-	-	1	1
Iraqi	-	-	-	1	1
Latvian	-	-	-	1	1
Portuguese	-	1	-	-	1
Period Total	16	160	42	153	371

*The category other includes women members of delegations in positions as Attachés, Secretaries, Private Secretaries, and Interpreters.

TABLE 7
Occupations of Women Delegates, Substitute Delegates and Experts,
1920-1938 (Numbers)

Occupation	Delegates Subst. Delegates	Experts	Combined
Member of Parliament	15	5	20
Academic/Researcher	9	5	14
Civil Servant	8	5	13
Foreign Service	4	2	6
Journalist/Writer	8	-	8
Justice of the Peace	6	-	6
Rep. of Women's NGO*	5	4	9
Rep. of Other NGO*	2	-	2
Medical Doctor	3	2	5
Lawyer	4	1	5
Economist	3	-	3
Librarian	1	-	1
Principal	-	1	1
Teacher	1	-	1
LNU Employee	1	1	2
Unknown	9	2	11
(More than 1 Occup.)	(12)	(5)	(17)
Number	67	23	90

*Where no other occupation is known.

TABLE 8
Number of Women Delegates, Substitute Delegates and Experts who spoke
on each topic at Assembly Committee and Plenary Sessions, 1920-1938*

Topic Addressed by Assembly	Committee	Plenary	Total
Traffic in Women and Children	115	17	132
Child Welfare	104	5	109
Opium Traffic	71	7	78
Refugees	47	5	52
Intellectual Co-operation	39	11	50
Penal Questions	33	1	34
Administrative Questions	30	4	34
Nationality of Married Women	22	8	30
Deportation of Women and Children	17	6	23
Health and Nutrition	20	1	21
Prostitution/Licensed Houses	18	2	20
Relief Work	18	2	20
Inquiry into the Status of Women	15	1	16
Organization of Peace	13	2	15
Education/Arts & Letters	8	3	11
League Budget	10	-	10
Cinema/Broadcasting	7	1	8
Mandates	5	3	8
Obscene Publications	5	3	8
Esperanto	4	3	7
Municipal Co-operation	6	-	6
Age of Marriage and Consent	4	1	5
Women Police	4	1	5
Slavery	4	-	4
International Law, general	2	2	4
Arbitration & Security	1	2	3
Economic Questions	2	-	2
Minorities	1	-	1

*Each topic has been counted only once per woman (Committee and Plenary meetings counted separately) regardless of the number of times she may have spoken on a particular topic per session.

TABLE 9
Assembly Committees upon which Women Delegates, Substitute Delegates
and Experts Sat, 1921-1938 (Numbers)

Committee	FIRST Legal Questions	SECOND Technical Questions	THIRD Reduction of Arms	FOURTH Financial Questions	FIFTH Social Questions	SIXTH Political Questions
1920*	-	-	-	-	-	-
1921	1	-	-	-	4	-
1922	2	2	-	1	6	1
1923	2	2	1	1	6	1
1924	1	1	-	1	6	-
1925	1	5	-	-	6	1
1926	1	4	-	1	7	1
1927	1	4	-	-	10	1
1928	-	3	-	-	9	3
1929	-	5	1	-	14	3
1930	1	4	1	1	13	2
1931	4	2	1	1	16	5
1932	6	4	-	1	14	13
1933	2	3	-	2	14	4
1934	1	2	-	1	13	5
1935	10	2	-	1	15	2
1936	3	4	-	1	15	3
1937	10	2	-	1	15	4
1938*	2	1	-	2	20	3
Period Total	48	50	4	15	203	52

*The Committees had slightly different titles in 1920 but as no women were represented these are not of importance. In 1938 a Seventh Committee was created which dealt with several issues previously considered by the First and Fifth Committees. There were 14 women on the Seventh Committee.

TABLE 10
Nationality of Women Members of League Committees, 1919-1939 (Numbers)

Nationality	Delegates	Assessors	Combined
American	9	1	10
British	3	5	8
Swiss	2	4	6
French	3	1	4
Swedish	3	1	4
Danish	3	-	3
German	3	-	3
Indian	3	-	3
Norwegian	3	-	3
Polish	3	-	3
Romanian	3	-	3
Spanish	3	-	3
Austrian	2	-	2
Italian	1	1	2
Belgian	-	1	1
Canadian	1	-	1
Chilean	1	-	1
Mexican	1	-	1
Peruvian	1	-	1
Portuguese	1	-	1
Uruguayan	1	-	1
Yugoslavian	1	-	1
Unknown	2	9	11
Number	53	23	76

TABLE 11
Occupations of Women Members of League Committees, 1919-1939 (Numbers)

Occupation	Delegate	Assessor	Combined
Rep. of Women's NGO*	8	13	21
Civil Servant	8	1	9
Rep. of Other NGO*	3	4	7
Medical Doctor	7	-	7
Lawyer	6	-	6
Academic/Researcher	5	-	5
Social/Relief Work	2	2	4
Journalist/Writer	4	-	4
Member of Parliament	3	-	3
Foreign Service	3	-	3
Teacher	1	1	2
Former League Employee	-	1	1
Unknown	10	2	12
More than 1 Occup.)	(7)	(1)	(8)
Number	53	23	76

*Where no other occupation is known.

CHAPTER 5

THE LEAGUE AND WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL WORK IN THE 1920S

The drafters of the League Covenant anticipated only a limited role for the League in the social and humanitarian field. Of the twenty-six articles comprising the Covenant, only Article 23 deals directly with establishing the League's responsibility in 'non-political' matters: securing "fair and humane conditions of labour" and the supervision of agreements with regard to "the traffic in women and children and the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs". Apart from Article 23 and the vague idea that the League should assist in dealing with "certain objects of a broad humanitarian interest" there was no specific policy directing the League's social and humanitarian work until the late 1930s.¹ Yet the League quickly became drawn into activities originally not envisaged as lying within its jurisdiction. Women's presence at the League ensured that certain subjects of interest to women were among them. Indeed, Vera Brittain claimed that the League's involvement in social and humanitarian activities was the "result of pressure of voluntary societies largely composed of women".² This statement is all the more significant in view of the assessment that the League achieved its greatest success in the field of social and humanitarian activities.³

Women's international work in connection with the League covered a variety of fields ranging from peace and disarmament to intellectual co-operation, yet it was in the social and humanitarian field that women's aid was most often solicited by the League and that women's organizations sustained a strong lobby throughout the 1920s. National and international women's organizations, often in conjunction with other voluntary

¹LNA, P.J. Baker, Note to Secretary-General, 6 December 1920, S152 "Motta Resolution". For development in this area see Dubin (1983).

²Brittain cites child welfare, traffic in women and children, refugees and slavery. Vera Brittain Papers, notes for lecture "Women and the League of Nations" (n.d.), F2.

³Ruth B. Henig, *The League of Nations* (Edinburgh: Oxford and Boyd, 1973) and F.S. Northedge, *The League of Nations its life and times 1920-1946* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986).

organizations, successfully lobbied to have a variety of issues placed on the agenda: conditions of women refugees and women in mandated territories, abolition of licensed houses, treatment of illegitimate children, and the ages of consent and marriage. In certain areas, especially those relating directly to women, it is unlikely that the League would have become involved without women's lobby efforts and the activities of the women's networks operating around the League. Moreover, in many areas of social and humanitarian work the League was reliant on support from the Women's International Organizations as propagandists for its activities. Women's participation on League committees and the presence of Dame Rachel Crowdy as Chief of the Social Section from 1919 to 1930 also contributed to women's influence in these areas. The latter point is especially significant in light of Ranshofen-Wertheimer's assessment that in the first ten years of the Secretariat's existence, it was the head of the section who shaped the character of the section's work.⁴

During the 1920s some women's organizations tried to interest the League in questions concerning the legal rights of women but soon discovered that such issues could only be introduced in an indirect manner by placing such issues within the context of the broader agenda of social reform. While this approach suited the majority of the Women's International Organizations, it was problematic for equal rights feminists who viewed social reform as a diversion of feminist energy from the pre-eminent goal: equality. Lady Rhondda (ERI) distinguished between feminists and social reformers:

every woman's organization recognizes that reformers are far more common than feminists, that the passion to look after your fellow man, especially woman, to do good to her in your way is far more common than the desire to put into every one's hand the power to look after themselves...⁵

Frustrated as many equality feminists may have been with the social reform

⁴Ranshofen-Wertheimer (1945), p.94.

⁵Quoted in Alberti (1989), p.207.

tendencies of the 'new' feminists in the 1920s, it is possible to interpret these developments in a different light. Black challenges the standard criticism of social feminism as conservative and constraining because it emphasizes what is different about women and argues, instead, that the most important function of "the doctrine of difference...was to legitimize women's activity in the public sphere and thus to create a political role for them".⁶ Achievements in the direction of equality such as women's suffrage or Article 7 of the Covenant did not diminish the political significance of what Black refers to as the "doctrine of difference" but enlarged its possibilities in terms of women's participation in policy formation and expanding the agenda for social change.

At the League women's participation moved in two mutually reinforcing directions. First, by directing the League's attention to gender-specific issues, women's organizations signalled their intention to use this newly available political space - the international arena - to pursue feminist goals. Second, they insisted upon women's special capacity to make judgements about policy formation in areas of concern to them, especially in the social and humanitarian field. Whether or not one is in accord with Eleanor Rathbone's view that women may be more attuned to and desirous of relieving human suffering and injustice or Caroline Spurgeon's belief that "[w]omen tend naturally to go straight for the human side of things - the individual, the social side",⁷ it is significant that women often initiated and were strong supporters of the League's social and humanitarian work. This chapter assesses women's influence in three areas: relief and refugee work, the Permanent Mandates Commission and social welfare activities.

⁶Black (1989), p.140 and p.328.

⁷See above pp.36-37.

The Women's Networks and the League's Relief and Refugee Work

The Women's International Organizations were active even before the meeting of the First Assembly in December 1920 in efforts to have certain questions placed on the agenda. Among them was an appeal to the League to aid deported Armenian women and children held in the Near East. In May 1920, Helena Swanwick (V.P. WILPF) wrote to Lord Robert Cecil, bringing to his attention "the enslavement and dishonouring of women and children all over the East as a result of the war". Swanwick suggested that this question "is one which might well be taken up by a special Commission of the League of Nations".⁸ Cecil passed on Swanwick's letter to Crowdy and apparently on the basis of the letter she became interested in the question and pushed to have it placed on the League agenda.⁹ At the same time, the WILPF circulated a request to the Assembly to find means "to trace and liberate women and children, who have been torn from their homes and are held in captivity in Asia Minor and elsewhere".¹⁰ Henni Forchhammer (WILPF), member of the Danish delegation, urged the League to appoint a commission of inquiry into the situation of deported women and children in Turkey and neighbouring countries. The Assembly invited the Council to form such a commission and requested that at least one member should be a woman.¹¹

The Commission was duly formed by the Council in February 1921 - consisting of one man, Dr. Kennedy (American) and two women, Karen Jeppe (Danish) and Emma Cushman (American) - and began to collect information in

⁸LNA, H.M. Swanwick to Lord Robert Cecil, 20 May 1920, 12/4631/4631 R638. In the course of protracted military operations during the war many thousands of Armenian women and children were taken from their homes and removed by their Turkish captors to the interior of Asia Minor. 'Adopted' by Turkish families and converted to Islam, these women and children were often held against their will, their status little more than slaves. Others were well-treated, and some were fully assimilated into Turkish families.

⁹See contents of file LNA 12/4631/4631 R638.

¹⁰LNA, E. Green Balch to President of the Assembly, 9 December 1920, 13/9176/9176 R1008.

¹¹LoN, First Assembly, Provisional Verbatim Record, 24th Plenary Meeting, 15 December 1920, pp.8-10.

the spring of 1921. From the beginning the Commission was hampered in its work by the difficult political and military situation in Turkey and it was confined mainly to areas under Allied control in Constantinople and the French mandate of Syria. The Council had specified that the Commission should limit itself to collecting information regarding the conditions in which Armenian women and children were living, yet it quickly became drawn into active relief work. In July 1921, Cushman recommended that the Commission "receive instructions for more definite efforts" and suggested that it should begin to rescue the Armenian children still detained in Turkish homes and Orphanages in Constantinople.¹²

At the Second Assembly in September 1921 the Fifth Committee recommended the conferral of greater powers on the Commission. The Rapporteur to the Assembly was Romanian substitute-delegate, Hélène Vacaresco (ICW), whose impassioned speech on the trials of Armenian women at the hands of their Turkish captors was met with loud applause by the Assembly. Interspersed amongst the relatively impartial information provided by the Commission of Inquiry were Vacaresco's vivid descriptions of the plight of "desecrated virgins...abducted in scenes of horror amid cries and the flames of their homes".¹³ Vacaresco's speech later brought the Secretary-General recriminations from the Turkish Embassy. The Turkish Minister at Berne questioned the League's departure "from the elementary rules of justice" in that:

in a question involving the honour of a whole nation it appointed as rapporteur a person whose natural sympathies were entirely on the side of Turkey's enemies, a lady, a slave to her feelings and a poetess...¹⁴

While it is difficult to judge the influence of Vacaresco's speech in the matter, the Assembly voted to extend the powers of the Commission,

¹²LNA, E. Cushman to Secretariat (letter thus addressed), 16 July 1921, 12/14199/4631 R638..

¹³Statement with Regard to the Deportation of Women and Children in Turkey and the Neighbouring Countries, submitted by H. Vacaresco, p.3, LNA 12/15946/4631 R638. See also LoN, Records of the Second Assembly, Seventeenth Plenary Meeting, 23 September, 1921, p.16ff.

¹⁴LNA, Mr. Djevad to Secretary-General, 17 March 1922, 12/19620/2631 R620. The Turkish Embassy at this time represented the Imperial Ottoman Legation and not the nationalist government of Kemal.

including the appointment of a Commissioner of the League at Constantinople to oversee the reclamations of women and children. A League of Nations' Neutral House was formed in both Constantinople and Aleppo for the temporary reception and examination of reclaimed women and children. Given the precarious relations with Turkey - Kemal's government had not been recognized and Turkey was in a state of war with certain member states of the League - it was impossible for the High Commissioner to carry out his duties. For the following five or six years most of the work of the Commission was carried out by Jeppe in Aleppo and Caris Mills, an American relief-worker who took over the work in Constantinople, thus explaining Dame Rachel's comment in 1925 that "[i]t appears to me that the two women of the Commission are the men of the party!".¹⁵

Despite the difficulties encountered, by 1927 several thousand women and children had been rescued and many thousands more received some manner of aid from the Commission and the League's Neutral Houses.¹⁶ Many had been rescued from Turkish and Arab homes or orphanages where they had been held against their will, some for as many as six or seven years. Although the Commission could only carry out direct reclamations in areas where they had support of the Allied or Mandated authorities, it also set up stations along the Turkish-Syrian border to receive refugees. Some women and children had managed to escape themselves and came directly to the League Houses for refuge. The Commission's work, particularly in Aleppo, was not confined to rescue operations; it also sought to provide refugees with the means to earn a living upon leaving the temporary care of the League houses.¹⁷ Moreover, in 1925 the Commission reported that in Constantinople "[t]he League of Nations House has become a well-known centre where women and children, detached from their families, suffering through war

¹⁵LNA, R. Crowdy, memo to Captain Walters, 1 August 1925 12/11979x/4631 R638.

¹⁶League of Nations (Information Section), *Social and Humanitarian Work* (Geneva, 1926), pp.46-47 and *Ten Years of World Co-operation* (Geneva, 1930), pp.278-280.

¹⁷See references made in LoN, Records of the Sixth Assembly, Minutes of the Fifth Committee, Annex 6 and 7, OJSS No.38, pp.157-164.

conditions, etc., may seek help, protection and advice".¹⁸

Those who were in favour of the League's work in this area fought a constant battle against those who believed that such work was more appropriate for voluntary relief agencies and those who believed that all such work was misdirected. It is unlikely that the work would have been supported by the League at all but for the personal efforts of Crowdy and the pressure from voluntary societies, women's organizations in particular. The Secretariat correspondence shows that there was a consistent appeal for League action from women's organizations. Perhaps the strongest criticism of the League's failure to take greater steps to alleviate the sufferings of the Armenians came from the Armenian Red Cross and Refugee Fund. The President of the Fund was Lady Acton and the executive were women.¹⁹ Women delegates to the Assembly championed the cause at each Assembly to ensure the Commission's continuation. Crowdy took a personal interest in this work from the moment it was brought to her attention. She was always on the lookout for ways to appropriate funds for Jeppe's work. Sometimes there were personal donations to the League and Dame Rachel managed to have some of the money directed to the League House in Aleppo. On one occasion her efforts led to a private donation of a car to aid the rescue work.²⁰

By August 1923 Crowdy was doubtful whether the Assembly would vote for the continuation of the Commission's work given that the question was not even on the agenda. She regretted this and wrote to the Secretary-General:

I think there is already a strong feeling among certain International and National Women's Organisations that the Secretariat is not making sufficient effort to continue this work. As you know I am very anxious that it should go on if

¹⁸Ibid., Annex 6, Appendix Part II, pp. 160-161.

¹⁹See letters to R. Crowdy from Emily Robinson, 21 June and 24 August 1922 in LNA 12/22326/4631 R640.

²⁰LNA, R. Crowdy to Miss Gilpin, 4 April 1923, S156 "Outgoing Letters April 1923". See also LoN, Records of the Fifth Assembly, Minutes of the Fifth Committee, Annex 10, OJSS No. 28, p.104.

possible.²¹

The question was eventually placed on the agenda of the Fourth Assembly where the debate focused on the issue of continuing financial support to the Commission. Representatives of the WILPF observing the proceedings wrote to the Secretary-General asking him to intervene. They explained that members of WILPF had been among those who suggested the establishment of the Commission "not only for the sake of the unfortunate people who have to be protected" but because they were convinced that "it would increase the prestige of the League of Nations and make the propaganda for it easier". They were "disappointed to learn that a mere question of expenditure - even of a relatively very small expenditure - could stop this practical work which has accomplished already remarkable results".²² The Rapporteur to the Assembly on this subject was the Danish delegate, Henni Forchhammer (WILPF) who elaborated:

You sometimes hear it said that the League ought not to undertake humanitarian work but I do not agree; I can assure you, from my experience in speaking to people about the work of the League, that humanitarian work, such as the protection of women and children in the Near East, the repatriation of prisoners of war, the fight against typhus, the work for refugees, appeals to the imagination of the woman in the street... and it helps to make the ordinary people realise that the League is a living reality...it helps, moreover, to rally behind the League that support of public opinion without which the League cannot live.²³

The Assembly finally voted for the continuation of the work for one further year, with half the former budget.

The Commission continued to provoke disagreement within the Secretariat over the appropriateness of financial aid by the League for work of this nature. In March 1924 the Secretary-General advised Crowdy that though he should hate to see the work stop "I cannot get over my objection of principle to continued League financial support in matters of

²¹LNA, R. Crowdy, memo to E. Drummond, 15 August 1923, 12/11634x/4631 R636.

²²LNA, M. Gobar to E. Drummond, 21 September 1923, 12/31116/4631 R640.

²³"Protection of Women and Children in the Near East" in LoN, Records of the Fourth Assembly, Sixteenth Plenary Meeting, 27 September 1923, OJSS No.13, p.111.



the kind".²⁴ Another senior Secretariat official was of the opinion that "this is not the proper work for the League".²⁵ Against such views within the Secretariat Dame Rachel persevered in her efforts throughout 1924. In June she wrote a private letter to Philip Noel-Baker, a former Secretariat official who now worked for the British Treasury, encouraging him to get the British Government to press for the League's continuation of the work. She argued that the work in Aleppo had been very ably carried out, and that "had it not been done by the League it would not have been done at all". Moreover, she believed that the work represented a major breakthrough for the League: "[t]his is a definite piece of humanitarian work and has shown actual results, not only on paper but in people". She reminded Noel-Baker of the general interest taken in the Commission's activities, noting that it had been described as "one of the best pieces of work undertaken by the League". In particular, she emphasized the support from Women's International Organizations and urged that

the work should not come to an end in view of the fact that we want all possible support for the League through the women of the various countries Members of the League (in twenty-five of these countries women have now the vote).²⁶

At the same time women were working on other fronts. In May the British LNU had written to League Council Member Lord Parmoor (Foreign Office) on behalf of its Women's Advisory Committee requesting the continuation of the League's support for Jeppe's work. The following month Miss Nalbandian of the Armenian Society, on the advice of Dame Rachel, spoke to Lady Parmoor about the matter.²⁷ Probably also at the suggestion of Crowdy, Forchhammer wrote to Cecil requesting his intervention. By mid-June Crowdy

²⁴LNA, E. Drummond, memo to R. Crowdy, 29 March 1924, 12/36522/4631 R640.

²⁵LNA, H. Berg, memo, 10 May 1924, 12/36522/4631 R640.

²⁶She believed that only pressure from the League forced France to give its support to work carried out in its mandated territory of Syria. R. Crowdy to P. J. Baker, 16 June 1924, LNA S156 "Outgoing Letters June 1924".

²⁷LNA, Women's Advisory Committee of the LNU to Lord Parmoor, 19 May 1924, 12/36522/4631 R640. Reference to meeting between Miss Nalbandian and Lady Parmoor made in letter from R. Crowdy to H. Forchhammer, 20 June 1924, LNA S156 "Outgoing Letters June 1924".

was able to report to Forchhammer that things were beginning to move:

Your letter to Lord Robert evidently bore fruit and in addition Lord Parmoor, the new British representative on the Council is interesting himself on the subject. I think, therefore, it is possible that the work may go on another year at least.

She also suggested that Forchhammer solicit the support of the Swiss representative on the Fifth Committee, or "to get the Swiss women to bring pressure to bear on him".²⁸

As Chief of the Social Section Crowdy often conducted affairs in this manner. While she took a personal interest in the question of Deported Armenian Women and Children, officially her hands were tied. This is reflected in a confidential letter to Jeppe in June 1924. She wrote that "in view of the fact that there is not a general feeling among my seniors in favour of its [the Commission's] prolongation, it is almost impossible for me to make use of your letters in order to press Government officials outside the Secretariat". She therefore advised Jeppe to write immediately to Lord Parmoor herself asking him to request that the British delegation recommend that the work be continued.²⁹ In September Crowdy also wrote to Swanwick, substitute-delegate for Britain, asking her to do everything she could to persuade the British delegation to support the Commission's work.³⁰ Dame Rachel's efforts were rewarded when the question was placed on the Assembly agenda by the Council following upon a favourable report by Lord Parmoor.³¹ The Assembly again voted to continue the League's support for the Commission's work.

Not only did Dame Rachel have to struggle against the disapproval of fellow-members of the Secretariat, but also against that of the British

²⁸Reference to letter is made by R. Crowdy in her letter to H. Forchhammer, 20 June 1924, LNA S156 "Outgoing Letters June 1924".

²⁹LNA, R. Crowdy to K. Jeppe, 24 June 1924, S156 "Outgoing Letters June 1924".

³⁰LNA, R. Crowdy to H.M. Swanwick, 10 September 1924, S146 "Deported Women and Children in the Near East".

³¹LoN, Records of the Fifth Assembly, Minutes of the Fifth Committee, Ninth Meeting, 18 September 1924, OJSS No.28, p.47.

Foreign Office.³² Her further request in August 1925 for funds to continue Jeppe's work, though eventually supported by Lord Parmoor before the League Council, prompted the following internal memo at the Foreign Office:

We are constantly receiving appeals from tender-hearted if impractical ladies and clerics to rescue Christian women and children from Turkish harems, often with special references to Miss Jeppe's work. This work, as I understand it, consists to a minor degree in enticing Armenian women and children to exchange what may be quite possibly be comfortable homes in Turkish towns and villages on the Turco-Syrian border, for the practical rigours but spiritual amenities of the refugee camps, the running of which forms the main part of her work.³³

Such pragmatism demonstrates a lack of understanding of the concepts of human rights and minority rights, just beginning to develop on a practical level through the intervention of the League. Moreover, it ignored the deplorable state in which many of these women and children were held. Certainly there were efforts by some groups to sensationalize the issue by making the most of the Turkish harem theme and emphasizing the "lost honour" of Armenian women and girls at the hands of their Turkish captors.³⁴ The speeches in support of Jeppe's work made by women Assembly delegates stressed that there was a greater common sympathy among women for women, and perhaps this was interpreted as sentimentalism. The Duchess of Atholl, Rapporteur to the Sixth Assembly on the question of deported Armenian women and children, stated that

[i]t is unnecessary for me to appeal in this matter to my fellow women delegates. No woman, happy in her freedom, the freedom to live in her own country, in her own home, surrounded by those whom she loves, can contemplate without a shudder the lot of these women

³²It is possible that objections were raised in other countries but the emphasis on the opinion of the Foreign Office reflects the British predominance at the League during the 1920s and the high proportion of officials of British nationality in senior Secretariat posts during the period.

³³PRO FO/371/10864, W.A. Osborne, memo, 12 August 1925, E4802/228/44. This view of the situation was shared by another official who wrote "our latest reports tend to show that many of these people...are better off where they are than they would be as starving refugees elsewhere", A.W. Rendel, memo, 30 July 1925, PRO FO/371/10864 E4443/228/44.

³⁴See for instance correspondence between Rachel Crowdy and members of a news sheet called "The Slave Market News" in 1925, LNA 12/43565/4631 and 12/41714/4631 R641.

and children.³⁵

In general, the tone was one of distress that such conditions existed and hope that the suffering could be quickly alleviated by practical action on the part of the League.

Karen Jeppe was aware of the attacks on her work. In her report to the Council in September 1925 she asserted:

*We pursue with equal intensity two aims, to rescue the women and children and to educate the rescued and give them a proper start in the new life...we are thoroughly careful never to undertake more than we can carry out to the end, so that nobody should have any reason to complain of broken promises.*³⁶

Moreover, in her report to the Assembly in 1927 Jeppe pointed out that the Commission was careful not to disturb those who had settled into their new surroundings and were bound to their new homes by ties of affection, but rescued only those who really wished to escape.³⁷

The League's financial support for the Neutral House in Constantinople finally came to an end in 1926, while its support for Jeppe's activities continued for one more year. Jeppe agreed that her relief work need no longer be carried out in connection with the League after the end of 1927.³⁸ Dame Rachel remained committed to the work until the end. During the 1926 Assembly she arranged a meeting between Jeppe and Dame Edith Lyttelton, substitute-delegate for Britain, to convince the latter of the importance of the Commission's activities.³⁹

At the same time Crowdy was the driving force within the Secretariat for a scheme aimed at the permanent settlement of Armenian refugees in Evrian. Although such work was outside the duties of the Social Section, Dame Rachel's personal interest in the plight of the Armenian refugees

³⁵LoN, Records of the Sixth Assembly, Seventeenth Plenary Meeting, 25 September 1925, OJSS No.33, p.135.

³⁶LoN, Records of the Sixth Assembly, Minutes of the Fifth Committee, Annex 6, Appendix, OJSS No.38, p.158.

³⁷See description of the work in League of Nations, *Ten Years of World Co-operation* (1930), pp.278-280.

³⁸LNA, R. Crowdy to E. Lyttelton, 10 September 1926, S157 "Outgoing Letters September 1926".

³⁹Ibid.

appears to have overridden administrative concerns. She was asked by the Secretary-General to serve as Secretary to the Armenian Refugee Settlement Commission formed by the Council in 1925.⁴⁰ Her correspondence during the period reflects a real anxiety over the situation of the refugees as well as an increasing frustration at the unwillingness of governments to come to their aid.

In August 1925 she wrote to Lady Astor about the difficulties she faced raising money for the settlement scheme saying, "if we spent a hundredth part of the money we spend on paper on people we could certainly tackle the problem".⁴¹ She could not hide her impatience with the governments she had to deal with: "[i]t is heresy to say so, but I always fear that by the time the countries of the world have really agreed on some scheme to protect minorities that there will be no more minorities left to protect!" On another occasion Crowdy attributed the lack of action with regard to the "shocking state of affairs" of Armenian refugees to the fact that "so very few people seem able to translate statistics into flesh and blood!"⁴² Crowdy's statement recalls Caroline Spurgeon's comment that "[w]omen tend naturally to go straight for the human side of things".⁴³

Among the Women's International Organizations, perhaps the most vocal on the question of the Armenians refugees and refugee problems in general was the WILPF.⁴⁴ Its point of view was forcefully presented at the Fifth Assembly by Helena Swanwick (WILPF), who served as Rapporteur on Refugee Questions. Swanwick emphasized the importance of the League's humanitarian activities:

⁴⁰LoN, C.A./1st Session/P.V.1.(1).-5(1). Minutes of First Meeting, Armenian Refugee Settlement Commission, 30 October 1925.

⁴¹LNA, R. Crowdy to Lady Astor, 11 August 1925, S157 "Outgoing Letters August 1925".

⁴²LNA, R. Crowdy to C. P. Howland, 13 October 1926, 12/54629/46805 R698.

⁴³See above, p.36.

⁴⁴See for example correspondence from the WIL(Br.) 12 November 1926, LNA 12/55346x/46805 R698 and from WILPF, February 1927, 12/57905/46805 R698.

The argument is constantly used that the League should not take on more "merely humanitarian work". It is a strange use of words to speak of the work of the League of Nations as "merely humanitarian", as if that were a very little thing, "merely", that is to say, for the welfare of the human race. There is a very great value, in my opinion, in work which is not purely generalised work, but which brings Members of the League of Nations into contact with individual suffering and with individual persons.⁴⁵

In her request for aid to refugees, Swanwick reminded the Assembly that "constructive work on the human side" was as essential for peace as schemes for arbitration of disputes. Although supporters of the Armenian Settlement Scheme, most notably the High Commissioner for Refugees, Fridtjof Nansen, struggled for several years to bring the scheme into effect, in 1929 it was abandoned for lack of government support.⁴⁶ Foreseeing the failure of their efforts, in 1925 Rachel Crowdy had written to Nansen that "[i]t will always be a matter of the deepest regret to me that the Members of the League, and particularly the Great Powers, have not apparently appreciated their responsibility in this matter".⁴⁷

Several points emerge from this account of efforts to expand the League's humanitarian activities to deal with deported Armenian women and children. Perhaps the most important is that the Commission's work was viewed by many governments and Secretariat officials as an inappropriate undertaking for the League, yet the desire to appease public opinion - very often viewed in terms of women's opinion - put the issue on the League agenda and kept it there for most of the 1920s. Secondly, women delegates and women's organizations, directed by Crowdy, played a key role in efforts to keep the League involved in the work. This is not meant to imply that men or mixed-sex organizations did not support the work of the Commission. The work of the League's Neutral Houses was supported by contributions from relief agencies working in the Near East as well as by funds sent from

⁴⁵LoN, Records of the Fifth Assembly, Nineteenth Plenary Meeting, 25 September 1924, OJSS No.23, p.145.

⁴⁶The 1929 Assembly's abandonment of the Armenian refugees is poignantly recounted in Ethel L Jones, *The Spirit of Geneva: A Woman's Journal, during the Tenth Assembly of the League of Nations, September 1929* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1929), pp.85-92.

⁴⁷LNA, R. Crowdy to F. Nansen, 1 September 1928, S158 "Outgoing Letters September 1928".

many national and international organizations. Yet the women's networks - Crowdy included - used women's support for the League as a leverage point to push for the extension of the League's humanitarian activities.

On occasion, the Secretariat expressed frustration at the reluctance of Women's International Organizations to move beyond their role as lobbyists. In the early 1920s, the League turned to women's organizations to aid Russian refugee women stranded in Constantinople. Many of these women had been registered as prostitutes by the Allied Police Bureau and for a period they were refused visas to leave Constantinople for other countries where they would be supported by friends and relatives. In 1921 the Secretariat advised the High Commissioner for Refugees that he solicit the aid of all the Women's International Organizations and "propose that a small sum of money be raised for the special assistance of these women."⁴⁸ Dr. Nansen sent out appeals for financial aid to several national and international women's organizations.⁴⁹ Their responses are informative. The British Association of Moral and Social Hygiene (AMSH) advised that it had no money but would take the matter up with the Foreign Office.⁵⁰ The IWSA informed Nansen that his letter was read at a committee meeting and that "it was agreed that the Alliance might be able to help by addressing a letter to the Allied Governments concerned". It also advised the High Commissioner that the Alliance would publish an article on the question in its journal.⁵¹

A few months later, in response to a further appeal by the High Commissioner, the IWSA wrote that it "is not in a position to give subscriptions to any other organisation, as its funds are contributed for certain limited specific purposes".⁵² Several affiliates of the ICW sent

⁴⁸LNA, P.J. Baker to Mr. Frick, 3 November 1921, 45/17871/17871x R1738.

⁴⁹LNA, Circular letter to women's organizations from F. Nansen, 8 November 1921, 45/17871/17871x R1738.

⁵⁰LNA, Association of Moral and Social Hygiene to Dr. Nansen 19 November 1921, LNA 45/17871/17871x(1) R1738.

⁵¹LNA, M. Corbett Ashby and K. E. Trouson to F. Nansen, 26 November 1921, 45/17871/17871x(1) R1738.

⁵²LNA, K. Bompas to T.F. Johnson, 1 March 1922, 45/19173x/17871 R1738.

similar responses. The NCW of Italy stated that it "would exert all its power to induce our Government to obtain from the Government of Constantinople such measures as may be required to relieve so immense sufferings".⁵³ The NCW of France wrote that they had appealed to the Allied Bureau of Police.⁵⁴ Although money later came from women in other European countries, only the National Councils of Women from the Scandinavian countries immediately sent money in response to Nansen's appeal which prompted Noel-Baker to ask Dame Rachel "can't British women's organisations give something?"⁵⁵ The responses of the Women's International Organizations and their national affiliates indicate the way in which they carried out their international work - primarily in the capacity of political pressure groups. Although the League sought in this instance to exploit the sympathies of women in order to raise money for Russian refugee women, these organizations were not designed as relief or fund-raising societies; thus the League had little success in this particular case.

Only the branches of the WYWCA engaged actively in relief work. In response to Nansen's appeal the Secretary of the WYWCA wrote that the society could not give any assistance as it "is a co-ordinating body only and is not allowed to use its purely administrative funds for relief work or in connection with other organizations".⁵⁶ The practical work of the society was carried on through the national bodies, however, and the American YWCA had a unit at work in Constantinople with a hostel for Russian girls, a restaurant and an employment bureau. In June 1922 members of the WYWCA met with Dame Rachel to discuss the question of the employment

⁵³LNA, E. Santillana Maggiorani to F. Nansen, 3 December 1921, 45/17871/17871x(1) R1738.

⁵⁴LNA, A. de Sainte-Croix to the President (presumably the High Commissioner), 30 January 1922, 45/17871/17871x(1) R1738.

⁵⁵LNA, P.J. Baker, memo to R. Crowdy, 3 May 1922, 45/17871/17871x(2) R1738. Dame Rachel did, in fact, launch an appeal to ex-service women in Britain to buy clothes for refugees. See LNA 45/17871/17871x(2) R1738, 48/24165x/23949 R1759 and 45/28300x/17337 R1736.

⁵⁶LNA, C.T. Niven to F. Nansen, 23 November 1921, 45/17871/17871x(1) R1738.

of Russian refugee women.⁵⁷ Ruth Woodsmall, Chief Worker of the American YWCA in Constantinople, was invited by Dr. Nansen to undertake "the co-ordination of the work of the existing private organisations interested in the welfare of these unfortunate people in Constantinople".⁵⁸ Toward this end Woodsmall prepared a report for the Secretariat about the establishment of training courses.⁵⁹ Upon receiving this report, the Secretariat recommended that all the money collected for the women of Constantinople be given to facilitate Woodsmall's work.⁶⁰ Links of a practical nature were forged between the League and the YWCA, but this was an unusual development.

Many members of the Women's International Organizations, however, had experience as relief workers. Mary Sheepshanks, Secretary of the IWSA, used the London headquarters as a support centre during the First World War for German women stranded in an alien country.⁶¹ British suffragists became involved in relief work, responding first to the plight of Belgian refugees and later, to the flood of refugees from other European countries. Kathleen Courtney (IWSA) worked as a volunteer with the Serbian Relief Fund in Salonika and Corsica. The Quaker Dr. Hilda Clark and her friend, nurse Edith Pye, both members of WIL(Br.), set up emergency maternity hospitals inside the French war zone. But it was the post-war hunger and desolation that really mobilized women and inspired their humanitarian and peace work for many years to come. In early 1919 the Fight the Famine Council brought together British Quakers and the WIL (Br.) to fight the effects of the

⁵⁷LNA, Meeting of Miss Clarke, WYWCA, Miss Larned, Emigration Officer WYWCA and R. Crowdy, 9 June 1922, 45/17871/17871x(2) R1738. They discussed questions such as how to train the women, how goods manufactured by the refugee women could be sold and the need to co-ordinate the work of the voluntary organizations in Constantinople.

⁵⁸LNA, Major Johnson to R.F. Woodsmall, 1 July 1922, 45/21558/17871 R1738.

⁵⁹Copy of Report "Investigation on the Advisability of Establishing Training Courses for Russian Women in Constantinople and Plan for Organizing Workshops for Making Hospital Supplies", LNA 45/22888/17871 R1738.

⁶⁰LNA, P.J. Baker to Major Johnson, 7 September 1922, 45/22888/17871 R1738.

⁶¹Sybil Oldfield, *Spinsters of this Parish* (London: Virago Press, 1984), p.182.

blockade. Dr. Clark established a Quaker Relief Mission to Vienna, where she and Pye struggled to reduce the incidence of malnutrition, rickets and T.B.⁶² These women remained active in relief work throughout the inter-war period. At the request of the Ukrainian branch of the WILPF in 1930, Sheepshanks investigated reports of Polish atrocities in the Ukraine and as a result of her findings, worked to rouse world opinion. She was long remembered by Ukrainians for her efforts on their behalf. Clark and Pye were members of the International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees which in the late 1930s raised funds from governments to feed refugee children in Spain.⁶³

While some members engaged in active relief work either as individuals or in other societies during the 1920s and 1930s, the Women's International Organizations believed their contribution lay in other areas. In the early 1920s the WILPF consciously stifled the temptation to move into relief work. Helena Swanwick convinced fellow-members that they should not surrender "to the age-old notion that women had no concern in public life except to wipe up the mess made by men".⁶⁴ Organizations such as the WILPF needed to play a different role, that of educating women to use their influence in favour of government policies that would make this mopping up routine obsolete. Their support for the League of Nations was linked to this goal. But they also recognized that in the short-term the League could co-ordinate relief programs on a scale not possible for voluntary societies such as their own.

In 1924, however, the women delegates to the Fifth Committee - with the exception of Vacaresco - opposed a scheme for an international relief union financed by the League put forward by Senator Giovanni Ciraolo, Chairman of the Italian Red Cross. The debate illustrates the extent to

⁶²See Edith M. Pye (ed.), *The War and its Aftermath, Letters from Hilda Clark* (London: Clare Son and Co., n.d.); Francesca Wilson, *In the Margins of Chaos* (London: John Murray, 1944); and Alberti, pp.58-60 and 84-6.

⁶³Pye, *The War and its Aftermath*, p.117. On relief work of British women during the Spanish Civil War see Jim Fyrth and Sally Alexander (eds.), *Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991).

⁶⁴Swanwick (1935), p.315.

which gender-stereotyping prevailed at the Assembly.⁶⁵ Helena Swanwick (WILPF), Swedish lawyer Anna Bugge-Wicksell (IAWSEC), and Norwegian zoologist Kristine Bonnevie (IFUW), desired that no further action should be taken until it was certain that governments - many of them already in arrears - would come forward with the extra funds the League would need to put the plan into practice. They did not object to the principle of the formation of a relief union but they were afraid that the reputation of the Fifth Committee - already referred to as "La Commission Sentimentale" - would be further damaged if it passed a resolution that had little chance of being implemented. No one attempted to meet their arguments and Ciraolo closed the meeting with an appeal to the women to "leave to men the task of stating practical objections and to let your mother-hearts be moved by suffering".

Swanwick was made Chairman of a sub-committee to draw up a resolution on the subject. When several countries continued to express their support for the scheme she made them angry by asking whether they were prepared to contribute the extra funds and pay their arrears of subscription to the League as well. As she later recounted, "[t]his was felt to be distinctly unwomanly of me". Vacaresco, who asserted that she was proud of the title "La Commission Sentimentale", smote Swanwick with the words "Je déteste ces hommes-femmes!"⁶⁶ Swanwick, however, voiced her objection to appeals "made to women in particular on the ground of sentiment":

women were there [on the Committee] not as women but as representatives of their respective Governments. Considerations of sentiment must not make them overlook the practical aspect of things.⁶⁷

Much to her annoyance, the English press reported the incident under the caption "Women delegates fall out". As she put it, "I 'fell out' on that

⁶⁵LoN, Records of the Fifth Assembly, Minutes of the Fifth Committee, Eighth Meeting, 17 September 1924 and Eleventh Meeting, 19 September 1924, OJSS No.28. The incident is recounted in some detail in Swanwick (1935), pp.396-399.

⁶⁶LoN, OJSS No.28, p.56; Swanwick (1935), p.398; Rose Macaulay's novel *Mystery at Geneva*, 4th ed. (London: Collins, 1924), caricatures Vacaresco as Mlle. Binesco, "a very womanly woman".

⁶⁷LoN, OJSS No.28, p.54.

occasion with twenty-one men and one woman, whereas we three who voted against the scheme were all women".⁶⁸ It was impossible for women delegates to escape from gender-stereotyping, and perhaps for this reason they more often than not attempted to use it to their favour. Although on this occasion Swanwick reproached Committee members for viewing women delegates as women rather than Government representatives, she was just as likely as other delegates to attribute to women a special role in League affairs.⁶⁹

Women on the Permanent Mandates Commission

The activities of women outlined above relates their efforts in connection with the humanitarian work of the League. Yet bowing to pressure from the WILPF and the IWSA, the First Assembly had also recommended that a woman be appointed to the Mandates Commission, politically one of the most important and most sensitive of the League's permanent advisory committees.⁷⁰ Uncertain of the outcome of the Assembly's recommendation, in February 1921 Chrystal Macmillan and Margery Corbett Ashby (IWSA) wrote to the members of the League Council reminding them of the Assembly recommendation and put forward the names of women "eminently fitted to render valuable service as a member of the Permanent Commission on Mandates", one of whom was eventually appointed - Anna Bugge-Wicksell of Sweden.⁷¹

Despite the overtly political character of the Mandates Commission

⁶⁸Swanwick (1935), p.399.

⁶⁹See above p.38 and p.110.

⁷⁰LNA, WILPF to Delegates of the First Assembly, 9 December 1920, 13/9176/9176 R1008. See also letter to Council from IWSA in Whittick (1979), Appendix 3, pp.297-298. "The function of the *Permanent Mandates Commission* was to study the annual reports from the mandated territories and to advise the Council whether the conditions of each mandate were being strictly observed", F.P. Walters *The History of the League of Nations*, Vol.1 (London, 1952), p.171.

⁷¹C. Macmillan and M. Corbett Ashby to Members of the Council, 18 February 1921, reproduced in Whittick (1979), Appendix 3, p.298.

there was little doubt that the role played by a women would be of a special nature. Macmillan and Corbett Ashby argued in their letter to the Council that:

[s]uccess in administration [of the Mandates] must lie in developing what is already good in a race, and since women are the prime guardian of its traditions, we believe the addition of a suitable woman representative would be of essential and immense value to the commission.

When she accepted the appointment, Bugge-Wicksell admitted that unlike the other members of the Committee who were "all experts in or at least familiar with colonial matters...I know hardly anything about such questions". She asserted, however, that in following the Assembly recommendation the Council had acted wisely:

I believe that position of women [sic] and children in the mandatory areas to be particularly helpless, and that the presence upon the Committee of one member, who can feel as a woman for other women as well as for children and who will make it her special business to care for and speak for that part of the native population, can be of great value.⁷²

This approach is similar to that described by Ramusack (1990) as "maternal imperialist" in her study of British women activists in colonial India.

At the first meeting of the Permanent Mandates Commission in October 1921 Bugge-Wicksell found herself in the company of eight men, many former Foreign Ministers or Colonial Secretaries. The President of the Commission paid particular note of her presence on the Commission in his opening address:

...your help, Madame, will doubtless prove particularly valuable in the study of those problems of colonial administration relating directly to the welfare of that half of the human race which both needs and deserves the special solicitude of those who are to govern it.⁷³

Although Bugge-Wicksell on many occasions stepped beyond her designated sphere of expertise, even on the Mandates Commission women were considered able to make judgements mainly on questions concerning women and children. Women simply did not have the positions of power - and the inside

⁷²LNA, A.Bugge-Wicksell to E. Drummond, 22 March 1921, S284/1(1) "Correspondence with Mme. Bugge-Wicksell".

⁷³LoN, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the First Session, First Meeting, 4 October 1921, C.416.M.296.1921.VI., p.3.

information which comes from such positions - to make a significant contribution of a broader nature on the Permanent Mandates Commission or on many other League bodies. Yet the presumption that there was a 'women's sphere' of activities at the international level was in some ways empowering for women. As pragmatists they seized the opportunities inherent in this limited role and continually pressed to have their concerns placed on the agenda. This can be seen in the way in which the work of the Permanent Mandates Commission developed.

In 1921 and 1922, when by Bugge-Wicksell's own admission, her lack of knowledge and experience made her "a rather useless member"⁷⁴ of the Commission, there were no direct references concerning the problems of women in mandated territories, though she did raise questions about native education. From 1923 onward, however, she pressed for the provision of information and discussion on gender-specific issues such as infant mortality, training of midwives, protection at child-birth, domestic sanitation, age of marriage and the traffic in women and children in mandated territories. Describing the development of her work on the Commission in 1923 she emphasized the importance of her strong personal conviction concerning issues such as the education of women and their position as indentured labourers:

This conviction is based not only on general feminist and humanitarian principles, though I hope it is not either contrary to these principles; its strength comes from the fact, that it is footed directly, on the broader and more universal view that is the leading star of the mandates commission - the moral and material wellfare [sic] of the whole native populations of the mandated areas.⁷⁵

It is interesting that Bugge-Wicksell justified her position in such terms. Perhaps she felt it necessary to take a cautious approach on the Commission where women's issues were concerned given her well-known personal commitments: she was a founding member of the IWSA and during her years on the Commission she retained her position as one of the Vice Presidents of

⁷⁴Quoted from paper "Education of Women and Employment of Women as Indentured Labourers in Territories Under B- and C-Mandate" prepared by A. Bugge-Wicksell, 29 June 1923, p.1, LNA S284/1(1) "Correspondence with Mme. Bugge-Wicksell".

⁷⁵Ibid.

the Alliance. Her approach was always circumspect, as illustrated in a letter written to the Director of the Mandates Section in 1922:

...people never realize that governments are very sensitive animals, and that if you really want them to mend their ways, you must approach them cautiously and find forms for your proposals that will not wound their vanity...as a rule I believe more real progress can be attained by quiet means than by making a fuss.⁷⁶

Undoubtedly she fits well into the company of inter-war feminists described by Harrison (1987) as "prudent revolutionaries". Throughout the 1920s, Bugge-Wicksell and her successor, the Norwegian educationalist Valentine Dannevig, pressed the Mandatory Powers to include information concerning the status of native women in their reports to the Commission so that by 1930 the agenda almost always included a sub-section on "the status of native women" - a practice that continued until the last meeting the Commission in 1938. By constantly requesting information concerning women, these two Commissioners encouraged the mandatory powers to pay closer attention to the situation of women in their mandates. When conditions were reported to the Mandates Commission it was possible for the members to make observations and recommendations, and in this way to work towards raising the status of women in mandated territories.

Although the Mandates Commission discussed a variety of issues concerning the treatment of women under native customs, for most of the 1920s the greatest emphasis was placed upon the education of native women. The mandatory powers had agreed to take control over questions of education, thus it was possible for the Mandates Commission - and the women Commissioners who were given authority concerning education questions - to have some influence in this area. Both Bugge-Wicksell and Dannevig were persistent in their efforts to have the education of women and girls taken seriously by the mandatory powers. Most often their arguments were couched in terms of gains to be made to the native community as a whole from the education of women. Particular emphasis was placed on the need for domestic education for women. Bugge-Wicksell approached the questions concerning native women - questions which, she said, "lie near to my

⁷⁶LNA, A. Bugge-Wicksell to Mr. Rappard 7 June 1922, S284/1(1) "Correspondence with Mme. Bugge-Wicksell".

women's heart" - from a point of view best described as social feminist.⁷⁷ She was anxious to improve the standard of life for native women based on the difficulties they faced in their day-to-day lives:

In speaking for the native women I am speaking for the native mothers and through them for the native race as a whole. Being myself a mother I know, that making life a little easier and less strenuous for women means to make life brighter and happier also for their husbands, sons and brothers, and that all keeping back or neglecting the women will mean slower progress, more frequent shocks and draw-backs and, upon the whole, an augmented number of obstacles in the way of future native wellfare[sic].⁷⁸

Bugge-Wicksell emphasized methods to improve the conditions of the home and the health of the mother and child, especially through domestic education. Though well-intentioned, her general approach to education and other subjects was decidedly Eurocentric, that is, imposing models and principles from the European experience. At one point she suggested the formation of troops of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in the French Cameroons as a method of "moral education and formation of character".⁷⁹ On another, she was pleased to discover that the use of the ox-plough was being introduced in Tanganyika which would have the positive result "of putting the work of cultivation in the hands of the male population".⁸⁰

Dannevig, appointed to the Commission after the death of Bugge-Wicksell in 1928, was interested in a wider variety of issues and was more likely than her predecessor to criticize the policies of the mandatory

⁷⁷A. Bugge-Wicksell, "Education of Women and Employment of Women as Indentured Labourers in Territories Under B- and C-Mandate", p.10.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹LoN, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the Fourth Session, Second Meeting, 24 June 1924, A.13.1924.VI., p.21.

⁸⁰LoN, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the Fourth Session, Thirteenth Meeting, 1 July 1924, A.13.1924.VI., p.108. The long-term consequences of this approach with regard to lowering the status of women have been explored in Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), esp. Chapter 3 "Loss of Status under European Rule", pp.53-65.

powers.⁸¹ She was also less inclined to emphasize the community over the individual rights of women. Although she continued to stress the importance of domestic education for women by the early 1930s she placed more emphasis on questions concerning the rights of women: divorce and dissolution of marriage, property rights, women's employment, ownership of wages, inheritance, dowry and status of widows. This reflected the general shift in women's international work in the 1930s. Whenever information about the position of women was not included by mandatory powers she was insistent that such matters be looked into and was usually rewarded for her efforts by the presentation of the requested information in the next report.⁸²

It was through pressure from women's organizations that the women Commissioners raised issues such as the extension of the 1921 Convention on the Traffic in Women and Children to mandated territories (at the request of the CRWLN and the IAW) and the age of marriage in the mandates (at the request of the IAW).⁸³ Throughout the inter-war years the WILPF also sent the Commission resolutions concerning the operation of the mandates system in general.⁸⁴ The women's organizations appear to have become most active when the question of appointments was raised. After the death of Bugge-Wicksell in 1928 the Secretariat was inundated with letters from women's organizations forwarding names of women who could replace her. Radziwill commented to a member of the Mandates Section, "I am sure that if she is replaced by a man we shall have all the women organisations of

⁸¹See in particular Dannevig's outrage at the treatment of the inhabitants of Homs, West Syria, by the French authorities. LoN, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the Fifteenth Session, Twenty-eighth Meeting, 18 July 1929, C.305.M.105.1929.VI., p.218.

⁸²She insisted that more information be provided about the situation of women in Ruanda-Urundi, LoN, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the Twenty-First Session, First Meeting, 26 October 1931, C.830.M.411.1931.VI., p.23. The information was included in the next report: LoN, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the Twenty-Second Session, Thirty-Third Meeting, 29 November 1932, p.236.

⁸³LoN, Permanent Mandates Commission, Minutes of the Third Session, Twenty-First Meeting, 2 August 1923, A.19.1923.VI., p.153. See also discussion concerning the Resolution on the Age of Marriage voted by the Eleventh Congress of the IAWSEC, LoN, Permanent Mandates Commission, Fifteenth Session, Twenty-ninth Meeting, 19 July 1929, C.305.M.105.1929.VI., p.221.

⁸⁴LNA, D. Woodman to Permanent Mandates Commission, February 1927, 1/57904/57904 R81.



the world on our back"; therefore, she forwarded a list of women who "would have the support of practically all women organisations".⁸⁵ At its first meeting after the death of Bugge-Wicksell the Council resolved "to appoint as a member of the Commission a woman chosen from among the nationals of non-mandatory Powers".⁸⁶

The search for a new commissioner went on for several months as there was some difficulty finding a Scandinavian woman - the preferred nationality for work concerning mandates - who had both the qualifications for the appointment and the support of the women's organizations. Finally Dannevig's name was put forward by Martha Larsen Jahn, President of the WILPF (Norway) and many times a substitute-delegate to the Assembly for Norway. According to Larsen Jahn, Dannevig had certain qualities that recommended her for the position apart from her reputation as a pedagogue and her knowledge of several languages:

Elle a été membre du Conseil municipal d'Oslo et a beaucoup participé aux mouvements féministes, sans cependant être une féministe "endurcie"... Personnellement elle est très agréable, pleine de tact et d'amabilité et je crois qu'il lui est facile de collaborer avec des hommes.⁸⁷

These were characteristics the Secretariat respected when seeking to appoint women. Approval was still needed from the Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organizations. It is significant that even after the support for the nomination was given by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Mandates Section indicated its preference for Dannevig, the Director of the Mandates Section wrote to Radziwill asking that she get the official nomination from the Joint Standing Committee before the next Council meeting.⁸⁸ This was duly provided by the Committee and at the next Council meeting the appointment of Dannevig was approved. Perhaps the appointment would have been made even without the

⁸⁵LNA, G. Radziwill, memo to Mr. Gilchrist, 22 February 1928, 6A/2214/1143 R2327.

⁸⁶LoN, C/49th Session/P.V.4(I), Forty-Ninth Session of the Council, Fourth Meeting, 7 March 1928, pp.6-7.

⁸⁷Translation of a personal letter to E. Colban from M. Larsen Jahn, 15 May 1928, LNA 6A/2214/1143 R2327.

⁸⁸LNA, V. Catastini to G. Radziwill, 30 May 1928, 6A/2214/1143 R2327.

support of the Committee; yet it is illustrative of the League's eagerness to comply with the wishes of the Women's International Organizations that their support was solicited before any decision was taken by the Council. The interest aroused regarding the appointment of a woman member of the Mandates Commission by comparison with the actual work of the Commission suggests that once a woman was represented on the Commission, women's 'interests' would also be represented.

Women and the League's Social Committees

As mentioned above, women's collaboration was most often solicited by the League in connection with the activities of its social committees: the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children and the Child Welfare Committee. The women's networks proved adept at using any opportunity open to them to get gender-specific concerns on the agenda of these Committees. Their initiatives were not always well-received. Members states often had very different ideas about which areas could be treated through international action. Even where consensus was possible, there was a marked absence of political will on the part of governments to turn Assembly resolutions into national policy. In such cases, the Women's International Organizations played an important role as propagandists for the League's social work.

At the beginning of this century trafficking in women became an issue for international treaty-making, primarily because of problems raised by the export of prostitutes from Europe to brothels in the colonial empires. Two international agreements to suppress the traffic were concluded, the first in 1904 and the second in 1910. These agreements provided for the establishment of national machinery to coordinate and exchange information on trafficking in women. In addition, the participant states agreed to punish the traffickers (souteneurs) if the victim was under twenty years old, even if she had consented. The efforts of the League resulted in two additional international treaties. The International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children (1921) raised the age of

consent to 21 and provided new methods for the protection of women and child emigrants and for the supervision of employment agencies recruiting foreign women. In 1933, another convention was adopted making the procurement of a woman of any age a punishable offence, even if she had consented.⁸⁹

In his opening speech at the first meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children in 1922 the Secretary-General said that the Committee "contained a larger representation of women than any other Committee of the League since the question with which it dealt required the fullest co-operation of women".⁹⁰ Indeed, women had long been involved in moral reform work and this may have been one reason for the League's decision to allow assessors representing women's voluntary organizations to sit on these Committees. The close connection between the moral reform movement and the feminist movement has been well-documented.⁹¹ The work of the Advisory Committee was to a certain degree influenced by ideas of moral reform inherited from the 'social purity' campaigns of the nineteenth century and Bristow is correct to suggest that the League took over the work "with an emotive flourish that left nothing to the Victorian pioneers".⁹² The 'social purity' movement, represented on the Advisory Committee by the International Bureau for the Suppression of the White Slave Trade (IBSWT), emphasized the immoral destruction of innocent girls' virtue as unsuspecting victims of traffickers, on the one hand, and the waywardness of 'fallen women' and the need to uplift them, on the other.⁹³

⁸⁹Laura Reanda, "Prostitution as a Human Rights Question: Problems and Prospects of United Nations Action" in *Human Rights Quarterly*, 13 (1991), esp. pp. 207-209.

⁹⁰LoN, Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, Minutes of the First Session, 28 June 1922, C.445.M.265.1922.IV., p.4.

⁹¹Banks (1981), p.63ff.

⁹²Edward J. Bristow, *Vice and Vigilance Purity Movements in Britain since 1700*, (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1977), p.194.

⁹³See Minutes of the 25th Annual Meeting of the National Vigilance Association and the International Bureau published in *The Vigilance Record*, 10 (November 1921). See also Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (London: New York University Press, 1984), pp.30-37.

Yet the motivations that gave rise to women's activism concerning the traffic in women and children were complex. Bristow argues that "[t]he social-purity coalition of feminists and puritans began coming apart between the wars"⁹⁴ and this can be seen in the approach taken by the Women's International Organizations. Emphasis was placed on the need to 'protect' the sanctity of womanhood but at the same time there was a demand for laws which did not infringe upon the individual rights and liberties of women. Although the term 'human rights' was not used in this context, members of the Committee began to use language different than the purity campaigners to voice their objection to the traffic. They opposed the use of women "as commodities" and saw the traffic as "prejudicial to the dignity of women" as human beings.⁹⁵ As Ki-Tcheng observed in 1928, the general principle being upheld in the execution of the conventions on the traffic in women was the right of a woman to the inviolability of her person and the protection of her individual rights.⁹⁶ Perhaps one of the most elusive goals of the inter-war women's movement was the establishment of an "Equal Moral Standard".⁹⁷ Toward this end women's organizations urged the League to recommend to member states "that questions of public order and decency should be governed by general measures applicable to all, and that all exceptional enactments against prostitutes should be abrogated".⁹⁸ The demand for the end to double standards had emerged during the Victorian women's movement and was rooted in ideas about the need for men to adopt women's high moral standards. By the 1920s, women placed less emphasis on the question of women's

⁹⁴Bristow (1977), p.198.

⁹⁵LNA, "Proposals Attached to the letter of Chairman of the Special Body of Experts on Traffic in Women and Children Addressed to Mr. S.W. Harris, February 22nd 1927, 12/58966/647 R637.

⁹⁶Ti-Tcheng (1928), p.36.

⁹⁷This was a goal of several Women's International Organizations: the IWSA had a Standing Committee for 'Equal Moral Standards and against the Traffic in Women' and the ICW had its own Committee on 'Equal Moral Standards and the Suppression of Traffic in Women'.

⁹⁸See resolutions presented in the Report of the International Women's Associations for 1926, LoN, Comité de la Traite des Femmes et des Enfants [hereafter cited as C.T.F.E.]/327, 11 February 1927, p.9.

morality than on the need for equality before the law. In 1921, Mme. de Witt Schlumberger, one of the Vice Presidents of the IWSA and Assistant French delegate to the International Conference on Traffic in Women held by the League in 1921, set forth the position of the Women's International Organizations. She asserted that the organizations she represented desired that protection be accorded to women and to young girls so long as that protection doesn't become "a hidden form of slavery": "[w]hen the protection which is afforded affects the dignity or the freedom of the individual, the remedy is worse than the evil". The Women's International Organizations demanded "that in no country should any law or special regulation be either instituted or allowed to subsist which does not apply equally and legally to the male sex".⁹⁹ The women's organizations laid particular emphasis on the rights of women and did not separate the moral exploitation of women from the legal, political and economic situation of women. Long before the adoption of the 1933 Convention, they had urged that procurers for the traffic should be punished regardless of the age and moral character of the women involved thus taking the emphasis off the 'fallen women' and placing it on her exploiter.¹⁰⁰

While they were anxious to promote women's rights, the Women's International Organizations continued to identify prostitution as a vice, and in this sense, they focused on policing solutions rather than favouring a progressive, libertarian approach. Both the League and Women's International Organizations also proved reluctant to tackle complex moral and social issues surrounding birth control and sex education. It is interesting to note, however, that Crowdy supported the birth control

⁹⁹LoN, C.T.F.E./40, 3 July 1921. Another organization which insisted on equal moral codes for both sexes was the Union Internationale contre le Péril Vénérien established in Paris in 1923. It had no assessor on the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, though technical representatives from the League of Nations Health Organization attended its meetings, as did those from the ICW. I am grateful to Paul Weindling for giving me a copy of his article, "The Politics of International Co-ordination to Combat Sexually Transmitted Diseases, 1900-1980s", in V. Berridge and P. Strong (eds.), *AIDS and Contemporary History* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

¹⁰⁰See for example statement by SJSPA included in Annual Report 1929 of International Women's Associations, 14 February 1930, LoN, C.T.F.E./461, pp. 1-2 and 8-9.

movement, and that Crowdy's close friend, Dame Katharine Furse, assessor on the Child Welfare Committee, attempted unsuccessfully to raise the topic of biological education for discussion.¹⁰¹ Family planning and birth control remained forbidden topics at the League on the grounds that they roused national and religious feelings.

Women sometimes expressed uneasiness about the emphasis on the 'protection of women and children' in the League's social activities.¹⁰² During the period women found themselves in an awkward position: they could still be grouped with children as needing special treatment under the law, yet in many countries they possessed the right to vote and viewed themselves as equal partners with men. Grace Abbott, Chief of the U.S. Children's Bureau, told fellow members of the Child Welfare Committee that women and children had both suffered by the assumption that their interests could be served by the same measures.¹⁰³ Women members of the social committees often carried out a monitoring function to ensure that women's rights were not violated under the guise of protection.

Throughout the 1920s the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children recommended special measures for the material and moral protection of women and girls who took up employment contracts abroad. Although women's organizations were anxious for measures that would protect women and children from exploitation they opposed measures which discriminated unfairly against women. A proposal put forward by one member of the Committee that a certificate of good conduct and moral character be furnished by girls under age who were travelling alone brought protest from the Women's International Organizations. They objected to the fact that it applied only to girls and not minors of both sexes; moreover they

¹⁰¹LNA, R. Crowdy to M. Sanger, 20 October 1925, S157 "Outgoing Letters October 1925" and to Dame Katharine Furse, 19 January 1928, S158 "Outgoing Letters January 1928". See also LoN, C.P.E./63 on biological education and Confidential Circular 15, 1927 regarding the position to be adopted by the League on birth control.

¹⁰²See comments of R. Crowdy, LoN, Directors' Meeting 146, Erratum, 29 August 1925.

¹⁰³LoN, Comité de la Protection de l'Enfance [hereafter cited as C.P.E.]/9, (n.d.) 1925.

believed that the entire system would be difficult to put into operation and was open to corruption.¹⁰⁴ In 1924, in response to plans for legislation which would make it almost impossible for women to travel alone, Dr. Paulina Luisi (IAW), delegate for Uruguay, asked whether such a prohibition would not favour rather than suppress the traffic because in many cases a woman would be obliged to turn to a man to accompany her on her journey.¹⁰⁵ Later she introduced a resolution stating that "[i]t is suggested that the measures issued by Governments for the protection of women immigrants should not be such as to interfere with the personal freedom of women of full legal age".¹⁰⁶ In 1930 the women's organizations also rejected a proposal put forward by the Bureau for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic for an international convention providing that prostitutes should be forcibly repatriated - that is, deported. The organizations represented by Avril de Sainte Croix were opposed to all proposals for the deportation of prostitutes as such measures unfairly placed them in a special legal category.¹⁰⁷

Women also pressed the Committee to examine the factors giving rise to the traffic in women as a means to prevent it. After a lengthy discussion on the question in 1927, the Committee adopted a resolution introduced by Baroness de Montenach, Assessor for the International Catholic Association for the Protection of Girls, which made a connection between the low wages paid to women in certain branches of employment and the traffic in women.¹⁰⁸ The question came under the jurisdiction of the ILO and in 1928 Sainte Croix urged the organization to study the problem of low wages paid to women as well as another question she described as being of particular interest to the women's organizations she represented - the effects of wholesale dismissal of women from certain employment - as

¹⁰⁴LoN, C.T.F.E./195, March 1924, Report of the Work of the Principal Women's Associations, p.31.

¹⁰⁵LoN, C.T.F.E./Experts/P.V.2, 1 April 1924.

¹⁰⁶LoN, C.T.F.E./220, 10 April 1924.

¹⁰⁷LoN, C.T.F.E./502, 3 March 1931, Annual Report 1930, Women's International Associations, p.8.

¹⁰⁸LoN, C.T.F.E./351, 30 April 1927, p.8.

"it had been found that prostitution was at least as much due to these causes as it was to low wages".¹⁰⁹ The ILO representative on the Committee assured her that these questions would be discussed by the Labour Conference.¹¹⁰ This was an important development as it signalled a shift away from the moralistic approach of the 'purity campaigners' toward a recognition of the need to improve the economic situation of women. The League gradually shifted from an emphasis on policing solutions to the traffic in women to a social welfare approach. In later years the Social Section examined the influence on prostitution of factors such as education, illegitimacy, employment and living conditions. It also dealt with matters of an increasingly expert character: the rehabilitation of prostitutes, the social aspects of venereal disease and the training of social workers.

Women delegates to the Assembly also made connections between the traffic in women and the status of women in general, and thereby re-enforced the demand for a broader social welfare approach to the problem of prostitution. At a meeting of the Fifth Committee during the Assembly in 1928, Tilma Hainari (ICW), delegate of Finland, observed that investigators who had studied the causes of the traffic had come to the conclusion that there was a close connection between the status of women and the traffic. To Hainari this meant that:

If the economic conditions of women were difficult and their status low, nothing could prevent the traffic. Facts proved that the victims of the traffic were largely drawn from those countries in which the status of women was low. If, therefore, the countries really desired to put an end to the traffic, they must afford their women better economic opportunities and raise their status in general.¹¹¹

Swanwick on the same occasion stated that governments not willing to accede to the Convention of 1921 "were holding up the movement for raising the

¹⁰⁹LoN, Minutes of the Seventh Session of the Traffic in Women and Children Committee, First Meeting, 19 March 1928, IV.Social.1928.IV.15., p.8.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹LoN, Records of the Tenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the Fifth Committee, Third Meeting, 12 September 1929, OJSS No.80, p.18.

position of women throughout the world" and urged them to sign and ratify the Convention and to implement their ratification by appropriate legislation. While Hainari emphasized that the low status of women was a contributing factor to the traffic and Swanwick, on the other hand, saw the traffic as a cause of women's low status, both delegates helped to place the status of women at the centre of the debate thus diverting it from possible preoccupation with the morality of prostitutes.

From the early 1920s the Women's International Organizations also urged the League to push for the abolition of the state regulation of vice and to condemn proposals for dealing with venereal disease which would have the effect of reintroducing regulation in countries where it had been abolished. A letter to this effect sent in 1920 by the NUSEC to the Secretary-General met with the response that "it would appear quite impossible for the League of Nations to concern itself with these questions at all" given that they were national rather than international concerns.¹¹² Nonetheless, similar appeals continued to come in from other women's organizations, including the IWSA and the AMSH.¹¹³ Another 'national' question that the traffic in women and children raised concerned the ages of marriage and consent, as it was believed that low ages contributed to the traffic. Again, although these questions were primarily of 'national' jurisdiction this did not prevent women's organizations from lobbying the League to recommend legislative reforms. This is especially true with regard to the state regulation of prostitution. Crowdy often advised the women's organizations to support half-way measures in order to achieve long-term goals in this controversial area.

One such case concerned the Sokal Resolution approved by the Assembly in 1922, which read that "pending the abolition of the system...no foreign woman should be employed in or carry on her profession as a prostitute in

¹¹²LNA, N. Stack to E. Drummond, 19 March 1920 and R. Crowdy, memo to Captain Walters, 1 April 1920, 12/3628/x R636.

¹¹³See LoN, C.T.F.E./4, 9 May 1921; LNA, C.J. Tarring, H. Wilson and A. Neilans to E. Drummond, 14 September 1920, 12/7171/647 R636 ;LoN, C.T.F.E./170, 10 July 1923.

any licensed brothel".¹¹⁴ Although supported at the Assembly by the women delegates - Forchhammer (ICW), for instance, advised that "it would be accepted with great satisfaction by Women's Organisations all over the world" - it provoked a strong backlash from many women's organizations.¹¹⁵ In her report to the Advisory Committee in March 1923, Sainte Croix announced that the organizations she represented had all pronounced against the resolution:

the leading Women's Associations demand that, instead of establishing measures which would tend to protect national prostitution against foreign prostitution on the pretext of limiting the effects of this traffic, the recognised brothel should be abolished.¹¹⁶

In May 1923 Dame Rachel attended a Congress of the IWSA where many of these organizations were represented. Discovering that a resolution had been prepared practically stating that the women of the world would not assist the League in any methods to regulate a system which should be abolished, Dame Rachel set to work. She met with many of the delegates and explained that any such resolution "would do the Advisory Committee a great deal of harm and render the work of the Committee nugatory". As the Committee was "the only international body attempting to deal with the question of the procuration of women and children, and to some extent with the abolition of the system of State Regulation" she believed it warranted women's full support.¹¹⁷ Crowdy was able to report to the Secretariat that "the Conference had ended by expressing approval of what had been done by the Assembly and the Council in this matter".¹¹⁸

The Secretariat was anxious for the Women's International Organizations to support the Committee's work and, at the same time, to put pressure on national governments for further action. Although other

¹¹⁴LoN, AV/P.V.10. Provisional minutes of the Fifth Committee, Third Assembly, p.4.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p.6.

¹¹⁶LoN, C.T.F.E./140, Report by Avril de Sainte Croix, Delegate of the Principal International Women's Associations, 22 March 1923, p.4.

¹¹⁷LNA, "Report on the 9th Congress of the IWSA" by Rachel Crowdy, p.4, 13/27029x/27029 R1013.

¹¹⁸LoN, Directors' Meeting, 23 May 1923, pp.2-3.

organizations represented on the Advisory Committee may have played an important part in defining policy,¹¹⁹ the propaganda work of the Women's International Organizations was vital given that government's of member states were often indifferent to the Committee's activities. According to Crowdy there were certain governments on the Committee "with particular interests of not too reputable a nature" which tended to inhibit its work.¹²⁰ In her opinion even government delegates to the Committee were often either hostile to or only luke-warm about its activities. In 1924 she wrote to S.W. Harris (British Home Office), Chairman of the Committee, saying:

Speaking quite confidentially, it always appears that, with the exception of yourself and the Assessors, no Member of the Committee has any wish for progress. The Committee meets and passes Resolutions about which the Government representatives individually apparently feel no responsibility with regard to urging their Governments to comply with the request contained in the Resolutions.¹²¹

Crowdy was particularly irritated that several of the countries which had members on the Committee, France for example, had not signed or ratified the Convention of 1921 negotiated through the League of Nations. Many countries did not even bother to send annual reports as requested by the Assembly.

Thus it is significant that in the mid-1920s the Women's International Organizations decided they could most effectively aid the campaign against the traffic in women and children by using "their influence with their Governments to obtain more complete and effective adherence to the decisions taken by the Advisory Committee of the League

¹¹⁹Other women's or mixed-sex organizations which were devoted specifically to practical work concerning the traffic, such as the International Bureau for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women and the Federation of National Unions for the Protection of Girls, each had an assessor on the Permanent Advisory Committee.

¹²⁰See R. Crowdy to Mr. Tufton, Foreign Office, 7 June 1923, LNA S156 "Outgoing letters June 1923".

¹²¹LNA, R. Crowdy to S.W. Harris, 31 January 1924, S156 "Outgoing letters January 1924".

of Nations".¹²² The Women's International Organizations requested their national affiliates to prevail upon their governments to sign and ratify the Convention of 1921, to insist that the authorities send annual reports to the Advisory Committee and in those countries where prostitution was still subject to regulation, "to obtain the abolition of a system favourable to the traffic and countenancing the principle that the responsibility of men is different from that of women, both as regards the law and public morals".¹²³ Each year the Assessor for the Women's International Organizations summarized the results of this campaign in her report to the Advisory Committee, noting in 1926 for example, that France had adhered to the Convention.¹²⁴ The work in France was particularly important given that the regulation of prostitution had not yet been abolished and France was very much opposed to the League's interference in this matter.¹²⁵ The French women's organizations actively pursued the campaign against licensed brothels by approaching the local authorities in connection with regulations which did not seem to accord with the spirit of reforms in this area promised by the French Government in the late 1920s.¹²⁶ In 1929 Sainte Croix was able to report that the women's organizations were now receiving collaboration from the authorities in their reform efforts.¹²⁷ Her reports highlighted similar efforts in other countries.

Women's organizations also engaged in propaganda work for the Committee through the organization of public meetings as well as through

¹²²LoN, C.T.F.E./234, Report on the International Women's Associations, 21 April 1925, p.1.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴LoN, C.T.F.E./289, Report for 1925 of the Women's International Associations, 5 March 1926.

¹²⁵See comments by R. Crowdy to G. Abbott, 1 May 1923, LNA S156 "Outgoing Letters May 1923".

¹²⁶LoN, C.T.F.E./461, Annual Report of the International Women's Associations for 1929, p.5.

¹²⁷LoN, Report of International Women's Associations for 1928, 22 April 1929, C.294.M.97.1929.IV., p.23.

articles in their pamphlets and journals.¹²⁸ Yet achievements in the area of moral reform proved difficult in part because of governments' ambivalence about possible gains to be made through legislative efforts.¹²⁹ Throughout the period women's organizations helped to keep the traffic in women and children on the political agenda. The Advisory Committee recognized the importance of women's activities "in regard to the formation of public opinion". The Chairman declared in 1928 that "[s]uch work could not be over-estimated, for, by enlightening public opinion, the resolutions and recommendations of the Committee were rendered more effective". He believed that "[t]he greater support given by women of all countries to the work of the Committee, the more sure would be its success".¹³⁰

One of the most significant achievements of the Advisory Committee was Report on the Inquiry into the Traffic in Women and Children (1927) which presented the results of several years' research by agents employed by the League working undercover in various European and South American countries.¹³¹ In 1923 Grace Abbott suggested that an investigation be undertaken with the aim of getting a factual basis upon which to make recommendations on the traffic in women and children. Up until this point the Committee had little idea about the extent of the traffic. The report drew conclusive links between the traffic and the regulation of prostitution. The British Government appeared reluctant to have such a controversial report published by the League and it was, in part, through the pressure of women's organizations that the Government eventually agreed

¹²⁸Examples include Alison Neilans, "League of Nations Traffic in Women Report", *Women's Leader*, 19, 27 January 1928 and B.B. "The Social Section of the League at Work", *Time and Tide*, 13 June 1924. See also Boy (1936), pp.135-153.

¹²⁹For problems faced by British feminists in the area of moral reform see Alberti (1989), pp.116-120.

¹³⁰LoN, Minutes of the Seventh Session of the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, Third Meeting, 13 March 1928, C.184.M.59.1928.IV., p.16.

¹³¹See LoN, Advisory Commission for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People, Traffic in Women and Children Committee, Report of Special Body of Experts, Part I (C.52.M52.1927.IV.) and Part II (C.52(2).M.52(1).1927.IV.).

to publication.¹³² The investigation was later extended to the Far East and offered further evidence that licensed houses provided a source and a market for the traffic. By the early 1930s the League was openly pressing for the abolition of state regulation and the League drafted a treaty to abolish licensed brothels and the registration of prostitutes that would have been concluded in 1940 had not the war broken out. Thus, the women's organizations which had been criticized in the early 1920s for their inability to distinguish between the proper spheres of national and international action were rewarded their perseverance. While it cannot be said that the treatment of such issues was solely the responsibility of women's networks, through their lobby efforts they played a significant role in pushing the League beyond its original mandate.

In the mid-1920s the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children was divided into two separate committees, one dealing mainly with the prevention of the traffic in women and the other with all the international aspects of child welfare. Many of the international women's organizations were interested in questions concerning child welfare and had pressed for the League's involvement in this field. An informal conference on the "International Aspects of Child Welfare Work" had taken place in Vienna in 1921 with representatives from the WILPF, the ICW, The International Union of the "Save the Children Fund" and various national branches of the Society of Friends' Relief Mission. Led by Dr. Hilda Clark, participants urged that an international standard of child welfare should be developed.¹³³ Both the ICW and the Save the Children Fund drafted Children's Charters in the early 1920s. That of the Save of Children Fund, "The Declaration of Geneva", was formally endorsed by the ICW in 1923 and adopted by the League Assembly in 1924 whereupon member

¹³²See memo by Mr. Bentinck (Foreign Office) about the need to respond to agitation of women's organizations for the publication of the report, 18 February 1927, PRO FO/371/12682 W1842/570/98. See also R. Crowdy to K.D. Courtney, 17 February 1927, LNA S158 "Outgoing Letters February 1927".

¹³³Copy of speech of Jane Addams sent to R. Crowdy by Dr. H. Clark, 18 July 1921, p. 6, LNA S152 "Conference on the International Aspects of Child Welfare Work".

states of the League were invited to follow its principles in their child welfare work. The Declaration represented an early attempt to outline the rights of the child to normal development materially and spiritually. No substantive obligations were attached to its acceptance.¹³⁴

The work of the Child Welfare Committee got off to a poor start when the British Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain bluntly stated to the Council in 1926 that "child welfare is not primarily a matter for international action and...the purposes which the League can serve in this direction are limited".¹³⁵ The Committee also exposed rifts between government representatives and social workers. It brought to the surface tensions between a judicial approach to social problems and a broader social welfare approach. From the beginning Crowdy was anxious that the Committee would address the social welfare of "the normal child" as well as the problems of delinquent or illegitimate children.¹³⁶ At the time the Committee was being formed she attempted to introduce the American social welfare approach by offering Grace Abbott of the U.S. Children's Bureau the opportunity to crystallize plans "into pretty well any shape" she chose.¹³⁷

Social work in America during the twenties was characterized by legacies from the Progressive Era. Detailed social research following scientific principles began to serve as a basis for defining broad social welfare policy. A growing number of schools offered training in social research methods and social policy. Grace Abbott and Julia Lathrop, both delegates to the League's advisory committees on social questions, were connected with this movement: Lathrop was the former Vice-President of the Chicago School of Civics which in 1920 became the Graduate School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. As Chief of the

¹³⁴ICW (1966), pp.50-51. Copies of both Charters in LNA 12/18633x/13720 R648.

¹³⁵LoN, Minutes of the Fortieth Session of the Council, Second Meeting, 9 June 1926, OJ 7th Year, No.7, July 1926, p.865.

¹³⁶LNA, R. Crowdy to A. Henry, 13 August 1925, S157 "Outgoing Letters August 1925".

¹³⁷LNA, R. Crowdy to G. Abbott, 16 January 1925, S157 "Outgoing Letters January 1925".

Children's Bureau, Lathrop regularly recruited students from the school. When Grace Abbott took over at the Children's Bureau she continued this practice. Abbott's sister, Edith, was a professor at the School. One of the goals pursued by Edith Abbott and her colleague Sophonisba Breckinridge, was the "collection of a body of authoritative data upon which programs for social reform and recommendations for social legislation may be based".¹³⁸ They rejected short-term ameliorative policies in favour of broad social change. Crowdy attempted to introduce a similar approach in the Social Section but neither she nor her staff members had formal training in social work. Indeed, the Social Section was sometimes criticized for its inability to turn the data it received into meaningful reports.¹³⁹

While Abbott and Lathrop were able to have some influence on the activities of both the League's committees on social questions, they appear to have placed a greater priority on their work in America and Crowdy found it difficult to persuade them to attend the annual sessions of the Committees. Until the major re-organization of the League's social activities began in the mid-1930s in response to the Depression, there was no real policy guiding the work of the Child Welfare Committee. As a result, through their assessors on the Committee women's organizations were able to have a variety of topics placed on the agenda. By 1930, Home Office official, S.W. Harris warned the British Foreign Office of the tendency of women's organizations to regard the Committee "as a useful vehicle for bringing up questions of special interest to women but not

¹³⁸Robyn L. Muncy, "Gender and Professionalization in the Origins of the U.S. Welfare State: The Careers of Sophonisba Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, 1890-1930", unpublished conference paper, 1989, p.14. See also Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Wendy Sarvasy, "Women Shaping the Welfare State: A Reconstruction of the Post-Suffrage Discourse", unpublished conference paper, 1989; Walton, Ronald G, *Women in Social Work* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975); and Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920", *The American Historical Review*, 95, 4 (October 1990), pp.1076-1108.

¹³⁹PRO FO/371/14945, S.W. Harris to Mr. Cadogan, 7 May 1930, W5575/9/98.

directly connected with Child Welfare".¹⁴⁰ He was correct to suggest that the Committee's failure to limit the topics on its agenda meant that many areas received only cursory treatment.

As the Assessor on the Child Welfare Committee, Eleanor Rathbone pushed the system of family allowances, so much so that Crowdy connected the tendency of the Committee to cover too much ground and to deal with questions in too superficial a manner with "the fact that so many of the Assessors and some of the Members are interested only in one aspect of child welfare and look on it almost as a personal affront if that aspect is in any way side-tracked". She cited Rathbone with her family allowances as an example of this tendency.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, partly through pressure from the Child Welfare Committee several reports were drawn up by the ILO concerning the connection between family allowances and the birth rate, the child mortality rate and the physical and moral well-being of children.¹⁴² One conclusion of the ILO's 1926 report on family allowances was that "the funds make it possible for mothers of working class families to take their proper place in the home".¹⁴³ The Child Welfare Committee and its women members tended to place the needs of the family at the centre of their concerns and women were primarily viewed in their role as mothers.¹⁴⁴ This is reflected in the subjects raised by delegates during the 1920s: treatment of unmarried mothers, protection of illegitimate children, and maintenance payments. The ICW was particularly anxious to have an international convention drafted on the question of "desertion of the family".¹⁴⁵ In 1928 Crowdy urged that the ICW help to prepare public

¹⁴⁰PRO FO/371/14945, Confidential letter from Mr. Harris (Home Office) to Mr. Cadogan (Foreign Office), 7 May 1930, W5575/9/98.

¹⁴¹LNA, R. Crowdy to Dr. Hein, 10 October 1928, S158 "Outgoing letters October 1928".

¹⁴²See LoN, C.P.E./150 (1928.IV.10.) and LoN, C.P.E./38, 4 March 1926.

¹⁴³LoN, C.P.E./38, 4 March 1926, p.28.

¹⁴⁴See Cott (1987) pp. 206-207, for outline of the similar influence of Julia Lathrop, director of the U.S. Children's Bureau in the early 1920s, on developments in the United States. Miss Lathrop was of the opinion that mothers' wage-earning was detrimental to their children.

¹⁴⁵Resolutions adopted by the Executive Committee of the ICW, June 1927, No. 24 in LNA 13/56903x/43088 R1022.

opinion in its favour. In what was clearly an appeal to the organization's brand of feminism, Dame Rachel pointed out that such a convention "does not only interest the child but in many cases the mother too" since the whole burden of the maintenance of the child was left to her upon the desertion of the father.¹⁴⁶

Another subject addressed by the Committee during the period was the age of consent and marriage. The topic was frequently raised in the joint meetings of the two branches of the Advisory Committee mainly through the intervention of women members, such as Luisi, Sainte Croix and Rathbone. The Women's International Organizations were anxious that member states of the League be made aware of the expediency of fixing the ages sufficiently high as to enable young girls to assume responsibility for their actions.¹⁴⁷ Rathbone suggested that an international convention be drafted dealing with the age of marriage and consent.¹⁴⁸ During the preparation of this draft convention an early version stipulated different ages for boys and girls to which Rachel Crowdy reacted:

I am very averse to making a distinction of age between the boy and the girl. There will, I know, be strong opposition to this from the International Women's Organisations and it will undoubtedly be opposed by the women members of the Advisory Committee.¹⁴⁹

It was not until 1962 that the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriage was adopted by the United Nations, but the publicity given to the question by the League was believed to have encouraged several countries to raise the age-limits. In May 1929, Dame Rachel wrote to S.W. Harris, Chairman of the Advisory Committee, saying "[m]ay I indeed congratulate you, the Advisory Committee, (and incidentally slightly myself,) on the Age of Marriage Bill having passed

¹⁴⁶LNA, R. Crowdy to E. Zimmern, 30 August 1928, S158 "Outgoing letters August 1928".

¹⁴⁷LoN, C.T.F.E./356 and C.P.E./103, 30 April 1927.

¹⁴⁸LoN, C.T.F.E./C.P.E. Mixed/P.V.1, p.8.

¹⁴⁹LNA, R. Crowdy to S.W. Harris, 19 July 1928, S158 "Outgoing letters July 1928".

the House of Commons in all its stages without debate".¹⁵⁰ Although women's organizations in many countries had long been pressing for reform in laws regarding the ages of marriage and consent, delegates to the 1928 Conference of the IAWSEC had also observed that the raising of the age of marriage and consent in various nations was largely due to the publicity that had been given to the question by the League of Nations even though it had not produced an international convention on the subject.¹⁵¹

It was only in response to the Depression that, influenced by the unprecedented domestic measures to ameliorate hunger, poor living conditions and a host of other social ills in the U.S. and elsewhere, the League's social programs were recast in terms of social welfare.¹⁵² One illustration of the development of a social welfare ethic is found in the changed attitude of the British government with regard to child welfare. Whereas Chamberlain had observed in 1926 that child welfare was not a subject for international consideration, in 1935 the British Government urged that the Child Welfare Committee's activities should be expanded.¹⁵³ In conjunction with the ILO and the Health Organization, the Child Welfare Committee began to consider broader questions of family welfare like housing and nutrition.¹⁵⁴ In response to demands for integrative family welfare programs, a new Advisory Committee on Social Questions replaced the Traffic in Women and Child Welfare Committees in 1937. One casualty of the heightened salience of social questions at the League was the category assessor. The Committee on Social Questions was composed only of government representatives. While many women were appointed as government delegates, the loss of the category assessor made it more difficult for

¹⁵⁰LNA, R. Crowdy to S.W. Harris, 13 May 1929, S159 "Outgoing Letters May 1929".

¹⁵¹LNA, Report on the Conference by R. Crowdy and G. Radziwill, 30 July 1928, 5A/7200/6500 R2181.

¹⁵²See discussion of these developments in Dubin (1983).

¹⁵³LoN, C.C.F.C.2, Reply from the Government of the United Kingdom to Circular Letter 170.1934, quoted in Dubin (1983), p.49.

¹⁵⁴Dubin (1983), pp.48-49.

women's organizations to participate directly in the League's social activities. The development reflects the shift from voluntarism to government intervention with regard to social welfare that took place during the first half of this century. Ironically, the women's organizations which had urged the expansion of the League's social activities were eased out precisely when such a policy was adopted. Yet with the professionalization of social work there were now women "experts" to replace assessors.

A comprehensive study of the social activities of the League of Nations remains to be written. This account of developments in the 1920s illustrates the extent to which the women's networks were able to have their concerns taken up by the League, among them the conditions which drew women into prostitution, the ages of consent and marriage and family allowances. Sometimes they were told that these issues were not international questions. They persevered in their efforts and, in many cases, were rewarded by the League's eventual treatment of these subjects. Yet in the absence of broad international consensus on most of the issues dealt with by the League's social committees in the 1920s there was only limited progress with regard to the adoption of international treaties and the implementation of social programs. Still, the League's advisory committees played an important role as centres for exchange of information and for research and consultation into the nature and extent of certain social problems.¹⁵⁵ They also provided a forum for the formulation of acceptable standards, and through the Assembly, a means to encourage the application of these standards. The women's organizations and their allies on League committees contributed to these developments both by pressing the League to consider subjects of interest to them and by lobbying governments to support the League's social activities. The functions they fulfilled are exactly those which Pickard attributes to non-governmental organizations. One of these "is to take the initiative with ideas and

¹⁵⁵Elsa Castendyck, "Social Problems" in *Pioneers in World Order: An American Appraisal of the League of Nations* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1944), p.239.

projects which governments are not yet ready to make their own".¹⁵⁶ Another is the provision of public support. Indeed, the fact that the Women's International Organizations claimed to represent tens of millions of women throughout the world ensured that their support would be courted by the League.

The assessment of women's international work in the 1920s must consider the impact of the popular notion that women had a special contribution to make with regard to the League's social and humanitarian work. L.P. Mair observed that "[t]he League dresses its salad of humanitarian activities with the oil of feminine tenderness and the vinegar of official discipline". He defined women's role at the League as that of "modify[ing] the common standards of values". Women attached little importance to "precedent and authority"; as a result, they remained "totally unimpressed" when told that international action in a certain area was impossible "because it has always been reserved to national sovereignty". According to Mair, what guided women's work at the League, and "len[t] them influence out of proportion to their small numbers" was their commitment to improving human welfare.¹⁵⁷

Statements about gender-specific characteristics and values are always problematic. Yet it is difficult to understand women's influence at the League without acknowledging the power of these ideas. Women's participation in League affairs in the 1920s was less a reflection of equality of opportunity established by Article 7 of the Covenant than a tribute to the "doctrine of difference". There was a general consensus that women had a special role to play in League activities, particularly in the social and humanitarian field. This provided an opening for the Women's International Organizations to establish themselves as new players in the international arena, and to get women into official positions within the League system.

¹⁵⁶Pickard (1956), p.80.

¹⁵⁷L.P. Mair, *Human Welfare and the League*, 8th ed., (London: League of Nations Union, 1934), pp.91-92.

Women's presence in official posts had two outcomes. First, making the most of the idea that women could make a special contribution in the social and humanitarian field, women drew the League's attention to matters not originally foreseen as lying within its authority: among them the plight of women refugees, the conditions of women in mandated territories, and the regulation of prostitution. They were not completely indiscriminate about the projects they supported, however, as the case of the International Relief Union demonstrates. They demonstrated a certain degree of political acumen by constantly reminding the League that the women's support for the League would be enhanced by concrete achievements in its social and humanitarian work. Second, they fostered an awareness of women as a group with specific needs that deserved attention from the international community. The emphasis on improving the conditions of women as wives, workers and mothers in relatively privileged communities or in less fortunate situations as refugees and inhabitants of mandated territories, embodied social feminist goals. Apart from objections raised about discriminatory legislation with regard to prostitution, social feminist ideas predominated at the international level throughout the 1920s. While their initiatives were sometimes resisted, social feminist organizations eventually found support for their goals at the League.

CHAPTER 6

THE 1930S: "GENEVA - THE KEY TO EQUALITY"¹

During the 1920s the status of women was raised at the League in connection with discussions on family allowances, the traffic in women and the treatment of women refugees and inhabitants in mandated territories. Yet there was no real undertaking by the League to advance the status of women. By the 1930s the Depression and the rise of reactionary ideologies threatened economic and political rights won by women. Feminists began to call for the League to take more decisive action with regard to the status of women. The League could not afford to ignore such trends or risk alienating women's organizations.

One obstacle to concrete action by the League, however, was the reluctance of member states to discuss issues viewed as essentially subject to domestic jurisdiction. The status of women was thus construed by the majority of states as well as by many senior League officials. Inter-war developments whereby international law came to be concerned with the rights of individuals (and not only of states) had not extended to include human rights in general.² International obligations to protect the rights of minorities, including their equality before the law in regard to civil and political rights had been placed under the guarantee of the League.³ The Mandates Commission and League sponsored conventions on slavery and the traffic in women were based also on the principle that there were fundamental individual rights which should be protected through international law. Throughout the 1930s feminists campaigned for similar international legal efforts to guarantee women's rights.

¹Title of an article by Vera Brittain, reprinted from *Time and Tide*, issued by The Six Point Group, London, (n.d.).

²See Starke (1965), Chapter 10, "The Contribution of the League of Nations to the Evolution of International Law"; Patricia Ireland, "International Advancement and Protection of the Human Rights of Women", *Lawyer of the Americas*, 10, 1 (Spring 1978), pp.87-98; A. H. Robertson, *Human Rights in the World* (University of Manchester Press, 1972), especially Introduction.

³See P. de Azcàrate, *The League of Nations and National Minorities* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1945); L.P. Mair, *The Protection of Minorities: the Working and the Scope of the Minorities Treaties under the League of Nations* (London: Christophers Press, 1928).

Apart from the general agreement that international action was necessary there was little consensus among women's groups over what League initiatives would prove most effective for advancing the status of women. Against the advice of senior Secretariat officials, equal rights feminists demanded a comprehensive convention that would prohibit all discrimination against women. They believed that any differences existing between the sexes should not be the basis for differential treatment in the form of protective legislation; laws intended 'to protect' women, they argued, actually restricted women's freedoms and placed them in a disadvantaged position. In contrast, social feminists preferred protective and corrective treaties addressing specific problems encountered by women.⁴ They maintained that women's position in society could be improved only if treaties and provisions addressed their special needs as workers, wives and mothers in addition to the rights they were entitled to share with men. Compromise between equal rights and social feminists proved impossible. The consequence was a bitter struggle for control in Geneva.

The History of the Equal Rights Treaty

International relations scholar, Sir Alfred Zimmern, unwittingly provided the inspiration for the major goal of equal rights feminists during the 1930s - an equal rights convention. According to Lady Rhondda (SPG), in an address to the IFUW Congress in July 1926 Zimmern stated that it would be "a long time before the League would be prepared to go so far as to frame an International Convention prohibiting the placing of legal

⁴The terms non-discriminatory and protective legislation are self-explanatory. The aim of 'corrective' legislation is to alter and improve specific treatment women are receiving, often removing a previous bar to activity or righting a specific wrong, such as trafficking in women. See Natalie Kaufman Hevener, *International Law and the Status of Women* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983) and "An Analysis of Gender Based Treaty Law: Contemporary Developments in Historical Perspective", *Human Rights Quarterly*, 8, 1 (February 1986), pp.70-88. See also Noreen Burrows, "International Law and Human Rights: the Case of Women's Rights" in Tom Campbell et al., *Human Rights: From Rhetoric to Reality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

disabilities on women's work".⁵ The possibility of an international convention to secure equality for women had not previously been considered by feminists. After hearing Zimmern's speech Rhondda was convinced that "most valuable propaganda" could be done in the course of demanding an equality convention. A member of the International Advisory Committee of the NWP⁶, she wrote directly to its Chairman, Alice Paul, about the plan. Vera Brittain claimed that the notion of tackling feminist problems through some kind of international machinery was first discussed by leaders of the SPG and the NWP at the IWSA Congress the previous month, but this seems unlikely. On another occasion Helen Archdale (ERI) stated that it was after Zimmern's speech to the IFUW in July that the proposal was first considered.⁷

The idea of an international convention to achieve equality for women in one fell swoop could not fail to appeal to the imagination that had conceived the ERA. Following the model of the ERA, Paul drafted the Equal Rights Treaty. It had only one effective clause: "The contracting States agree that upon the ratification of this Treaty, men and women shall have Equal Rights throughout the territory subject to their respective jurisdictions". For the next decade Paul spent most of her time outside the U.S. attempting to sell the Treaty to feminists, the Pan-American Union, the League of Nations and the ILO. Pardo suggests that the NWP's support for an equality convention was a conscious manoeuvre to help persuade the American Congress to pass the ERA.⁸ It was believed that if other countries signed such a convention the U.S., for reasons of international prestige, would be bound to follow - if not by signing the Equal Rights Treaty at least by passing the ERA to signal their support for the

⁵ERI Papers, Lady Rhondda to A. Paul, 31 August 1926, "Foundation of ERI"/311.

⁶For the history of this Committee see Crystal Eastman, "International Co-operation", *Equal Rights*, 9 May 1925, reproduced in Cook (1978), pp.165-169.

⁷In Geneva - *The Key to Equality*, p.7, See Memo "For translation into French and German" by H.A. Archdale, 5 May 1932, ERI Papers, "Business and Professional Women (Heneker)"/333.

⁸Pardo (1978), p.24.

principle of equality.

Indeed, by the late 1920s equal rights feminists in both the U.S. and Britain had reached a sort of impasse. In the years immediately following the war many legal inequalities had been overcome. Yet discrimination still existed in civil and labor law. In certain areas, social feminists were promoting further legal inequalities through protective legislation for women. To counter the incremental and in their view, even regressive pattern of change at the national level, equal rights feminists turned to Geneva as "The Key to Equality". As Vera Brittain put it, "the time has now come to move from the national to the international sphere, and to endeavour to obtain by international agreement what national legislation has failed to accomplish".⁹ Members of the Six Point Group and the National Woman's Party formed the ODI and the ERI to co-ordinate the international equal rights campaign. The major benefactor of the NWP, Alva Belmont, gave \$5,000 to help launch the ERI.¹⁰ The international activities of the NWP assumed an even greater importance after 1933 when the Roosevelts moved into the White House. Eleanor Roosevelt had close contacts with leading American social feminists and the NWP found it increasingly difficult to have any influence in Washington. One example often cited by historians of the NWP was the State Department's "plan of action" - pushed with the aid of the Roosevelts by key women civil servants opposed to the ERA - to remove Doris Stevens as Chairman of the IACW in favour of a social feminist, Mary Winslow.¹¹

Yet there were other reasons for the shift of both American and European feminists to the treaty method for securing equal rights. At one level they were merely reacting to forces already at work. Several of the ILO's Conventions placed restrictions on women's right to work, namely, the Night Work Convention (1919), the Childbirth Convention (1919) and the Lead Paint Convention (1921). An equality treaty was considered by equal rights

⁹Vera Brittain, *A Memorandum showing the connection between the Status of Women and the Relations between Countries* (London: Six Point Group, n.d.), p.3.

¹⁰Pfeffer (1985), p.464.

¹¹Becker (1981), p.79 and Pfeffer (1985), pp.466-467.

feminists as the most effective method to have such conventions amended or replaced and the principle of equality established in international law. Furthermore, if states approved the principle of equal rights through an international treaty, they would find it difficult to justify discriminatory national laws. Brittain described the Equal Rights Treaty as the "simplest, the most dignified and the most permanent method of...conferring upon one-half of humanity the benefits of justice already enjoyed by the other".¹²

In one of a series of pamphlets on the Equal Rights Treaty issued by the Six Point Group, Brittain asked, "Is the Status of Women an International Question?"¹³ Linking the cause of equality for women with the ideals of the peace movement, she claimed that discrimination against women precluded justice and hence the possibility of peace, which could only be based on the establishment of justice and the protection of human rights. On a practical level she pointed out ways in which the relations between countries were adversely affected by the inequality of the sexes as well as by the unequal treatment of women from country to country such as unfair competition from the exploitation of women's labor or the international traffic in women.¹⁴

Yet the argument most frequently put forward by feminists in support of the Equal Rights Treaty appealed to the idea of an international sisterhood. Becker convincingly argues that the underlying ideology of the NWP was one of sisterhood; members emphasized the common problems shared by women throughout the world. Furthermore, like many other inter-war feminists, they believed that there was an inter-relationship in the status of women in all countries.¹⁵ British feminists' efforts to improve the conditions of Indian women or native women in the colonies have been seen

¹²Brittain, *A Memorandum showing the connection between the Status of Women and the Relations between Countries*, p.8.

¹³Ibid., p.3.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 6-8.

¹⁵Becker (1981), pp.161-163.

as a form of paternalism or imperialism.¹⁶ But the idea of international action toward establishing the equality of the sexes emerged from a different kind of thinking. It was not only the result of Western women, cognizant of their own emancipation, wishing to help their less fortunate sisters (though of course this motivation was present); also important was the belief that the subjugation of women in some countries had negative effects on women in all countries. Dr. Ethel Osborne, substitute-delegate for Australia in 1932, argued before the Assembly that though there was no doubt as to the equality of the sexes in her country, it was necessary to help the less forward nations because "[t]he strength of a chain was that of its weakest link".¹⁷ In a similar vein, a resolution passed at the Annual Conference of the British National Union of Women Teachers (NUWT), an affiliate of the ERI, stated "that those countries more advanced in admitting women to equal citizenship with men are hindered in the giving of complete equality by the low position of women in more backward countries". The Union believed that this problem could best be resolved through an international agreement affirming the principle of equality of rights between men and women.¹⁸

During the late 1920s and early 1930s the campaign for the League's adoption of the Equal Rights Treaty was led by members of the Six Point Group.¹⁹ The SPG, however, did not imagine that "the adoption or recommendation of the Equal Rights Treaty by the League of Nations will at once create equality of rights":

Article 7 of the Covenant of the League of Nations has not created the equality it proclaims. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of Great Britain has not removed disqualification. Other countries have equality in greater and less degree, written into their Constitution, their codes, but still true

¹⁶See Ramusack (1990) and Haggis (1990).

¹⁷LoN, Records of the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the First Committee, Fifth meeting, 6 October 1932, OJSS No.105, p.36.

¹⁸LNA, resolution sent to the Secretary-General by E.E. Froud, 10 March 1931, 11A/13219/13219 R3019.

¹⁹See speech by Stevens at banquet held by the International Union of Societies for the League of Nations, Geneva, 17 September 1928. Text found in ERI Papers, "To be filed General"/330.

equality lingers.²⁰

In this statement the Group acknowledged the limitations of the Treaty and other legislative reforms in a way the NWP was reluctant to do. Still, it urged the League's adoption of the Treaty on the grounds that "[a]n adherence to principle cannot but be followed by its expression in practice". The SPG appeared to see the Equal Rights Treaty as an effective instrument of propaganda toward the ultimate goal of equality. The NWP saw the Treaty as an end in itself. The degree of commitment to the Treaty was often an individual matter with the result that members of the same organizations sometimes worked at cross-purposes. Aware of the intensity of feeling provoked by the Treaty among its members, the WILPF had the foresight to resolve that members work on this matter as individuals.²¹

To raise support for the Treaty members of the SPG (and later the ERI) interviewed dozens of Assembly delegates and consulted Secretariat officials. The greatest support came from Lord Robert Cecil and Eduard Beneš, Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia.²² According to Helen Archdale (ERI Chairman), Cecil was very sympathetic and gave her a number of suggestions as to possible strategies; in particular, he stressed "the necessity of showing that Equal Rights for Women was an international matter, there being danger of breaking up the League by bringing to it national matters".²³ He supported the general aims of the ERI and told members in September 1931 that "it would be a victory for enlightenment and commonsense if this movement spread and gathered force all over the world."²⁴ Beneš promised his backing but advised that they should win the support of national women's groups which could then encourage action on

²⁰ERI Papers, memo by the Six Point Group marked "for immediate release", 14 September 1929, "Geneva 1929"/331.

²¹MCA Papers, Circular Letter to WILPF members from G. Baer, 17 May 1935, "LCWIO/PDCWIO 1934-41"/484.

²²ERI Papers, Report of Operations at Geneva in September 1929 for Filing at Headquarters, "Annual Reports"/330.

²³ERI Papers, H. Archdale, "Notes on Interview with Lord Cecil", London, 10 August 1929, "Annual Reports"/330.

²⁴ERI Papers, message sent by Lord Robert Cecil with regard to the ERI Dinner, 17 September 1931, "ERI Treaty Dinner"/330.

the part of Assembly delegations.²⁵ Little support was forthcoming from the Secretariat, however. Hugh McKinnon Wood, Legal Adviser at the Secretariat, maintained that the ERI would be more likely to achieve the equality it demanded if it proceeded by means of one international convention at a time dealing with specific problems encountered by women.²⁶ This philosophy, shared by the majority of Women's International Organizations, was to prove one of the greatest obstacles to the acceptance of the Equal Rights Treaty.

Despite initial promises of support for the Equal Rights Treaty - in 1930 the Six Point Group saw representatives of twenty-eight delegations, only one of whom (Bulgaria) was opposed to the Treaty - no country agreed to place the question on the Assembly agenda. Though disappointed the SPG (and ERI) seemed willing to accept that the Treaty should not be pushed and that support must be built up inside countries of the League. Although their efforts in Geneva continued unabated, members of the ERI also networked with women's organizations in League member states. Each year as many Assembly delegates as possible were approached by women and women's organizations from their own countries urging support for the Treaty. Despite its affiliation to the ERI, the NWP adopted a different strategy. Alice Paul desired first to get the Equal Rights Treaty on the League agenda, then to build up support for the Treaty from other Women's International Organizations, and only as a final step, to develop national support for ratification within individual countries.²⁷ While the ERI campaigned to educate women around the world about the advantages of an equality convention, Paul and her supporters in the NWP and the IACW worked to have the Equal Rights Treaty brought before the League.

Efforts on both fronts proceeded slowly and it soon became apparent that support for the principle of equal rights for women did not necessarily translate into support for the Equal Rights Treaty. This fact

²⁵ERI Papers, "Notes made by H.A.A. Immediately on Return from Seeing Benes on September 23" [1929], "Annual Reports"/330.

²⁶ERI Papers, H. Archdale, memo of meeting with H.McKinnon Wood, 11 July 1932, "World Court"/332.

²⁷Becker (1981), p.177.

was brought home to members of the Equal Rights International in 1931 when the Women's International Organizations failed to identify the Equal Rights Treaty as the means by which the League could advance the status of women. As a result of a resolution introduced by the Spanish delegation at the Assembly of 1931, the Secretary-General invited the Women's International Organizations to present their views on means to improve the collaboration of women in the peace work of the League. The Spanish Resolution was intended only to solicit suggestions regarding women's support for the Disarmament Conference, but seizing the opportunity the women's organizations turned the study on its head.

The ERI, with the encouragement of Lord Robert Cecil, pushed other members of the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations to use the opening to push for equal rights.²⁸ Archdale made an appeal to members of the Liaison Committee:

This is a unique, never to be repeated, opportunity to offer that in which we all believe, whether we call it equal status, or equal rights, or equal citizenship, or the abolition from law of distinction based upon sex, we mean one thing and this is our opportunity to say so.²⁹

The struggle to articulate that "one thing" they all meant was no easy task. In response to the Secretary-General's request for suggestions on the collaboration of women in the League's peace work, the women's organizations were unanimous in supporting the view that the equal status between men and women was a necessary "prerequisite to effective collaboration of women with the League".³⁰ Until equality was secured women could not play a full part in the work of the League because legal disabilities and customs which precluded women from higher offices, especially in the diplomatic service, prevented them from achieving their potential in the League of Nations. It is significant that the term "equality of status" was widely used in these reports, even by the ERI

²⁸ERI Papers, H. Archdale, "Notes on Talk with Lord Cecil", 5 February 1932, "Executive and Council, 1930-1932"/334.

²⁹ERI Papers, H. Archdale's message to the LCWIO given in memo form to her proxy for the March meeting, "LCWIO"/333.

³⁰LoN, Collaboration of Women in the Work of the League, Report by the Sixth Committee, 10 October 1932, A.49.1932.IV., p.2.

which normally used the term "equal rights". As will be seen, "equal status" reflected efforts to appease social feminist members of the Liaison Committee, but the exact meaning was not defined.

Similarly, few groups made definite proposals as to the way "equal status" could be achieved. The ERI recommended that member states of the League adopt the Equal Rights Treaty, but it was the only organization to do so.³¹ The ODI desired that member states be recommended to give women full civil, political, and economic rights.³² Both the CRWLN and the ICWG suggested that the League could co-ordinate an investigation into the legal status of women throughout the world.³³ An inquiry of this nature would identify the problems faced by women and elaborate strategies for ameliorating their situation. The CRWLN pursued this line despite having received a blunt rejection to its request that the British Government introduce a resolution at the Assembly in support of such an inquiry. Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, stated that "it was in the province of each country to decide for itself what status it gave its women".³⁴

Led by Alice Paul, some members of the ERI used the Spanish Resolution as an opportunity to call for the formation of a special women's committee as an official body of the League, though this was opposed by other ERI members as well as by the Liaison Committee.³⁵ The Committee continued to maintain that such a body would contradict the principle of equality laid down in Article 7 and would, in effect, "emphasise and perpetuate that difference in status which the Committee desires to obliterate".³⁶ Although the women's organizations joined together to impress upon the League the importance of securing equality for women,

³¹LoN, Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace, Report by the Secretary-General, 25 August 1932, A.10.1932., p.4.

³²Ibid., p.13.

³³Ibid., p.5 and p.18.

³⁴CRWLN, Annual Report 1932, p.3.

³⁵See letters from F. Barry to H. Archdale, 23 January 1932 and 10 February 1932, ERI Papers, "Correspondence with Members"/334.

³⁶LoN, Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace, A.10.1932., p.11.

there was clearly no consensus on how the League could help to achieve this goal.

The Nationality of Married Women: A Cause for Compromise

During the early 1930s attention was briefly diverted from the Equal Rights Treaty when an opening appeared for international action on the nationality of married women. All Women's International Organizations agreed on the principle of equality in nationality laws; on this issue, at least, equality and social feminists were able to support joint resolutions and initiatives. Because countries experienced and responded to migration differently, nationality laws had developed unevenly. Married women were left open to a number of abuses arising from the absence of uniform laws. Most often a woman's nationality was dependent upon that of her husband, with the result that a woman marrying a foreigner lost her own nationality and in cases where she was not entitled to take up the nationality of her husband, she was left stateless. The situation could be particularly trying for a woman who married a foreigner and remained in her own country without any citizenship rights. Equal rights feminists were incensed by this example of women's status as second class citizens. Among countries of immigration, these problems were most acute in the Americas. It is not surprising that nationality was the first subject studied by the IACW. Women in the U.S. had already succeeded in securing many changes to immigration and nationality laws, but inequalities remained.³⁷ From the early twenties, several Women's International Organizations, including the WILPF and the IWSA, had adopted resolutions stating that a woman should have the same rights as a man to retain or change her nationality. Efforts by Dame Rachel Crowdy as early as 1924 to bring the question before the League through intervention on the part of the British government were unsuccessful - the Home Office taking the line that an international

³⁷Both Pador (1979) and Becker (1981) trace the history of legislative changes in the area of immigration and nationality in the United States during the inter-war years.

agreement was impracticable.³⁸

When they discovered that nationality laws were on the agenda of the first Conference on the Codification of International Law held under the auspices of the League of Nations at The Hague in 1930, women's organizations co-ordinated a campaign for complete equality in the standardization of all nationality laws. Backed by the support of other Women's International Organizations, hundreds of national societies and many prominent political figures, the ICW and the IAWSEC held a "Joint Demonstration on the Nationality of Married Women" at The Hague on 14 March 1930 in support of the resolution: "That a woman, whether married or unmarried, should have the same right as a man to retain or to change her nationality".³⁹ When it appeared certain that discriminatory articles would be included in the nationality convention being drafted, women's organizations successfully lobbied for a hearing by the Codification Conference to state the case for equality.⁴⁰

Prior to the meeting a memorandum of the Joint Conference and Demonstration of Women was circulated to the Nationality Committee. It stated that "[t]he right of citizenship is the most fundamental political right" and that a woman should not be deprived of this right solely because she is married. Furthermore, it reminded delegates of one of the guidelines established by the Conference's Preparatory Commission: "the work of codification involves a risk of setback in international law if the content of the Codification instrument is less advanced than the actually

³⁸LNA, R. Crowdy to M. Bondfield, M.P., 1 February 1924, S156 "Outgoing letters February 1924" and R. Crowdy to R.J. Davies, Home Office, 18 March 1924, S156 "Outgoing letters March 1924".

³⁹IAWSEC, *Report of the Joint Demonstration and Joint Conference on the Nationality of Women* (London, 1930), pp.2-3.

⁴⁰LoN, Conference for the Codification of International Law, Minutes of the First Committee, Annex II, Joint Deputation of the International Council of Women and of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship, Verbatim Report of a Meeting with the Bureau of the Conference, 15 March 1930, pp.361-321; and Minutes of the First Committee, Fifteenth Meeting, 1 April 1930, Reception of the Joint Deputation of the International Council of Women..., pp.178-183, C.351(a.).M.145(a).1930.V.

existing law".⁴¹ In some countries, including the U.S.A., the law provided that a woman could keep her own nationality upon marriage. According to the progressive ideals set forth for the codification of international law, all countries should come into line with the most advanced. For many feminists this was an important point in favour of using international law as a means to advance the status of women. Of course the concept of 'progress' was open to dispute and the ideal was not to be realized in the area of nationality laws: the discriminatory articles (8-11) were adopted by the Conference, with only the U.S. voting against them.

It should be noted, however, that these articles were designed to alleviate difficulties experienced by married women. One sought to eliminate cases of statelessness by automatically giving a woman her husband's nationality. What the women's organizations objected to was the continued dependence of women on men for their nationality: no provision was made to give nationality to women in their own right. The Conference did, however, recommend to the States "to study whether it would not be possible...to introduce into their law the principle of the equality of the sexes in matters of nationality".⁴²

The Hague Conference was a great disappointment to feminists hoping to use international law for the cause of equal rights. Led by Chrystal Macmillan and Alice Paul the Women's International Organizations staged a formidable protest directed at the Secretariat and the League Council to ensure that The Hague Convention on Certain Questions relating to the

⁴¹LoN, Conference for the Codification of International Law, Minutes of the First Committee, Nationality, Annex VI, Nationality of Married Women, Memorandum of the Joint Conference and Demonstration of the International Council of Women and the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Citizenship on the Nationality of Married Women, pp.315-316.

⁴²LoN, Records of the Twelfth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the First Committee, Nationality of Women, Annex 7, Previous Consideration of the Question under the Auspices of the League of Nations, A.19.1931.V., OJSS, No.94, pp. 122-123. See Starke (1965) for discussion of the goals of the Hague Conference on the Progressive Codification of International Law, pp.150-152.

Conflict in Nationality Laws would not be the final word on the subject.⁴³ National women's organizations campaigned to discourage their governments from signing and ratifying the Convention or to press them to sign only with reservations on the discriminatory articles. As a result of an intensive telegram campaign - women all over the world sent telegrams and cables to the Council members, and British Foreign Minister Arthur Henderson, President of the Council, received 210 telegrams in less than forty-eight hours, 150 from England - in January 1931 the Council conceded to the demand that the nationality of married women be placed on the Assembly agenda and that a committee of women's organizations be appointed to examine the question.⁴⁴ The Council was influenced also by the dissatisfaction with The Hague Convention demonstrated by some governments; several of the states which signed the Convention did so with reservations regarding Articles 8-11.⁴⁵

Nine Women's International Organizations were invited by the Council to create a committee which would formulate "joint proposals" for inclusion in a report to the Assembly by the Secretary-General on the nationality of married women, eight of which accepted (See Appendix 3).⁴⁶ The Committee, known as the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality, operated until the late 1930s. Officials in the Legal Section of the Secretariat remained vague about the exact status of the Women's

⁴³See discussion on the original aims of the "feminist leaders" in minute from H. McKinnon Wood to Mr. Wilson, 31 July 1933, LNA 3e/1791/887 R3886.

⁴⁴See Boy (1936), p.144 and account of events in "American Women Win Issue to Have Right of Equality Put Before League of Nations", *Chicago Tribune*, 29 January 1931 and "Status of Women on League Agenda", *Montreal Gazette*, 26 January 1931. Cables were sent to the Persian and Japanese members of the Council from the All Asian Women's Conference meeting at the time in Lahore. See AAWC, *First Session, Lahore, 19th to 25th January 1931* (Bombay: The Times of India Press, 1931), pp.83-84.

⁴⁵Many countries invited to sign the Convention did not do so. At least seven countries which signed did so with reservations relating to Articles 8-11. LoN, Records of the Twelfth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Annex 7, OJSS, No.94, p.127.

⁴⁶The organizations named by the Council were: ICW, IAWSEC, WILPF, IACW, ERI, WUWIC, AACW, IFUW, WYWCA. The WYWCA declined. Sixty-second Session of Council, Ninth Meeting, 24 January 1931, OJ 12th Year, No.2 (February 1931), pp.231-232.

Consultative Committee. It had been formed at the request of the Council, composed of organizations specified by the Council. It was entitled to hold its meetings in the Secretariat and its communications were circulated directly to the Council and the Assembly. These privileges were without precedent. The Secretariat insisted, however, that the Committee had no official status in connection with the League.⁴⁷

While it proclaimed itself a League body, and held its meetings at the League, the first action of the Committee in July 1931 was a declaration against the Hague Convention. It urged the Assembly to take immediate steps to submit "to the Governments for ratification a new convention founded on the principle of equality between men and women with regard to nationality".⁴⁸ The Committee claimed that the Hague Convention would, if ratified, "give recognition in an international convention to the old idea of the subordinate position of women in the matter of nationality" and would have a grave psychological effect upon women all over the world.⁴⁹ According to Pador, when the Committee tried to meet again at the League Headquarters, members found themselves locked out by angry Secretariat officials annoyed that the Hague Convention had not automatically been endorsed. More than likely this was a rumour spread by the NWP. Pador goes on to state that all League facilities were subsequently closed to the Committee, but according to Secretariat documents it was not until February 1937 that staff finally found a way to refuse the Committee's request to meet at the League Headquarters.⁵⁰

The nationality of married women was the first equal rights issue to be discussed in any detail by the Assembly. Although the formation of the Women's Consultative Committee indicated the League's willingness to give

⁴⁷"Women's Consultative Committee On Nationality", *Pax International*, 6, 8 (August 1931).

⁴⁸LoN, Records of the Twelfth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Annex 7, Proposals of the Committee of Representatives of Women's International Organizations, OJSS, No.94, p. 126.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp.126-127.

⁵⁰The excuse given was that the Secretariat had moved into new premises. LNA, H.McKinnon Wood to M. Podestá Costa, 16 February 1937, 3e/1791/887 R3886.

women's organizations a hearing, those feminists anxious to raise the status of women through international action had a long struggle ahead of them. During discussions on the nationality of women at the 1931 Assembly many delegates spoke of the need to bring national and international legislation into line with the changed social and economic position of women. According to Dame Edith Lyttelton, substitute-delegate for Britain, women could not understand why men reserved the right to change their nationality from that which providence had given them: "[w]e do not want our nationality to be treated as a coat or garment which a man can cut or alter or dye or throw away just as he likes".⁵¹ She rejected the main argument put forward against equal nationality laws for women - that the unity of the family would be threatened: the real unity of the family was one based on mutual respect. Although many delegates spoke in support of the principle of equal nationality rights for women, there was a marked absence of political will to put this principle into practice. For many member states the legal, not to mention social and political difficulties of different nationalities for the husband and wife were insurmountable.⁵² The principle of the unity of the family was considered paramount to the emancipation of women. Thus all that emerged from the 1931 Assembly was a resolution stating that the Hague Convention represented the maximum agreement possible. In recognition of the dissatisfaction of the women's organizations, however, governments were invited to submit observations on the question, thus ensuring that the question would reappear in the future.⁵³

The Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality was invited to continue its examination of women's position under nationality laws but differences among Committee members made any further joint action impossible. The equal rights feminists saw the Committee primarily as a

⁵¹LoN, Records of the Twelfth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Fifteenth Plenary Meeting, 26 September 1931 OJSS, No. 93, p.141.

⁵²LoN, Records of the Twelfth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the First Committee, Eighth Meeting, 21 September 1931, OJSS No.94, pp.53-55.

⁵³Ibid., p.142.

means to press for concrete action by the League towards securing equal rights.⁵⁴ Social feminists, on the other hand, wished to elaborate upon the injustice and hardships suffered by women under existing laws, in part because they saw the report to the Assembly chiefly as a document to be used in individual countries for propaganda campaigns to encourage national governments to change their laws.⁵⁵ Consensus broke down completely when Alice Paul pushed to have the Consultative Committee established as an official League body and its mandate extended to all questions concerning women.⁵⁶

Paul and her supporters were guided by the NWP's achievement at the Sixth Conference of American States in 1928 when the Inter-American Commission of Women was established as a branch of the Pan American Union. The Commission, composed of women appointed by the Union, was charged with the preparation of juridical information and data to enable the Conference of American States to take up the consideration of the civil and political equality of women. Members of the NWP believed they could use the Commission as a means to abolish legal inequalities in the Americas and to ensure that international law would no longer be written by men only.⁵⁷ While these objectives were not fully met, the IACW proved an important means of placing gender-specific issues before Pan-American Conferences. As noted above, the first area investigated by the Commission was the nationality of married women. As a result of its investigation into discrimination against women under nationality laws an Equal Nationality Treaty was drafted in 1930 by the IACW stating that contracting parties agree "There shall be no distinction based on sex as regards nationality,

⁵⁴ERI Papers, draft of Press Release by the Inter American Commission of Women, 7 July 1931, "Inter-American Commission"/333.

⁵⁵Among representatives at the first meeting were Maria Vérone (Fr.) for the ICW, Margery Corbett Ashby for the IAWSEC, Madeleine A. Doty (Am.) for WILPF, Alice Paul and Doris Stevens for the IACW, Dorothy Evans (Br.) and Margaret Whittemore (Am.) for the ERI, and Chrystal Macmillan (Br.) for the IFUW. Ibid.

⁵⁶ERI Papers, H. Archdale, "Notes on talk with Lord Robert", 5 February 1932, "Executive and Council 1930-1931"/334.

⁵⁷James Brown Scott, "Inter-American Commission of Women", *American Journal of International Law*, 24 (1930), pp.757-62; Pfeffer (1985), p.463.

in their legislation or in their practice".

Many equal rights feminists believed that a permanent women's committee at the League could advocate equal rights objectives and monitor all League resolutions for their effects upon women.⁵⁸ It was not only nationality rights that were at stake but whether the whole process of the codification of international law would be founded upon equality of the sexes.⁵⁹ Former suffragette, Dorothy Evans (ERI), worked to win support for the plan in Britain while Paul set to work in Geneva. The particular method Paul chose - pretending to have the support of certain countries in order to win approval of others - only succeeded in alienating Council members when the ruse was discovered. Robert Cecil, for example, confided to Archdale that "he was entirely opposed to Paul...was indignant at her and her secretary's falsity...[and] said she was a terrible woman."⁶⁰

The methods used by NWP members at the international level parallel those of the NWP in American campaigns.⁶¹ Their strategy was to seek the support of "the key men" in the decision-process, whether it be American legislators, Pan-American members or League delegates. This also formed one of the strategies of other women's organizations but unlike the others NWP members had little interest in educating public opinion or in securing grassroots support. The NWP and the ERI, were elite groups by comparison with the broadly-based membership of the other Women's International Organizations. NWP members were reliant on the press as a means of publicizing their cause and were prone to exaggerate disagreements with the League in order to gain attention. Secretariat officials soon came to distinguish between the "extremist" and the "sensible" women's organizations, the former description reserved for staunch equal rights

⁵⁸Pador (1979), p.32.

⁵⁹Phyllis Lovell, "Equal Rights at the Assembly", *Equal Rights*, 18, 41, 12 November 1932, p.323.

⁶⁰ERI Papers, H. Archdale, "Additional Notes of talk with Lord Cecil", 5 February 1932, "Executive and Council 1930-1932"/334.

⁶¹Cott (1987), esp. pp.79-80.

groups.⁶²

The "sensible" organizations, obviously, were those which tended to heed the advice of Secretariat officials. On this occasion the Secretariat had little reason to intervene for social feminist organizations readily voiced their disapproval of the plan to turn the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality into an official League body. Corbett Ashby warned members of the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations that the proposal for a Women's Committee was most reactionary in view of the provisions of Article 7 of the Covenant: "[w]e cannot simultaneously claim equality with men and ask for a privileged position for women as women".⁶³ That Paul and her supporters were able to do so reflects their pre-occupation with finding a means to gain influence at the League rather than ideological integrity. Of course, members of the Liaison Committee were hardly consistent either: they demanded both equal treatment and special protection for women.

During the 1932 Assembly it became clear that the equal rights organizations were prepared to use the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality as a vehicle to push forward their goals with little regard for the wishes of other constituent members of the Committee. Throughout the spring and summer of 1932 the Committee had been unable to reach agreement on recommendations to be forwarded to the Assembly. As a result, two separate reports had to be submitted. That signed by Paul and her supporters continued to demand a new nationality convention that would ensure "no distinction based on sex".⁶⁴ Moreover, in a rather diluted

⁶²See memos by officials in 1935 in LNA 3A/18581/13900 R3755. See also C. Beresford Fox to A. Harrison, 19 March 1935, MCA Papers, "LCWIO/PDCWIO, 1934-41"/484.

⁶³Draft of a letter given by Corbett Ashby to Archdale at meeting of LCWIO, 2 March 1932. Those organizations in agreement with this point of view were asked to send a letter to this effect to Radziwill. See ERI Papers, "Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality"/332.

⁶⁴Paul's report was signed by the IACW, AAWC, ERI and WILPF. The WILPF signatory, Lola Maverick Lloyd, was also a NWP member. Archdale actually went as far as to withdraw the name of the ERI from the First report but other members of the ERI ruled against her and asked the Secretariat to put names back into report. See minutes of the General Meeting of the Equal Rights International, September 23 & 24, Geneva, ERI Papers, "ERI Minutes, Notices, etc. "/330. See also D. Evans to W. Mayo, 29 July 1932, NWP Papers, I/1/49.

version of Paul's original proposal, the report recommended that the League "provide means for taking into consideration the woman's point of view on all codification projects affecting the status of women" and "[t]o ensure that all future codification of international law undertaken under the auspices of the League shall be free from inequalities based on sex".⁶⁵ The latter point alludes to another project Paul had in the works regarding an amendment to the Statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice that would make it impossible for the Court to enforce any provision in a Convention which involved discrimination between the sexes.⁶⁶

The second report submitted by the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality represented the views current in the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations.⁶⁷ It requested only that the League re-examine the question of nationality of women and in effect used the report as a means to set forward the case for women's independent nationality, arguing that the real issue at stake was "the right of women to liberty as individuals".⁶⁸ The IAW and IFUW, in particular, had always placed emphasis on women's *independent* nationality because they were convinced that the demand for "no distinction based on sex" would give rise to laws which provided that either the husband or wife be requested to change nationality: in such cases tradition would dictate that the woman lose her nationality.⁶⁹ The conflict between feminists was not over the principle of equal nationality rights; instead, opinion was divided over

⁶⁵LoN, Records of the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the First Committee, Annex 5, OJSS No.105, p.60.

⁶⁶See correspondence between H. McKinnon Wood and H. Archdale on this question in July and August 1932, ERI Papers, "World Court"/332. Archdale took the advice of McKinnon Wood against such an action, but was unable to convince Paul. Both Pador (1979) and Becker (1981) describe the NWP's efforts to keep the U.S. out of the World Court unless an equality amendment was forthcoming.

⁶⁷This Report was signed by the ICW, IAWSEC, IFUW and WUWIC. OJSS No.105, pp.58-64.

⁶⁸OJSS No.105, p.62.

⁶⁹ERI Papers, C. Macmillan to H. Archdale, 24 August 1932, "ODI"/330.

whether or not the wording of the IACW's proposed nationality convention would actually guarantee such rights. In what represents the most striking example of the Women's International Organizations' failed efforts toward compromise, the second report indicated that the Hague Convention should be ratified as it eliminated some of the difficulties faced by married women, a further communication appended to the report stated that all eight organizations had agreed to ask for revision of the Hague Convention and for the ratification of a new convention, while a footnote to this communication claimed that the IFUW's signature was based upon a misunderstanding and the Federation requested only a new study of the Hague Convention.⁷⁰ This performance merely underlined to League member states that there was little hope for consensus regarding the nationality of married women.

Still, discussions on the nationality rights of married women at the 1932 Assembly revealed that several countries were willing to go a long way toward compromise to satisfy demands made by the Consultative Committee. There was a lengthy though ultimately unsuccessful debate on a proposal to open for signature a Protocol that would insert the words "his or her" or the word "person" in clauses of the Convention that implied discrimination between the sexes. Equal rights feminists had reason to believe that their concerns were finally being taken seriously.⁷¹ Nonetheless, it appeared as if some delegates were less concerned about the principle involved - justice for women - than keeping women's support for the League. Mr. Hoffinger (Austria) stated that "it was the League's duty to consider the opinion of the great organisations which spoke on behalf of millions of women":

The League... should be anxious to retain the confidence even of those whose wishes it must, for some reason, refuse to satisfy. What must at all costs be avoided was that the women's organisations, which were world-wide, should lose faith in the League and come to believe that their grievances and their wishes were of less interest to it than other

⁷⁰OJSS No.105, p.63.

⁷¹Inter-American Commission of Women, *Equal Nationality Campaign at Geneva* (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, n.d.), p.2.

problems brought before it.⁷²

The result was a resolution urging states to ratify the Hague Convention on the grounds that it represented the maximum to be obtained at the time but that left open the possibility for the reconsideration of the question when the development of public opinion had reached a point at which further concerted international action was justified.

The compromise failed to appease some members of the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality. Before the resolution came to a vote, a propaganda sub-committee was formed to fight the ratification of the Hague Convention.⁷³ With the support of two delegates, Maria de Pizano (Columbia) and Marta Vergara (Chile), both members of the IACW (the latter also on the Women's Consultative Committee), this sub-committee managed to convince several countries to register their protest against the resolution.⁷⁴ Whereas most resolutions brought before the Assembly were passed unanimously, on this occasion there were nine abstentions.⁷⁵

This action was not supported by many of the groups represented on the Women's Consultative Committee but they bore the brunt of recriminations emerging from the Secretariat over the situation. An article on the League's involvement in questions concerning the nationality of women was prepared by Mary Craig McGeachy of the Information Section and distributed to several women's organizations with the request that it be given wide publicity "in order to clear up certain misunderstandings" that had arisen in view of the action of the propaganda sub-committee of

⁷²OJSS No.105, p.19.

⁷³ERI Papers, "Report on Work with 1932 Assembly by Sub-Committee on Nationality", by L. van Matsch, "Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality"/332. Equal rights feminists continued to fight the Convention until it received the required number of signatures and entered into force in 1937.

⁷⁴IACW, *Equal Nationality Campaign at Geneva*.

⁷⁵These were: Chile, China, Columbia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Mexico, Poland and Turkey. LoN, Records of the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Plenary Sessions, Tenth Meeting, 12 October 1932, OJSS No.104, p.80.

the Women's Consultative Committee.⁷⁶ The article made it clear that from the point of view of the Secretariat the Convention "does not lay down any principle in contradiction with the independence of the nationality of married women" and that its ratification would eliminate at least some of the abuses suffered by women under existing law.⁷⁷ Radziwill confided to Hesselgren (ICW) that she thought "the women's organisations have considered this whole question a little too much from the academic point of view, the point of view of the principle involved, and have perhaps even avoided looking at it from the purely social point of view". She believed that a thorough-going study - along the lines of research by the American social reformer Sophonsiba Breckinridge - should be made of the problem from a legal point of view, co-ordinated by the women's organizations.⁷⁸ Moreover, she admitted that she did not consider the Women's Consultative Committee very useful and would "welcome its reorganization".

Indeed, making the most of good relations established over the previous decade with constituent organizations of the Liaison Committee, in 1933 Radziwill set about to destroy the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality. She made it clear to leaders of the Women's International Organizations that "the action of the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality is not feared by the Secretariat...but there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that this activity of the Women's Consultative Committee is doing the Women's Organisations a great deal of harm":

I have heard it expressed from more than one side that it is a strange thing for women to ask for collaboration and at the same time, when the Assembly has taken a definite decision after a long and careful discussion and has done its utmost to meet women's views, the only effect it seems to have is for them to go on as if no discussion had ever taken place.⁷⁹

⁷⁶LNA, G. Radziwill to K. Hesselgren, 22 November 1932, 3e/39917/25640 (I) R2076. See also Information Section, "The Nationality of Married Women", in same file.

⁷⁷Info. Section, "The Nationality of Married Women", p. 12.

⁷⁸LNA, letters from G. Radziwill to K. Hesselgren, M. Woolley, and I. Palencia, 22 November 1932, 3e/39917/25640 (I) R2076. Regarding Breckinridge see above, p.176.

⁷⁹LNA, G. Radziwill to M. Ogilvie Gordon, 23 January 1933, 50/9105/9105 R3585.

Radziwill suggested that a meeting of the Liaison Committee should be called to discuss the question "very thoroughly" and that all women's organizations not in agreement with the action of the propaganda sub-committee should withdraw their representatives.⁸⁰

Women's organizations that had struggled throughout the 1920s to build good relations with the League were reluctant to ignore Radziwill's advice. In July 1933 the IAW and the IFUW requested the Secretary-General to release their organizations "from any obligation to continue to act as members of the Consultative Committee on the Nationality of Women". They informed him that the proper method for women to exercise their due share of influence was by admission to the ordinary League committees and not by creation of a special body.⁸¹ At the same time, they attempted to prevent Alice Paul from using the Committee to further her own goals by suggesting to the Secretary-General that "[t]he object of the existing Committee being to present the agreed views of the organisations selected to form it, it will, we presume, automatically come to an end on the withdrawal of two of those eight organisations".⁸²

The Headquarters Secretary of the IAW later expressed regret that "we found ourselves, as we saw it, forced to take action which advertises differences of opinion among women on a question which ought to unite them".⁸³ Eugenie Miskolczy Meller (WILPF) attributed the action to long-standing antagonism of Corbett Ashby and Macmillan against the NWP that dated back to the Alliance Congress in 1926 when the NWP's application for affiliation was rejected: "Ever since - I deplore to have to state it - the rivalry of the Liaison Committee Members has continually attempted to wreck the Consultative Committee and personal antagonism has dimmed objective reasoning". Further, she asserted that "any woman who is working

⁸⁰LNA, G. Radziwill to K. Hesselgren, 23 January 1933, 3e/1206/887 R3886.

⁸¹LNA, M. Corbett Ashby and J. Westerdyk to Secretary-General, 3 July 1933, 3e/1790/887 R3886.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³ERI Papers, Katherine Bompas to H. Archdale, 1 September 1933, "Correspondence with IAW"/333.

for the recognition of women in public activities should endeavour to save the dignity of women, [and] should anxiously avoid the appearance as if women could not work in concord and solidarity".⁸⁴

The belief that women should act in union prevented close analysis of the origins of the dispute. Although personality conflicts were important, differences on matters of policy also must be considered. As noted above, there were fundamental disagreements over the necessity of non-discriminatory legislation versus protective or corrective legislation. The IFUW and the IAW had always believed that the right of women to *independent* nationality was the key legal point and were never satisfied with the pronouncements of Paul and her supporters that "there be no distinction based on sex". In this sense, members of the IFUW and the IAW favoured corrective legislation to secure women's rights over non-discriminatory legislation; they believed that only specific enumeration of women's nationality rights would end discrimination. This difference made it impossible for the Women's Consultative Committee to agree on proposals for action. At another level, tensions arose because the IAW had from 1920 been against proposals for a special Women's Committee of the League.⁸⁵ Even though it was not an official body of the League, the Women's Consultative Committee had always been treated with caution, not least because certain equal rights feminists attempted to use it for their own ends.

McKinnon Wood, Legal Adviser to the Secretariat, at first advised the Secretary-General to refrain from any statement on the authority of the remaining members to continue to act as the Women's Consultative Committee in order to avoid "the extremely unscrupulous propaganda...of which some of the members of the Committee are masters".⁸⁶ When it became clear that the remaining members would continue to demand the privileges afforded the original body, he urged the Secretary-General to take the view that the

⁸⁴WILPF Papers, Eugenie Miskolczy Meller to WILPF Executive, 28 May 1933, IV/274/109.

⁸⁵See Chapter 1, p.33.

⁸⁶LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to G. Radziwill, 18 July 1933, 3e/1791/882 R3889.

Committee "ceased to have any official character" upon the resignation of the IAW and the IFUW, a rather odd choice of wording if the Committee had no official status in the first place.⁸⁷ McKinnon Wood was anxious to put an end to a committee whose "extremist character...is not in the interests of women obtaining their proper share in the League's work".⁸⁸ The ensuing confusion over the status of the Committee generated numerous internal memos and efforts were made to revoke the privileges regarding the communication of documents to the Council and Assembly. Yet at least until 1937 the Committee still met in the Secretariat. In the late 1930s when reforms to the Covenant were being considered by the League, the equal rights feminists used the Committee to introduce proposals for equality amendments which, among other things, would ensure women's suffrage and equal nationality in all member states.⁸⁹

Assembly debates on the nationality of married women and the ill-fated Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality provided little encouragement for feminists wishing to advance the status of women through international law. All that had emerged from Assembly debates was a group of documents submitted by governments and women's organizations outlining the treatment of women under nationality laws of each country.⁹⁰ Of course, the possibility was left open that the question could be re-examined when changes in national legislation made further compromise possible. The 1932 Assembly advised women's organizations that by directing their efforts toward the reform of national legislation they could prepare ground for the eventual revision of the Hague Convention.⁹¹ Organizations affiliated to the Liaison Committee were prepared to pursue this course but Paul and her supporters wanted more immediate results regarding both the

⁸⁷LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to Secretary-General, 6 December 1934, 3A/13900/13900 R3755.

⁸⁸LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to Mr. Wilson, 31 July 1933, 3e/1791/887 R3886.

⁸⁹For details of this four point amendment see "Memorandum from the Women's Consultative Committee", May 1937, WILPF Papers, IV/277/110.

⁹⁰LoN, Records of the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the First Committee, Annexes 4-9, OJSS No.105.

⁹¹OJSS No.105, p.71.

nationality of women and equal rights in general.

The Advancement of the Status of Women: Establishing a Role for the League

Because they had no allies in the Secretariat, the remaining members of the Women's Consultative Committee had to rely on contacts established through the IACW to forward their goals. They were heartened when the two equality treaties (equal rights and nationality) proposed by the IACW were placed on the agenda at the Seventh Pan American Conference in Montevideo in December 1933. The Equal Nationality Treaty was signed by eighteen countries, including the U.S.A., while the Equal Rights Treaty secured four signatures.⁹² In a radio broadcast in February 1934, Doris Stevens (NWP), Chairman of the IACW, expressed her hope that these agreements which extended equality to women "by one continental stroke" would set an example to be followed by Europe, Asia and Africa.⁹³

Why was it that women were able to achieve at the Pan American Conference what they had thus far been unable to achieve at the League? According to Pfeffer social feminists in the American Department of Labor and in the Woman's Bureau believed that Latin Americans supported the Equal Rights Treaty only because they had been led by members of the IACW to confuse "equal rights" with "suffrage" but this claim seems somewhat exaggerated.⁹⁴ Stevens attributed the victory, in part, to the fact that "many people of South and Central America have been shaken to their depths by revolution or economic disaster or both": "[i]t is a sad but historic fact that men listen more hospitably to what women ask when men are

⁹²Text of the Montevideo Convention on the Nationality of Women reproduced in LoN, Nationality of Women, Convention on the Nationality of Women, A.7.1935.V. Signatories were Argentine Republic, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Salvador, the U.S.A. (in 1934) and Uruguay. Text of the Montevideo Equal Rights Treaty reproduced in LoN, Status of Women, Proposal of Certain Delegations for the Examination by the Assembly of the Status of Women, A.8.1935.V. It was signed by Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador and Cuba.

⁹³"Remarks of Miss Doris Stevens, Chairman of the Inter-American Commission of Women...Radio...February 13, 1934", p.2. Transcript in ERI Papers, "Inter American Commission"/333.

⁹⁴Pfeffer (1985), p.466.

overtaken by disaster, than when they are secure in their authority".⁹⁵ Certain reforms can probably be attributed to the economic and social upheaval experienced by many Latin American countries. Another important factor was that by comparison with the League, which was made up of member states with vast cultural, religious and political differences, the countries of the Americas shared certain cultural similarities that made it easier for them to achieve compromise.

During the 1930s Latin American delegations were largely responsible for placing questions regarding the nationality and status of women on the Assembly agenda.⁹⁶ Latin American feminism was more developed during the inter-war years than the North American/European focus in women's history leads one to believe.⁹⁷ Miller argues that Latin American feminists were alienated from the political processes within their countries and thus used Inter-American Conferences as a forum for the debate of feminist issues.⁹⁸ In this way they developed contacts with diplomats such as Cuban Ambassador and League delegate Don Orestes Ferrara, a leading international advocate of equal rights.⁹⁹ Moreover, the establishment of the IACW in 1928 as an official body of the Pan-American Union made it difficult for women's demands to be ignored. Members of the Commission then worked behind the scenes to induce Latin American governments to place the nationality and status of women on the League agenda. When Marta Vergara (IACW) convinced

⁹⁵"Remarks of Doris Stevens", p.5.

⁹⁶See LoN, Nationality of Women, A.7.1935.V., and LoN, Records of the Seventeenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Seventeenth Plenary Meeting, 10 October 1936, OJSS No.155.

⁹⁷A few works on the subject include: Asunción Lavrin (ed.), *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978) and "Female, Feminine and Feminist: Key Concepts in Understanding Women's History in Twentieth Century Latin America", Occasional Lecture Series, No.4, Department of Hispanic, Portuguese and Latin American Studies, University of Bristol, November 1988; and Jane S. Jaquette (ed.), *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Elsa M. Chaney, *Supermadre: Women in Politics in Latin America* (London: University of Texas Press, 1979); and Seminar on Feminism and Culture in Latin America (ed.), *Women, Culture and Politics in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁹⁸Miller (1990), p.19.

⁹⁹Pador (1979), p.34.

the Chilean government to request that the nationality issue be placed on the agenda again in 1933, Alice Paul told her "we are indeed fortunate in having you in a position to bring this to pass".¹⁰⁰

Another possible explanation for the initiative taken by the Latin American delegations lies further afield, in geo-political relations. In 1932 Archdale assessed her efforts to collect delegates favourable to the Equal Rights Treaty in the following way:

I think we may engineer something among the "small nations" to give the "big nations" another rap. They enjoyed doing so over disarmament and over Japan v[s.] China, and may see in supporting equality between the sexes another opportunity.¹⁰¹

One member of the NWP explained the vote registered by nine countries against the Hague Convention at the Assembly of 1932 in terms of a protest of the small nations against the great powers.¹⁰² Whatever may have inspired Latin American delegations to sign the Montevideo Treaties or to raise questions concerning the status of women at the League, their actions were not necessarily followed up at the national level. For many years after signing and ratifying the Montevideo Nationality Treaty several American Republics maintained discriminatory laws on nationality. The Equal Rights Treaty does not appear to have been ratified during the 1930s by any of those countries which signed it.¹⁰³ This suggests that their action at the League can be interpreted, in part, as a gesture in support of the principle of equality for women.

The greatest achievement of American feminists was to have "the entire Status of Women" with "particular attention" to the Equal Rights Treaty placed on the Assembly agenda in 1934 by a joint request of ten Latin American delegations. These delegations asserted that as "the League

¹⁰⁰NWP Papers, A. Paul to Marta Vergara, 6 April 1933, I/1/50.

¹⁰¹ERI Papers, H. Archdale to Mrs. Jessie Street, 27 August 1932, "Corr. with Members 1930-32"/334.

¹⁰²Phyllis Lovell, "Equal Rights in the Assembly", *Equal Rights*, 18, 41, 12 November 1932, p.323.

¹⁰³Information on the exact status of the Treaty is difficult to locate, but in the spring of 1938 no nation had adhered to or ratified the Treaty, including the countries which signed it originally. See ODI Papers, (confidential) "Memorandum to the Board of Officers from the Headquarters Committee of the Open Door International", p.2, 5/ODI/x10-13/472.

of Nations is an international organisation designed to defend human rights" it should "take cognisance of the present widespread and alarming encroachments upon the rights and liberties of women". The delegations affirmed that the League should give "immediate attention" to every circumstance imperilling women's welfare as a sign of appreciation that the League had "no more loyal supporters in its work for international peace than the women of the world".¹⁰⁴

The action was entirely opposed by McKinnon Wood. He believed that the proposal had been drafted by Alice Paul. He doubted that the issue was taken as seriously by the Latin American delegations as the request suggested.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, he knew that women's organizations were not unified on the initiative taken by the Latin Americans. Although the ERI had been formed expressly for the purpose of promoting the Equal Rights Treaty its Chairman, Helen Archdale, had already expressed uncertainty as to whether such a comprehensive treaty was the best means to raise the status of women.

To the annoyance of the Secretariat and many of the Women's International Organizations, the Equal Rights Treaty was now almost certain to be placed on the Assembly agenda. Members of the Secretariat disagreed on what action the League should take. There was a general acknowledgement of the negative effects of the economic crisis and the rise of authoritarian regimes on the status of women. McKinnon Wood maintained, however, that to place either the status of women as a whole or the Montevideo Equal Rights Treaty on the agenda was simply to invite trouble, as they both raised questions of "the internal political and social organisation of states which have no international character":

The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Members of the League appears to me implicit in the Covenant (c.f. Article 15, paragraph 8) and, therefore, to invite the Assembly to discuss whether there should be an international obligation to give women identical political rights with men,

¹⁰⁴LoN, Status of Women, Note by the Secretary-General, 27 September 1934, C.440.M.190.1934.V. The letter was signed by delegates from Argentine, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay.

¹⁰⁵LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to M. Buero, 29 September 1934, 3A/13900/13900 R3755.

appears to be contrary to the nature of the institution.¹⁰⁶

He asserted, moreover, that it was hardly the time "for discussing the organisation of democratic institutions at an international assembly".¹⁰⁷ As a result of pressure from the IACW, he consulted with members of the Pan American Union and was told that the Montevideo Convention on the Nationality of Women was open for signature to states outside the Pan American Union. The Secretary-General announced this fact to League member states in May 1935.¹⁰⁸ As for the Equal Rights Treaty, McKinnon Wood proposed a vague resolution to the effect that governments be recommended to establish equality between men and women so far as circumstances in each country permit, as it would not commit the League to action.¹⁰⁹

Radziwill disagreed. She pushed for a compromise between McKinnon Wood's position that the status of women was outside League authority and the demand by Paul's group for the adoption of the Equal Rights Treaty. Against McKinnon Wood's reservations she pointed out that the political and civil rights of women were not less international than some of the questions treated by the Advisory Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The status of women could not simply be dismissed as being outside the jurisdiction of the League at a time when women's rights were being threatened in many countries. Such a response would alienate women

¹⁰⁶LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to Secretary-General, 3 July 1935, 3A/18611/13900 R3755. Article 15, paragraph 8 laid out that the Council shall make no recommendation in regard to a dispute arising out of "a matter which by international law is solely within the domestic jurisdiction" of a member state.

¹⁰⁷LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to M. Pilotti, 5 July 1935, 3A/18611/13900 R3755.

¹⁰⁸LoN, Nationality of Women, A.7.1935.V., p.2; copies of correspondence exchanged between the League and the Pan American Union over this matter are reproduced in IACW, *Documents Concerning its Creation and Organization* (Washington, D.C.: Pan American Union, 1935).

¹⁰⁹McKinnon Wood pointed out that the Pan American Conference in 1933 had resolved that the concession of rights belonged exclusively to states and that granting political and civil rights depended on conditions in each country, then it went on rather illogically, to offer the Equal Rights Treaty for signature. LNA, H. McKinnon Wood to G. Radziwill, 26 November 1934, 3e/8392/887 R3886. See also Pan American Union, *Seventh International Conference of American States, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 3-26, 1933, Final Act, Including the Conventions and Additional Protocol Adopted by the Conference*, pp.41-43.

and, in her view, "[e]lles sont une force qu'il convient de ne pas négliger".¹¹⁰ She advised that the Assembly should request information from member states concerning the political and civil rights of women. Later an advisory committee could be set up to deal with proposals raised in the course of collecting this information. She knew this plan would satisfy the majority of women's organizations which had long supported the idea of a League sponsored inquiry.¹¹¹

McKinnon Wood continued to voice his opposition to any action on the status of women. If information was requested from governments, he argued, the women's organizations would quite reasonably expect further action by the League at some point. Since he was certain that no action was possible, the proposed inquiry would only be a "way of shelving a question which the majority of delegations found it impossible to solve and dangerous to their comfort to reject".¹¹² "The hard reality is", he told Radziwill in November 1934, "that the consequence of the economic crisis upon the employment of women, and the consequence of political movements upon their status in other respects in particular countries, are questions in regard to which a power of exhortation - an activity which I personally rather deprecate - is all that can really be attributed to the League".¹¹³

While he recognized that the League's "relations with the women's organisations are difficult and important" he insisted that they be dealt with straightforwardly on this issue. Women's support for the League "has not to be won by pretending to adopt the programs they draw up for it, however impracticable".¹¹⁴ After the fiasco over the Women's Consultative Committee he was anxious to avoid any action which would provide "the Alice Paul group of opinion...with magnificent opportunities for propaganda" and

¹¹⁰Ibid., p.14.

¹¹¹LNA, G. Radziwill to M. Pilotti, 22 July 1935, 3A/18611/13900 R3755.

¹¹²LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to M. Pilotti, 5 August 1935, 3A/18611/13900 R3755.

¹¹³LNA, H. McKinnon Wood to G. Radziwill, 26 November 1934, 3e/8392/887 R3886.

¹¹⁴LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to M. Pilotti, 5 August 1935, 3A/18611/13900 R3755.

he believed that Radziwill's proposal would allow Paul "the use of the Assembly as a sounding board for her views for an indefinite period of time".¹¹⁵ In early September, McKinnon Wood's suspicions were confirmed when he was told by Paul's representatives that they did not really expect to get a resolution from the Assembly advocating the Equal Rights Treaty, but "their object was to keep the subject on the Assembly's agenda year after year until something happened".¹¹⁶

In spite of McKinnon Wood's objections the Women's International Organizations were invited by the Secretary-General to present statements on the nationality and status of women to the 1935 Assembly. This provided one of the greatest opportunities available for women to voice their anxiety about anti-feminist reaction in Europe.¹¹⁷ The women's organizations were unanimous in voicing concern over the growing tendency for governments to over-ride clauses of constitutions and laws establishing equality between the sexes and to restrict the employment of women.¹¹⁸ The WYWCA recorded its anxiety over restrictive legislative measures recently passed and applied in seven European countries and one Australian State "limiting the careers to which women have access, excluding women from admission to posts for which their training had fitted them or compelling them to resign posts which they were actually occupying when the legislation in question was introduced".¹¹⁹ In Belgium a quota had been fixed for the percentage of women (married or single) in each branch of industry in order to secure the employment of men. In the Netherlands, the

¹¹⁵LNA, H. McKinnon Wood to M. Pilotti, 15 July 1935, p.4 and to M. Pilotti, 5 August 1935, 3A/18611/13900 R3755, p.3.

¹¹⁶LNA, H. McKinnon Wood to H.B. Butler, 5 September 1935, 3A/19723/13900 R3756.

¹¹⁷The Secretariat published a fifty-page document of statements from fifteen Women's International Organizations detailing the legal, economic and political position of women throughout the world. See LoN, Nationality and Status of Women, Statements Presented by International Women's Organizations, 30 August 1935, A.19.1935.V..

¹¹⁸For more information on situation around this time see Reports of Fourth Conference of ODI (1935), Twelfth Congress of IAW (1935) and IFPBW Conference (1936).

¹¹⁹LoN, Nationality and Status of Women, Statements Presented by Women's International Organizations, A.19.1935.V., p.10ff.

Government had requested that wherever possible women should be replaced by men. In other countries measures excluded married women teachers, public servants and medical women from employment or severely curtailed their employment opportunities. Even in countries where special legislation had not yet been introduced to restrict the right of women to work, "there is a noticeable tendency to resort to discrimination".¹²⁰

Few Women's International Organizations recommended the Equal Rights Treaty as the solution to this situation. On the question of nationality most organizations indicated that the Hague Convention still needed revision or that a new Convention should be adopted, but did not apparently see the Montevideo Nationality Convention as the answer. Several of the organizations, among them the WYWCA, IFBPW and ICWG, continued to press for a comprehensive study by the League on the entire status of women in each country as an effective basis for further concerted international action. Only the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality unconditionally supported the Montevideo Treaties. Although the Committee was aware that "the League of Nations as a body cannot legislate nationally" it believed that conventions of the League could become "guiding principles for the Member States".¹²¹

The Committee saw the "rising tide everywhere of unjust discrimination against women" as evidence of the need for the Equal Rights Treaty to set up common international standards. In particular it expressed concern over manifestations of reactionary attitudes about women in Germany. Its memorandum described the effects of the Depression and Nazi ideology on women's political and economic rights.¹²² The British National Union of Women Teachers, one of the organizations represented on the Committee by the ERI, had earlier described the crisis women faced in Germany as "proof of the value of writing equal rights into an international convention, less subject to alteration by transient national passions". Concern was expressed over the fact that the Reichstag in May

¹²⁰Ibid., p.11.

¹²¹Ibid., p.16

¹²²Ibid., pp.20-21.

1932 had deliberately rendered void the part of the Constitution which gave equal rights to men and women.¹²³

Many other organizations indicated their support for the principle of equality set forth in the Equal Rights Treaty, but none asked that the Treaty be placed before the Assembly. Both the IAW and the ICWG did not rule out the possibility of "an international convention" but in the words of the ICWG it should "not take the form of an empty formula", no doubt a jab at the Treaty.¹²⁴ During the drafting of the reports to the Secretary-General a half-hearted attempt was made by members of the Liaison Committee to develop a compromise treaty known as "International Convention on the Status of Women" or the "Equality of Status (Women) Convention". In the words of Archdale (ERI) "[i]t was hoped that the change in title and in text will do away with the objections to the words 'Equal Rights'" voiced by some groups.¹²⁵ Like the Equal Rights Treaty this Convention had only one effective article stating that contracting parties "grant equal legal and juridical status and equal rights and responsibilities of citizenship to men and women whether married or unmarried".¹²⁶ According to Mary Craig McGeachy, the organizations that opposed the Treaty did so because the ILO's Legal Adviser claimed that it would sweep away all special legislation for women in industry.¹²⁷ It was hoped, therefore, that the "International Convention on the Status of Women" would not endanger protective legislation.

The response from official circles was not favourable. One member of the WYWCA had been told by Craig McGeachy that the proposed Convention

¹²³From Statement passed by the National Union of Women Teachers, reproduced in letter from them to ERI, 23 September 1932 in ERI Papers, "Annual General 1932"/330.

¹²⁴LoN, Nationality and Status of Women, A.19.1935.V., p.34.

¹²⁵ERI Papers, H. Archdale to Miss Clark, 17 September 1934, "Correspondence with the Federation of European American Women's Clubs in Europe"/333.

¹²⁶WILPF Papers, Copy of "Draft International Convention on the Status of Women", 21 February 1935, IV/278/110.

¹²⁷LNA, M. McGeachy to Mr. Pelt, 19 June 1935, 3A/18611/13900 R3755. See also G. Radziwill, memo to M. Pilotti, 5 July 1935, 3e/12133/887 R3886.

was "utterly worthless" and that "its contents will give rise to contempt and cynicism...on the part of thinking people in the League and in the Assembly".¹²⁸ Led by the ICW, the Liaison Committee considered another alternative. Members suggested that a preamble be placed before the Equal Rights Treaty declaring that it would not affect the special provisions made for women in industry under the International Labor Conventions and other protective legislation.¹²⁹ Essentially, members of the Committee wished to use the opportunity provided by the Assembly to outline their interpretation of women's rights, but appeared to have trouble articulating what they meant by "equal status".

Corbett Ashby, for one, was dismayed by their failure to act more decisively. She advised "a positive statement of position" instead of mere reaction to the case for the Equality Treaty presented by Paul and the IACW. She urged that those organizations trying to accommodate Paul's treaty by the means of reservations and preambles "should take an aggressive line" and make it clear to the Secretary-General that a simple statement about equality like that contained in the Equal Rights Treaty was "not an adequate method" of addressing problems concerning the status of women. In her opinion, this method did not consider the position of working women or the "great variety of social and economic conditions in different countries". More importantly, it did not recognize that "the position of women in various countries is ultimately dependent upon national action which may or may not follow directly upon the adoption of an expression of view at Geneva".¹³⁰

This attitude was reflected in the statements forwarded to the Secretary-General in the summer of 1935. According to the ICWG, "a hard and fast rule as to complete equality can be specially dangerous to protective legislation affecting women as mothers...where there is no

¹²⁸MCA Papers, C. Beresford Fox to E. Luxmore, A. Harrison, M. Dingman and R. Woodsmall, 4 February 1935, "LCWIO/PDCWIO 1934-41"/484.

¹²⁹MCA Papers, Circular letter to members of the WILPF from Gertrude Baer, 17 May 1935, "LCWIO/PDCWIO 1934-41"/484.

¹³⁰MCA Papers, M. Corbett Ashby to K. Courtney, 21 March 1935, "Disarmament Conference Corr. 1931-35"/438.

equality of function, legal equality cannot exist".¹³¹ Along the same lines, the WYWCA claimed that the Montevideo Treaty was not an appropriate solution to problems facing women because it did not take into account the claims of motherhood and the family, nor did it consider the different social and economic conditions of each country. Instead, the WYWCA reiterated its desire for "specific international agreements based upon careful comparative study" that would establish "a true equality of opportunity" for women.¹³² An annex to the WYWCA report put forward the views of the National Women's Trade Union League of America (WTUL), one of the strongest opposers of the ERA.¹³³ The WTUL believed the Equal Rights Treaty was "impracticable and detrimental to the real interests of women" and that the equal rights proponents had misunderstood the needs of industrial versus professional women.¹³⁴ Although the supporters of the Equal Rights Treaty were most often professional women, professional women's organizations did not necessarily support the Treaty. The IFBPW, for instance, refused support on the grounds that it threatened to break down the standards "which organised industrial women had repeatedly declared to be essential to their welfare".¹³⁵

Despite their skill as lobbyists, the equal rights feminists were clearly outnumbered. The majority of the Women's International Organizations opposed the Equal Rights Treaty because it threatened protective legislation. Key contacts in the Secretariat such as Radziwill and Craig McGeachy were unwilling to support a treaty that would challenge international legislation already adopted by one of the League bodies -the ILO. Moreover, many of the women on Assembly delegations and Committees

¹³¹LoN, Nationality and Status of Women, A.19.1935.V., p.34.

¹³²Ibid., pp.10-11.

¹³³This fact infuriated the ODI which had submitted statements from various national affiliates, but were told by the Secretariat that such material could not be included as it did not come from international organizations. Naturally the League would be biased in favour of those groups signalling support for the ILO's Conventions. See "The League of Nations and the Status of Women" in *The Open Door*, December 1937.

¹³⁴LoN, Nationality and Status of Women, A.19.1935.V., Annex 3, pp.12-15.

¹³⁵LoN, Nationality and Status of Women, A.19.1935.V., p.36.

supported protective legislation, at least in the area of protection of maternity. Even equal rights feminists associated with the Women's Consultative Committee tended to avoid any direct policy statement on protective legislation with regard to maternity, though the WILPF representative on the Committee, Lola Maverick Lloyd (also a member of the NWP), advised fellow-members:

Let us not be side-tracked by the issue of protective laws, a red herring cast in our way by the opponents of feminism. After women have gained a legal equality that will enable them to safeguard more carefully than ever all the interests of the race, details of legislation for the benefit of the coming generation can safely be left to them.¹³⁶

Many equal rights feminists simply maintained that non-discriminatory legislation like the Equal Rights Treaty was the best means of dealing with maternity.

One of the few Women's International Organizations that could have been expected to join forces with the Women's Consultative Committee was the ODI. Despite the group's uncompromising stand against protective legislation it opposed the Equal Rights Treaty. Throughout the 1930s the NWP, an affiliate of the ODI, remained unable to secure support for the Treaty.¹³⁷ The ODI believed that it was not specific enough and would not necessarily bring about the repeal of existing laws, in particular the international labor conventions, that discriminated against women; as proof it listed Latin American countries which had signed the Treaty but had not freed themselves from obligations under the discriminatory Night Work Convention.¹³⁸ To the ODI blanket legislation such as the Equal Rights Treaty was not a suitable means "for securing those complicated amendments to widely differing laws which will be necessary in every country before women attain to an equality of right in every sphere with their fellow

¹³⁶WILPF Papers, report of L. Maverick Lloyd for Brugge Executive Meeting, (n.d.), p.3, IV/277/110.

¹³⁷See ODI, *Report of the Fourth Conference in Copenhagen, August 19th-23rd, 1935* (London, 1935), pp.42-51;65-67.

¹³⁸LoN, *Nationality and Status of Women*, A.19.1935.V., p.43. See Chapter 2, p.61 for details on the Night Work Convention.

citizens - men".¹³⁹ The fact that several women's organizations had shown support for the Equal Rights Treaty was explained in the following terms:

The truth is that to-day there are very few women's organisations which like to say, or like to be quoted as saying, that they are opposed to "equal rights for women". They feel that they will be considered as reactionary unless they support the comfortably vague phrase, "equal rights". Very few societies, however, have cleared their own minds as to what exactly they mean by "equal rights"...They like the phrase, but shun the definition.¹⁴⁰

Throughout the 1930s the ODI took objection to the tendency of both governments and women's organizations to exclude economic rights in their use of the term "equal rights". In particular, it deplored "the lack of intellectual clarity" manifested in calls for full political rights for women and for differential labor legislation and restriction on the working rights of women.¹⁴¹ While the ODI had no doubt about the meaning of equal rights - "the autonomy and responsibility of the adult individual, whether man or woman" - it believed that if no clear definition could be reached by others it was dangerous to have the Equal Rights Treaty ratified.¹⁴²

The tendency of most Women's International Organizations to demand both equality and protection grew stronger during the late 1930s in the face of growing restrictions on the right of women to work. The ICW and the IAW passed several resolutions affirming the principle that a woman, married or unmarried, should have the same rights as a man to keep or obtain paid work. For the IAW this included the right to equal pay for equal work. At the last IAW Congress before the Second World War, a resolution was passed declaring "[t]hat regulations dealing with hours of work, night work, dangerous or unhealthy work shall be based upon the nature of the work and designed for the adequate and scientific protection

¹³⁹ODI Papers, Confidential report from the Headquarters Committee to the Board of Officers on "The Equal Rights Treaty...", (n.d., 1938?) p.8, 5/ODI/X13/472.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p.8.

¹⁴¹See resolution adopted on "The Modern Line of Attack on Women's Civil Rights", in ODI, *Report of the Fifth Conference in Cambridge, July 25th-29th, 1938* (London, 1938), p.50.

¹⁴²ODI, "Confidential report from Headquarters Committee", p.12.

of all workers, irrespective of their sex". It should be noted that this resolution did not obtain the support of the U.S. delegation.¹⁴³ Both the ICW and IAW, however, continued to support the protection of maternity.

The 1935 Assembly had the difficult task of responding to the statements forwarded by the Women's International Organizations. Several delegates supported the view that "at a time when the position of women in many countries was causing the greatest possible anxiety and alarm...the League should not hesitate to give a lead and a direction to national discussion".¹⁴⁴ Though little headway was made against the idea that the status of women was a domestic issue, the Assembly invited governments to send information regarding the political and civil rights of women in their countries. The women's organizations, even those who would have preferred more immediate action by way of an international convention on equal rights, were satisfied that their campaign was placed "in the forefront of world politics".¹⁴⁵ McKinnon Wood viewed the plan as a compromise "intended to avoid any necessity for immediate thought or unpleasantness": governments were unable to propose any definite line of action and unwilling to offend the women's organizations.¹⁴⁶ The result, he believed, would be "an ill-digested encyclopaedic mass of information...unlikely to provide anything approaching a policy".¹⁴⁷

Even countries that forwarded reports on the status of women to the Secretary-General continued to deny League authority in the matter. The Government of the United Kingdom, for example, prefaced its response with the statement that unlike the nationality of women and the traffic in women, the status of women was not a matter of international concern: "the extent to which effect should be given in any State to the principle of the

¹⁴³Whittick (1979), p.142; Munro (1979), pp.208-210.

¹⁴⁴LoN, Records of the Ordinary Session of the Sixteenth Assembly, First Committee, Fourth Meeting, 18 September 1935, OJSS No.134, p.29.

¹⁴⁵NWP Papers, D. Evans to Betty [no last name], 4 October 1935. I/1/56.

¹⁴⁶LNA, H.McKinnon Wood, memo to Mr. Wilson, 3 June 1937, 3A/19205/13900, R3756.

¹⁴⁷H. McKinnon Wood to Mrs. Pittman Potter, 26 May 1936, quoted in Becker (1981), p.178.

equality of the sexes is a matter for that State to determine under its domestic law according to its own circumstances and requirements".¹⁴⁸ Still, a catalogue of the treatment of women under laws of each country could provide data for a comparative study. Throughout 1936 and 1937 the League received statements from governments and women's organizations generating the publication of several hundred pages of data on the status of women throughout the world. The results clearly demonstrated the inequalities still existing between the sexes in each nation and the unequal development in the status of women from country to country.¹⁴⁹

In the meantime the Women's International Organizations continued to consider possibilities for raising the status of women through international action. Still opposed to the Equal Rights Treaty, the Liaison Committee formed a new body "The Status of Women Group" to reconsider its earlier proposal for an alternative equality convention.¹⁵⁰ McKinnon Wood accurately described the Group's program as "ambiguous". This time the Group made no attempt to draft a convention; instead, it lobbied the League to appoint a committee of experts to plan an international conference which would draft a convention securing for women "civil, political and legal status based on the principle of the equality of the sexes".¹⁵¹ This plan did not have the support of all members of the Liaison Committee. The IFUW believed that since an equality convention "was not practical politics" women should not press for action "at this difficult moment in world affairs"; further demands at this juncture, they believed, "might prove to be injurious rather than helpful

¹⁴⁸LoN, Status of Women, Communications Received from Governments and Women's International Organisations since September 1936, 10 September 1937, A.14(a).1937.V., p.2.

¹⁴⁹See LoN, Status of Women, Communications from Governments and Women's International Organisations, 29 September 1936, A.33.1936.V. Information was received from twenty-eight governments and eight women's organizations. Reports furnished covered thirty-eight countries.

¹⁵⁰WILPF Papers, Minutes of Liaison Committee Meeting, 13 April 1937 and 24 May 1937, IV/278/110; also meeting of 27 September 1937, IV/279/110.

¹⁵¹LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to M. Kremer, 16 September 1937, 3A/30687/13900 R3757 and contents of file.

to the cause of women".¹⁵² The WYWCA and the IFBPW requested the League to establish effective machinery to undertake a thorough study of the material it had received "with a view of ascertaining the best and most practical methods of improving the status of women".¹⁵³

Yet contrary to the apprehensions expressed by some women's organizations there was a growing responsiveness to ideas about the League's role in protecting fundamental individual rights. At the 1937 Assembly Mr. Cassin (France) stated that "[t]he competence of the League in humanitarian matters of a material kind was fully accepted" and "would not be denied in this matter":

The League could not ignore inequalities of so gross a character in some countries that it left women under such disabilities as to cause much suffering...The League, by its universality, the fact that it contained all civilisations, could aid Governments by its high moral authority to overcome their local difficulties and to remove serious inequalities in their countries.¹⁵⁴

For the first time since the status of women was raised at the League, the possibility of an international convention to promote women's rights was discussed, albeit for the distant future after further League investigations. While Cassin believed that time "was not ripe to conclude an international convention", he suggested that an international committee should be appointed to work out a program of action. The CRWLN's proposal for an inquiry into the status of women, raised five years earlier, was finally accepted.

The 1937 Assembly approved plan for a comprehensive and scientific inquiry into "the legal status enjoyed by women in the various countries of the world as the results of the provisions of national law and the application of those provisions". It was specified that this three-year

¹⁵²In June the IFUW participated in the Group but may have withdrawn later. See Extracts from Status of Women Group Minutes June 1937, WILPF Papers, IV/279/110, and Minutes of 22nd Meeting of the IFUW Council, 17 and 19 August(?) 1937, IFUW Papers, Council Minutes, Vol.3, Item 15, p.6 and Item 32, p.15

¹⁵³LNA, Dorothy A. Heneker to the Secretary-General, 16 September 1937, 3A/19397/13900 R3756. A similar letter was written by Ruth F. Woodsmall (WYWCA) to the Secretary-General, 7 June 1937, 3A/19189/13900 R3755.

¹⁵⁴LoN, Journal of the Eighteenth Session of the Assembly, No.10, 23 September 1937, p.103.

inquiry would be carried out by several scientific institutions (later named as the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, the International Institute of Public Law and the International Bureau for Unification of Penal Law) under the supervision of a committee of legal experts appointed by the Council and, if desired, with the co-operation of the Women's International Organizations. The Inquiry into the Legal Status of Women was intended to provide the League with an objective picture of the actual legal position of women upon which further action could be based.¹⁵⁵ Though rather vague with regard to long-term policy, it was the first step toward international action to advance the status of women.

Even the Women's Consultative Committee had reason to be satisfied. Dorothy Evans (ERI) congratulated American feminists for releasing the "inertia" among European feminists:

Without the persistent lobbying of the American women and Miss Paul's genius for making each opportunity the stepping stone to wider opportunities, we know that the League would still be ignoring our demands instead of being prepared to spend a large sum on investigating the status of women throughout the world.¹⁵⁶

On this occasion the equal rights feminists were not only satisfied with 'half a loaf' but were prepared to take credit for it. Their struggles over the previous decade had probably resigned them to the fact that the Inquiry represented the maximum international consensus available. The Consultative Committee was not alone in believing that the League Inquiry marked "an important step in the history of women's emancipation".¹⁵⁷ All the women's organizations acknowledged that the Inquiry would provide a solid basis for future action. Although there was no reference to an international convention, the Inquiry was viewed by the Status of Women Group as "practical progress" in the direction of eventual international

¹⁵⁵LoN, Status of Women, Report submitted to the First Committee to the Assembly, 25 September 1937, A.54.1937.V., p.3.

¹⁵⁶NWP Papers, D. Evans to Mrs. Stephen Pell, 2(?) November, 1937. NWP I/1/60.

¹⁵⁷LNA, Communication from the Women's Consultative Committee to Committee of Experts on the Status of Women, 3 April 1938, 3A/19254/13900 R3756.

legislation.¹⁵⁸

The Committee of Inquiry into the Status of Women functioned until its work was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War.¹⁵⁹ During this period the scientific institutes collected data in regard to the three areas under examination: private law, public law and criminal law. Apart from certain laws which restricted contract and business activities of married women as professional persons, all questions concerning employment of women were examined by the ILO in its parallel inquiry on the economic status of women.¹⁶⁰ While there was no repeat performance of the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality women's groups were able to maintain close contact with the Committee of Inquiry. The Committee was made up of three men and four women, all lawyers or jurists with the exception of Kerstin Hesselgren, a regular member of the Swedish delegation to the Assembly. McKinnon Wood explained to Hesselgren (ICW) that her participation would help inspire the confidence of the women's organizations and that she could play an important role "in protecting the committee...against possible ill-informed criticism" from women who demanded more of the Committee than could possibly be expected.¹⁶¹ After a lengthy debate concerning the best means to encourage the involvement of the women's organizations without undermining the objectivity of the inquiry by appearing too closely connected with them, provisions were made for the collaboration of women's organizations through round-table discussions.¹⁶²

A second problem raised in connection with the Women's International

¹⁵⁸WILPF Papers, Confidential "Status of Women Group, Organiser's Report", 27 September 1937, p.3 and p.5, IV/279/110.

¹⁵⁹The only secondary work on the Committee is a two-page note "The League of Nations Status of Women Committee", *The Australian Law Journal*, 60 (March 1986), pp.121-22.

¹⁶⁰See ILO, *The Law and Women's Work: A Contribution to the Study of the Status of Women* (Geneva, 1939).

¹⁶¹LNA, H. McKinnon Wood to K. Hesselgren, 20 January 1938, 3A/31757/31757 R3771.

¹⁶²LoN, Comité chargé de l'étude du statut juridique de la femme [hereafter cited as C.S.F.]/1st Session/P.V.2., 4 April, 1938; C.S.F./1st Session/P.V.5., 6 April 1938; and C.S.F./1st Session/P.V.6., 6 April 1938.

Organizations concerned the information to be supplied by them. The Chairman, Professor Gutteridge of the University of Cambridge, believed that the Women's International Organizations would provide useful information regarding the practical enforcement of laws. There was some fear, however, that such information would not be sufficiently objective and that information supplied on women in non-Western cultures would expose the Committee to the criticism of certain States.¹⁶³ The women's organizations proved less of a problem than had been anticipated. They respected the value of an objective study and deferred to Hesselgren's judgement on technical matters.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, they were satisfied that Committee members took their task seriously. New York lawyer, Dorothy Kenyon, was a member of the American Business and Professional Women's Association. Mrs. Bastid, Professor of Law at the University of Lyon, was a member of the French NCW and, according to Corbett Ashby, was an excellent example of "the new feminism": she brought her three-month old baby to the first meetings of the Committee.¹⁶⁵ McKinnon Wood was charged with the task of co-ordinating the Committee's activities and even he had changed his views. He admitted to Gutteridge that the position of women (under Western law) "can probably be promoted and accelerated by a comparative study of the law such as is now in progress".¹⁶⁶

At the preliminary meeting with the Women's International Organizations the Chairman explained that "the first step towards abolishing divergencies in the laws of the different countries concerning the legal status of women was to institute preparatory studies - a purely technical matter in itself, but an essential preliminary to further progress". Toward this end the women's organizations were invited to bring to the Committee's notice any cases where existing laws did not seem

¹⁶³LoN, C.S.F./1st Session/P.V.9., 8 April 1938, pp.2-5.

¹⁶⁴LNA, H. McKinnon Wood, memo to the Secretary-General, 18 January 1939, wherein he pays tribute to the efforts of Hesselgren as chief liaison with the women's organizations, 3A/36734/31757 R3772.

¹⁶⁵WILPF Papers, Confidential Report by M. Corbett Ashby, "Status of Women at Geneva: Meeting of the Committee of Experts", n.d., IV/279/110.

¹⁶⁶LNA, H. McKinnon Wood to Prof. Gutteridge, 20 October 1938, 3A/33633/31757 R3772.

to be applied in practice.¹⁶⁷ Corbett Ashby later noted:

[o]ne or two of the Committee members were nervous of the effect on governments of setting up the women's organisations in judgement on them, but all were agreed that the tabling of laws alone could not give a true picture of women's status, so often profoundly modified by tradition, by the lapse in practice of certain laws, or by the fact that new codes may be ahead of actual custom.¹⁶⁸

Although the question of the application of law was bound to involve the Committee in controversy, it was a sign of its commitment to addressing the realities of women's position that it insisted on addressing this aspect of the problem. Perhaps to dispel the worries of Committee members over the possible action of propagandist organizations, Margery Corbett Ashby and Gertrude Baer (WILPF) recommended that the professional women's organizations would be in the best position to supply the Committee with impartial information regarding the application of the laws.¹⁶⁹

Most of the women's organizations seemed willing to wait for the inquiry to table its report at the end of three years before making further demands of the League. As Corbett Ashby put it, "[p]ropaganda and education are left to us: the Committee will provide the unassailable basis of facts".¹⁷⁰ The Women's Consultative Committee, however, continued its efforts for more immediate action by attempting, unsuccessfully, to place the Equal Nationality Treaty and equality amendments to the Covenant on the Assembly agenda in 1938 and 1939.

Although Geneva failed to live up to expectations as "the key to equality", important advances were made by feminists at the League in the 1930s . Indeed, to have convinced the League to take up the status of women as a subject deserving consideration at the inter-governmental level was a significant achievement. Progress by women in this area came in the wake of other developments concerning the League's responsibility in the

¹⁶⁷LoN, C.S.F./1st Session/P.V.12(1), 9 April 1938, pp.2-6.

¹⁶⁸WILPF Papers, Confidential Report of M. Corbett Ashby, "Status of Women at Geneva Meeting of the Committee of Experts", [n.d.], p.2, IV/279/110.

¹⁶⁹LoN, C.S.F./1st Session/P.V.12(1), p.10.

¹⁷⁰Confidential Report of M. Corbett Ashby (op.cit), pp.1-2.

field of human rights. Feminists were able to draw on these ideas in their campaign for international obligations that would guarantee women's rights. Yet they proved unable to reach consensus on what form these obligations should take. It was agreed that the elimination of discrimination on the basis of sex in the area of political and civil rights was necessary, but the Equal Rights Treaty gave rise to doubts whether the concept 'equality' adequately dealt with the needs of women in other areas. Doctrinaire equal rights feminists stuck to their demand for the Treaty. Other feminists struggled to articulate women's desire for equality while hanging on to protective legislation that recognized difference.

The equal rights feminists' success at drawing attention to the Equal Rights Treaty at the League forced its opponents to formulate alternative proposals such as the demand for a League sponsored inquiry into the status of women. Without Radziwill's support proposals for an inquiry would have received scant attention in the Secretariat. This re-confirms the importance of the women's networks for getting gender-specific issues on the agenda. It also suggests that Secretariat officials ultimately had more influence in policy-making than the Latin American delegations which apparently backed the Equal Rights Treaty but were unable to have it adopted by the League. The League's eventual support for an investigation into the status of women can be interpreted in a number of ways. At best, it reflected the recognition that women's rights deserved international protection. At the same time Assembly delegates appeared to support calls for the Inquiry because they saw it as a means of sustaining women's loyalty to the League. At worst, the Inquiry can be interpreted as a mere gesture in support of women's rights, but one that had lasting implications.

While slow to concede a role for the League in regard to the status of women, McKinnon Wood was among those who encouraged the scientific institutes to continue the inquiry after the war broke out. As he put it, "information collected now would...have a value if the League survives or is re-established in a form which would want to publish something about the

status of women".¹⁷¹ He was correct to foresee a continued role in questions concerning the status of women for the new international organization. At the San Francisco Conference to determine the structure of the United Nations Organization held in the spring of 1945, Brazilian delegate, Bertha Lutz (IACW) succeeded in having a phrase about equality included in the goals of the UN as set forth in the preamble to the UN Charter: "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small". Through her delegation, Lutz also requested that a special committee be created to study conditions and prepare reports on the political, civil and economic status of women as a continuation of the work begun by the League of Nations.¹⁷²

Initially, the Commission was proposed as a sub-committee of the Human Rights Commission. Its aims and to a certain degree even its structure were very similar to plans for an International Women's Bureau outlined by Chrystal Macmillan more than twenty-five years earlier. Using the same arguments as they had presented over the previous two decades, those Women's International Organizations which had opposed a Women's Bureau at the League attempted to block the creation of the Status of Women Commission. In 1946 the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations wrote to the UN Economic and Social Council deploring any action that would suggest that human rights referred to only men and that women's rights were a separate category.¹⁷³ In this they were supported by Eleanor Roosevelt, a member of the Human Rights Commission, who believed that women should work on an equal basis with men within the full UN

¹⁷¹LNA, H. McKinnon Wood to Prof. Gutteridge, 27 September 1939, 3A/33633/31757 R3772. See also 3A/38289/30999 R3769 for activities during the war.

¹⁷²The declaration was not adopted at San Francisco, but was raised again at the first meeting of the Economic and Social Council in February 1946. The story of the formation of the Status of Women Commission remains to be written. See UN Office of Public Info., *The United Nations and the Status of Women* (UN, 1961); "Status of Women", *UN Weekly Bulletin*, 16 September 1946, pp.11-13. I am indebted to Margaret E. Galey for helping me to piece together the events surrounding the formation of the Commission. Her account can be found in M. Galey and V. Schuck, *Women and Politics in the United Nations* (forthcoming).

¹⁷³LCWIO, *An Experiment in Co-operation 1925-1954* (London, 1954), p.8.

system.¹⁷⁴ Meanwhile members of the WWP successfully lobbied for a Sub-Commission on the Status of Women and later, led by Alice Paul, succeeded in having the Sub-Commission raised to a full Commission. The example of the IACW was set forward as the prototype for the Commission and from the outset it was granted special status.¹⁷⁵ Equal rights organizations continued to maintain that until women were on an equal footing with men in all fields a special commission was necessary to promote their interests.

The scheme outlined by the League committee of experts and the material collected in the course of its inquiry provided the basis for the early activities of the Status of Women Commission.¹⁷⁶ There was even continuity in terms of participation. Lawyer Dorothy Kenyon, former member of the League's Committee of Inquiry, was appointed to the Commission. Three women who had served as delegates or experts to the League Assembly were also members of the Commission, among them Danish economist and Vice President of the Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations, Bodil Begtrup, who was appointed the first Chairman of the Commission.¹⁷⁷

As the aims of the Commission were defined and its work got under way, the Women's International Organizations originally opposed to the Commission on the grounds that it segregated women's issues from other UN activities soon came to support its activities. Most were granted NGO consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council allowing them to send representatives to participate in the meetings of the Council and its Commissions (Status of Women, Human Rights and various social bodies). After almost two decades of disagreement over the best means to improve the

¹⁷⁴Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor: The Years Alone* (New York: WW Norton, 1972), pp.49-50.

¹⁷⁵UN, Commission on the Status of Women, Report of the Commission on the Status of Women to the Economic and Social Council, 25 February 1947, E/281/Rev.1.

¹⁷⁶"Status of Women", *UN Weekly Bulletin*, 16 September, 1946, p.11.

¹⁷⁷UN, Commission on the Status of Women, Report of the Commission on the Status of Women to the Economic and Social Council, E/281/Rev.1, 25 February 1947.

situation of women in society the Women's International Organizations met in an uneasy alliance on the Status of Women Commission. There was no end to the tension between the demand for non-discriminatory legislation and protective or corrective legislation. The Commission immediately embraced the cause of equal rights but emphasized that with respect to the enjoyment of full equality in social and labor rights special consideration should be given to women on the grounds of motherhood. It also supported provisions for maternal and child care.¹⁷⁸ It is possible to conclude that the activities of inter-war feminists at the League of Nations not only laid the foundations for UN action with regard to the status of women but provided some indication of the fundamental divisions in feminist thought that it would have to accommodate.

¹⁷⁸UN, Report of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women to the Commission on Human Rights (UN E/HR/18/Rev.1), Economic and Social Council Official Records, First Year, Second Session, Fourth Meeting, 28 May 1946, Annex 4.

CHAPTER 7

WOMEN'S PEACE WORK AT THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Women's enhanced presence in the public sphere after the First World War gave rise to many hopes and expectations about their influence in the cause of peace. Women members of the Secretariat, League committees and delegations shared with Women's International Organizations the certainty that their social and humanitarian activities - not least that of raising the status of women - would aid in establishing conditions upon which world peace could be built. At the same time, peace work was considered a category in itself. "Peace and disarmament" became a standard item on the agendas of social feminist organizations. They campaigned in favour of disarmament and strengthening the League's peace-keeping activities. Most of the equal rights groups steered clear of peace work in Geneva preferring to devote their efforts to the cause of equality. Equal rights feminists who wished to work for disarmament were free to join peace societies, as many of them did.¹ All the Women's International Organizations used claims about women's special contribution to the cause of peace to expand women's influence at the League, however.

As outlined above, there are two distinct theoretical orientations discernable in writings on 'women and peace'. The first approach, sometimes referred to as 'feminist standpoint', celebrates difference. It argues that women's maternal role and/or women's traditional exclusion from the military provides them with special insights which lead to an anti-war stance. The second approach interprets 'women and peace' as a social, political and historical construct which must be de-constructed in order to lay bare the political claims and social identities it sustains. During the inter-war years social feminists articulated something very close to a 'feminist standpoint' approach. The cornerstone of women's peace work at the League was the celebration of difference - that is, the idea that women could provide an alternative perspective to the 'male' war ethic. Yet the motivations that gave rise to claims about 'women and peace' were complex. The cultural image of woman as peacemaker had its political uses

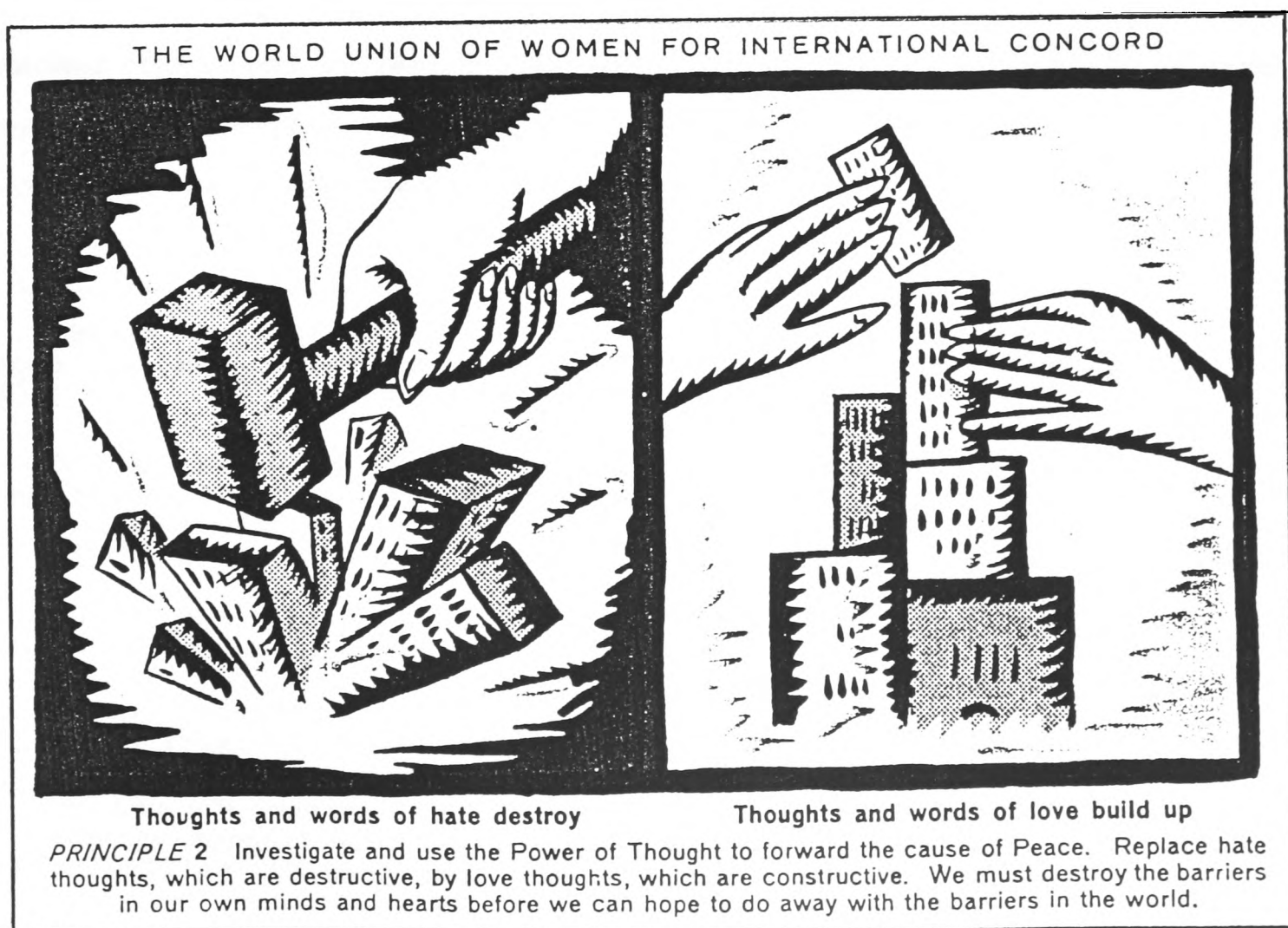
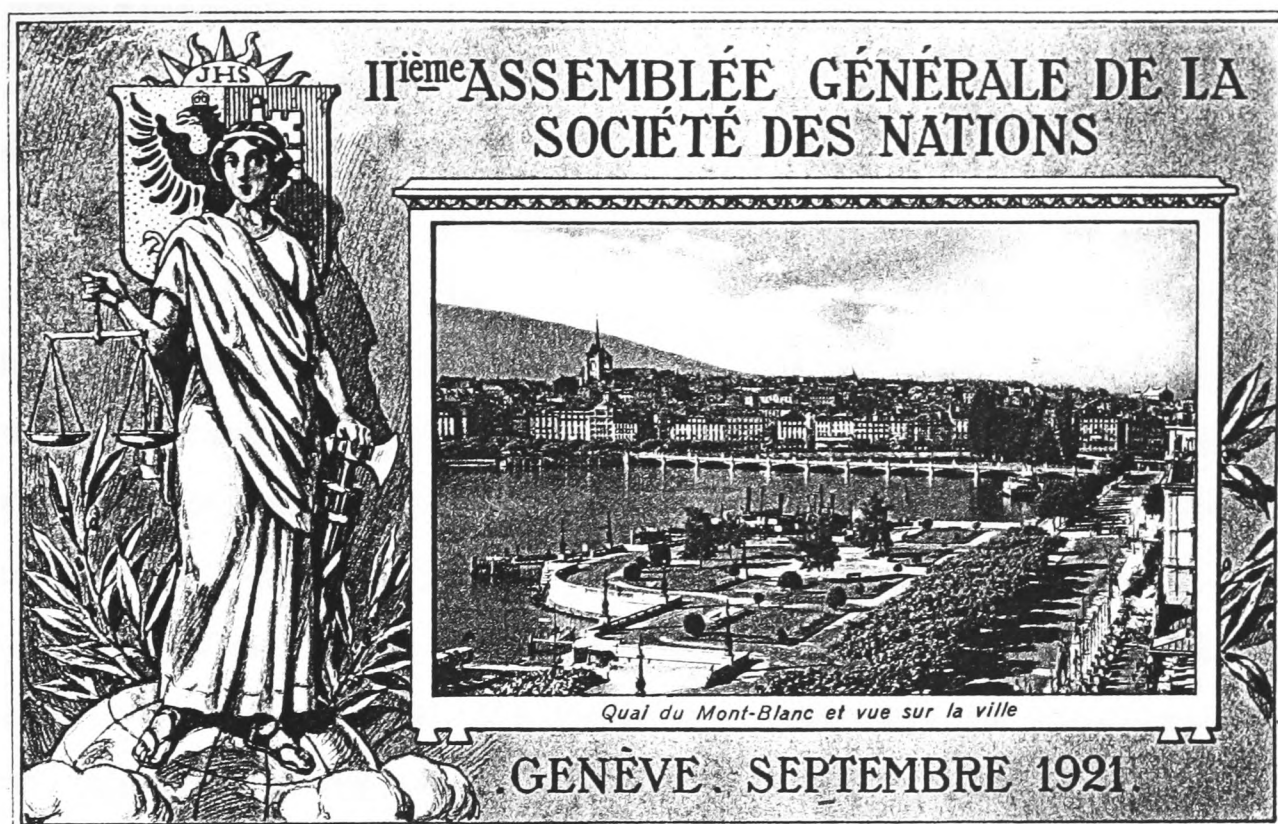
¹Cott (1987), pp.70-72.

and these must be considered in the analysis of women's peace work at the League. As the League came under criticism in the 1930s, it searched for ways in which to garner support. One such effort involved intensifying collaboration with women. The League sought to harness the considerable propagandist skills demonstrated over the years by the Women's International Organizations. In its efforts to mobilize women's support the League relied on the traditional identification of men with war and women with peace. One of the great ironies of the period was that while internationalists at Geneva held on to the image of women as pacifists, women were being used for quite different purposes in authoritarian regimes.

During the twenties the peace movement was at its strongest. Women's International Organizations joined other groups in promoting the League at their congresses and at special women's peace conferences. Yet apart from the WILPF, few of the women's organizations attempted to establish specific policies on peace and disarmament. Expressions of hostility to war were usually followed by resolutions in support of the League of Nations. Some Women's International Organizations urged national affiliates to press their governments to sign international agreements for the peaceful settlement of disputes, among them the Geneva Protocol (1924), the Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928) and the Optional Clause (1929). More often, however, women's organizations simply made vague pronouncements in support of disarmament and the arbitration of disputes through the League without seriously examining how either could be realized. In this, the Women's International Organizations were not alone. During the twenties few supporters of the League considered exactly what it would entail to make the League's peace-keeping functions operative.

Like many other internationalist groups the Women's International Organizations turned their energies toward educating for peace. Here again, there was a lack of preciseness but liberal hopes about the interdependence of nations and the oneness of humanity were among the ideas they aimed to transmit. At the heart of their education work was the conviction that public opinion could be organized to play an important role in determining

Examples of Postcards Issued During the Inter-War Years



foreign policy in favour of peace. Throughout the inter-war years women's organizations held study-groups, public meetings and circulated masses of material on international issues. One of the most successful Conference was that on "The Prevention of the Causes of War" held in London in 1924 by the ICW. It brought together delegates from the Women's International Organizations, women M.P.s and League delegates, members of the British LNU, British intellectuals and officials from the League Secretariat and the ILO.² Education to develop "the international mind" in individuals, in trade and finance and in governments was the central theme of the Conference. Meetings and conferences were held on a variety of other peace themes as well. In 1927, for example, the Alliance held a study conference on the subject of "Action Possible to Women as Citizens in Support of Peace and the League of Nations".³ Women's organizations, especially the IFUW, co-operated in the work of the League's Committee on Intellectual Co-operation for the reform of school and university curricula to educate youth in the aims of the League.⁴

One reason for the emphasis on educating for peace can be found in the structure of the women's organizations themselves. Most were consensus-seeking bodies which avoided controversial issues wherever possible. Although most women were in favour of general disarmament, some demanded "total and universal disarmament" while others wanted disarmament only insofar as their own nation's security would not be threatened.⁵ Discussions on disarmament always proved a sensitive issue for German

²Among the fifty speakers were Dr. Nitobe, Under-Secretary of the League, Gilbert Murray, Lady Astor, Helena Swanwick, and J.A. Hobson, ICW (1924).

³Bussey and Tims (1965;1980) is the best available source for the broad range of peace activities carried out by women in the period, and though the emphasis is on the WILPF, other women's groups participated in many of the same activities.

⁴The Committee was intended to improve the conditions of intellectual workers, to build up international contacts among members of intellectual professions and to strengthen the League's influence for peace by encouraging teachers, etc. to use their influence in support of the cause of international co-operation. Walters (1952), Vol.1, p.190.

⁵At the ICW Congress in 1925, delegations from Poland and Germany were reluctant to support disarmament resolutions on these grounds. LNA, report by Radziwill on ICW Congress, 3 July 1925, 13/43088/43088x R1022.

members of women's organizations. If other member states of the League were not planning to honour international obligations to disarm, argued German members of the IAW in 1931, then Germany should have the right to re-arm "to the lowest point consistent with national safety" as provided in Article 8 of the Covenant.⁶ Specificities on peace issues threatened to split Women's International Organizations in a way that would be irreparable for bodies constituted internationally - along national lines. Thus vague pro-League statements and education programs to create peace-sustaining values remained the safest options. This is not to suggest that women's peace work was entirely compromised by the need for consensus. Through their national affiliates the Women's International Organizations helped to bring international affairs to the attention of large numbers of citizens in many countries who might not have been reached through the normal channels, most notably, women.⁷

By the 1930s the Women's International Organizations had established themselves as propagandists for the League. Even if they sometimes criticized its failure to act decisively on questions concerning women, they championed the cause of disarmament and the arbitration of international disputes through the League. At the same time they pushed the idea that women had a special contribution to make to the cause of peace. As the League got into trouble it became more eager for women's support, though not in the way the women's organizations had intended. The first move in this direction came in September 1931 when the Assembly resolved to study schemes for "increasing the collaboration of women in the work of the League of Nations". The resolution emerged from a request by the Spanish delegation that the League Assembly consider "[m]eans of associating feminine action and feminine feeling with the work of the

⁶Quoted in Whittick (1979), p.112.

⁷See analysis of the part played by Canadian women raising the public's consciousness about international issues by Veronica Strong-Boag, "Peace-Making Women: Canada 1919-1939" in Roach Pierson (1987).

League of Nations by an effective and direct collaboration".⁸ It was introduced by delegate Salvador de Madariaga, the former Director of the Disarmament Section, who was well-acquainted with the Women's International Organizations, having attended some of their Conferences as a representative of the Secretariat. In 1927 alone he participated in three separate study conferences on arbitration and security organized by the WILPF, the ICW and the IAWSEC. Yet the women's organizations in Geneva were not directly responsible for the Spanish Resolution. Instead, the impetus came from the General Association of Spanish Women which had called for a women's conference to assist in disarmament and the organization of peace.⁹ The willingness of the Spanish delegation to raise the issue of women's collaboration with the League on behalf of the Association of Spanish Women can perhaps be attributed to developments in the newly founded Second Republic. Three women deputies had been elected to the Cortes by the all male electorate, among them the suffragist Clara Campoamor who was instrumental in having women's franchise included in the republican constitution adopted in December 1931. Given the changes afoot, politicians were anxious to win women's support.¹⁰ While not a member of the Assembly Committee which discussed the collaboration of women in the League's peace work, Clara Campoamor was present at the Assembly as a substitute-delegate and networked with the Women's International Organizations.¹¹

The Assembly's support for the Spanish Resolution must be seen in the wider context of deteriorating international conditions. In January 1931 the Council had announced that the long-awaited World Disarmament Conference would meet in February 1932. Just three years earlier the

⁸LoN, Co-operation of Women and of the Press in the Organisation of Peace, Report by the Third Committee, 22 September 1931, A.73.1931.IX., p.1.

⁹LoN, Records of the Twelfth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the Third Committee, Sixth Meeting, 18 September 1931, OJSS No.96, p.27.

¹⁰Mildred Kahler Geare, "Women Hold Balance of Power in Spain", *Equal Rights*, 18, 33, 17 September 1932.

¹¹ERI Papers, Report of the Work of the ERI during the 12th Session of the Assembly, 1931, "Annual Reports, 1929-33"/330.

President of the Assembly had explained to Mary Sheepshanks and other members of a WILPF deputation calling for the convening of the Conference that

in advocating solutions of a too positive character, too brusque, too imperfectly adapted to the present-day world you may add to the difficulties which the men who are responsible for their countries' destinies are trying to smooth by slow and loyal means.¹²

The President commended the admirable propaganda work carried out by women's organizations but did not hesitate to distinguish between the obligations of political men who were in power and the lofty ideals of women, who were not.

Yet by 1931 the League was prepared to solicit women's aid. By this time the rise of nationalistic feelings provoked by the economic depression made international economic relations difficult. Prospects for co-operation toward disarmament seemed even more slight. Few statesmen would be willing to support policies aimed at further reducing the production of armaments thus adding to staggering unemployment figures. When the Assembly met in September 1931 predictions for the success of the Disarmament Conference were already gloomy. In this context it is significant that the discussion on the collaboration of women took place in the Committee on the Reduction of Armaments. The Committee asserted that closer collaboration with women could be especially important at a time when the League was "undertaking what may be decisive work in the sphere of peace and understanding between nations".¹³ Helen Archdale (ERI) interpreted the Spanish Resolution as a typical response of nations in times of trouble: "[w]hatever the position of women may be in times of peace and in times of national contentment, there is no doubt that in times of national discontentment, the call to the women is always heard". Thus she asserted, "[i]n its 12th Assembly puzzled, uncertain, attacked from

¹²Quoted in Bussey and Tims (1965;1980), p.84. Other members of the deputation were Emily Green Balch (USA), Dr. Hilda Clark (Br.), Gertrude Baer (Germany), and Gabrielle Duchêne (France). See also "La députation de la L.I.F. à la S.D.N. au sujet du désarmement", *Pax International*, 3me année, 11 (Octobre 1928), p.3.

¹³LoN, Co-operation of Women and of the Press in the Organisation of Peace, Report by the Third Committee, 22 September 1931, A.73.1931.IX., p.1.

many sides, the League called upon women for help".¹⁴ It is worth noting that the Assembly prior to the Disarmament Conference had the highest ever number of women participants (though this was probably also related to the discussion of the nationality of women).

Among Assembly delegates there was a general consensus that women could help create a "moral atmosphere" favourable to the Disarmament Conference, but beyond this they were divided. Some delegates spoke explicitly of "using women for propaganda in favour of peace" [emphasis added]; they believed that women's "educative and moral rôle" and women's "influence in the formation of public opinion" could be exploited to the benefit of the League.¹⁵ Delegates were already aware of the important work done by the women's organizations to spread awareness of the League's activities but they wished to make women's propaganda efforts more effective through closer links with the League. Princess Cantacuzène (ICW), an adviser to the Romanian delegation, desired that women be allowed to play an official part at the Conference "worthy of their high pacifist mission" but this idea was rejected on the grounds that women and women's organizations should not receive special treatment over and above other powerful organizations. Lord Robert Cecil stated that he "had always been a partisan of equal rights for men and women but... would be opposed to any resolution placing women in a more advantageous position simply because they were women".¹⁶

Although the Assembly agreed in principle on the need to further women's collaboration with the League's disarmament efforts, no agreement could be reached on the best means to achieve this end. Instead, the

¹⁴Helen Archdale, "The XIIIth Assembly of the League of Nations from the Feminist Point of View" in *Catholic Citizen*, 18, 10 (November 1932), p.83.

¹⁵LoN, Co-operation of Women and of the Press in the Organisation of Peace, A.73.1931.IX., p.1.

¹⁶The *Daily Herald* reported the next day that "[a] movement to give women a larger share in the work of the League of Nations was checked by Lord Cecil". Such reports of Lord Cecil's supposed anti-feminism obscured the fact that most of the Women's International Organizations were in accord with his position, as their memoranda over the following months was to reveal. "No Place at Geneva says Lord Cecil", *Daily Herald*, 19 September 1931.

Secretariat solicited suggestions directly from women on both the question of women's collaboration in connection with the Disarmament Conference and in relation to the wider activities of the League. Letters were sent out in November and December 1931 to all the important national and international women's organizations, to women Assembly delegates and to prominent women of many countries.¹⁷ The women's organizations themselves were somewhat skeptical of the Spanish Resolution judging by Radziwill's efforts to convince them of its importance. She wrote to Ogilvie Gordon (CRWLN) that she was "very anxious that women should realise that the League of Nations can be of use to them":

The League is aware that the support of women is very necessary to the development of its work, and that the increasing participation of women in the national and international life of nations can only work in the interest of peace and international understanding.¹⁸

On their side, the Women's International Organization made the irrefutable argument that if, as the League suggested, women were forces for peace then the obvious corollary was the need for more women in positions of power. The first step toward getting them into these positions: equality for women. This response was a consciously chosen political strategy. Chapter Six outlined the way in which the Spanish Resolution was used in the campaign for equality. What needs to be examined in more detail here is the way in which the demand for equality was used in the campaign for peace.

At the centre of the women's peace movement was the Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations (Appendix 3). The Committee was formed in September 1931 to co-ordinate propaganda work in connection with the Disarmament Conference. The Committee developed a broad education policy and served as a distribution centre for information sent out to international, national and local groups. By the mid-1930s it had established itself as "the Voice of Women" in Geneva on peace questions. In response to the Secretariat's request for suggestions on the co-operation of women in the organization of peace, the Committee stated

¹⁷Full list in LNA 50/32781/31137 R3603.

¹⁸LNA, G. Radziwill to M. Ogilvie Gordon, 15 July 1932, 50/34500/31137 R3604.

that the essential condition for the full co-operation of women was "the equalisation of the status of men and women":

When this has been achieved, the co-operation of women in the organisation of peace will be fully available and will correspond in scope and influence to the interest which women take in this vital question.¹⁹

On the more immediate question of the Disarmament Conference the PDCWIO made several points and recommendations. It believed that government delegations should search for an agreement that would take into consideration the security and well being of the next generation, and the reality that existing expenditure on armaments could be maintained only at the expense of education, social services, and other constructive measures. This line of argument ran through a lot of what was written by women on foreign affairs. In her lectures and journalism, Vera Brittain often emphasized how women's lives would be fundamentally changed if only part of the defence expenditure of Britain were to be spent on housing, education, nutrition and medical services.²⁰ In 1934 she estimated that for the cost of three bombardments of World War I "we could have had a National Maternity Service, with all that it would have meant in the reduction of maternal mortality, for nearly twenty years".²¹ At a practical level, the success of women peace activists hinged upon their ability to translate international affairs into the vocabulary of female experience - especially as mothers - and to reveal the relationship between women's concerns and political events in Manchuria or Abyssinia.²² In her writings and extensive travels a member of the Bahá'í community, Laura Dreyfus Barney (V.P. of PDCWIO), also sought to teach "that world affairs

¹⁹LNA, memo. of PDCWIO on "Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace", 1 January 1932, 50/33895/31137 R3604.

²⁰V. Brittain, "Women and Disarmament", *Headway* (February 1934), p.2.

²¹V. Brittain, "Can the Women of the World Stop War?", *Modern Women* (February 1934).

²²See Vera Brittain's lecture notes on "Women and the League of Nations" in Vera Brittain Papers, F2. This strategy is explored for an earlier period in Papachristous (1990).

are home affairs".²³

Thus, in 1931 the Peace and Disarmament Committee claimed its right, as representing women, "to an active share in all efforts to put an end to war" at the Disarmament Conference on the following grounds:

Women, who constitute half the population of the world, share with men in the economic burdens imposed by armaments and in the suffering and distress caused by war. They have made a recognised contribution to moral and social welfare and as mothers they are specially concerned with the well being of the rising generation.²⁴

Its concrete proposals for securing an "active" role for women at the Disarmament Conference included the recommendation that competent women be appointed to national delegations, that time be set aside during a plenary session to receive petitions and declarations in favour of disarmament prepared by the women's organizations throughout the world, and that special arrangements be made to give the PDCWIO the same access to the Conference Hall and to circulated documents as would be accorded the press.

These recommendations, together with others along similar lines made by other women's organizations, were included in the Secretary-General's report on the collaboration of women with the Disarmament Conference circulated to member states. Officials of the British Foreign Office remarked that the suggestions "are entirely for the Conference which will doubtless find them very tiresome".²⁵ Nevertheless, during the Disarmament Conference the women's organizations did win a few notable victories, though these were overshadowed at the time by the Conference's abysmal failure. There were four women delegates appointed to the Conference, all members of the Women's International Organizations: Margery Corbett Ashby (Britain), Winnifred Kydd (Canada), Anne Szelagowska (Poland) and Dr. Paulina Luisi (Uruguay). Prior to the Conference Mary Dingman, President

²³Quoted in Bahíyyih Nakhjavání, *Asking Questions: A Challenge to Fundamentalism* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1990), p.144.

²⁴LNA, Memorandum on the Collaboration of Women by PDCWIO, 1 January 1932, pp.2-3, 50/33895/31137 R3604.

²⁵PRO FO/371, C. Howard Smith, memo re: LoN Conf.D.75., 25 February 1932, W2143/1008/98.

of the Peace and Disarmament Committee, led a campaign to improve relations between the Secretariat and non-governmental organizations along the lines of her Committee's proposals. In this connection special entrance cards were distributed to accredited representatives of NGOs for access to plenary meetings and public committee meetings. Arrangements were also made for them to receive Conference documents. A special bureau was set up in the Information Section for liaison purposes, at first intended just for the women's organizations, but its responsibilities soon extended to other organizations.²⁶

Like the category assessor on the League's social committees, the special status accorded NGOs at the Disarmament Conference was a significant achievement within the context of efforts to gain official status for voluntary organizations, finally realized with the provision of NGO consultative status at the formation of the UN. While they were without the authority invested in government representatives, NGOs came to be recognized as legitimate actors in the international arena. The Women's International Organizations played no small part in this process.²⁷ Another important event was the special session held at the Conference to receive petitions from the representatives of national and international organizations.²⁸ Nine international societies were represented. The two women's groups - the PDCWIO and the IUCWL - claimed to represent seventy million women. Mary Dingman spoke on behalf of the PDCWIO. She stated that women "are weary of the unending sacrifices expected of us for purposes of destruction". Women pleaded for peace not for themselves but for the future generation:

To us women, as mothers, the thought of what another great war would mean for our children is the strongest incentive

²⁶The arrangements are discussed contents of file: LNA 7B/33776/3071 R2444.

²⁷Pickard (1956), pp.44-45. See also circular letter to members of the Federation of International Organizations from Pickard, 16 January 1932, LNA 7B/33776/3071 R2444.

²⁸LoN, Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Series A, Verbatim Record of the Plenary Meeting, Vol. 1, Extraordinary Plenary Meeting, 6 February 1932, IX. Disarmament 1932. IX.60., Annex, pp.187-201.

impelling us to spend ourselves in the endeavour to make their lives secure from such a disastrous fate.²⁹

The mother image was a powerful one, even for women like Dingman, who had no children. After Dingman spoke, a procession of two hundred women presented bundles containing the eight million signatures collected by the women's organizations in the course of a disarmament campaign initiated by the WILPF in the spring of 1930. The declaration "War is Renounced - Let Us Renounce Armaments" called on governments "to examine all proposals for disarmament that have been or may be made, and to take the necessary steps to achieve disarmament". The petition was criticized both for its vagueness and for its extremism. To counter the first criticism, during the second year the petition was circulated with concrete proposals including the realization of total universal disarmament as an obligation under the Kellogg-Briand pact and equal representation of all countries at the Disarmament Conference.³⁰

Representatives of other organizations made speeches and presented petitions, among them Lord Robert Cecil on behalf of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies. Yet when the President of the Conference, Arthur Henderson, closed the session, he singled out the women's organizations for special acknowledgement:

They have brought us really a remarkable manifestation of public interest in this Conference, and the amount of labour which must have been necessary to obtain all those millions of signatures is truly astonishing...I venture to hope that, as the Conference proceeds, they will feel that they have a deepened interest in watching its progress, and that their efforts have not been in vain.³¹

Cecil, who later nominated the PDCWIO for the Nobel Peace Prize, described the Committee as "the interpreter to the Disarmament Conference of the deep anxiety of the women throughout the world that some serious step should at length be taken towards the reduction and limitation of the

²⁹Ibid., p.189.

³⁰Bussey and Tims (1965;1980), pp.94-101.

³¹LoN, Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, IX. Disarmament 1932.IX.60., Annex, pp.200-201.



100-100
Presentation of the Disarmament Petitions by
Representatives of the Women's International Organizations,
Disarmament Conference, 1932



'Women Demand Disarmament': display of petitions
presented to the Disarmament Conference, 1932



armaments of the world".³² Although the PDCWIO was not awarded the Peace Prize, it did receive several grants from the Nobel Committee to help finance its work.³³

Meanwhile, the Secretariat continued to receive recommendations on methods by which women could more effectively promote disarmament and the general aims of the League. Tilma Hainari, President of the NCW of Finland and Assembly Substitute-delegate from 1927 to 1930, believed that means should be found to "inspire" women to "make it their duty as mothers, educators, teachers and social workers to spread the knowledge of international co-operation, understanding and goodwill".³⁴ In her view closer contact with the League would aid this purpose. In particular, she suggested making the PDCWIO a temporary committee of the League for a period of five years. Several other recommendations were made regarding the formalization of links between women's organizations and the League along the lines established at the Disarmament Conference, including requests for the more liberal supply of League documents and improved access to League meetings for representatives of women's organizations.

What comes across most clearly in memoranda received by the Secretariat on the subject of women's collaboration is the resentment at being seen merely as propagandists content to operate on the 'outside'. Women's organizations bluntly rejected the sort of co-operation "which would leave women in the subordinate position to be made use of for carrying out policies decided by others"[emphasis added].³⁵ The IFUW stated:

³²Lord Cecil to Clara Guthrie d'Arcis, 5 July 1933. Reproduced in PDCWIO (1937) *The Peace-Roll of Industry*, p.53.

³³The Nobel candidature was supported by several prominent international figures including several League delegates, ambassadors and the Prime Ministers of France and Belgium. PDCWIO pamphlet, "Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations", (n.d.), UNL PDCWIO Collection [hereafter cited as Coll.], Vol.1.

³⁴LNA, T. Hainari to the Secretariat, 20 May 1932, 50/37182/31137 R3604.

³⁵LoN, Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace, Report by the Secretary-General, 25 August 1932, A.10.1932., p.2.

The appointment of more women to responsible positions in the League and to the delegations of the various countries would not only ensure more of the co-operation so much desired by the Assembly, but would also make it clear to the world that the League of Nations is, in fact as well as in word, "convinced of the great value of the contribution of women to the work of peace and good understanding between nations".³⁶

An interplay between equality and difference runs through most of the statements received by the Secretariat. Equality of status is identified as the pre-eminent goal. Yet the need for equality is explained in terms of its positive "repercussions on the international work of women and their influence on the problems dealt with by the League".³⁷ In general, the responses of the majority of the women's organizations are without references to women's presumed strong moral characters or their supposed pacifism. Yet the underlying argument was that if given greater opportunities in official positions "women's influence would be more effectively exerted to promote peace and disarmament".³⁸ Only the keen equal rights organization, the ODI, tried not to commit itself on the role of women in peace, tentatively stating that:

[w]omen who might possibly make a valuable contribution to the work of the League are, many of them, at present fully occupied in seeking to remove disabilities imposed on them...and their work and influence is lost to the League.³⁹

By the time the Assembly met in September 1932 women's organizations had made perfectly clear their commitment to getting women into official positions as the best means of improving women's contribution to the cause of peace.⁴⁰ Women delegates urged the League to follow up in deed its words about the importance of women in peace work. Forchhammer (ICW) stated:

"[w]omen had for long been helping unofficially, particularly

³⁶LoN, A.10.1932., p.8.

³⁷LoN, A.10.1932., p.10.

³⁸LoN, A.10.1932., p.12.

³⁹LoN, A.10.1932., p.14.

⁴⁰The question was moved from the Third Committee (Disarmament) to the Sixth Committee because the second part (of the Secretary-General's inquiry) involved the broader issue of collaboration in the League's work, in general.

in connection with the disarmament question. The help of women on an official basis was absolutely indispensable in the organisation of world peace".⁴¹

Some women delegates were less reticent than the women's organizations had been about making a connection between women's roles as mothers and their influence for peace. An adviser to the French delegation, Germaine Malaterre-Sellier (IAW), asserted that women represented a great force for peace which was based on their common sentiment as mothers of sons who would be sacrificed in war.⁴² Yet in most cases women's contribution was defined in vague terms, for example, by Dr. Ethel Osborne as "the complement of the activities of men", perhaps implying that women's supposed influence for peace would balance men's supposed war-like tendencies.⁴³

Lord Robert Cecil asserted that the organizations working in support of the League of Nations in Britain "owed much of their development to the devotion and activity of women". He believed that if governments could be encouraged to grant women access to education and experience for higher posts at present filled by men, "[t]he result would be of great benefit internationally".⁴⁴ But for others the contribution to be made by women clearly lay outside the political sphere. One of the delegates of France stated that his country attached great importance to the collaboration of women in the work of the League but "desired to make it clear that the French delegation did not associate the co-operation of women in the organisation of peace with the right to vote".⁴⁵

In the end, the 1932 Assembly merely re-affirmed the principle of equality set forward in Article 7 of the Covenant. Hopes raised by the League's apparent willingness to extend women's collaboration were

⁴¹LoN, Records of the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the Sixth Committee, Second Meeting, 29 September 1932, OJSS No.109, p.11.

⁴²LoN, OJSS No.109, p.11.

⁴³LoN, OJSS No.109, p.13.

⁴⁴LoN, OJSS No.109, p.13.

⁴⁵LoN, Records of the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the Sixth Committee, Fifth Meeting, 5 October 1932, OJSS No.109, p.27.

disappointed. Yet it is difficult to imagine how anything more could have emerged from the debates. Assuming that women's natural sympathies lay on the side of peace, the Assembly wished to find means by which women could be more effectively used as propagandists to bolster support for the League. But women were not content to support men's policies. They wanted the opportunity to make their own contribution to peace from positions of power. By 1932, the women's organizations had rejected unofficial collaboration as only furthering women's exclusion from power, but at the same time most remained wary of any sort of women's committee at the League.⁴⁶

At one level, the Spanish Resolution provided an opening for equal rights feminists to push for equality. In fact, it was the ERI (an organization not even affiliated to the Peace and Disarmament Committee) that convinced other women's groups to use the opportunity to press for equality. But the links drawn between equality for women and peace had long been part of the feminist repertory. Indeed, social feminists tended to perceive equality not as an end in itself, but as an essential tool for a variety of reforms among which peace figured prominently. Although equal rights organizations rarely participated in peace work, they were just as likely to use the 'women and peace' construct to justify claims for equality. One of Lola Maverick Lloyd's (NWP, WILPF) arguments in support of making the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality an official League body included the dubious claim that it was "a Committee of women workers for disarmament".⁴⁷ Members of the IACW often maintained that "equal rights would benefit peace".⁴⁸

Thus by pushing for equality instead of merely supporting the limited co-operation envisaged by the Spanish Resolution, the women's organizations helped to bring questions concerning the status of women before the League,

⁴⁶LoN, Collaboration of Women in the Organisation of Peace, A.10.1932., p.3.

⁴⁷NWP Papers, Press Release, WIL Section of the WCCN, 28 January 1932, I/V/N/144.

⁴⁸NWP Papers, Letter of Chairman to Sixth Commission of Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace, 15 December 1936, I/V/J/143.

eventually leading to the aforementioned Status of Women Inquiry. In the short-term there were also some practical benefits. Secretariat documents after 1932 reveal that officials attempted to keep the women's organizations au courant with League activities by sending them copies of League documents and by providing them access to meetings in compliance with recommendations made in connection with the Spanish Resolution.⁴⁹ Not satisfied to be "used" by the League the Women's International Organizations made important contributions to the development of a two-way relationship between the League and non-governmental organizations.

At the same time as the League sent out an appeal to women for support, the Women's International Organizations were experiencing difficulties of their own. The Depression hit organized women, whose resources were already limited, particularly hard. Many national branches found it difficult to pay affiliation fees to their international bodies. Although all the Women's International Organizations managed to survive the financial crisis, cut-backs were made, conferences postponed and publications curtailed. Resources (human and financial) that might have been used in the disarmament campaign were diverted increasingly to fighting attacks on women's economic rights imposed by governments as a means of combating male unemployment. It was noted at the 1936 Conference of the IFUW that

whereas in 1932 the activities of the National Associations reported under the heading 'Public Affairs' largely consisted in publicity for the Disarmament Conference, in 1936 the energies of the Associations are almost exclusively directed towards fighting the restrictions threatening the employment of women.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the rise of authoritarian regimes in Europe not only stripped women of rights they had won but eliminated women's groups which had worked to improve the status of women and to secure peaceful relations between

⁴⁹See for instance letters and memos regarding distribution of documents to the CRWLN in LNA 50/34500/31137 R3604 and R5668 50/20262/568. Also see LNA 15/5258/3676 R5217 for arrangements at subsequent meetings of the Assembly.

⁵⁰IFUW, Report of the Cracow Conference, quoted in Hilary Newitt, *Women Must Choose: The Position of Women in Europe To-Day* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937), p.258.

nations.

In 1932 the Italian section of WILPF ceased to exist, although links were established with Italian women living in exile.⁵¹ The Italian Association of University Women was dissolved at the request of the Italian government in 1935 after a long struggle to retain its independence from the Fascist system.⁵² After the Nazi victory in 1933, women's organizations were given the choice of *Gleichschaltung* (co-ordination) which meant conforming to certain Nazi regulations, or disbanding.⁵³ The major German women's organization, *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (BDF), an ICW affiliate, chose the latter option.⁵⁴ The German Federation of University Women continued to operate but the old Council which had campaigned against the Nazis was replaced with a new group - including members of the Nazi Party - sympathetic to the regime.⁵⁵ The exclusion of Jewish members did not rest easy with the international executive, yet it refused to release any sort of statement regarding the German Government's racial policy. Political questions of this sort were deemed "outside the scope of the Federation", though national organizations were entitled to do as they wished.⁵⁶ This position can be explained partly by the desire to keep the German Federation operating for as long as possible. The exclusion of Jewish women from the German Federation remained a point of controversy for the Board of Officers. They were relieved when the German Federation finally withdrew from the International Federation in the spring of 1936 with the explanation that "University Women as such should not be

⁵¹Bussey and Tims (1965;1980), p.105.

⁵²IFUW, *Bulletin*, 17 (December 1935), p.10.

⁵³These included recognizing the special social tasks assigned to women, the exclusion of Jewish members and the placement of Nazi women in leading posts. ICW (1966), pp.64-65.

⁵⁴Opinion is divided on the meaning of this move and whether it should be seen as an act of defiance or as passive resignation. See Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman and Marion Kaplan (eds.), *When Biology Became Destiny* (N.Y.: Monthly Review, 1984), p.21 and Koonz (1987), pp.143-44.

⁵⁵Batho (1968), p.15.

⁵⁶IFUW Papers, Minutes of Meetings of Officers, Board of Officers, 28-10 April 1933, p.5.

given a more important status than other workers".⁵⁷ Many members of the German branch of the WILPF were arrested or went into exile after the Nazi seizure of power. Two leading members, Anita Auspurg and Lida Gustava Heymann, found refuge in Switzerland where they tried to convince fellow WILPF members to take a hard line against Germany. Throughout the rest of the 1930s Women's International Organizations lost sections in Spain, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Some Japanese women's societies may have been dissolved by the government but three Japanese delegates attended the Pan-Pacific Women's Conference held in Vancouver in 1937, though they had received warnings before leaving Japan that everything they said would be reported to the Japanese authorities.⁵⁸

At the same time, the international situation was worsening. The departure of Germany from the Disarmament Conference and its subsequent withdrawal from the League in October 1933 effectively ruled out any possibilities for agreement on the reduction of armaments. Even prior to this some members of the Secretariat had abandoned hopes for educating public opinion for peace or "moral disarmament" as it became known at the League, precisely the area in which women's participation had been encouraged. Given the importance attached to women's moral rôle it was not surprising that the four women delegates to the Disarmament Conference had been appointed to the Committee on Moral Disarmament, with Margery Corbett Ashby as Chairman. This Committee met on several occasions in 1932 and 1933. It discussed issues such as the part to be played in moral disarmament by teachers and intellectuals, the cinema and broadcasting and the teaching of history and geography.

In spite of the emphasis placed on women's educative role in the Spanish Resolution, the contribution to be made by women in educating for peace never appeared on the Committee agenda. Nor was the role of women's organizations raised in the discussions, except once or twice in the same

⁵⁷IFUW Papers, Minutes of Meetings of Officers, Board of Officers, 16-17 April 1936, p.2.

⁵⁸Yoko Matsuoka, *Daughter of the Pacific* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), pp.91-92.

breath as other voluntary organizations.⁵⁹ Instead, emphasis was placed on "moral forces, whether individual or collective" and their influence in preparing conditions for peace.⁶⁰ A transcript for a peace film sent to Arthur Henderson in 1933 on behalf of the ICWG by Emmy Freundlich does not appear to have been discussed by the Committee. In the film the mother figure plays a central role. In the midst of battle scenes there is a "Pledge of the Mothers":

We who create life...we will make ourselves the conscience of the world...the mother will regenerate the earth and make of it a paradise, we will be the guardians of life, we will protect that which we have brought into the world".⁶¹

Presumably the collaboration of women envisaged by the League was not meant to extend this far. In fact, the whole question of "moral disarmament" was treated with some disdain by senior members of the Secretariat. The Director of the Disarmament Section even postponed meetings of the Committee on the grounds that they would be "highly detrimental to the interests of true disarmament". He was afraid that it would look as though whenever the League was losing confidence in the Disarmament Conference it was quite ready to indulge in the second-best course, by passing "some virtuous resolutions exalting in the proper literary form certain principles of humanity, brotherhood and solidarity".⁶²

In this climate the PDCWIO continued its peace work in Geneva. It had been founded as a consensus seeking body, but it often proved difficult for constituent members to reach agreement on policy in the face of new international crises. Even the drafting of a common working

⁵⁹LoN, Conf.D./C.D.M./37, 1 December 1933.

⁶⁰LoN, Conf.D./C.D.M./18, 20 May 1932.

⁶¹LNA, "Thine is the Earth, Oh Mankind", Film MS forwarded by E. Freundlich on behalf of the ICWG to A. Henderson in 1933, 7A/9076/9076 R4210.

⁶²LNA, T. Agnides, memo to Secretary-General, 22 May 1933, 7A/4264/4264 R4209.

program was described by the Committee as an "arduous" task.⁶³ This "Statement of Policy" supported a system of world co-operation providing for the peaceful settlement of international disputes, the changing by peaceful means world economic and political conditions, effective collective action to prevent, or in the last resort to stop, a breach of world peace and the reduction, limitation and control of armaments.⁶⁴ Underlying the foreign policy ideas of the Committee was a "profoundly moral conception of the fundamental unity of mankind".⁶⁵

The ideas propagated by the PDCWIO were internationalist. It never wavered in its support for the peaceful settlement of disputes through the League of Nations. The Committee's Vice President, Kathleen Courtney, was also a member of the executive of the League of Nations Union (Britain), and a friend of Cecil. The Committee participated both in Cecil's International Peace Campaign (IPC) and in the International Consultative Group for Peace and Disarmament (ICG).⁶⁶ Many of the study guides and political summaries circulated by the Women's Disarmament Committee were prepared by these groups. In general the policy of the Committee was patterned upon progressivist doctrines of the period and like many other peace groups it was vague on how far it was willing to go with sanctions and the use of force in collective security.

What set the PDCWIO apart from the many other peace societies was its commitment to providing an organizational structure for broadcasting

⁶³PDCWIO, Press Release No.133, 4 July 1932, UNL PDCWIO Docs. 1931-1937, p.44.

⁶⁴PDCWIO, "Statement of the Women's International Organizations in Relation to the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments", UNL PDCWIO Docs. 1931-1937, pp.40-43.

⁶⁵One principle of the Committee as described by Dingman in PDCWIO Annual Report 1938-1939, UNL PDCWIO Coll., Vol. 2, p.6.

⁶⁶Formed in the spring of 1936 with the support of Lord Robert Cecil the IPC was a popular movement to restore the authority of the League. See Birn (1981), p.173ff. The ICG was formed at the initiative of the PDCWIO in July 1932 at the end of the first session of the Disarmament Conference. Apart from the PDCWIO, its members included the International Federation of League of Nations Societies and several other international and national groups. Its aims were mainly organizational: to make reports, co-ordinate policies and programs and to do lobby work in Geneva. See International Consultative Group, *The International Consultative Group for Peace and Disarmament: Its Origin, Aims and Development*, (Geneva: ICG, 1937).

what it described as "the Voice of Women" in Geneva. The Committee attempted to educate and mobilize women through its regular news bulletins on important political events, many written by Courtney, and through prepared study guides on international issues, distributed each month to hundreds of individuals and groups all over the world. Tens of thousands of its original statement of policy were distributed throughout the world - 50,000 to Germany alone. Rarely did the material make naive statements on the need for peace; instead, detailed analyses were made of the issues of the day. Through such means the Committee sought to keep women in touch with events in Geneva. In 1936 a study on the theory and practice of sanctions was circulated. The study analyzed the attitudes of governments to sanctions and the implications of the use of sanctions for the League of Nations.⁶⁷ Each year the Committee also lobbied Assembly delegates and was successful at gaining access to key figures. Members met on several occasions with Arthur Henderson, President of the Disarmament Conference, and participated almost every year in deputations to President of the Assembly. The League continued to encourage whatever support it could muster from the women's organizations. The Assembly's vote in favour of the inquiry into the status of women described above can be attributed, in part, to its fear of losing women's support as propagandists for the League's peace-keeping activities. Indeed, the inquiry was sometimes seen by delegates as a reward for women's peace work. It will be remembered that the Latin American delegates responsible for having the status of women placed on the Assembly agenda stated that the League had "no more loyal supporters in its work for international peace than the women of the world" and as a result, "the League should show its appreciation of the services of women by giving immediate attention to every circumstance imperilling their welfare".⁶⁸

The PDCWIO's success at making itself known as the voice of women in the peace movement eventually led to tensions with the WILPF, a constituent

⁶⁷"A Note on the Basis and Nature of Sanctions", Group Survey No.5 by arrangement with the ICG, 15 September 1936, UNL PDCWIO Coll., Vol.1.

⁶⁸LoN, Status of Women, A.8.1935.V., p.1.

body not always in agreement with the Committee's policies. Some members of the WILPF were of the opinion that the PDCWIO wished to control all the peace work of women's organizations. This may have been acceptable to other women's organizations that were not themselves primarily involved with peace work, but it was resented by WILPF. According to Gertrude Baer "when women's organizations are invited or asked for information on important women's peace work, very often only that Committee [PDCWIO] is consulted". This prevented the WILPF from expressing its own views. Indeed there appears to have been some confusion over the role of the PDCWIO. Leader of the French section of the WILPF, Gabrielle Duchêne, reported that when she approached organizations represented on the Committee with a proposal for peace work, "they replied that their action for peace was done in Geneva by that Committee". When she approached Mary Dingman, the reply was that "the work was done by each federated organization".⁶⁹ In effect, some women's organizations did not engage in peace work except by virtue of their participation in the PDCWIO, though all saw the very existence of their groups as furthering the cause of international co-operation. In 1934 the IFBPW declined to become involved with certain campaigns organized by the WILPF because, in the words of President Dorothy Heneker,

apart from our active work for peace as evidenced by our affiliation with the Disarmament Committee, of the Women's International Organizations, we feel that the effort which our organisation is making to bring the trained women of all countries into closer co-operation on practical matters affecting their own interests, is in itself a strong method of promoting peace in the world.⁷⁰

Although the WILPF's progressive ideas and policies always led to tension with other women's groups, it agreed that the Committee's extensive circulation of information and literature could reach a broader audience than its own small staff and thus continued to work with the Committee.⁷¹ Yet there can be no comparison between the tremendous commitment to peace work of WILPF members and the support lent to peace activities by some of the professional women's societies. Although the Peace and Disarmament

⁶⁹WILPF Papers, WILPF Exec. Meeting, 8 April 1937, I/B/24/11.

⁷⁰WILPF Papers, D. Heneker to E. Green Balch, 4 July 1934, IV/91/101.

⁷¹WILPF Papers, WILPF Exec. Meeting, 8 September 1938, I/B/25/11.

Committee was effective at distributing information, its ability to articulate constructive responses to the crises of the 1930s was limited, in part, by the need to maintain consensus among its constituent societies. The tacit acceptance of women's role as peacemakers, however, helped to sustain the Committee as the peace movement fell apart in the mid-1930s, divided over issues of sanctions, military resistance and economic and political appeasement.

At a time when the whole political role of the League was being discredited, the Women's International Organizations stepped up their campaign for collective security through the League, yet disagreements began to emerge on what exactly this policy would entail. Women's organizations in Britain had been very active in 1934 and 1935 during the LNU's Peace Ballot, a sort of foreign policy referendum which demonstrated public support for the idea of collective security through economic, non-military sanctions and if necessary, military sanctions.⁷² The WILPF was dissatisfied with the limited aims of the Peace Ballot, however, and in April 1935 launched its own "People's Mandate Campaign". The "People's Mandate" petition, which received fourteen million signatures, was intended to force governments to honor their pledges for the peaceful settlement of disputes and disarmament made in the Kellogg Pact and the League Covenant. But by the time the WILPF presented the results of the campaign to the President of the Assembly in September 1935, governments were already bypassing the League on international questions. In Britain, for example, the White Paper on Defence of the previous March established a policy of re-armament, signalling the abandonment of collective security, or at least, collective security through non-military means. With the publication of the White Paper on Defence, Corbett Ashby resigned from the Disarmament Conference because she could not support a policy of re-armament.⁷³ She described her experiences as a member of the Disarmament Conference as the most unhappy period of her life and blamed the intransigence of the

⁷²See Dame Adelaide Livingstone, *The Peace Ballot: The Official History* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1935).

⁷³Whittick (1979), pp.115-116.

British, in part, for the failure of governments to reach any constructive agreement which might have averted the move to re-arm.⁷⁴

Still, the Women's International Organizations continued to look to the League for solutions to international crises. The WILPF was the first organization to draw the League's attention to the tensions along the border between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland that would eventually lead to the Italian invasion in October 1935.⁷⁵ A few weeks prior to the attack WILPF helped to organize an NBC radio broadcast out of Abyssinia during which the Empress Selassie implored the women of the world to make their voices heard "in the firm, united demand that the horror of useless bloodshed and overwhelming ruin shall not be".⁷⁶ Many of the women's organizations supported economic sanctions against Italy. In December 1935 a delegation of Women's International Organizations delivered a letter to the President of the League Council which stated their opposition to the Hoare-Laval Plan as a betrayal of both Abyssinia and the sanctionist cause.⁷⁷ Pacifist women, among them Helena Swanwick, consistently opposed all use of sanctions, however.

In March 1936 Germany re-occupied the Rhineland. It soon became clear that women had conflicting ideas about how to respond to the threat posed by Hitler. The Peace and Disarmament Committee sent a statement to the League Council urging that negotiations "should include the consideration of substantial grievances which undermine the structure on which a lasting peace can be built".⁷⁸ Women in favour of negotiations and economic appeasement found support in the publication in 1937 of

⁷⁴LNA, M. Corbett Ashby to T. Agnides, 31 March 1935, 7B/1863/718 R4217; MCA Papers, summary of the period, "Dis. Conf. Corr. 1931-35"/438.

⁷⁵The *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27th to 31st, 1937* gives an excellent account of the group's tremendous peace activities from 1934 to 1937.

⁷⁶Bussey and Tims (1965;1980), p.134.

⁷⁷The Hoare-Laval Plan was a secret deal between Britain and France to give a strip of Abyssinian territory to Italy as a means of resolving the dispute. The plan was eventually dropped.

⁷⁸LNA, statement sent to the President of the Council from the PDCWIO, 27 March 1936, 7B/4834/664 R4225.

Swanwick's *Collective Insecurity* which argued that a harsh attitude to Germany and talk about "defending the Covenant" by force were only worsening the international situation.⁷⁹ Other members of the Committee had begun to doubt whether it was possible to negotiate with the Nazis. In the WILPF divisions emerged between sections from the Central European States and the British and Scandinavian sections. While the British section endorsed negotiations, Lida Heymann of the exiled German section of the WILPF argued in favour of punitive measures.⁸⁰ These differences could not help but extend to the Peace and Disarmament Committee. Recognizing the crisis the Committee was facing, Kathleen Courtney wrote to Dingman in mid-March 1936 that "a situation does sometimes escape from the hands of voluntary organisations, and it is not much use for them to endeavour to suggest a solution". She believed the PDCWIO could "be much more effective in trying to make people understand each other than by recommending some kind of common action which in circumstances like these would probably be quite ineffective..."⁸¹ Indeed after 1936 education programs continued but policy statements became even more vague and greater emphasis was placed on women's proclivity for peace.

At the World Peace Congress held by the International Peace Campaign in April 1936 the main demand of the women's organizations was for the greater representation of women in both the Campaign and at the League of Nations as a means to strengthen the cause of peace.⁸² Yet when women were given the opportunity to participate in League discussions on the international situation, their calls for peace on behalf of women were not particularly constructive. In July 1936 Kerstin Hesselgren (ICW) was the only woman to address the Assembly on the dispute between Abyssinia and Italy. She reminded fellow delegates that when women's collaboration had been requested by the League "we answered by pleading, by millions all over

⁷⁹Birn (1981), p.177.

⁸⁰Bussey and Tims (1965;1980), pp.140-41.

⁸¹Woodrow Wilson Memorial Library [hereafter cited as WWML]:PDCWIO, extracts of letter from K. Courtney reproduced in Dingman's circular letter, 18 March 1936.

⁸²Bussey and Tims (1965;1980), p.148.

the world, for disarmament". The only result had been rearmament. When the League declared Italy an aggressor nation, women had hoped that "our homes and our children could be safe under its wings". But the result was worse than nothing, she asserted, and Abyssinia had been wiped out. Hesselgren admitted, however, that she had no advice to offer on how the League could be made more effective. She could "only voice the intense anguish of the women all over the world" that the League find a solution to the international crisis.⁸³

It is interesting to note that Hesselgren made a connection between the failure of the League to act decisively and the low birthrate in many European countries. "How could it be otherwise", she asserted; "how could women wish to bear children into a world that is so hopeless, so insecure!" The low birth-rate had been troubling European nations for many years and pro-natalist policies had been introduced in several countries including Italy, France and the Soviet Union.⁸⁴ Hesselgren viewed the low birth-rate within the social feminist context of women's conscious decisions about the kind of world they wanted for their children. If she could make a connection between women's desire for peace and the low birth-rate, the issue was viewed quite differently in Nazi Germany. Massive social programs to make motherhood more attractive to women and thus, to increase the birth-rate, were carried out within the context of larger political aims of the Nazi regime. German women were recruited by the Nazis to wage a "battle of births" which would both substantiate the need for *Lebensraum* (living-space) and provide the manpower needed for Nazi expansionism and ultimately, war.⁸⁵

Many former members of the *Bund Deutscher Frauen* were sympathetic to Nazi appeals to motherhood, eugenics and social health. German women's organizations which survived after 1933, mainly professional and housewives associations, shared with Nazi women the belief that they could carve out

⁸³LoN, Records of the Sixteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Part II, Twenty-fourth Plenary Meeting, 3 July 1936, OJSS No.151, p.63.

⁸⁴See Koonz (1987), pp.177;185-186.

⁸⁵Bridenthal (1984), p.19.

gender-separate spheres of activity within the Nazi State through which they could make their own contribution to society.⁸⁶ This contribution would emerge from traditional womanly virtues such as maternal love, idealism, co-operation and sacrifice. Koonz argues that their manipulation of traditional womanly ideals must be seen as a conscious tactic to gain what power they could in the private sphere since women were completely excluded from the public sphere.⁸⁷ Former President of the BDF, Dr. Gertrude Baumer, wrote in 1933:

In the final analysis, the composition of the state - whether parliamentary, democratic or fascist - which will address the contemporary issue of the position and purpose of women, is a matter of the utmost insignificance...The fundamental demand will remain the same...to allow the cultural influence of women to realise its full potential and act as a free and effective social force.⁸⁸

An expert on women's questions on the German delegation to the League in the 1920s, after 1933 Baumer defended organized women as an "apolitical force" with no desire to interfere in power politics.⁸⁹

Thus while in Germany the dominant cultural image of woman was that of the essentially apolitical mother who was prepared to sacrifice all for her country, in Geneva the image of woman as pacifist was being held up as one of the remaining possibilities for peace in that quintessential realm of politics - the international arena. In neither case did the image conform to reality. Hitler ultimately failed mobilize women as child-bearers to substantially increase the birth-rate. And despite the efforts of the Women's International Organizations the world's women were not mobilized to put an end to war.

Although they were aware of what was happening in Germany the Women's International Organizations hung on to the idea of women's special contribution to peace. They described the rise of authoritarian regimes as

⁸⁶Bridenthal (1984), p.19.

⁸⁷Koonz (1987), p.173.

⁸⁸Quoted in Ute Frevert, *Women in German History* (Oxford: Berg, 1989), p.204.

⁸⁹Koonz (1987), p.148.

a product of women's exclusion from the political sphere. As a member of a women's deputation to the President of the Assembly in 1937 Corbett Ashby (IAWSEC) stated:

We believe that had women been admitted as full members and voting citizens of the democracies the present reaction against democracy could not have happened; but because democracy refused citizenship rights to half the human race it remained feeble against reaction.⁹⁰

Gertrude Baer (WILPF) re-iterated this point, arguing that all efforts "to give true Equality to women" would strengthen peace; women demanded freedom and equality in education, political and economic life "not to be the competitors or the imitators of men who have led the world to the brim of an abyss" but to make their own contribution in the creation of "a New International Order".⁹¹

The situation in authoritarian regimes only strengthened women's resolve that equality would benefit peace. The fact that different images of women were co-existing as the motive force behind quite different movements did not lead women's organizations to challenge the validity of either. At the League they demanded equality for women. Yet they did not reject the association of women with peace - at the heart of the League's appeal to women - because it was almost an article of faith among the Women's International Organizations. Ideas about women's opposition to war were reinforced in the late 1930s by the appearance of Swanwick's *Roots of Peace* and Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*. Swanwick claimed that women's needs as mothers and homemakers lead them to ways of thinking about war differently from men: "[w]omen do, I believe, hate war more fervently than men and this not because they are better than men, or wiser, but because war hits them much harder and has very little to offer them in return".⁹² Woolf, on the other hand, located women's thinking about war in their

⁹⁰LNA, Summary of statements made to President of the Assembly, 27 September 1937, 3A/30687/13900 R3757.

⁹¹WILPF Papers, Transcript of G.Baer's speech on Status of Women and Peace at reception by President of Assembly, 25 September 1937, IV/14/103. The term "New International Order" refers to the theme of the last pre-War Congress of the WILPF, July 1937.

⁹²Swanwick (1938), p.183.

exclusion from power-bestowing educational, professional and state institutions. For Woolf the freedom of loyalties to institutions of power allowed women to see the world differently from men, and through this, to find new methods to prevent war.⁹³

Yet women had always been involved in wars in support roles of some sort. Women's activities during the Great War as "wartime civic cheerleaders" - to borrow Elshtain's phrase - such as the British women with white feathers urging the boys to war, appear to have been forgotten by the 1930s.⁹⁴ So too, does women's work in auxiliary forces such as the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS). Even equal rights organizations showed little inclination to include among their causes the opening of the military services to women. The NWP answered worries that the ERA would make women eligible for conscription into armed services with the reassurance that it would simply give recognition to the patriotic services women had always rendered during war.⁹⁵

The issue of women's military service was raised briefly in connection with discriminations under public law discussed by the League's Status of Women Committee in 1938, but the Chairman's dismissive statement that the matter "did not seem of much importance" was not challenged by feminists.⁹⁶ Yet the Committee had before it documents on the recent recruitment of women's battalions in Albania and China. Under Cuban Law (1935) a women's military reserve had been formed. In Spain, Czechoslovakia and the USSR, women were placed for military purposes "on a footing of theoretical equality with men". In the first months of the Spanish Civil War, women had been recruited into the Popular Front militias, though later they were prohibited from fighting.⁹⁷ Under a German decree of April 1938

⁹³Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, rpt. of 1938 edition (London: Hogarth Press, 1943).

⁹⁴Elshtain (1987), esp. Chapter 5 "Women: The Ferocious Few/The Noncombatant Many".

⁹⁵Becker (1981), p.126.

⁹⁶LoN, C.S.F./1st Session/P.V.4, Fourth Meeting, 5 April 1938, pp.7-8.

⁹⁷Fyrth and Alexander (1991), p.19.

a Women's Auxiliary Service had been instituted and in July 1938, French law provided that troops of volunteers of both sexes would participate in air-raid protection in time of war.⁹⁸ In Estonia, Finland, Poland and Portugal auxiliary services of women received various degrees of military training and were to be engaged as volunteers in times of war.⁹⁹ British women's auxiliary services were reconstituted in 1938. Dame Helen Gwynne Vaughan and Dowager Marchioness of Reading, the first involved in the formation of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) and the latter in the Women's Voluntary Services for Air Raid Precautions (WVS), do not appear to have been involved in the Women's International Organizations.¹⁰⁰ Their interest in establishing a role for women in the military and civil defence services was probably a greater reflection of their patriotism than their sympathy with the cause of equality. In spite of these developments, peace campaigners continued to present an image of women as antipathetic to war.

International developments forced a reappraisal of Peace and Disarmament Committee policy in September 1938. Although the Committee recognized that hopes for the establishment of a system of international cooperation had been "disappointed if not shattered" by the events of recent years it re-affirmed its principles of 1932 with an attempt to clarify the meaning of collective security:

Collective action, as envisaged in the Covenant, does not imply merely the use of force to restrain an aggressor; it involves the profoundly moral conception of the fundamental unity of mankind, and recognizes that the defeat of justice, the triumph of violence in any part of the world, hold back mankind in the struggle to defend and maintain such standards of civilisation as it has been able to reach.¹⁰¹

Thus, the task of the women's organizations was that of "strengthening

⁹⁸LoN, Survey of Institute of Public Law, C.S.F. 17.

⁹⁹LNA, Mr. Bach, memo to T. Agnides, 4 November 1937, 7A/31394/5989 R4209.

¹⁰⁰Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (London: Pandora, 1987), pp.151-153; Elizabeth Ewing, *Women in Uniform* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1975), pp.102-107.

¹⁰¹PDCWIO (1938), p.47.

these moral values and the maintenance of the moral basis of international cooperation and of collective action". Although the Committee re-emphasized the need for educating public opinion to develop this moral basis, it did not actually rule out the use of force in collective action. This was important, for it allowed each organization to pursue its own policy. While the PDCWIO circulated documents largely reflecting views current among certain LNU members that the League must be strengthened and the use of force sanctioned¹⁰², the ICWG maintained its absolute pacifist position.¹⁰³ The IFUW supported a motion to drop the word "disarmament" from the name of the Committee but it was in a minority, and no change was made.¹⁰⁴ Members of the WILPF could not reach agreement. Some stood firm on absolute pacifism while others argued for collective security, claiming that moral force was useless against those who dealt only in military force.¹⁰⁵

Around this time the WILPF Executive considered the challenge to their pacifism posed by Hitler's designs on the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. One British member urged that the WILPF find guidance in the ideas which had inspired its founders in 1915:

The Women then tried to see what they as women could do in the conflict and we should go back to that conception of having to make a contribution because we are women, who are not only the guardians of physical life, but of culture. When we say that we can only defend a certain thing by war, we go back to the position of 1914 asking our own sons and brothers to commit a crime and thus invite dual crime.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²See documents circulated in the late 1930s found in UNL PDCWIO Coll., Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.

¹⁰³Delegates to the ICWG's Congress of 1938 discussed whether their anti-war policy should be re-assessed in favour of the principle of collective security (which was advocated by the Co-operative Party). The vote was 897 to 623 in favour of retaining a pacifist stance. Jean Gaffin and David Thomas, *Caring and Sharing: The Centenary History of the Co-operative Women's Guild* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1983), p.114.

¹⁰⁴The PDCWIO asked all the member bodies to make a decision regarding this. Discussed by WILPF at Exec. Mtg. 8 September 1938, WILPF Papers, I/B/25/11 and IFUW Papers, Minutes of Meetings of Officers, Meeting of Board of Officers, 20 July 1938, p. 1, Item 3.

¹⁰⁵WILPF Papers, WILPF Exec. Mtg., 8 September 1938, I/B/25/11.

¹⁰⁶WILPF Papers, WILPF Exec. Mtg., discussion on "women's efforts for peace and democracy", 8 September 1938, I/B/25/11.

In contrast, many Central European members reluctantly concluded that physical force would have to be met by physical force. Gabrielle Duchêne argued that the WILPF could not simply tell its friends in Czechoslovakia to "cross their arms and let things come to pass":

The most pacifist mother would defend her child if it were attacked...We must not to lose time by discussing questions of doctrine, but act with our heart and human feeling.¹⁰⁷

Thus women were divided not only on the question of the use of force, but also on the moral obligations deriving from motherhood.

By the summer of 1939 when war was almost inevitable, women's sense of frustration was acute. Minutes of a June meeting of the PDCWIO described the discussion on "The Present International Situation" as "short and not very satisfactory": "[t]here was no suggestion for any concrete action in this period of tension and suspense".¹⁰⁸ Although convinced of women's special contribution, they could not find means to translate this into concrete policy initiatives. Measures taken by women's organizations became increasingly unrealistic. In mid-August the World Women's Party Headquarters opened in Geneva in an unsuccessful bid to bolster a flailing European women's movement with American support. Although the WWP was an equal rights organization, its Honorary Chairman, British Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, used social feminist language in her opening address. She warned of the destruction of the human race unless there was "a new influx of women's maternal forces" and appealed to "World Motherhood" to initiate a new "Peace-Consciousness".¹⁰⁹ And just a few days before the outbreak of war, the ICW sent a telegram to Hitler imploring him to solve the crisis by pacific means, in the "cherished memory" of his own mother.¹¹⁰

When war broke out in September 1939 the Women's International

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Minutes of PDCWIO Meeting of 17 June 1939, UNL PDCWIO Coll., Vol. 2, p.6.

¹⁰⁹WWP, *World Woman's Party: A New World Centre for the Woman Movement*, (Geneva, 1939).

¹¹⁰Reproduced in PDCWIO Press Release No.270, November 1939, UNL PDCWIO Coll., Vol.2, p.3.

Organizations did not voice much opposition to the use of military force against Nazism. As organizations constituted 'internationally' most of the Women's International Organizations were pledged to neutrality. Yet with few of their affiliated societies still functioning in Germany and the occupied zones, there was little hesitation about pointing the finger at the enemy. While some women pacifists continued to voice their opposition to the use of force as a means to resolve disputes, there appears to have been no repeat performance of the anti-war campaigns staged by women pacifists at the outbreak of the First World War.¹¹¹ Many women renounced pacifism in response to the growing threat of Nazism, among them Eleanor Rathbone, Mary Sheepshanks, Edith Pye and Lida Gustava Heymann. Her faith the peaceful settlement of international disputes shattered by the outbreak of war, Helena Swanwick died in November 1939 following an overdose of sleeping pills.¹¹² Dorothy M. Arnold, the Committee Secretary of the Peace and Disarmament Committee, wrote to Kathleen Courtney in August 1940 that "[t]he pacifist attitude seems to me hard to support for everything that we as women have so long fought and striven for would be swept away".¹¹³ This opinion seems to have been shared by the majority of the Women's International Organizations. Indeed, the consequences of a Nazi victory were brought home to the women's organizations by the loss of some of their leaders. The Dutch feminist Rosa Manus, on the executive board of both the Alliance and the Peace and Disarmament Committee, was arrested by the Gestapo in 1941 and is believed to have died in Ravensbrück two years later. The first woman Senator in Czechoslovakia, Františka Plamínková, Vice-President of the Alliance from 1926 to 1942 and executive member of several other Women's International Organizations, was killed by

¹¹¹This deserves further investigation. On World War I see Jo Vellacott, "Feminist Consciousness and the First World War", *History Workshop*, 23 (Spring 1987), pp.81-101; Jill Liddington, "The Women's Peace Crusade", in Dorothy Thompson (ed.), *Over Our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb* (London: Virago, 1983); and Wiltsher (1985).

¹¹²Vera Brittain, *Testament of Experience*, first pub., 1957 (London: Virago, 1979), p.226.

¹¹³Kathleen Courtney Papers, D. Arnold to K. Courtney, 30 August 1940, KDC/I1/1-17/ 456.

the Nazis in 1942.¹¹⁴ The President of the Romanian NCW and a Vice-President of the ICW, Princess Cantacuzène died imprisoned in a room of her own home.¹¹⁵ The latter two women had been delegates to the Assembly.

Even those women who hung on to their pacifism increasingly defined it as an individual stance. As one member of the British WIL stated in 1941:

Personally, my pacifism is unchanged, but I think that Governments, by pursuing unpacific policies...have landed themselves into a war with a madman with whom no peace negotiations would be any use.¹¹⁶

Of course most members of the Women's International Organizations, while supporting the peaceful resolution of international disputes through the League, had never associated themselves with absolute pacifism thus the dilemma of supporting a war against Hitler was not as problematic for them as for pacifists. Apart from the WILPF which remained active in peace work, most of the Women's International Organizations simply re-affirmed their commitment to international co-operation and pledged themselves to maintain contact with women throughout the world so that they would be "ready for action when the time comes for the influence of women to make itself felt effectively".¹¹⁷ In 1940, Laura Dreyfus-Barney, Vice-President of the PDCWIO, defined the *raison d'être* for the continued existence of her Committee in a similar manner: "to hold ourselves in readiness to resume activity wherever and whenever the international situation developed in such a way to enable us usefully to do so".¹¹⁸

One of the primary concerns of the Women's International Organizations during the war was simply to keep their groups functioning and to retain contacts with members and affiliates throughout the world.

¹¹⁴Bosch (1990), p.264.

¹¹⁵ICW (1966), p.78.

¹¹⁶WILPF (Headquarters) Papers, letter from Kathleen E. Innes reproduced in International Circular Letter, No.4/1941, NYC December 1941, p.4.

¹¹⁷PDCWIO, Press Release No.270, November 1939, UNL, PDCWIO Coll., Vol.2.

¹¹⁸PDCWIO, minutes of meeting, 29 February 1940, UNL, PDCWIO Coll., Vol.2, p.3.

This was no easy task at a time when communication services were interrupted and travel in Europe became near to impossible. News bulletins and circular letters replaced international conferences and journals as a means of maintaining contact. Information coming into the international headquarters from national societies was censored and attempts were made to keep in touch with women through clandestine correspondence. Members of Women's International Organizations who had escaped to Switzerland, Britain or the United States held meetings whenever they could do so. The London-based Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations remained active and encouraged representatives of women's organizations still in Geneva to hold meetings there under the auspices of the Liaison Committee. From October 1939 to February 1945, twenty-seven meetings were held in Geneva, normally attended by representatives of six or seven women's organizations who outlined their continued collaborative efforts with the League of Nations in the social and humanitarian field.¹¹⁹

Records of both the Liaison Committee and the Peace and Disarmament Committee indicate that many of the women's organizations moved quickly into relief work after the war started, struggling to cope with the stream of refugees dislocated by the war.¹²⁰ According to May C. Hermes, Executive Secretary of the IFUW from 1941 to 1947, "the war brought home to members in grimly practical terms what the Federation stood for and the price that some had to pay for upholding its ideals and aims". She referred to the many university women who became refugees or were persecuted and died in their own countries. The war-time program of the Federation was carried out with the co-operation of half the thirty-four national groups affiliated to the IFUW ten years earlier; it consisted mainly of providing financial and practical aid to university women who had become refugees and victims of war.¹²¹ Even the newly opened WWP

¹¹⁹See summary of war-time activities in LCWIO (1945), *An Experiment in Co-operation*, pp.8-41.

¹²⁰Efforts recounted in the Bulletins and Annual Reports of the Committee in UNL PDCWIO Coll., Vol.2.

¹²¹Batho (1968), p.20. An Emergency Association of University Women was created to co-ordinate this work, the papers of which are found at the IFUW Headquarters in Geneva.

Headquarters in the stately Villa Bartholoni overlooking Lake Geneva became a temporary shelter for refugee women. Alice Paul confided to a fellow member that taking care of refugees was not exactly the work of an equal rights organization, but she believed that they had to help in some way to deal with the terrible situation in Europe.¹²² Paul worked tirelessly in Switzerland, and later in Washington, to secure refugees entrance visas to the USA, many personally sponsored by NWP members. The WYWCA aided women interned as enemy aliens in Europe and America.¹²³ The Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations also set up an Inter-Allied Advisory Committee which organized practical training courses to prepare women refugees in Britain for relief work in their own countries on the cessation of hostilities.¹²⁴

Women's involvement in relief work re-enforced the image of women as non-combatants. Yet the 'women and peace' construct was inexorably challenged by the appearance of uniformed servicewomen. The Second World War saw the greatest mobilization ever of women for the war effort both on the home front and in uniform. Yet even in countries where women were conscripted, the decision was always made by men with great reluctance and some ambivalence.¹²⁵ The cultural images and stereotypes which cast women as bearers and not destroyers of life were difficult to erase.

By the National Service Number 2 Act of December 1941 single women in Britain aged twenty to thirty became liable for military service. Wives and mothers of children under fourteen were not directed into warwork, however.¹²⁶ With few exceptions British women in the military were unmarried and without children. They worked on the land or provided support services for the male armed forces. As members of women's navy, army and air force units they operated radios, transmitted codes, learned

¹²²WWP Papers, A. Paul to Mrs. Ransome, 20 December 1939, I/VII/173.

¹²³Rice (1947), pp.244-255.

¹²⁴LCWIO (1945), p.8.

¹²⁵Goldman (1982), pp.4-14.

¹²⁶The Women Power Committee in Britain, for example, pushed for the mobilization of women in 1940-41. See Braybon and Summerfield (1987), pp.158-159.

to work anti-aircraft guns and to aim searchlights.¹²⁷ It was not until 1943 that all German women between seventeen and forty-five were obliged to report for warwork. Women generally resisted the call and for ideological reasons the authorities were reluctant to apply the regulations.¹²⁸ Soviet women saw active combat in artillery and tank units and staffed regiments in the airforce. In 1938 Helena Swanwick described the possibility of women bombers as an implausible nightmare.¹²⁹ She did not live long enough to learn of the formation of the Soviet all-female 122nd Air-Group of bombers in 1941. This group flew 4,419 missions, participated in 125 air combats and scored 38 aerial victories.¹³⁰

It is difficult to know whether many of the women connected with the Women's International Organizations joined the auxiliary services. In general the leadership cohort of the Women's International Organizations engaged in work of a humanitarian nature and it is likely that this pattern was followed by less active members. Organizations such as the IAWSEC had long emphasized that equality for women included the acceptance of civic responsibilities although it is not clear whether this was meant to extend to military service. The Alliance President, Margery Corbett Ashby, went on a propaganda mission to Sweden at the request of the British Government; apparently her task was to present the British point of view regarding the war to public figures and members of voluntary organizations in neutral Sweden.¹³¹ A shortage of male recruits led to the appointment of the former Secretariat employee Mary Craig McGeachy as the first women member of the British Diplomatic Corps in 1942. Always one to emphasize team work and co-operation between the sexes, she played down the significance of her appointment as "the first woman diplomat". Still she evaluated her own post and the warwork done by women as a reflection of the fact that "[w]omen today have far more complicated community

¹²⁷Anderson and Zinsser (1990), p.311.

¹²⁸Frevert (1989), pp.223-224.

¹²⁹Swanwick (1938), p.184.

¹³⁰Anderson and Zinsser (1990), p.312.

¹³¹Whittick (1979), p.149.

obligations than they used to have".¹³² As in the First World War, after 1939 women were given new opportunities to demonstrate their ability to fulfil the duties implied in citizenship.

The Women's International Organizations continued to attribute to women a *special* role in international affairs, however. Shortly before the war started, Alice Paul wondered "how different the world situation might be today had the voice of women been heard in the Committees and deliberations of the League during the last twenty years?"¹³³ In 1941 she asserted:

This world crisis came about without women having had anything to do with it. If the women of the world had not been excluded from world affairs, events might have been different. This is a man-made world.¹³⁴

As in 1914, many women's organizations tended to hold men responsible for war.¹³⁵ One recurring subject raised during the war years was the part women should play in the eventual peace conference and in post-war reconstruction. As early as December 1939 plans were discussed for a conference of women to coincide with the peace settlement in order to give publicity to "the viewpoint of women in regard to the fundamental requisites for a just and durable Peace".¹³⁶ Women's agenda for social, political and economic re-construction was elaborated in a series of Conferences on "Women in the Post War World" held in 1941 and 1942 by the Liaison Committee. In 1942 and 1943 deputations from the Women's International Organizations presented their recommendations for post-war reconstruction to representatives in Britain of thirty-nine Allied and neutral countries. The main point brought forward by these deputations was that full reconstruction could not be achieved without full equality for

¹³²Craig McGeachy Papers, article by Glory Harris, "Meet M. Craig McGeachy - Tradition Breaker" (n.d.); Elizabeth R. Valentine, "Britain's First Woman Diplomat", *New York Times Magazine*, 11 April 1943.

¹³³WWP Papers, Press Release on formation of WWP, 30 April [1938?], I/VII/178/E.

¹³⁴Quoted in Becker (1981), p.162.

¹³⁵Anderson and Zinsser (1990), p.405.

¹³⁶PDCWIO Meeting, 4 December 1939, UNL PDCWIO Coll., Vol.2.

women, including their representation in all national and international bodies set up for the planning of post-war reconstruction. Members of the Liaison Committee emphasized that the problems to be dealt with "are those which always fall especially within the province of women": the provision of food, clothing and shelter and the social and moral problems which arose from the devastation and disorganization of war.¹³⁷ The authorities apparently concurred: in 1944 Mary Craig McGeachy was appointed Chief of the Welfare Division of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).

While the demands of the Liaison Committee were couched in terms of recognition for women's considerable contribution to the war effort, statements issued by individual Women's International Organizations continued to play upon the 'women and peace' construct. In February 1945 a WILPF circular asked "will the importance of women's role in society at last be recognized?"

...will they at last be called for offices which manipulate the master levers, where the purpose and methods of public action are determined? They are not only capable of first-class competence they are needed and indispensable.¹³⁸

The WWP circulated an appeal "that the half of the human race which has most heartily hated war and has had no part in the planning of wars be now included in the planning of peace".¹³⁹ Even though women had been recruited in record numbers for the war effort, for many the faith that women had an important contribution to make in the cause of peace had not been diminished by the War. Indeed, the continued existence of war was linked directly to the continued absence of women in the councils of power.

Could the Women's International Organizations have been more effective in their peace work? Some women later confessed to having been overly sanguine about prospects for world peace. According to one Czech

¹³⁷LCWIO (1945), pp.10-15.

¹³⁸WWML:WILPF International Circular Letter No.1/1945, NYC February 1945.

¹³⁹WWP, *Information Bulletin*, 7 September 1946.

member of the IFBPW, instead of facing up to mistakes being made by some countries, women shut their eyes to unpleasant realities and became "lost in a world of wishful belief".¹⁴⁰ The chroniclers of WILPF's history imply that the British members' guilt about Versailles and their obsession with treating Germany fairly led them to support appeasement, making it difficult for the society to pursue a more realistic policy regarding German expansionism. Or perhaps by clinging to the League of Nations as the best hope for peace women's organizations missed opportunities to influence the action of individual governments. But in reality, there were few options open to women. Situated outside the real councils of power women could only work as propagandists in the difficult struggle to educate public opinion, and as lobbyists to make those in power aware of their concerns. At a time when women were excluded from the diplomatic services in most countries, the League of Nations represented the best means available for women to participate in international affairs. By the 1930s, feminists had also come to view the League as a major player in their efforts to improve social conditions and to raise the status of women. In this context it is hardly surprising that many women's organizations clung to the League even as its weaknesses as an international peace-keeper became apparent. Moreover, they saw their own organizations as manifestations of the same internationalist ideals upon which the League was based. To abandon the League would have meant to admit the failure of these ideals.

The assessment of women's peace work at the League must ultimately consider the impact of the "doctrine of difference". During the inter-war years much was made of the idea that women's natural sympathies lay on the side of peace and that, as a consequence, women could contribute an alternative perspective to the 'male' war ethic which had made peace unobtainable in the past. Of the many available cultural images of women, the representation of women as pacifists gained prominence at the League precisely because it had political relevance in the context of League activities. It is possible to suggest that the League solicited the

¹⁴⁰PDCWIO, Press Release No.281, February 1940, UNL, PDCWIO Coll., Vol.2.

collaboration of women in its peace work not necessarily because it was in search of alternative approaches to peace, but because the values espoused by the Women's International Organizations were almost identical to those internationalist ideals shared by supporters of the League of Nations. In effect, women were seen as resources to be used by the League to promote its activities.

The Women's International Organizations, however, continued to assert that women as women had a special contribution to make at the League. While gender-specific experiences may have led some women to adopt an anti-war stance, women's organizations found it difficult to translate this anti-war sentiment into practical policy initiatives. Significantly, the only unique contribution women were able to offer in response to the international crises of the 1930s was the call for equal rights for women. In short, establishing equality for women was identified as one of the surest means of bringing women's influence as forces for peace to bear on international relations. Such arguments helped to re-enforce demands for League action to advance the status of women. At the same time, feminists lamented the failure of women to mobilize en masse as forces for peace. Instead of raising questions about the problematic nature of claims deriving from gendered roles and experiences, inter-war feminists struggled to understand the general apathy of women. For Helena Swanwick the problem was that women had not yet begun to think freely as women; on the contrary they continued to mimic male behaviour.¹⁴¹ Vera Brittain complained that women, particularly housewives, were denying their real responsibilities as women.¹⁴² And Margery Corbett Ashby believed that women had not yet come to value the importance of their special contribution as women.¹⁴³

While women were able to use ideas about difference to enlarge their role in the social and humanitarian field, such ideas did not appear to

¹⁴¹Swanwick (1938), pp.191-192.

¹⁴²V. Brittain, "Women and the Next War", *British Legion Journal* (April 1936), pp.403-404.

¹⁴³M. Corbett Ashby, Presidential Address, *British Commonwealth League Report of 14th Annual Conference: Women Plan for Peace, Prosperity and Progress* (June 1938), pp.6-7.

strengthen demands for the recruitment of women in decision-making positions with regard to international politics. At the end of the day, women's peace work was considered to be quite distinct from the power politics of diplomacy and war which ultimately challenged the internationalist ideals embodied in the League. Arguments grounded in difference merely reinforced the idea that there were separate spheres of male and female activity at the international level. Given the exceedingly small number of women with any experience in international diplomacy, it is hardly surprising that inter-war feminists attempted to establish a role for women by stressing their supposed influence for peace. Even after the start of the Second World War the problematic but appealing association of women with peace retained its status as part of the feminist repertory.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to consider women's international work in the context of developments that encouraged feminists to believe their goals could be promoted through the League. The apparent democratization of international relations through the creation of the League of Nations led newly enfranchised women in many countries to expect that they could have direct influence in establishing world peace. Thus feminist organizations campaigned to get women into official positions in the Secretariat and on Assembly delegations and League advisory committees. The heightened salience of peace and disarmament on the feminist agenda after the First World War only partly accounts for the shift from the national to the international arena. Women's activities at the League embraced the full spectrum of feminist causes: peace, social reform and women's rights.

The League provided a forum for the consideration of a variety of social and humanitarian issues of concern to women's organizations from the traffic in women to relief work. Furthermore, as the League established a role for itself in the legal protection of the rights of minorities, hopes were raised for similar action with regard to women's rights. Feminists sought to use the machinery of the League to gain leverage for securing changes to national legislation in all areas affecting women. In this sense, the examination of women's activities at the League offers a reassessment of the interpretation that women's international work was disconnected from the goals and priorities of national women's movements.¹

Inter-war feminist activity at the League was characterized by tensions in the politics of gender between equality and difference. These tensions were manifested most dramatically in the split that emerged between social feminists and equal rights feminists. Yet at a certain level the "doctrine of difference" appealed to all feminists. The assertion that women experienced the world differently from men and therefore needed gender-specific legislation to protect their interests was something quite distinct from the celebration of gender-specific experiences and values as a form of empowerment. While the equal rights

¹David Doughan, "Lobbying for Liberation", lecture to Fawcett Society, 1980; Harrison (1987), p.310; Evans (1977), p.241.

feminists opposed the first proposition, both groups of feminists used claims deriving from difference to expand women's influence at the League. All the Women's International Organizations demanded equal representation for women at the League on the grounds that women as women had a special contribution to make to international affairs.

Such ideas received reinforcement at the League. Indeed, the "doctrine of difference" appeared to legitimize women's participation at the League. The notion that women represented a special body of public opinion with distinct interests and perspectives gave the Women's International Organizations a heightened status in their interactions with the League. It is possible that some feminists cynically manipulated the language of difference for purely instrumental reasons. Yet whatever motivations lay behind the assertion of difference it is clear that all feminists were ultimately seeking to expand women's political influence. They were united in the conviction that women's full participation in world affairs was essential to women's fulfilment as individuals, and would give them power to shape the world in which they lived.

Given their under-representation at the League, the women's networks operating in and around the League were essential for consolidating women's influence. Women's International Organizations were able to have some of their initiatives taken up at the inter-governmental level as a result of contacts they established with women Secretariat officials and Assembly delegates. While a few tentative steps were taken for the direct participation of women's organizations at the League, among them the category assessor and the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality, most often women's networks interacted with officials through more informal methods.

Women members of advisory committees and high-ranking Secretariat officials appeared to have had the most influence with regard to the direction of League policy. They often encouraged the Women's International Organizations to settle for half-measures as a means of overcoming initial resistance to their proposals. While this appears to confirm that idea that women 'insiders' adopt more conservative positions

than women 'outsiders'², it is also possible to suggest that women officials made realistic assessments of how far member states would be willing to go to meet women's demands. At the same time, women officials often used the support of women's organizations to push forward their own initiatives inside the Secretariat.

When it came to turning proposals into Assembly resolutions, women delegates to the Assembly usually could be relied on for support. This can be explained partly by the fact that so many of these women were connected with the Women's International Organizations. Few women had won recognition in the traditional fields from which appointments were made: national politics, the diplomatic service and other high-level civil service posts. In response to pressure for the appointment of women, governments often chose women prominent for their work in connection with women's organizations. Even women delegates who were politicians or civil servants were often members of women's organizations. This situation led to the criticism that women delegates represented women's organizations rather than their national governments. While this claim was no doubt exaggerated, it nonetheless confirms that the Women's International Organizations' influence at the League was not inconsiderable.

The role of the women's networks at the League was complex. On the one hand, they worked to promote women's interests. On the other, they claimed to represent "the women's point of view" on issues coming before the League. It was one thing to work for the advancement of the status of women through international action by the League. It was another to claim that women as women had a distinct perspective on international affairs which could be conveyed to the League through the Women's International Organizations and women delegates. The growing number of Women's International Organizations, each evaluating women's interests somewhat differently, should have alerted women to the difficulty of articulating "the women's point of view" on women's needs, not to mention international political crises. Yet the "doctrine of difference" was too appealing to resist.

²Joan Hoff-Wilson, "Conclusion: Of Mice and Men" in Crapol (1987), p.182.

Undoubtedly, the assertion of difference proved a source of empowerment for women. It helped to establish women's presence at the Assembly. At the same time emphasis on difference had the unfortunate side-effect of restricting women to appointments in areas traditionally identified as women's work - social welfare and humanitarian activities. Governments and League officials apparently did not share the argument put forward by women's organizations that women's influence needed to be felt in all areas of the League's activities. Nonetheless, women were able to carve out a sphere of influence in the social and humanitarian field. The popular notion that they could infuse the League with more humanistic values provided the women's networks room to operate. Their disregard for distinctions between 'national' and 'international' authority when it came to dealing with issues of human welfare was often humoured by the League, perhaps because certain Secretariat officials themselves were anxious to extend the League's mandate.

Women won a few victories in the 1920s, among them the Commission of Inquiry on the Deportation of Women and Children in the Near East, the Inquiry into the Traffic in Women and Children and the treatment of other gender-specific issues. But it was the changed political and economic situation in the 1930s that finally encouraged the League to develop wider responsibilities in the social field. Ironically, as the League's social activities grew in importance the openings for women's direct influence declined. While the "doctrine of difference" helped women to establish a foothold at the League and to get their concerns on the agenda, it did not ensconce them in positions of power. Most often, women's support was solicited by the League because they were seen as a useful resource to enhance the League's activities, either as voters or as educators of public opinion. The importance of women's propaganda work, however, should not be underestimated. Not only did they publicize the League's social and humanitarian activities but they put pressure on national governments to respond to League initiatives with practical action.

The League's consideration of possible methods to improve the collaboration of women in its peace work represents one departure from its tendency to solicit women's support only in the social and humanitarian

field. Traditional representations of women as a force for peace were not without significance in the context of the League's activities. Yet the League proved more interested in harnessing women's considerable skills as propagandists than in providing them with practical opportunities to make their special contribution to peace. For feminists who were convinced that women could offer an alternative perspective to the 'male' war ethic, feeble initiatives such as the Spanish Resolution were disheartening.

The few opportunities offered to the Women's International Organizations failed to produce distinctive peace proposals in response to the international crises of the 1930s. Perhaps this was because the "doctrine of difference" located women's contribution not in new forms of relations among nations but in new human relations that would emerge from women's full participation in decision-making councils. And women's full participation could be achieved only if women were given opportunities and rights in education, employment and political participation. For this reason feminists identified equality for women as the key to peace. As conditions worsened in the 1930s, the Women's International Organizations pointed to the absence of women's full integration into society as one explanation for the international crisis.

But women's roles as mothers and nurturers and their status as outsiders did not lead them directly to an anti-war position. The way in which women interpreted their experiences as women was shaped by the cultural, political and economic environments in which they existed and led to a variety of orientations to peace and war. Most of the Women's International Organizations examined here shared a commitment to the peaceful resolution of international conflicts through the League of Nations. Yet even they disagreed over methods the League should use to prevent war. During the period other women claimed to work for world peace in socialist and communist organizations. Still others worked within nazi or fascist women's groups toward purely nationalist goals.

Yet if women's contribution to world peace did not measure up to expectations raised in inter-war discourse on women and international affairs their influence was nonetheless felt. The Women's International Organizations helped to mobilize support for the League's initiatives in

the peace-keeping field, most notably in connection with the Disarmament Conference. They kept women informed about international political events, thus challenging the perception that international relations were the province of men. Often they used the language of women's experience as women - as wives, as mothers and as nurturers - to sensitize women. Ultimately the values they attempted to spread were not distinctly womanly; they were humanitarian and internationalist ideals shared by all true supporters of the League. Because caring and co-operation were identified as feminine values, women were undoubtedly given more freedom to express and uphold such values at the League, and in this context their participation was vital.

The most significant and lasting contribution made by women at the League was to have won recognition for the idea that the status of women deserved attention from the international community. Women's organizations rejected outright the notion that national governments should retain sovereignty over questions concerning the status of women. In this sense, it can be said that a feminist point of view on international relations and international law revealed itself. Feminists asserted that the low status of women in one country negatively affected women in other countries, inhibiting women's struggle for full integration into society. This fact was brought home to feminists in connection with their campaign to improve the representation of women at the League. Until women had been accepted as full citizens in all countries of the world they would be under-represented in positions at the League. The spread of anti-feminism in the 1930s also convinced feminists that governments could not be trusted to protect women's rights. They found it unacceptable that governments could with impunity withdraw rights previously extended to women. In this environment international action with regard to the status of women appeared all the more essential.

Throughout the 1920s social feminists worked for specific reforms at the League which took into consideration the complex nature of women's life experiences as workers, wives and mothers and even as refugees and inhabitants of mandated territories. By the late 1920s equal rights

feminists had appeared on the international scene. Impatient with the gradualist approach adopted by social feminists of one reform at a time, they believed that such processes could be by-passed by the simple declaration that "men and women shall have equal rights". While all the Women's International Organizations claimed to support the cause of equality the narrowly legalistic approach adopted by some equal rights groups alienated many Women's International Organizations.

The campaign for the Equal Rights Treaty fully exposed tensions between equal rights and social feminists. Feminists found it difficult to come to terms with the practical implications of the tension between equality and difference when it came to protective legislation for motherhood. The Equal Rights Treaty forced some feminists to re-evaluate their understanding of the concept equality. Attempts to replace the demand for equality with the demand for equal status reflected concerns that equality did not adequately account for women's needs in society. Social feminists, however, found it difficult to articulate an alternative to the Equal Rights Treaty. Most social feminist organizations did not oppose the use of international conventions as a means to improve the status of women so long as specific conventions addressed specific problems faced by women. Yet they were unable to find legislative means to accommodate both the desire for equality and the reality of difference. Instead of working for the Equal Rights Treaty they used the momentum built up by its campaign to call for a League sponsored inquiry into the status of women. They insisted that more information was needed before further international action could be taken.

Pfeffer (1985) has attributed the failure of the League to adopt the Equal Rights Treaty to obstructionism by social reformers. Yet even if social feminists had agreed to support the Treaty it is difficult to imagine that it would have been adopted by the League. One reason was that the Treaty threatened several of the ILO conventions. More important, however, was the fact that for most member states the line between national and international jurisdiction was still firmly drawn when it came to questions concerning women's rights. By the end of the inter-war period it had been established that international law could concern the

status and treatment of the individual with regard to slavery, minorities and inhabitants of mandated territories. But for most member states the status of women was tied to sensitive cultural and religious traditions far beyond the authority of the League. In this context it was a real achievement for the women's networks to have convinced League member states that the position of women in society could be construed as a problem for international attention in the form of an inquiry into their rights and status. The League's Inquiry marked an important first step with regard to international action to advance women's position in society. It emerged from the tension between the progressive proposals of equal rights feminists and the gradualist approach favoured by social feminists. In the long term it helped to advance the goals of both groups.

When members of the WWP and the IACW won their campaign in 1946 for the UN Status of Women Commission to continue work begun by the League Inquiry many women probably regretted that a similar body had not been formed earlier. Yet would an International Woman's Bureau have led to greater gains for women during the inter-war years? Probably not. It would have been largely ineffective until the status of women was recognized as a subject that could be dealt with internationally. Perhaps it would have only further reinforced the idea that there were separate spheres of male and female activity at the international level. While women's influence was minimal outside areas traditionally perceived as the women's sphere, as delegates to the Assembly and League Committees they had some opportunity to participate in a variety of League activities and to raise gender-specific issues whenever relevant. The work of women on the Permanent Mandates Commission provides one illustration of this point. Interventions to draw attention to the status of women in mandated territories would have been more difficult if the pattern arose of appointing women only to the Woman's Bureau. Although no Women's Bureau was formed, disagreements over whether an assimilationist or separatist approach would best meet women's needs within the League system remained unresolved during the inter-war years. Forty-six years after the formation of the Status of Women Commission there is ongoing debate over whether the

theoretical and organizational separation of the status of women from the rest of the UN system has led to the marginalization of women's issues.³

During the inter-war years some of the functions of the proposed Women's Bureau were carried out by women's networks at the League. Women's organizations were given the opportunity to act in an advisory capacity through the Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality and as assessors to the social committees. The women's networks constantly monitored League activities to ensure that women's rights were not infringed. Often they were able to get gender-specific interests and concerns on the agenda. It is important to remember that the social feminist organizations that opposed the formation of a Woman's Bureau did not reject the idea that the status of women deserved treatment by the League. They believed the full integration of women at the League would enable them to make their special contribution to world affairs. Significantly, claims grounded in difference were used primarily to justify demands for equal rights and representation for women. The ultimate goal of the Women's International Organizations was to enhance the political participation of women.

But was it realistic for feminists to expect to be integrated fully as equals at the League when they based their claims for participation on difference? And what were the consequences of the emphasis on benefits to the community to accrue from women's participation over women's dignity and rights as human beings? These questions remain at the heart of the feminist debate. It is important to recognize that the "doctrine of difference" was not intended to restrict women's activities but to change the basis of participation in international affairs and thereby to expand the agenda for social change. In the context of League activities the assertion of difference appeared to have more influence than emphasis on equality between the sexes (in the sense of sameness); thus, it is possible to conclude that feminists' achievements at the League would have been less considerable if their demands had been articulated only in the language

³This issue was raised at two meetings in which I participated at the UN, Geneva: JUNIC/NGO Programme Group on Women and Development, Fifteenth Session, 20 February 1991; Panel Discussion to examine and evaluate the application of the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women on its Tenth Anniversary, 3 September 1991.

of individual rights.

The central tension between the desire for equality and the recognition of difference which characterized women's international work at the League has not yet been resolved. There are now twenty-two international legal instruments related to the status of women, among them the long-awaited Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (1958).⁴ Although the most recent trend is in the direction of non-discriminatory treaties and provisions, many are protective or corrective. The policy advocated by the League and social feminist organizations for specific conventions to address specific problems was followed by the UN until 1981 when the comprehensive Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women came into force. While its complex provisions (elaborated in thirty articles) bear little resemblance to the one clause Equal Rights Treaty, the fundamental principle is the same: to establish full legal equality for men and women. Yet unable to escape from difference, the Convention nonetheless contains provisions which recognize that women as a group need special treatment to redress imbalances or to eliminate wrongs.⁵

Despite the complex body of international conventions and monitoring systems now in place, women's rights are still jealously guarded by many countries as 'national' questions. In this context one final question must be considered: how expedient was the shift to the international arena? Again the answer must be placed in the framework of inter-war developments which drew feminists to the League. Few inter-war feminists rejected the idea that efforts were still needed at the national level to improve the position of women. But they believed that internal struggles for the advancement of women could be supported by principles established at the

⁴Hevener (1986), pp.87-88.

⁵This ongoing tension between the need to advance the status of women through the means of non-discriminatory legislation which eliminates all legal distinctions between the sexes and the desire to enumerate a body of rights for women based on the realities of their experiences as women can be discerned in two recent articles on women and international law. See Hevener (1986) and Burrows (1986).

international level. Although possibilities for the codification of international law were just beginning to be explored, it appeared likely that international conventions could establish and protect women's rights. At a very basic level standards set by such conventions could inspire national women's movements.⁶ To a certain extent the Women's International Organizations performed this function through their own investigations but their efforts lacked the authority of inter-governmental initiatives. The heightened salience of the international arena for inter-war feminists was only partly related to their hopes for advancing the status of women through League action. The humanitarian and internationalist ideals of the Women's International Organizations logically led them to cooperate with the League. For many feminists the League provided a forum for the full range of projects they hoped would bring about social justice and peace. The collapse of the League in no way shook their faith in international action as a means to promote their long-term goals. Indeed, they re-appeared after the Second World War at the United Nations.

Apart from the IACW (which was, in effect, a precursor to the Status of Women Commission in the context of inter-American relations), most of the Women's International Organizations of an equal rights orientation appear to have disbanded by the early 1950s. Perhaps this was because their major goals in the international sphere had been accomplished: the UN Charter (1945) included a phrase reaffirming equal rights of men and women, as did the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the Status of Women Commission had been formed specifically to advance the position of women in society; and the move toward the convention method of raising the status of women was already under way. On the contrary, most of those Women's International Organizations described here as social feminist can

⁶This is explored in an historical context in Mrs. Shahzanan Shalarchi Yasseen, "Collaboration between International Organizations and Arab Middle East States to Improve 'The Status of Women'", unpublished mémoire, Geneva Institute for International Studies, June 1972.

still be found lobbying the United Nations.⁷ Unlike the equal rights organizations which tended to identify very specific objectives, those of a social feminist orientation most often embraced a broad range of goals from women's rights to world peace, none of which has become any less relevant in the 1990s. Although their links with the UN have been formalized through the provision of consultative status, their activities are in many ways similar to those of their predecessors at the League. If anything their work has become more diversified than it was in the inter-war years, though the main objective is to ensure the representation of women and women's interests throughout the UN system. While they tend to avoid the language of difference and the gendered roles and values it sustains, they continue the difficult search for ways to advance the status of women with due attention to all the dimensions and challenges of women's lives.

⁷This conclusion is drawn from my participation in meetings of the UN Geneva and from the list of NGOs with consultative status in connection with UN bodies kindly provided by Yvonne Backholm of the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service, Geneva.

APPENDIX 1

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS, 1919-1939

Altrusa International
 Associated Country Women of the World (1929), London
 Association of Inner Wheel Clubs (1934), London
 Central Office for Feminist Documentation (1909), Brussels
 European Federation of Soroptimist Clubs (1928), Amsterdam
 Federation Internationale de L'Enseignement Menager (1908), Fribourg
 Federation Mondiale des Jeunesses Feminines Catholique (1926), Belgium
 Federation of National Unions of Girls' Friendly Societies (1877), Geneva
 General Federation of Women's Clubs (1890), Washington
 International Associations of Lyceum Clubs (1903), Geneva
 International Catholic Assoc. of Girls' Friendly Societies (1897), Friborg
 International Ctte. of Women Agriculturist Organizations (1913), Brussels
 International Committee of Women Trade Unionists (1924), Paris
 International Confederation of Midwives (1909, re-organized 1949)
 International Congress of Working Women
 International Council of Jewish Women (1912, re-organized 1949)
 International Council of Nurses (1899), Geneva
 International Federation for Aid to Young Women
 International Federation for Home Economics, Fribourg
 International Federation of Catholic Alumnae (1914), New York
 International Federation of Women's Hockey Associations (1927), London
 International Federation of Trade Unions' Int'l Ctte. of Trade Union Women
 International Inner Wheel
 International League of Mothers and of Women Teachers for the Promotion of Peace (1928), Paris
 International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues (1910), Utrecht
 International Union of Liberal Christian Women (1910)
 International Women's Committee of the Labour and Socialist International
 Medical Women's International Association (1922), Paris
 Pan-Pacific Women's Association (1928), Honolulu
 Pilot International
 Superior Council of the Alliance for the General Oriental Women
 Women's International Zionist Organization (1920)
 Women's Organization for World Order
 World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (1928), London
 The World Committee of Women against War and Fascism (1934), Paris
 World Woman's Party for Equal Rights (1938), Geneva
 Zonta International (1919), Chicago

N.B. Though referred to as "International" organizations many had members in only a few countries, and several were regional organizations. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list (organizations listed in Appendix 2 are not included).

APPENDIX 2

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, 1919-1939

All Asian Women's Conference (AAWC)

Seat: Gwalior, India

Foundation: 1931

Objects: To promote the consciousness of unity amongst the women of Asia as members of a common Oriental culture. To take stock of qualities of Oriental civilization so as to preserve them for national and world service (simplicity, philosophy, art, the cult of the family, veneration of motherhood, spiritual consciousness). To review and seek remedies for the defects at present apparent in Oriental civilization (ill-health, illiteracy, poverty and underpayment of labor, infantile mortality, marriage customs). To sift what is appropriate for Asia from the Occidental influences (education, dress, freedom of movement, cinemas, machinery). To strengthen one another by exchange of data and experiences concerning women's conditions in the respective countries of Asia (economic, moral, political, and spiritual status). To promote world peace.

Activities: Conferences.

[LoN, *Handbook of International Organisations*, 1938]

Equal Rights International (ERI)

Seat: London (Geneva office)

Foundation: 1930

Objects: To establish equal rights for men and women throughout the world. The organization shall work for the adoption of the Equal Rights Treaty by all nations.

Activities: Holds annual meetings during the time of the Assembly Sessions.

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1931]

Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW)

Seat: Washington, D.C. (Geneva office)

Foundation: 1928 (as a body of the Pan-American Union)

Objects: Mainly to inquire into the means of obtaining equal rights for women on the American continent and to give advice to international conferences of American States.

Activities: The Commission's chief task has been to make a thorough study of the civil and political situation of women on the American continent. As an outcome of these studies the Equal Rights Treaty and the Equal Nationality Treaty, designed to place women on the same footing as men, were recommended by the Commission.

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1938]

International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAW)

Seat: London

Foundation: 1904

Objects: (1) To secure the enfranchisement of women of all nations, by the promotion of Women Suffrage and all such other reforms as are necessary to establish a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women: (2) to educate women for their task as citizens and to further their influence in public life.

Activities: Publications, public meetings, special international committees; dissemination of statistics and other documents relating to the position of women all over the world.

Official Publication: *Jus Suffragii* (monthly)

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1929]

International Co-operative Women's Guild (ICWG)

Seat: London

Foundation: 1921

Objects: To unite co-operative women, to promote co-operation, to improve the conditions of home life and to work for peace.

Activities: International Conferences, arranges exchange visits, publishes pamphlets and monthly notes, seeks to express the housewife's point of view in international affairs.

Official Publication: *International Review of Co-operation* (monthly)

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1929]

International Council of Women (ICW)

Seat: Rotating within Europe, (Geneva office)

Foundation: 1888

Objects: (1) To promote among women of all countries sentiments of solidarity and mutual understanding; (2) to provide a means of communication between women's organizations in all countries; (3) to provide opportunities for women to meet together from all parts of the world to confer upon questions relating to the welfare of the commonwealth, the family and the individual.

Activities: Annual and Quinquennial reports; Quinquennial international meetings.

Official Publication: *Bulletin of the International Council of Women* (monthly in English, French and German)

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1929]

International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW)

Seat: New York City (Geneva office)

Foundation: 1930

Objects: To promote friendly relations between the business and professional women of all countries; to co-operate in regard to their common interests; to work for high standards of service to their communities and to all nations.

Activities: Interchange of speakers of the different countries. Mutual aid through committees of commercial exchange, hospitality and courtesies, fine arts, publicity.

Official Publication: *Widening Horizons* (quarterly bulletin).

[LoN, *Handbook of Official Publications*, 1931]

International Federation of University Women (IFUW)

Seat: London

Foundation: 1919

Objects: To promote understanding and friendship between the university women of the nations of the world, and thereby to further their interests and develop between their countries sympathy and mutual helpfulness.

Activities: Provision of international fellowships for research, establishment of international club-houses, interchange of teachers, intellectual co-operation, investigation of equivalence of academic standards, organization of group travel for scientific or cultural purposes, organization of international congresses, publication of reports, memoranda and pamphlets.

Official Publication: *Bulletin*

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1929]

International Federation of Women Magistrates, Barristers and other members of the Legal Profession (IFWMB)

Seat: Paris

Foundation: 1928

Objects: To establish relations and exchanges between women magistrates, barristers, solicitors, notaries, professors of law and holders of law degrees practising law in any other capacity, in all other countries.

Activities: Inquiries into various questions of interest to women: the opening of judicial positions to women, the internationalization of the offence of family desertion, legal status of the international associations, etc.

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1931]

The Open Door International for the Emancipation of the Woman Worker (ODI)

Seat: London (Geneva office)

Foundation: 1929

Object: To secure that a woman shall be free to work and protected as a worker on the same terms as a man and that legislation and regulations dealing with conditions and hours, payment, entry and training shall be based upon the nature of the work and not upon the sex of the worker; and to secure for a woman, irrespective of marriage or childbirth, the right at all times to decide whether or not she shall engage in paid work and to ensure that no legislation or regulations shall deprive her of this right.

Activities: Biennial conferences, summer school meetings, etc.

Official Publication: *The Open Door* (quarterly in English and French).

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1931]

St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance (SJSPA)

Seat: London

Foundation: 1931

Objects: Unenfranchised Countries: (a) To band together Catholics of both sexes in order to secure for women the parliamentary vote on the same terms as it is, or may be, granted to men; (b) To secure the political, social and economic equality between men and women and to further the work and usefulness of Catholic women as citizens. Enfranchised countries: (b) only of above.

Activities: Involved in international work especially in the areas of the Nationality of Married Women and the position of African Women.

Official Publications: *The Catholic Citizen* (monthly), *Revue de l'Alliance Sainte-Jeanne d'Arc* (bi-monthly).

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1938]

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Seat: Geneva

Foundation: 1915

Object: Aims at uniting women in all countries who are opposed to every kind of war, exploitation and oppression, and who work for universal disarmament and for the solution of conflicts by the recognition of human solidarity, by conciliation and arbitration, by world co-operation, and by the establishment of social, political and economic justice for all without distinction of sex, race, class or creed.

Activities: Attempts by meetings, political action, a monthly bulletin, education and personal contacts to achieve its aims. It holds International Congresses every two years and a Summer School every year.

Official Publication: *Pax International* published monthly in English, French and German.

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1929]

World Union of Women for International Concord (WUWIC)

Seat: Geneva

Foundation: 1915

Object: To establish permanent peace; mutual education; to develop humanitarian internationalism by establishing relations among women throughout the world; a universal sisterhood open to all women of all ages, regardless of nationality, religion or social position. The objects of the Union are entirely non-political.

Activities: Individual propaganda by members. Meetings, conferences, publication of a bulletin, international congresses.

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1927]

World's Women's Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU)

Seat: New York, London

Foundation: 1883

Object: The prohibition of the liquor traffic throughout the world.

Activities: Publications, lectures, international conferences.

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1929]

World's Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA)

Seat: Geneva

Foundation: 1894

Object: The federation, development and extension of Young Women's Christian Associations to all lands.

Activities: Committee meetings, conferences, visits, preparation courses for secretaries, correspondence and international publications.

[LoN, *Handbook of Int'l Organisations*, 1931]

APPENDIX 3

CONSULTATIVE BODIES OF WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

A) Created at the Invitation of the League of Nations:**Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality (WCCN)**

This group was formed at the invitation of the League Council in 1931 to advise it on the question of the nationality of married women; the original committee included:

All Asian Conference of Women
 Equal Rights International
 Inter-American Commission of Women
 International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship
 International Council of Women
 International Federation of University Women
 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
 World Union of Women for International Concord
 World's Young Women's Christian Association (declined invitation)

B) Created by the Women's International Organizations:**Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organizations (JSCWIO)**

Formed in 1926, the full title was the 'Joint Standing Committee of Women's International Organizations for securing the appointment of women to the International and Expert Committees of the League of Nations'. In 1936 it was amalgamated with the Liaison Committee. In 1935 this group included:

Equal Rights International
 International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship
 International Council of Women
 International Federation of University Women
 St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance
 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
 World Union of Women for International Concord
 World's Women's Christian Temperance Union
 World's Young Women's Christian Association

The Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations (LCWIO)

The Liaison Committee was formed in 1931 "To secure intercommunication between the member organisations in cases where it is agreed that co-operation would be desirable". Affiliates included:

Equal Rights International
 International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship
 International Council of Women
 International Federation of Business and Professional Women
 International Federation of University Women
 International Federation of Women Magistrates, Barristers and other Branches of the Legal Profession
 St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance
 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
 World Union of Women for International Concord
 World's Women's Christian Temperance Union
 World's Young Women's Christian Association

The Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations (PDCWIO)

This group was formed in 1931 with the aims: (1) To spread knowledge and understanding of the great issues underlying the organization of peace; (2) To enlist the support of women in all parts of the world in the service of peace;

(3) To give expression in Geneva to the world-wide desire for peace and the reduction, limitation and control of armaments. A cumulative list of the affiliates includes:

Association of Slavic Women
European Federation of Soroptimist Clubs
Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas
International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship
International Co-operative Women's Guild (Observer)
International Council of Women
International Federation of Business and Professional Women
International Federation of University Women (Observer)
League of Jewish Women
League of Mothers and Educators for Peace
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Women's Peace Crusade
Women's Polish Organizations
World Union of Women for International Concord
World's Women's Christian Temperance Union
World's Young Women's Christian Association

The Status of Women Group of the International Organizations of Women

Formed by members of the Liaison Committee to lobby for an international convention on the status of women in the 1930s.

Equal Rights International
International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship
International Council of Women
International Federation of Women Magistrates, Barristers and other Branches of the Legal Profession
St. Joan's Political and Social Alliance
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
World Union of Women for International Concord
World's Women's Christian Temperance Union

APPENDIX 4

Geographical Location of National Affiliates of the Women's International Organizations

<u>Country (vote)</u>	<u>Affiliated to WIO</u>		<u>WIO Executive</u>	<u>League Member</u>	<u>Women on Delegations</u>	<u>Women in Secretariat</u>
Afghanistan* (1965)	AAWC			X		
Argentina (1952)	ICW IUCWL	WILPF IAWC		X		
Australia (1901)	ICW IFUW WUWIC WWCTU ODI	IAW ILPF WYWCA ERI SJSPA	ERI SJSPA	X	X	X
Austria (1918)	ICW IFUW WILPF WYWCA IFBPW	IAW ICWG WUWIC ERI IUCWL	ICWG** IFBPW IUCWL	X	X	
Belgium (1948)	ICW IFUW WILPF IUCWL ICWG	IAW WUWIC IFBPW ODI	ODI IUCWL IFBPW	X	X	X
Bermuda	IAW					
Bolivia (1952)	IAW	IACW		X		
Brazil (1934)	ICW WUWIC IUCWL	IAW SJSPA IACW	SJSPA	X		
Bulgaria (1944)	ICW IFUW WUWIC	IAW WILPF		X	X	
Burma (1932)	WWCTU AAWC	ERI				
Canada (1918)	ICW IFUW WYWCA ERI IUCWL	IAW WILPF WWCTU IFBPW	ICW IFBPW WWCTU	X	X	X
Ceylon (1931)	WWCTU	AAWC				
Chile* (1949)	ICW IUCWL	ERI IACW		X	X	
China (1949)	ICW WUWIC WWCTU	WILPF WYWCA		X	X	

<u>Country (vote)</u>	<u>Affiliated to WIO</u>		<u>WIO Executive</u>	<u>League Member</u>	<u>Women on Delegations</u>	<u>Women in Secretariat</u>
Costa Rica (1949)	IACW			X		
Cuba (1934)	ICW ERI	IAW IACW		X		
Czechoslovakia (1920)	ICW IFUW WILPF WYWCA ODI IUCWL	IAW ICWG WUWIC ERI IFBPW	ICW IAW ODI IFBPW	X	X	X
Denmark (1915)	ICW IFUW WUWIC ERI IUCWL	IAW WILPF WYWCA ODI	ICW ODI	X	X	X
Dominican Republic*(1942)	IACW			X		
Egypt (1956)	IAW WUWIC	WILPF YWCA				
Ecuador (1928)	IACW			X		
Estonia* (1920)	ICW WWCTU	IFUW		X		
Finland (1906)	ICW IFUW WYWCA ERI IFBPW	IAW WILPF WWCTU ODI	ODI	X	X	X
France (1944)	ICW IFUW WILPF WYWCA ERI IFBPW IUCWL	IAW ICWG WUWIC WWCTU ODI SJPSA IFWMB	ICW IAW ERI WILPF SJSPA IUCWL IFWMB**	X	X	X
Germany (1919)	ICW IFUW WUWIC ERI IUCWL	IAW WILPF WYWCA IFWMB ODI	ICW IAW WILPF ERI ODI IFWMB IUCWL	X	X	X
Great Britain (1918)	ICW IFUW WILPF WYWCA ERI SJSPA	IAW ICWG WUWIC WWCTU ODI IUCWL	ICW** IAW** ERI** WILPF WUWIC WWCTU ODI** IFUW ICWG IUCWL	X	X	X
Greece (1952)	ICW WUWIC	IAW WILPF		X		

<u>Country (vote)</u>	<u>Affiliated to WIO</u>		<u>WIO Executive</u>	<u>League Member</u>	<u>Women on Delegations</u>	<u>Women in Secretariat</u>
Guatemala (1945)	ICW	IACW		X		
Haiti* (1950)	WILPF	IACW		X		
Honduras (1957)	IACW			X		
Hungary (1945)	ICW IFUW WUWIC ERI IFBPW	IAW WILPF WYWCA ODI IUCWL	IUCWL	X	X	X
Iceland (1915)	ICW IFUW	IAW WYWCA				
India (1950)	ICW IFUW WWCTU ODI	IAW WYWCA ERI AAWC	AAWC**	X	X	
Iran (1963)	ERI	AAWC		X	X	
Ireland (1918)	ICW IFUW WILPF SJSPA	IAW ICWG WWCTU	WILPF SJSPA	X	X	X
Italy (1945)	ICW IFUW WUWIC IFBPW	IAW WILPF WYWCA IUCWL	IAW IUCWL IFBPW	X	X	X
Jamaica* (1953)	IAW	WYWCA				
Japan (1945)	IAW WYWCA WWCTU AAWC	WUWIC WILPF ODI		X		
Korea (South, 1948)	WYWCA					
Latvia* (1920)	ICW WILPF	IFUW WWCTU		X		
Lithuania* (1918)	IAW WWCTU	WUWIC		X	X	X
Luxemburg (1919)	IAW IUCWL	IFUW		X		
Mexico (1953)	ICW WILPF IACW	IFUW IUCWL	IUCWL	X	X	
Malay States (1957)	WYWCA					

<u>Country (vote)</u>	<u>Affiliated to WIO</u>		<u>WIO Executive</u>	<u>League Member</u>	<u>Women on Delegations</u>	<u>Women in Secretariat</u>
Netherlands (1919)	ICW IFUW WILPF WYWCA ODI	IAW ICWG WUWIC ERI IUCWL	IUCWL**ICW IAW IFUW WILPF BRI	X	X	X
New Zealand (1893)	ICW IFUW WYWCA	IAW WILPF WWCTU		X	X	
Nigeria* (1954)	WWCTU					
Norway (1913)	ICW IFUW WILPF WYWCA ODI IUCWL	IAW ICWG WUWIC WWCTU IFBPW	IFUW* ICW WILPF	X	X	X
Palestine	ICW WYWCA ODI	IAW ERI				
Panama (1941)	IACW			X		
Paraguay (1962)	IACW			X		
Peru* (1955)	ICW WILPF	IAW IACW		X		
Philippines (1939)	WILPF					
Poland (1918)	ICW WILPF ERI IFWMB	IFUW WUWIC IUCWL	IFWMB	X	X	X
Peurto Rico	IAW					
Portugal (1931)	ICW WUWIC IUCWL	IAW WYWCA		X	X	
Rhodesia (1957)	IAW					
Romania (1946)	ICW IFUW WUWIC ERI	IAW WILPF WYWCA IUCWL	ICW WUWIC	X	X	
Salvador	IACW			X		
South Africa* (1930)	ICW IFUW WYWCA	IAW WILPF WWCTU	WWCT	X	X	
Soviet Union (1917)	IAW WUWIC	WILPF		X	X	

<u>Country (vote)</u>	<u>Affiliated to WIO</u>		<u>WIO Executive</u>	<u>League Member</u>	<u>Women on Delegations</u>	<u>Women in Secretariat</u>
Spain (1931)	IAW WILPF WUWIC IFWMB	IFUW ERI IUCWL	IUCWL IFWMB	X	X	
Sweden (1921)	ICW IFUW WILPF WYWCA ERI IFBPW	IAW ICWG WUWIC WWCTU ODI IUCWL	WWCTU ODI IFBPW IUCWL	X	X	X
Switzerland (1971)	ICW IFUW WILPF WYWCA IUCWL	IAW ICWG WUWIC ODI	WUWIC** IAW IFUW WILPF IUCWL	X	X	X
Syria (1949)	WILPF					
Turkey (1934)	IAW WUWIC	WILPF WWCTU		X	X	
USA (1920 19th Amendment)	ICW IFUW WUWIC WWCTU ODI SJSPA IACW	IAW WILPF WYWCA ERI IFBPW IUCWL	IAW IFUW ICW ERI SJSPA	WILPF** WWCTU** IFBPW** IACW** ODI		X
Uruguay (1932)	ICW WILPF IUCWL	IAW WUWIC IACW		X		
Venezuela (1947)	IUCWL	IACW		X		
Yugoslavia (1946)	ICW IFUW WUWIC	IAW WILPF ERI	ICW	X		

N.B. Sources for data in Table: *League of Nations Handbook of International Organizations*, 1926 Edition: WUWIC; 1929 Edition: ICW, IAW, IFUW, ICWG, WILPF, WWCTU, IUCWL; 1931 Edition: WYWCA, ERI, ODI, IFBPW; 1938 Edition: SJSPA, AAWC, IACW. Because of different years of formation and inclusion in the *League Handbook* it is difficult to construct a table using data on all organizations from the same year. This Table is meant only to give a general picture of the period. Dates in parantheses indicate year of women's suffrage in each country (in many cases it was only limited suffrage) from *The World's Women* (UN, New York, 1991) unless marked with * in which case dates come from Boulding, Nuss, Carson, Greenstein (1976), Chaney (1979) or Flanz (1983). The ** marks country of Acting Head of each organization.

APPENDIX 5

SELECT BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

Lady Aberdeen (1857-1939) British. President of Women's Liberal Federation in England and Scotland. Founder of International Lyceum Club. Spokeswoman for ICW deputation to League of Nations Commission at Paris Peace Conference. ICW President 1893-1899, 1904-1920, 1922-1936. Friend of Gladstone.

Grace Abbott American. Hull House Resident. Chief of U.S. Children's Bureau, 1921-1934. Delegate, Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children and the Child Welfare Committee, 1922-1931. Sister of Edith Abbott, social work educator and social reformer.

Stanislawa Adamowicz Polish. Epidemiologist. Lecturer at State School of Hygiene. Member of Section, Health Section, 1921-1923. Assembly substitute-delegate, 1936. Vice President of IFUW, 1932-1936.

Helen Archdale (1876-1949) British. Journalist. Member of WSPU, twice imprisoned during the militant suffrage campaign. Executive committee of Six Point Group. Chairman of ERI from 1930. Editor of *Time and Tide* 1921-1926.

Gertrude Baer German. General Secretary of German WILPF, 1919-1933. Co-Chairman of International Section from 1929 and from 1946, Executive Member. Editor of *Pax et Libertas* until 1956. WILPF's first UN consultant, 1948-1972. Corresponding member of ODI from 1929. Vice-Chairman of ERI from 1931.

(Dr.) Gertrude Baumer (1873-1954) German. Popular critic and biographer. Member of National Assembly, 1919. Member of Reichstag, 1920-1933, working in Ministry of the Interior. Expert, Assembly Delegation, 1926. Delegate, Traffic in Women and Child Welfare Committee, 1928-1932. President of the *Bund Deutscher Frauen*, 1919-1933. Editor of BDF's journal *Die Frau*.

Bodil Begtrup Danish. Economist. Substitute-delegate to Assembly, 1938. Chairman of the Commission for Children's Health in Denmark, 1939. V.P. of National Council of Women and representative on ICW Peace and Arbitration Committee. From 1939 Vice-President of Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations. First Chairman of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women.

(Dr.) Kristine Bonnevie (1872-?) Norwegian. Professor of Zoology. Substitute-delegate to Assembly, 1920-24. Member, Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, 1922. First President of the Norwegian Federation of University Women from 1921.

Vera Brittain (1896-1970) British. Journalist, writer and pacifist. Lecturer for LNU. Vice-president of WIL (Br.). Executive member of Six Point Group.

Anna Bugge-Wicksell (?-1928) Swedish. Lawyer specializing in international law. Substitute-delegate to Assembly, 1920-1927. Member of Permanent Mandates Commission, 1921-1926. Board Member of IAWSEC from 1920-1927.

Clara Campoamor Spanish. Lawyer. Member of Cortes, 1931-33. Director of Public Assistance, 1933-1934. Substitute-delegate to Assembly, 1931;1934. Champion of votes for women in Spain. Exiled in England during Spanish Civil War.

Carrie Chapman Catt (1860-1935) American. Founder and President of the IWSA, 1904-1923. Hon. President, 1923-1939. Leader of American constitutionalist suffrage society, National American Woman Suffrage Association. Founder and President Emerita of American League of Women Voters. Founder and Chairman of National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War in 1925.

(Dame) Margery Corbett Ashby (1882-1981) British. Secretary of National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies from 1907. Member of IWSA delegation to Paris Peace Conference. President of IWSA 1923-1946. British delegate to the Disarmament Conference 1932. Chairman of the British Commonwealth League.

(Dame) Kathleen D'Olier Courtney (1878-1974) British. Honorary Secretary of NUWSS 1911-1915. One of the founders of the WILPF. Relief worker in Serbia and Vienna. Honorary Secretary of Women's Peace Crusade. Joined British LNU in 1928, becoming Vice-Chairman in 1939. Vice-President of PDCWIO 1931-1939, then President. Deputy Chairman of UN Association after the war. Friend of Gilbert Murray and Lord Robert Cecil.

Mary Craig McGeachy (1901?-1991) Canadian. Senior Assistant, Information Section of Secretariat, 1929-1940. First Secretary, British Embassy Washington, 1941-1944. Chief of Welfare Division of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 1944-1946. Liaison officer for ICW at UN, 1959-1963. President of ICW, 1963-1969?

(Dame) Rachel Crowdy (1884-1964) British. Principal Commandant VADs, France and Belgium, 1914-1919. Chief of Social Section, Secretariat, 1919-1930. Assessor to Advisory Committees on Traffic in Women and Child Welfare from 1930. Member of Royal Commission on the Private Manufacture of and Trading in Arms, 1935-1936. Member of Parliamentary Commission to observe the Spanish Civil War, 1937. Regions Advisor, Ministry of Information, 1939-1946.

Emma Cushman American. Representative of the Entente Powers in Turkey, working with prisoners of war. French Legion of Honor for Relief work during World War I. Member of Commission on the Deported Women and Children, 1921-1923.

Valentine Dannevig Norwegian. Linguist and educationalist. Municipal Councillor, 1914-1917. Member of Permanent Mandates Commission, 1928-1938. Director of National Council of Women, 1918-1921.

Mary Dingman American. Industrial Secretary for the WYWCA from 1921. President of Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organizations, 1931-1939. Spokesperson for the Women's International Organizations at the Special Session of the Disarmament Conference, 1932.

Dorothy Evans (1889-1944) British. Barrister. Member of WSPU. First secretary of British WIL, 1919-1924. General Secretary of the National Association of Women Civil Servants. Chairman of Nationality Committee, Six Point Group. Representative for ERI on Women's Consultative Committee from 1931. Several publications on the legal status of British women.

Henni Forchhammer Danish. Linguist and lecturer on English Phonetics. Substitute/delegate or expert, 1920-1937. From 1913 President of Danish National Council of Women and from 1914 Vice President of the ICW. Member of WILPF. Council member of ERI.

Clara Guthrie D'Arcis (?-1937) Swiss (American by birth). Founder and President of the WUWIC, 1915-1937. Treasurer of PDCWIO until 1937. Planner of the Peace-Roll of Industry campaign.

Kerstin Hesselgren Swedish. Substitute-delegate or expert, 1928; 1930; 1932-1938. Member of the Committee of Experts on the Status of Women, 1938-1940. Member of the First Chamber of the Rikstag, 1933. Member of the Second Chamber, 1937. President of Swedish National Council of Women. Helped to found Swedish UN Association.

Dorothy Kenyon (1888-1972) American. Doctor of Law. Member of New York Bar. Judge. Member of the League Committee of Experts on the Status of Women, 1938-1940. Member of American Business and Professional Women's Association. Member of the UN Status of Women Commission, 1946-1950. National board of directors of American Civil Liberties Union, 1930-1972.

Alexandra Kollantai (1872-1952) Russian revolutionary. Commissar for Public Welfare, 1917-1923. Minister to Norway 1923-1925, Mexico 1925-1927, Norway 1927-1930, Sweden 1930-1945. Made Ambassador to Sweden in 1943. Substitute-delegate to Assembly, 1935-1938. Several publications on the status of women.

Karen Jeppe (1876-1939) Danish. Relief worker before and during the First World War in Armenia. Member of Commission on Deported Women and Children, 1921-1927.

Martha Larsen Jahn (1875-?) Norwegian. Librarian. Substitute-Delegate to Assembly, 1925-1927. Founder and President of Norwegian Section of WILPF. Executive Committee of WILPF. Wife of Chairman of Nobel Committee.

Julia Lathrop (1858-1932) American. Hull House resident and Vice President of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy. Chief of U.S. Children's Bureau 1912-1921. Assessor, League Child Welfare Committee, 1929-1931. Member of the WTUL and President of the Illinois League of Women Voters, 1922-1924.

(Dr.) **Paulina Luisi** Uruguayan. First woman in Uruguay to qualify as doctor of medicine. Member of Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and Children and Child Welfare Committee, 1922-1932. Founder and President of the Uruguayan Women's Association, 1920. IAWSEC Committee member, 1923-1939. Member of IFUW. Board of Officers of ODI from 1935.

Bertha Lutz (1899-1976) Brazilian. For many years taught zoology at the University of Rio de Janeiro. Founder and President of the Brazilian Federation for the Advancement of Women, 1922-1976. Permanent delegate of Brazil to IACW. Opened Government services to women. As member of Brazilian delegation to San Francisco Conference of 1946 to plan structure of UN, pushed for the Status of Women Commission.

Dame Edith Lyttelton (?-1948) British. Co-founder of War Refugees Committee in 1915? Representative of National Federation of Women's Institutes at the Board of Agriculture. Substitute-delegate to Assembly, 1923;1927;1928;1931. Playwright and biographer.

Chrystal Macmillan (1882-1937) British. Barrister. Founding member of WILPF. Executive Secretary of IWSA from 1913-1923, from 1923 as Chairman of Nationality Committee. Vice-President of CRWLN. Representative of IFUW on Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality. Co-founder and President of ODI from 1929.

Germaine Malaterre-Sellier French. Expert, French delegation to Assembly, 1932-1938. Vice-President of IAWSEC, 1926-1939. Council member of the Union Française pour le Suffrage des Femmes. Involved in the Section féminine du Parti Démocrate Populaire.

Gariela Mistral (1889-1957) Chilean. Poet and educationalist. Member of Intellectual Co-operation Committee. Secretary of Institute of Intellectual Co-operation. Consul in Spain, Dominican Republic, Brazil and USA. Nobel Prize of Literature, 1945. Appointed member of UN Sub-Commission on the Status of Women, 1946.

Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon (?-1939) British. Ph.D. in Zoology, Fellow of the Linnean and Royal Physical Societies. President of Council for Representation of Women in the League of Nations. President of NCW of Britain. Hon. Corresponding Secretary, then Vice-President of ICW.

Isabel Oyarzabal de Palencia Spanish. Spanish Inspector of Labour, 1936. Substitute-delegate to the Assembly, 1932-1933;1936. Member of the Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery, 1933. President of Spanish Feminist Association. Republican's Spain's ambassador to Stockholm where she met and became close friends with Kollantai. Went into exile in Mexico with the defeat of the Republic. Writer.

Alice Paul (1885-1977) American. Ph.D. in Sociology. Master of Laws, Doctor of Civil Laws. Worked with Pankhursts in the WSPU, imprisoned three times. Founded the militant Congressional Union in 1913 which became the Woman's Party in 1916. Chairman and then International Secretary of the NWP. Council member of ERI. Drafter of the Equal Rights Amendment and the Equal Rights Treaty. Nationality Chairman of IACW. Founded the WWP in 1938.

Františka Plamínková (1875-1942) Czechoslovakian. Teacher and school inspector. Member of Legislative Assembly 1925 and in 1929 elected first woman Senator. Substitute-delegate to Assembly, 1931-1932. From 1923 first Chairman of the Czech Council of Women. Vice President of IAWSEC, 1926-1942. Board of Officers ODI from 1929. Member of WILPF and IFBPW.

Princess Gabrielle Radziwill (1878-?) Lithuanian. Senior member of several Secretariat Sections (Information, Social, International Bureaux) from 1920-1938, serving as liaison with the Women's International Organizations from 1925-1931.

Eleanor Rathbone (1872-1946) British. M.P. (Independent), 1929-1946. President of NUSEC, 1919-1928. Vice-President of CRWLN. Committee member of IWSA, 1920-1923. Rapporteur on Family Allowances, IWSA Congress 1932. Assessor for Women's International Organizations on Child Welfare Committee, 1925-1929. Several publications on family welfare.

(Lady) Margaret Rhondda (1883-1958) British. Publisher. Member of WSPU, imprisoned and went on hunger strike. Founded *Time and Tide* in 1920, editor from 1926. Chairman of Six Point Group and founding member of ERI. Honorary member of IFUW.

Avril de Sainte Croix (?-1939) French. Abolitionist worker. Member of Extra-Parliamentary Committee for the reform of the regulation of Vice, 1904. Co-founder of the NCW of France and President from 1922. Convener of ICW Standing Committee on Moral Welfare, 1904-1936, Hon. Vice-President of ICW 1936-1939. Assessor for Women's International Organizations on League Advisory Committee for Traffic in Women and Children from 1922-36.

Mary Sheepshanks (1872-1958) British. Secretary of IWSA Headquarters from 1913. Editor *Jus Suffragii* until 1915. Chairman of Women's International Relief Committee during WWI. Secretary, British Fight the Famine Council. International Secretary of the WILPF in Geneva, 1927-1930. Chaired first Conference on Statelessness held in Geneva, 1930.

Doris Stevens American. Journalist. Birth control campaigner. Member of the militant Congressional Union, arrested twice. Member of NWP Council. Chairman of IACW, 1928-1939.

Helena Maria Swanwick (1864-1939) British. Journalist and writer. Editor of journal *Foreign Affairs*, 1924-1927. Chairman of British Section of WILPF. Advisor to Labour Party on international affairs. Substitute-Delegate to Assembly 1924;1929. Vice President of LNU, 1929-1936?

Hélène Vacaresco Romanian. Poet. Member of Romanian Academy. Substitute-delegate to Assembly, 1921-1938. Member of Arts and Letters sub-committee of the Commission of Intellectual Co-operation, 1926. Member of NCW.

Marta Vergara Chilean. Expert/Substitute-delegate to Assembly 1931-1932. Council member of the ERI from 1931. Member of the Consultative Committee on Nationality of Women for the IACW. Member of WWP.

Ruth Woodsmall (1883-1963) American. Executive secretary of YWCA in the Near East (Turkey and Syria) and secretary of the YWCA Eastern Mediterranean Federations (Turkey, Syria, Palestine and Egypt). Invited by League of Nations High Commissioner of Refugees to Co-ordinate field work in Constantinople. General Secretary of WYWCA 1935-1947. Representative for WYWCA on the PDCWIO. Several publications on status of eastern women.

Elsie Zimmern British. Hon. Secretary of ICW, 1920-1925; General Secretary, 1925-1946. Secretary of Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations, 1925-1946. Member of CRWLN. Sister of Sir Alfred Zimmern.

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 Co-operation (13)
 Information (22)
 Several Units (26)
 Personnel and Internal Administration
 Services (29)
 Refugees (45, 48)

1928-1932 and
1933-1946

Political (1)
 Legal (3A, 3E)
 International Bureaux and Intellectual
 Co-operation (5A)
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