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SEX VERSUS CLASS IN TWO BRITISH TRADE UNIONS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY¹

Cathy Hunt

At the start of the twentieth century, as women moved into traditionally male areas of industry, the “family wage” and the status of the craftsman came under increased scrutiny, leading men to question whether women should be driven from the factory or unionized. If the latter, questions arose as to how they were best organized and by whom. This article considers some of the debates surrounding the organization of women into two British trade unions before and during the First World War. It argues that tensions between the two—the mixed-sex Workers’ Union and the single-sex National Federation of Women Workers—were, despite opinions stated by men in the labor movement, focusing on issues of sex and class, less to do with differences in organizational principles than with the insecurities of male workers. While looking at the women who organized for the two unions, this article also seeks to find out what encouraged women to become members.

Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, the unease caused by women’s increasing participation in industries previously dominated by men across Europe and North America is summed up in a much quoted appeal from a male trade unionist to the British Women’s Trade Union League (hereafter, the League) for help in organizing women. It was either this, he warned with dramatic emphasis, or the women of his town “must be exterminated.”² As women’s participation in the industrial workforce grew, poor wages in the so called “women’s trades” such as dressmaking or laundry work may have evinced pity amongst men, reinforcing notions of women as helpless victims of industrialization, but in Britain it was their encroachment into traditionally male industrial work that caused the greatest concern amongst male workers and within the male dominated labor movement.

Ben Tillet of the General Labourers’ Union in Britain warned in the 1890s that “the day is coming when husband and wife will fight at the same factory door for work” and it seemed to many that that day had arrived, with employers undercutting male wages by using women workers.³ In 1906 Samuel Gompers, of the American Federation of Labor, spoke of the

“so-called competition of the unorganised defenceless women workers, the girl and the wife, that often tends to reduce the wages of the father and the husband.”⁴ Women workers were vulnerable and exploitable but they were also dangerous. Their industrial presence threatened the “family wage,” which preserved the pay differential between men and women, prompting working men to look to the trade union movement for protection. Here, however, considerable debate was generated about whether women could be organized and if so, *how* and by *whom*.

As men regarded women workers as intrinsically different, the idea of forming workplace alliances with them was viewed with suspicion.⁵ Women’s industrial lives were widely thought to be limited to the few years between school and marriage and so, even if they struck work in displays of militancy, they were, men argued, unlikely to develop strong habits of trade unionism. Arguments revolved around whether women were capable of organizing other women, whether they should be incorporated into men’s unions or whether they should form separate organizations. If it was acknowledged that women *could* organize, male discussion focused on the question of the class or working status of the women involved in the task.

This article employs a case study of two British trade unions operating just before and during the First World War in order to explore ways in which the organization of women workers was undertaken. It does so by looking at the work of women activists and their relationship with those women they sought to bring into the mixed-sex Workers’ Union (hereafter, the WU) and the single-sex National Federation of Women Workers (hereafter, the Federation). In examining how arguments over sex and class were played out within these two unions, the article reveals the difficulties experienced by women of the British labor movement whose work brought them into contact with issues affecting all aspects of working women’s lives, not just those of the workplace. These issues became very public during the years of the First World War; women workers were suddenly visible, their roles as workers, wives, and mothers became topics of government and public interest. During the war the number of women in paid employment increased by nearly one and a half million, with almost eight hundred thousand new workers in industry.⁶ Women continued to be regarded as “different” and rather than being accepted by the men of the labor movement as permanent workforce additions, their organization continued to be regarded as distinct from that of men.

By examining the positions of the most prominent women in the two unions—Mary Macarthur, general secretary of the Federation and Julia Varley, chief women’s officer of the WU, whose work covered the years before and during the war—the article adds a British context to what was

labeled "industrial feminism" by scholar Mildred Moore in the US in 1915, in reference to the links between the industrial and political concerns of women.⁷ In Britain Varley believed that men and women should be organized in the same branches, concluding that "trade unionism is sexless."⁸ This was not far removed from Macarthur's abhorrence of "any attempt to create sex antagonism between the men and women in industry."⁹ She had always maintained that the single-sex Federation, far from having feminist principles, was intended merely as a temporary measure until such time as women could be freely admitted to all trade unions.¹⁰

The fact that both women had to regularly state their positions regarding "the woman question" emphasizes the precariousness of being women organizers within a male dominated movement, taking care not to alienate or alarm either the men whose support was vital to successful organization or the women they sought to recruit. The historian Robin Miller Jacoby's study of the British and American Women's Trade Union Leagues at the start of the twentieth century highlights tensions encountered by women trade union activists while negotiating the claims of the male labor movement alongside the issues raised by the diverse elements of feminism.¹¹ Macarthur's biographer, Mary Agnes Hamilton, appeared to defend her subject from feminist "charges" when she wrote that Macarthur "had far too sure a belief in the comradeship of the sexes to be a feminist," calling her instead an "equalitarian. Women were human beings—some good, some bad; to argue in favour of their emancipation was to insult them."¹²

Yet to be able to convince women workers of the importance of trade unionism, activists needed to engage not just with shop floor problems but with what the historian Kathleen Canning has referred to, in the context of women organizing in early twentieth-century Germany, as women's "special needs," in order to fully understand the distinct issues that women encountered as workers and as trade unionists.¹³ As the historian Karen Offen has shown, the work of such activists was carried out in Europe against a backdrop of imperialist concerns over "degeneration," ensuring debate over questions of women as workers.¹⁴ The historians Seth Koven and Sonja Michel have shown how nineteenth-century women activists in the US made use of a "rich legacy of domestic ideologies" to inform their "maternalist" political campaigning.¹⁵ Women in Britain whose work was divided between labor and women's movements also recognized the need to formulate with care positions on every aspect of women's lives, from questions of suffrage to marriage and motherhood in addition to questions of wages and legislative protection in the workplace. The historian Deborah Thom also adopts the word "maternalist" to describe the approach of early twentieth-century women trade union leaders seeking to emphasize the

educational advantages that union membership could bring to a woman as worker, wife, and mother, described by Varley as the “life connection.”¹⁶

The article looks at questions of leadership and at the experiences of women activists and members. In this it adds to work by Deborah Thom which considers the influence that Varley and Macarthur had on membership and urges further studies to be carried out to uncover details of grassroots trade unionism.¹⁷ While there was rivalry between the Federation and the WU, this did not necessarily reflect the opinions of women who became members or regional organizers. I have used regional evidence to seek to determine whether women workers were drawn towards a union by its specific principles or by more practical reasons. I argue that at times the women organizers of both unions were caught up in a competition for members initiated less by differences in approach than by the defensive actions of the men who dominated the labor movement. This dominance meant that women organizers depended on male goodwill and cooperation. Despite some differences in achieved pay awards, whether women joined the Federation or the WU was often down to the strength of branches, the work of organizers and activists in the field and, to a considerable extent, the amount of help offered by the local labor movement. The extent to which help was forthcoming appears to point to a tension that had little to do with sex antagonism and much more to do with questions of status amongst working men.

Although the branch records for neither union have survived, details of disputes and branch creations are reported in the annual reports and journals of the two unions, while regional newspapers provide details of their impact on local communities. In addition, the material of local trades councils (hereafter, TCs)—organizations of affiliated trade unions—provides details of relationships between local labor movements and WU and Federation branches. Other sources, while invaluable for enriching understanding of the industrial position of women during this period, nonetheless require careful scrutiny. For example, signposting to places and events is offered by the vast bank of newspaper cuttings on women’s trade unionism within the Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, yet, as Thom warns, Tuckwell’s close association with the Federation perhaps tends to magnify its centrality at the expense of other unions.¹⁸ Thom has also shown how the Women’s Work Collection at the Imperial War Museum in London reinforces the belief that gender was the “dominant division between people in wartime.”¹⁹ The categorization of women’s work as separate from men’s is also apparent in the official record; the records of the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry reveal much about wartime developments in women’s work and trade unionism, yet that “otherness” of women during war is of

course responsible for the very existence of committees reflecting government concerns over questions of women's pay in relation to men's in the postwar world.²⁰

The National Federation of Women Workers and the Workers' Union

The WU and the Federation were not the only unions open to women; both before and just after the First World War, textile unions contained the greatest proportion of organized women workers, with the WU and Federation together making up around 5 percent of women trade unionists in 1914 and 15 percent in 1918.²¹ During the war, other general unions, notably the National Union of General Workers (hereafter, NUGW) also recruited women members. Where the operations of the WU and the Federation overlapped, however, particularly in the recruitment of women war workers, rivalry manifested itself in arguments over which of these two unions had the real interests of women workers at heart.

The WU was formed in 1898 as a general trade union for unskilled and semi-skilled workers, adopting many of the characteristics of New Unionism that ran counter to the principles of the skilled unions—it was militant, admitted women from the outset, and promoted inclusivity with its low subscription rates. It prided itself on having a “sexless spirit of organisation which has brought men and women together in the same union,” although success in doing so before the appointment in 1912 of its first woman organizer, Varley, was limited.²² During a prolonged strike of men and women engaged in the metal engineering industries in the British Midlands, her energy and enthusiasm kept the women's spirits up and was credited with laying the “basis for our subsequent success in the Midlands.”²³ Although she was apparently willing to be used by the male leadership in 1913 to encourage women in Cornwall to support their husbands' industrial action, Varley was also relentless in insisting that the men, “who are always first in the march,” should, in return, extend a helping hand to women unable to earn a living wage and bring them into the ranks of the labor movement.²⁴

The Federation was formed in 1906 for those women excluded from men's unions. It operated under the guidance of the League, to unite and strengthen the women's societies that it had formed and encouraged since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It sought to recruit from “traditional” women's industries, including garment making, food preparation, paper bag and tin box production, and laundry work, but also from within industries where women now worked as well as men, such as the cycle factories of the Midlands or the chain making trades of the Black Country to the north of Birmingham. Macarthur worked with the support of a team

of women officials from across the class divide who were able, by holding local campaigning events and responding to calls for assistance during strikes and disputes, to establish up to seventy-six branches and around 10,000 members by 1914.²⁵ The WU, with around 7,500 women members by that year, made capital out of the fact that some League and Federation organizers had little or no direct experience of factory life.²⁶ It claimed that such “amateur organisers” would fail by not “understand[ing] the working girl and the working girl fails to understand—because she is too greatly amused with the drawing room lady.”²⁷

Regional evidence suggests that some Federation organizers *did* make errors of judgment based on ignorance of local working conditions, or because they were too trusting of factory management’s pledges to improve conditions or protect returning strikers from intimidation.²⁸ Such errors, however, were not necessarily the result of class barriers and were certainly not exclusive to the Federation; new unions commonly took time to become established and teach enthusiastic volunteers how to negotiate with employers and how to manage members.²⁹ Male labor leaders, however, were more likely to express concerns over women’s lack of allegiance to the labor cause than to admit that trade unionism was also a new experience for many men, suggesting that trade unionism was viewed as a natural, instinctive part of a working man’s life.

The relationship with the League was of considerable practical advantage to the Federation. Middle-class benefactors had provided the League, since its formation in 1874, with funding—paying, for example, the salaries of two former factory workers whose organizing talents had been spotted during strikes in London before the war—but subscriptions from affiliated men and women’s trade unions, political groups, and TCs became increasingly important.³⁰ It gained increased recognition by organizing meetings during Trades Union Congress (hereafter, TUC) weeks, held in a different location each year, to encourage local women to organize. Inexperience could also be problematic; rapidly formed branches were not always successful and depended on activists left in the field once the League had left town. In Bath, for example, where employer intimidation and sweated rates of pay in the garment industry were recognized barriers to membership, the Federation representatives were two non-industrial women from wealthy families whose wider involvement in militant suffrage activities may have distracted them from a single-minded commitment to the cause of women’s trade unionism. The branch struggled to maintain its membership for more than a few years.³¹

While the WU seized on examples that it could use to highlight distance between Federation organizers and members, it was arguably the close prewar links that the Federation forged with skilled men’s unions that

it resented more. The Federation sought the backing of established trade unions; certainly the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (hereafter, ASE) regarded it as being respectable enough to lend its support. The combination of self-protection, pity, and paternalism that male unions felt towards women workers was summed up in Oxford as "heart rending" and when describing the "social sin" of women on low wages, a speaker declared that in order to keep workers honest, the TC had to compel employers, through trade unions, to pay a fair living wage.³² At a 1911 meeting to organize the women of the Northampton boot and shoe industry, male trade unionists claimed that women had finally recognized their duty to organize and protect the craft tradition; "Best Boots" deserved "Best Labour," to preserve the town's reputation for the finest boots in the world.³³ In Coventry, in common with dominant discourse on the expected public behavior of women, the men's unions' preference seemed to be for the Federation's "respectable campaign[s] for recognition" as opposed to the belligerent determination of the WU to stage strikes.³⁴

Male attitudes towards women workers were closely linked to the preservation of the family wage. In 1906 Coventry TC agreed that the organization of women was necessary until all workers were freed from the "class domination which at present places them in the helpless position of being entirely at the mercy of the employing classes." Only then would a woman be able to "step up to occupy her ideal and natural position of being a helpmate and partner to man in every sense of the word."³⁵ Debate on the industrial position of women workers took place in many different "wings" of labor politics and was not just confined to male circles; the Women's Co-operative Guild debated the extent to which problems such as "hooliganism" might be attributed to "overworked, underfed, intellectually starved women workers."³⁶ In 1909, the Coventry Women's Labour League, which included Federation members, discussed the hope that if male wages rose, women's labor could be abolished in favor of the state endowment of motherhood.³⁷

Despite women's multi-layered involvement in labor politics, however, the central mission of women's trade unionists was to organize all women who needed to work. While, as Thom notes, the Federation offered a "dowry" payment to women members leaving work upon marriage, this was arguably a practical policy promoting choice rather than casting judgment on married women workers.³⁸ Macarthur argued that trade unionism educated women to become better citizens who would therefore have less need to use marriage as an escape from low-paid drudgery. Although she believed that membership would ensure that women were "more fitted physically and mentally to be mothers of the coming race," echoing both

labor and (some) feminist views about the sanctity of motherhood, her central message emphasized women's protection, with pay rates based on capability not sex.³⁹ *The Woman Worker*, the Federation's newspaper, welcomed debate amongst its readers on married women's work, emphasizing it as a matter of international concern. In 1907 it printed an American drawing of a nursing mother engaged in sweated labor while surrounded by her hungry and neglected children. One reader noted that the image "epitomised the pathos and tragedy of the life of the married home worker" but insisted that mothers must also be kept from working *outside* the home.⁴⁰ The following month saw letters expressing support for women's right to work after marriage, with one stating that "what is wanted is not to prohibit married women from working outside the home, but to make the conditions of that work such that it does not interfere with the due exercise of maternal functions."⁴¹ Another warned of the "sentimental rubbish" written on married women's labor; if abolished, it would result in "semi-starvation" and dependence on charity.⁴²

In place of such "women's" debates, the *WU Record* printed stories of the dreadful conditions that women endured as workers, reinforcing views of them as weak creatures at grave risk of moral impurity. It reported how girls in low paid and irregular work in the corset trade in the naval town of Portsmouth struggled to keep "clean, respectable and well dressed . . . and in a naval or military town temptations are rife and it is so easy to slip, if one is hard up."⁴³ Such accounts strengthened views of women workers as different, and the overall tone of the journal made it clear that, despite the WU's professed commitment to both sexes, the economic protection of the male worker was its primary concern. Varley was employed within a separate "women's department," and although the WU allowed women the choice between joining mixed-sex branches or setting up single-sex ones, the whole set up of the union, from meetings to leisure activities, was geared towards the needs and interests of male workers. Branch meetings before the war were commonly held in pubs, women were invited to social events as "wives and sisters" rather than as members.⁴⁴ There is no evidence of whether this put women off joining the WU or whether the Federation's attempts to secure accommodation such as church halls, vicarages, and Labour Party rooms made it easier for women to attend meetings that were not held in the pub. Arguably the use of such venues strengthened the community view that women workers were delicate and in need of special treatment.

While in some areas the TC acted quickly to assist the Federation in times of dispute, calling in its national organizers, help was dependent on the industrial and political makeup of local areas. If male wage levels were not threatened, as in Sheffield, where the predominance of heavy manufacturing

industry meant that there was relatively little fear of women as competitors, the TC expressed sympathy with the local work of the Federation in 1912 but gave no financial support.⁴⁵ Two years later the Federation noted that conditions in the Sheffield confectionery trade remained "deplorable," with rates being reduced if girls were seen to be earning too much, and with fear of employer intimidation high.⁴⁶ In areas where the unskilled members of the WU held more sway in the labor movement, the Federation could be less popular. In 1914 in Wolverhampton an argument broke out at a TC meeting over the alleged attempts of the Federation to recruit at a local firm where the WU already "had some hold." At the same meeting the decision of the women's branch of the WU to affiliate with the TC was greeted with cheers.⁴⁷ This stands in contrast to the situation in Coventry in 1913 when the Federation was supported by the TC during a strike at a blouse making firm amidst complaints of "friction" with the WU, which had "persistently canvassed our members," resulting in the depletion of Federation membership "without any corresponding gain" to the WU.⁴⁸

While the dynamics of local labor politics could assist either union in branch formation, rank-and-file membership before the war was often simply determined by which union the workers came into contact with first. Both unions made use of the wildcat strike as a recruitment device. During years of heightened labor unrest before the war, women and girls often joined the WU or the Federation in a flurry of strike induced enthusiasm; walk-outs and disputes over poor or reduced pay, fines, and alleged unfair treatment at the hands of supervisors were generally spontaneous, especially in areas where women had been previously unorganized. Despite the help of the League, the Federation's membership was only two and a half thousand more than the WU's women membership in 1914, suggesting that this relationship brought it no more success than the WU's less nationally coordinated methods.⁴⁹ Federation reports indicate the struggles branches faced for survival, with lapses and revivals reported with equal regularity.⁵⁰

During the First World War, as women entered male strongholds of industry in ever-increasing numbers, competition between the Federation and the WU accelerated as both sought members in munitions factories. The WU drew attention to the Federation's alleged class distance from women workers in order to try to persuade women that the WU was a better choice, because *its* organizers understood their situation. It also used the class argument to persuade its male members not to hinder the attempts of women organizers; from 1915 the WU's team of women expanded as the leadership realized the gains to be made from women war workers and by 1918 twenty women organizers were working across the country.⁵¹ It set out to reassure men that its women organizers were solidly working-class

women who had “come into contact with the rough side of life at a very early age.”⁵² Links with the labor tradition were stressed; the father of Alice Maclenan, organizer for the Manchester district, was a veteran of the 1889 London Dock Strike; Florence Hancock had worked to care for her brothers and sister after the death of their parents.⁵³ In other words, these women, with working-class badges of honor, understood the realities of the lives of the women they sought to organize.

Varley’s credentials were highlighted with pride in a 1914 biography in *Record*; she was born in Bradford in 1881 and by the age of thirteen was a mill worker, also caring for her motherless younger siblings.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, she became a delegate for the Weavers and Textile Workers’ Union on the Bradford TC while still in her teens.⁵⁵ From 1908 she worked with the League and for the Federation in the Midlands, representing the Federation on the Birmingham TC and working for the Birmingham Committee for the Organization of Women.⁵⁶ *Record* reported that by 1912 she had concluded that men and women should, wherever possible, be in the same union, implying that this was why she moved from the Federation to the WU. In 1915 she stated her belief that “women have confidence in a Union that places them on an equal footing with their fathers and brothers.”⁵⁷

The 1914 description of Varley distinguishes her from the despised “philanthropic woman,” described in *Record* in 1916 as “rushing for notoriety, unburden[ing] herself on the working girl in true drawing room fashion, coming forward as an amateur organiser.”⁵⁸ Her commitment to class over sex is also made apparent; two spells of imprisonment as a suffrage supporter after arrest for disorderly conduct and resisting police in 1907 are not mentioned, amidst fears perhaps, that mention of militant suffragism might appear to dilute commitment to the working-class cause. Instead *Record* emphasized her “large experience” and the fact that “on the platform she is not showy” but that her work was both direct and simple, qualities that “will tell in the long run.”⁵⁹ Male members needed to be convinced of her credentials to support her work. Thom notes the distinct separation of Varley’s suffrage and trade union activities, and it does appear that her involvement with the campaign for the vote was brief; she later wrote that she had become involved so that she could “respectably” compare prison with the experience of sleeping in the casual wards of workhouses, as she had done as part of a social investigation for Bradford Board of Guardians.⁶⁰ This tension between involvement in suffrage and trade unionism provides further insight into the sensitivities surrounding issues of sex and class in the labor movement.

While individual union activists were involved in the fight for equal suffrage, trade union leadership in Britain backed adult suffrage as a mat-

ter of class allegiance. For women activists the choice was not always easy; the historians Jill Liddington and Jill Norris suggest that the conversion of one time radical suffragist Helen Silcock to the cause of adult suffrage may have been influenced by her concern that as a working-class socialist woman, she was betraying her class.⁶¹ While many women activists encouraged women workers to recognize the link between gaining political representation and higher wages, there was a need to ensure that the suffrage cause never obscured the labor one. League minutes emphasize the tension; under the auspices of the Manchester and Salford Women's Trade and Labour Council, suffragists Esther Roper and Eva Gore-Booth started a trade union for women chain makers in the Black Country which the League claimed was defunct by 1906. When Macarthur, who was herself an adult suffragist, met with the chain makers, she claimed that they preferred her organization, complaining that "the chief work done by the old union was to send suffrage petitions and delegations to London."⁶²

Although Macarthur, because of her middle-class roots, could, in WU eyes, be classed in its "amateur organiser" category, in reality she could not so easily be dismissed, for in her, the WU male leadership came to recognize a serious threat to its attempts to recruit women, particularly during the War. Her popularity with working women gave the lie to claims that middle-class women, whether working or not, did not understand the needs of working-class women. Gertrude Tuckwell recalled how Macarthur used to tell audiences that "what was required was imagination enough on both sides to realise that the different surroundings in which they had been bred made no difference and that the claim of the oppressed and destitute was a common meeting ground."⁶³ Macarthur was born in 1880 into a Scottish family whose "comfortable circumstances" were based on the establishment of a drapery business; while trying to decide on her calling, she wrote for an Ayrshire newspaper and was asked to report on a Shop Assistants' Union meeting.⁶⁴ Here, she underwent something of a conversion, writing later that "going to scoff, I remained to pray."⁶⁵ She subsequently became chair of the Ayr Shop Assistants branch, before becoming secretary to the League in 1903.

Despite different familial backgrounds, comparisons between Varley and Macarthur are apparent. Both were presented with opportunities outside of the usual experience of women of their class or situation. In the case of both women, recognized as pragmatists by Thom, opportunities spring boarding their trade union careers came from association with a prominent trade unionist, Margaret Bondfield.⁶⁶ That the employment choices that they subsequently took were different has arguably less to do with principle and belief than to do with the circles in which the two moved once they

began working within trade unionism, in which employment opportunities for women were rare. The need to ensure a secure future and to have the importance of one's role recognized were, as today, no less important for women than for men and we must guard against the strength of lingering Victorian assumptions that women in the early twentieth-century labor movement were more likely and more able than men to be driven in their work by principle than by personal ambition, because they did not need to earn a living.

There are no known details of the relationship between Varley and Macarthur, although Thom suggests "a hint of bitterness" after Varley's departure from the Federation.⁶⁷ The organization of the women chain makers at Cradley Heath has been strongly associated with the leadership of Macarthur. The WU, however, boldly claimed that to Varley belonged "the lion's share for the women chain makers' movement. She did the initial work for women . . . and was present at all the early meetings and, indeed initiated the [subsequent] movement amongst the women brickworkers. Why she did not go through with it was due to Trade Union jealousy and is another story."⁶⁸ That "story" does not appear to have been publicly told. It is possible that Varley's departure from the Federation was the result of disagreement, such as that which led to the defection to the WU of Federation organizer George Dallas over "methods of working."⁶⁹ It is as likely that she was swayed by the post of woman's officer with the WU, (the first such post to be given to a woman in a mixed-sex union in Britain), offering both recognition and financial security.

The First World War

During the War, rivalry between the Federation and the WU grew and relations were strained by a wartime alliance between the Federation and the ASE. This encouraged the WU to continue to express antagonism towards the Federation in terms of both sex and class. In 1915 the ASE was adamant that it would not admit women, but this left it with a dilemma; while it perceived women to be doing "men's work," this would leave unorganized female labor as a threat after the war. The war encouraged male workers to give full vent to their distrust of women as both workers and trade unionists. The minute books of the ASE in areas of intense war production indicate the rising panic that accompanied the introduction of women into traditionally male shops or onto previously male operated machinery, with shop stewards demanding urgent interviews with management to ensure the long term protection of their members. Overreactions were frequent; women did not simply swoop in and take men's work. In

order to make the concept of equal pay for equal work as difficult to adhere to as possible, firms "diluted" and altered skilled processes to such an extent that although some women did take over the work of a skilled man in its entirety, many more were employed on a vast range of practices and, as the historian Gail Braybon shows, the amount of skill required could vary considerably.⁷⁰ Despite this, union men sought ways to "manage" women; rather than accepting that they would join the general unions, over whose peacetime plans it clearly had no control, the ASE agreed to help the Federation to organize women for the duration of the war. The Federation in turn gave assurances that its members would withdraw from the skilled men's jobs at the end of the war so that prewar labor conditions might be resumed.

The ASE's determination to retain its privileged position within the labor movement led to a bitter clash with the WU which professed to have neither a "new-found or passing" interest in women workers and was instead determined to fashion itself into "the most powerful Union for women as well as men the world has ever seen."⁷¹ While the skilled unions sought to preserve the craftsmen status of its members and the unskilled unions sought recognition for its enlarged body of members within negotiation processes, relations between the two worsened. From the summer of 1915 ASE districts were being urged by the Executive not just to help the Federation but to hinder WU efforts to recruit women.⁷² *The Woman Worker* is full of reports thanking the Engineers for support; in January 1916, after a successful application for increased wages, "a well-known ASE man was carried round the factory in triumph by the girls."⁷³ In Motherwell, the District branch of the ASE had been "splendid" and as a result the Federation branch was "full of spirit."⁷⁴ In Coventry Mr. and Mrs. Givens, he of the ASE and she a local organizer of the Federation, were acknowledged as the power and success behind the Coventry Federation branch.⁷⁵

The WU was undoubtedly correct in its belief that the men of the ASE were motivated by self-preservation and that if women "were not a menace to the craft interests, many men who today are declaring their undying love for the women's cause would see them hang before lifting a finger."⁷⁶ Despite the expressions of gratitude to the ASE in *The Woman Worker*, evidence suggests little enthusiasm at ASE District Committees for organizing women. A delegate at an ASE meeting in Barrow in Furness in 1917 noted that "he did not believe in fighting for the women workers as such but pointed out we were obliged to take up the fight in order to safeguard the status of our own members."⁷⁷ May Ford, who became a Federation shop steward in Coventry during the war, recalled that although the Federation was permitted to use the ASE buildings, the women were never made to feel very welcome; "periodically the men let us into their meetings on Saturday afternoons but not with open arms."⁷⁸

Despite inter-union rivalry, the numbers of women joining trade unions increased by over 160 percent during the war.⁷⁹ Early responses to problems encountered by women workers directed into munitions centers such as Coventry or Barrow seem to have had a healthy impact on union recruitment. The value of help given to women in securing fair rates of pay, or securing the required wartime leaving certificates is in accordance with the regional findings of the government Enquiry into Industrial Unrest, which highlighted the preponderance of tensions caused by women receiving lower rates of pay than those promised on appointment and the need to ensure that wages kept pace with the rising costs of living.⁸⁰ In Coventry the WU highlighted the “disgraceful manner in which girls were brought to Coventry” on promises of wages far in excess of what they actually received and obtained for them the correct rates.⁸¹ In Barrow in 1916 the Federation negotiated fares home for women who had been directed to munitions work on promises of wages that the firm (Vickers) admitted could not be realistically earned on its piece rate wages. While negotiations went on between Vickers and the Federation, the firm’s manager worked with Federation officials “until nice lodgings were found for the girls which he promised would be paid for by the firm.”⁸² The Federation had also secured pay arrears and *The Woman Worker* reminded readers of promises made by the company to brighten up its dining rooms, provide a good canteen and improved rest rooms, and to appoint a welfare matron.⁸³ The unions’ position is summed up by MacArthur’s evidence before the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry. She stated that, “We understand the nurse; she . . . binds our wounds. We understand the foreman or woman; they are there to preserve discipline and see that we turn out our work; we understand the Factory Inspector; she is employed by the government to see that our employer does fairly by us but we do not understand the woman who says she is our friend and who is paid by the employer.”⁸⁴

While the health and safety of members was fought for, the unions remained wary of welfare supervisors who they suspected were appointed by employers to maximize output, particularly where class barriers between supervisor and workers were evident. Varley told the Commission of her disapproval of a factory welfare worker who had “made it her business to see that girls went home and got to bed at a decent hour.” It was not, she stated, the job of welfare supervisors to “interfere with trade union [and wage] matters.”⁸⁵

The unions sought, therefore, to be the first point of contact for women workers, and organizers made enormous efforts to persuade women of the benefits of joining. This was often to the annoyance of matrons and welfare supervisors in munitions hostels who believed that the unions had no right to “pester” the women in their living quarters. In the case of the munitions

works at Gretna, such canvassing was the only way that the Federation could reach women workers as it fought the Ministry of Munitions for representation within the works.⁸⁶ WU organizer Florence Hancock stressed the importance of the personal touch, believing that visits to workers' homes were an important way to establish good relations with members and encourage new recruits, particularly amongst younger workers.⁸⁷

During the war, Varley was joined by regional officers and the Federation staff expanded. Shop stewards were used where representation was permitted and where the unions could find willing volunteers to turn departments into union shops, of vital importance when paid officials were denied permission to enter the works. Within the WU some of the more proficient women shop stewards became paid organizers, based on the numbers of women members that they had secured.⁸⁸ WU women's representation on the shop floor, however, was not always straightforward; mixed-sex branches were preferred by the union to single-sex ones, although these were permitted, and hints from Varley that there was no need for duplication of roles suggest that the men were encouraged to take on shop floor responsibilities. In 1915 she stated, for example, that "there should be no need for a girl collector in the shop if there is a man. The man will get the women to pay equally as well as a woman, if he will deign to try. Further, it has a look of division if the man only collects from men and the women from the women."⁸⁹

Thom, in her study of women workers at the Woolwich Arsenal in East London, found that the Federation's shop stewards were mostly married women, with the ability, it was hoped, to exert maternal influence over the younger and less experienced women and girls, and to take on management with confidence.⁹⁰ Around the country, the pattern may have been varied; many of the shop stewards mentioned for their energy and dedication in *The Woman Worker* were single women. In factories where unions did not have the authority to be able to hold workplace meetings, the availability of women without childcare and domestic responsibilities to organize or attend evening meetings and social events was vital to the continuation of organization.

The evidence reveals that women had many reasons for becoming trade unionists in wartime. As Braybon shows, women joined munitions factories from a variety of trades.⁹¹ The encouragement given to new members by those with prewar union experience within these trades was welcomed by the Federation and demonstrates that even when there were breaks in membership, as women shifted into war work, Varley's "life connection" was, to an extent, beginning to be evident.⁹² In addition, confidence to organize was much higher than before the war, partly because of the large departments in which women came to work and partly, as the historian Angela Woolacott

has shown, due to increased levels of self-esteem amongst women workers.⁹³ Others were converted to trade unionism by the commitment shown by local organizers; in Coventry Margaret Jeffs was recruited by Alice Arnold, who went from being a shop steward in a munitions factory to WU organizer. She was impressed by Arnold's "down to earth" speeches against worker exploitation, qualified to do so, thought Jeffs, by the poverty of her own upbringing in Coventry.⁹⁴ The Industrial Unrest Enquiry findings indicated that inequalities of earnings between men and women were a major cause of discontent during the war. In Coventry, the help received from the WU by Isabelle Clarke (nee Magee) to gain the correct rate for her skilled work convinced her that Alice Arnold was "a wonderful person for the working woman."⁹⁵ Organizers in both unions highlighted the discontent caused by excessive work hours and the inflexible nature of over time, particularly for women with children, and there are numerous examples of officials working to protect their members from disadvantageous shift patterns and extensions to the working day.⁹⁶

Organizers from both unions worked unceasingly to secure pay deals for members, representing their members at munitions tribunals. Federation personnel sat on several Government committees, including the Labour Supply Committee, working to establish a minimum rate of one pound a week for substituted women war workers in government establishments.⁹⁷ Although the Federation did not make regular use of its journal to indulge in direct criticisms of the WU, on occasion readers' letters were used to highlight the perceived inadequacies of WU pay awards for women war workers, leaving one reader in 1916 to wonder how "is a girl to lodge and feed and clothe herself" ("and what about books? Not to speak of going to the pictures sometimes") on a weekly amount that was below the one pound a week minimum that the Federation had been fighting for.⁹⁸ The letter referred to an agreement signed by the WU in the Midlands in 1915 establishing a sixteen shilling a week pay scale for women over the age of twenty-one.⁹⁹ The award was criticized by the ASE and the Federation as inadequate although the WU claimed that the reason its opponents found fault with its successes in improving women's conditions was to do with nothing more than "jealousy and spleen" and that it had "put shillings per week" in the pockets of women and girls.¹⁰⁰ Lewenhak suggests that Varley may have been prevented from achieving a better deal for women members because of opposition from the male membership of the WU.¹⁰¹ If this was the case, it indicates that despite the leaders' enthusiastic rhetoric of women as "wonderful fields of conquest," the men of the WU were very slow to convert to the idea of recruiting women to their ranks and never very willing to secure too comfortable a position for them in case they undermined the long term future of male workers.¹⁰²

The End of the War

When the war ended, the Federation's compliance with its agreement with the ASE to withdraw its members from the latter's members' jobs was criticized by the WU and seen as confirmation that the Federation believed that women's position in the workforce was of less importance than that of the nation's male workers. The question of whether Macarthur contributed to the long-term industrial position of women in industry has continued to be of interest to historians.¹⁰³ Both the WU and the Federation reminded women of the importance of defending the male wage for the duration of the war, yet it seems clear that women joined unions for reasons of their own rather than to safeguard their men folk's futures. Braybon notes that women trade unionists were schooled within a male dominated labor movement to regard women's work as of lesser importance than men's.¹⁰⁴ Macarthur made it clear that she would cooperate with the peacetime restoration of prewar work practices, but it is arguable that this was not a wholehearted abandonment of the Federation's indefatigable wartime support of women workers. She marched with women from the Woolwich Arsenal in December 1918 to demand fair treatment and employment for the hundreds of thousands displaced by the cessation of munitions production.¹⁰⁵ The historian Sarah Boston draws attention to Macarthur's 1917 hope that "if we stand by the men for complete restoration let them stand by us for guarantees and indemnities for the women" and while there is little evidence to suggest that the skilled unions offered support to displaced women industrial workers, there are examples of Federation endeavors to ensure that wartime gains were not eradicated after Armistice.¹⁰⁶

Giving evidence before the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry in 1918, Macarthur stated that "women who have been accustomed to economic independence for the first time during the war will not be inclined to relinquish it," anticipating that "there will be, as compared with pre-war times, a much larger number of women desiring to enter industry."¹⁰⁷ In October 1918, Gertrude Tuckwell set out the Federation's vision for postwar women workers, endeavoring to "keep what we have got" with the support and comradeship of men because "men's and women's interests are identical." She urged women to keep fighting for equal pay for equal work and to contribute to the management of industry by working for the union.¹⁰⁸

Although Tuckwell also stressed the Federation's determination, in the national interest, to ensure that "the wives of discharged soldiers and widows are in a position to stay at home and look after their children and are not forced to go to work," this was not a command to all women to leave the factory.¹⁰⁹ The WU President referred to motherhood, stating in 1916 that although women should face no "barriers of sex" in their choice of

occupation, their first duty, "in the interests of the race," was to care for the young.¹¹⁰ Varley expressed the hope that motherhood was a woman's highest calling, while women might withdraw from paid work after marriage, their sense of responsibility within the labor movement would by that time be sufficiently strong to ensure that they would continue to be members after they had withdrawn. In 1915 she had written that "I am looking forward to the day when the married woman will retain her membership of the Union after marriage," a statement that was surely music to the ears of the WU male leadership.¹¹¹ Hoping for minimal postwar competition from women, they could still look forward to former women workers supporting the union cause by retaining their membership.

Voicing its objection to the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act of 1919, the WU proclaimed its long term support for women workers, declaring that "a woman has a right to choose her occupation with or without the guidance of a man, in the same way as a man has a right to choose his occupation with or without the guidance of the woman." The same article in *Record* interpreted the Act as "pretending to assure the rights of trade unionists but which in effect is saying to the labourer, 'Get back to your place, dog,' to the woman, 'Get out of the shop, to your home, to the workhouse, or onto the streets for what we care.'"¹¹² It was arguably easy for the WU to state this as its position once the Federation had complied with the restoration of prewar work practices, handing privileges back to the craftsmen.

The WU wanted to keep its female membership but, perhaps more importantly, it was determined to retain its enhanced status within the labor movement at the expense of the craftsmen. The political nature of its position was exposed by its criticism of the Labour Party which had, the WU claimed, ignored the rights of "women and labourers" in its desire not to offend the craftsmen.¹¹³ While in the immediate postwar years, its women organizers set about the relentless task of restoring women's membership to its wartime levels, recruiting once again from "women's" industries, the WU male leaders could meanwhile proclaim their commitment to egalitarianism, safe in the knowledge that the removal of women as competitors in engineering was well underway. Once again, therefore, despite appearing to support women, the WU was arguably more concerned with its standing in the labor movement and its continued struggle with the skilled unions, particularly within the engineering sector.

Conclusion

Macarthur noted in 1907 that, "the only person who gains by sex jealousy is the capitalist."¹¹⁴ While the leadership of the WU claimed that the single-sex Federation did not understand the position of the woman

worker, there was often little real difference between the ways in which these two British unions operated. Women organizers from both worked incessantly to bring women into union ranks. Their determination to seek to understand women's lives in their entirety was widely shared; the historian Colette Hyman notes that the approach of the Women's Trade Union League of America was to take into account "the whole of women's lives, not just their lives as wage-workers."¹¹⁵ Varley and Macarthur were both notoriously hard workers, touring extensively, suffering periods of exhaustion, and resultant poor health. They were not alone; the journals of both unions carried reports of women organizers' health breakdowns as the result of overwork. The organization of women demanded an intensity of work that some involved in the wider aspects of labor women's activism were unable to sustain. In 1913, for example, a Women's Labour League branch in London tried to help with the organization of domestic workers but was forced to admit that this was "difficult work and that there are too few willing volunteers."¹¹⁶ Successful organization meant that women trade unionists had to keep "industrial feminism" at the heart of their agendas; they could not allow their cause to be blown off course by related issues or by ideological arguments over sex and class.

Despite rivalry between the Federation and the WU, women joined the two unions in more or less equal numbers. I have found no accounts of women who chose the Federation because it was single sex. Women came into contact with both unions in various ways; they joined as the result of disputes, in comradeship and solidarity, through the campaigning work of national organizers, the dedication and energy of local organizers, through the involvement of labor movement men, and through introductions to activists. Rosina Whyatt, who became a WU organizer, was introduced to trade unionism because "it so happened that the secretary of a trade union, the WU, was working in the department." When Whyatt was asked to join, she had only a "vague idea that there were trade unions but she did not know the first thing about them."¹¹⁷ Evidence also shows that in the post-war years Federation and WU organizers worked together in an attempt to maintain the strength of women's trade unionism as women returned to the hidden areas of work from which many had come before the war. In Coventry the WU's Alice Arnold teamed up with the Federation's Henrietta Givens to campaign for improved working conditions for women who had been compelled to return to domestic service by unemployment.¹¹⁸ This cooperation symbolized a determination to survive; in 1920 the Federation agreed to a merger with the NUGW, becoming its women's section, registering its belief in "[the League's] dictum that it was better for men and women to be working together . . . provided that women should not lose their separate identity."¹¹⁹

Women trade unionists' fight to retain this identity was, however, seriously weakened during the 1920s; Macarthur died aged just forty on the day that the amalgamation arrangements were complete.¹²⁰ In 1923 the separate identity of the Women's Section of the NUGW was lost and the women's branches were transferred to the districts. The League's work was taken over by a non-policy making committee of the General Council of the TUC. Despite Varley's election to the General Council in 1921, in a climate of growing unemployment and failed labor disputes, the autonomy of women's leaders was lost during the interwar years, in which the interests of class were largely seen to be male.

NOTES

¹This article has evolved from my paper delivered at "Labouring Feminisms and Feminist Working Class History in Europe and Beyond" in Stockholm, 2008 and has been developed with assistance from a Nuffield Foundation Social Science Small Grant.

²Barbara Hutchins, "Women in Trade Unionism," *The New Statesman*, February 21, 1914, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection (GTC), TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University, 300f/41.

³Cited in Sally Alexander, "Bringing Women into Line with Men: the Women's Trade Union League 1874-1921" in Alexander, *Becoming A Woman and Other Essays in 19th and 20th Century Feminist History* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 69.

⁴Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 26.

⁵See Kessler-Harris, "Problems of Coalition-Building: Women and Trade Unions in the 1920s" in Ruth Milkman, *Women Work and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History* (Boston, Routledge, 1985), 110-138.

⁶Angela Woolacott *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 17.

⁷Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and A Little Fire: Women and Working Class Politics in the United States 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 54.

⁸Workers' Union *Record*, July 1915, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS.126/WU/4/2; WU Triennial Conference, Birmingham, 1916, Julia Varley Collection, Hull University Archives, DJV/8.

⁹Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Mary Macarthur: A Biographical Sketch* (London: Leonard Parsons, 1925), 42.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Robin Miller Jacoby, *The British and American Women's Trade Union Leagues 1890–1925: A Case Study of Feminism and Class* (New York: Carlson, 1994).

¹²Hamilton, *Mary Macarthur*, 202.

¹³Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany 1850–1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 317.

¹⁴Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 229.

¹⁵Seth Koven and Sonja Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 10.

¹⁶Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War One* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 28; *Workers' Union Record (Record)*, June, 1915.

¹⁷Thom, "'The Bundle of Sticks': Women Trade Unionists and Collective Organization Before 1918" in *Nice Girls and Rude Girls* (2000), 94–121.

¹⁸GTC, TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University; Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls*, 98.

¹⁹Thom, "Making Spectaculars: Museums and How We Remember Gender in Wartime" in *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914–1918*, Gail Braybon, ed. (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), 52.

²⁰War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry (Minutes), National Archives MUN/5/84-88/342.

²¹Barbara Drake, *Women in Trade Unions* (London: Labour Research Department, 1920; Virago Edition, 1984), Tables, 237–239.

²²*Record*, June, 1916.

²³*Record*, July, 1914.

²⁴*Record*, July, 1914; *Record* April, 1914.

²⁵Federation Annual Reports (AR), TUC Library Collections, HD 6079; Drake, *Women in Trade Unions*, 237–239.

²⁶Drake, *Women in Trade Unions* 237–239.

²⁷*Record*, August, 1916.

²⁸See for example Cathy Hunt, "Tea and Sympathy: A Study of Diversity among Women Activists in the National Federation of Women Workers in Coventry, England 1907–1914" in *International Labor and Working Class History Journal* no. 72 (Fall 2007), 183.

²⁹See Frank Carr, "Engineering Workers and the Rise of Labour in Coventry 1914–39," (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 1978), 108.

³⁰Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) Minutes, June 18 1908, May 11 1911, TUC Library Collections, London Metropolitan University, HD 6079.

³¹See GTC 524/3; Federation AR, 1909; *Woman Worker*, October 1907; *Women's Trade Union Review*, January 1908.

³²*Jackson's Oxford Journal* June 22, 1907.

³³*Northampton Daily Chronicle*, September 21, 1911.

³⁴Carr, "Engineering Workers and the Rise of Labour," 38.

³⁵*Coventry Trades Council AR* 1906, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, MSS. 5/2/2.

³⁶*The Co-operative News*, February 10, 1906, Manchester.

³⁷*Midland Daily Telegraph*, February 12, 1909, Coventry.

³⁸Thom, "The Bundle of Sticks," 112.

³⁹*The Manchester Chronicle*, October 24, 1907, GTC 300b/4.

⁴⁰*The Woman Worker (WW)*, February, 1908, London.

⁴¹WW, March, 1908.

⁴²WW, March, 1908.

⁴³*Record*, April, 1915.

⁴⁴*Record*, January and July, 1914.

⁴⁵Sheffield Trades and Labour Council minutes (EC), Sheffield Archives 1912, Sheffield Archives LD1625-1634.

⁴⁶*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, March 2, 1914.

⁴⁷*Wolverhampton Express and Star*, August 20, 1914, GTC, 357.

⁴⁸*Federation AR*, 1914.

⁴⁹Drake, *Women in Trade Unions*, 237–239.

⁵⁰Hunt, "The Fragility of the Union: the Work of the National Federation of Women Workers in the Regions of Britain, 1906–1914" in *Class and Gender in British Labour History: Renewing the Debate (or Starting It?)*, Mary Davis, ed. (Wales: Merlin Press, 2011), 171–189.

⁵¹Richard Hyman, *The Workers' Union*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 87.

⁵²*Record* May, 1923.

⁵³*Record*, August, 1919; *Record*, March, 1922.

⁵⁴*Record*, July, 1914.

⁵⁵*Record*, July, 1914.

⁵⁶Joyce Bellamy, et al, "Julia Varley" in *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, Volume 4 (London: MacMillan, 1977), 216–221.

⁵⁷*Record*, July, 1915.

⁵⁸*Record*, August, 1916.

⁵⁹*Record*, July, 1914.

⁶⁰Thom, "The Bundle of Sticks," 99; *Evening Dispatch*, May 8, 1936, University Archives, Hull, DJV/5/a.

⁶¹Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us: the Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Virago, 1984), 233.

⁶²WTUL Committee Minutes, December 13, 1906.

⁶³"Reminiscences," an unpublished biography of Gertrude Tuckwell, GTC, TUC Library Collections.

⁶⁴Hamilton, *Mary Macarthur*, 4.

⁶⁵*Ibid*, 7.

⁶⁶Thom, "The Bundle of Sticks," 101.

⁶⁷Thom, "The Bundle of Sticks," 102.

⁶⁸*Record*, July, 1914.

⁶⁹Bellamy et al, *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, Volume 4, 69–74.

⁷⁰Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, (New York: Routledge, 1981), 62.

⁷¹*Record*, June, 1916; WU AR, 1915.

⁷²Hyman, *The Workers' Union*, 119–120.

⁷³WW, January, 1916.

⁷⁴WW, March, 1916.

⁷⁵WW, February, 1917.

⁷⁶Hyman, *The Workers' Union*, 120.

⁷⁷ASE District Committee minutes, Barrow in Furness, February, 23 1917, Barrow Archives BDS0 57/1/8.

⁷⁸Mrs. May Ford, Kenneth Richardson Collection of Audiotapes, Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

⁷⁹Sarah Boston, *Women Workers and Trade Unions* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), 126.

⁸⁰Report to the War Cabinet of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest 1917, National Archives, The Cabinet Papers 1915–79 LG/F/78/5/1.

⁸¹*Record*, October, 1917.

⁸²*WW*, August, 1916.

⁸³*WW*, February, 1916.

⁸⁴War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry, Day 4, October 1918, National Archives MUN 5/84–88/342/17.

⁸⁵War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry, Day 7, October, 1918.

⁸⁶National Archives, MUN 7/259.

⁸⁷Hyman Correspondence, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, interview with Dame Florence Hancock MSS 51/3/1/27.

⁸⁸Jack Jones, interview with the author, London, 2001.

⁸⁹*Record* June, 1915.

⁹⁰Thom “Women Munition Workers at Woolwich Arsenal in the 1914–1918 War” (MA Thesis, University of Warwick, 1975).

⁹¹Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, 49.

⁹²See for example, *WW*, January, 1917.

⁹³Woolacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, 102.

⁹⁴Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Margaret Jeffs 826/2.

⁹⁵Isabelle Clarke, Red Lane History Project, Coventry Archives, PA1235.

⁹⁶See for example, *WW*, July, 1916.

⁹⁷Drake, *Women and Trade Unions*, 80.

⁹⁸*WW*, January, 1916.

⁹⁹Drake, *Women and Trade Unions*, 78.

¹⁰⁰*Record*, August, 1916.

¹⁰¹Lewenhak, *Women and Trade Unions*, 156.

¹⁰²*Record*, September 1915; Lewenhak, *Women and Trade Unions*, 156.

¹⁰³See, for example, Susan Pederson, *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State in Britain and France, 1914–1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁰⁴Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, 155.

¹⁰⁵WW, December, 1918.

¹⁰⁶Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, 133.

¹⁰⁷War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry, National Archives MUN 5/84/342/17.

¹⁰⁸WW, October, 1918.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰*Record*, July, 1916.

¹¹¹*Record*, July, 1915.

¹¹²*Record*, October, 1919.

¹¹³*Record*, October, 1919.

¹¹⁴*Manchester Guardian*, October 25, 1907, GTC, 300b/4.

¹¹⁵Colette Hyman "Labor Organizing and Female Institution-Building: The Chicago Women's Trade Union League" in *Women, Work and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History*, Ruth Milkman, ed. (Boston: Routledge, 1985), 23.

¹¹⁶*League Leaflet*, February, 1913.

¹¹⁷John Burnett, ed., *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London: Allen Lane, 1974), 127.

¹¹⁸Cathy Hunt, "'Her Heart and Soul were with the Labour Movement': Using a Local Study to Highlight the Work of Women Organisers Employed by the Workers' Union in Britain from the First World War to 1931," *Labour History Review*, vol. 70, no. 2, (2005), 176.

¹¹⁹Margaret Bondfield, *A Life's Work*, (New York: Hutchinson, 1949), 60. Macarthur and the NUGW's President, JR Clynes, MP, had a long association within the labor movement and Macarthur believed that this was the union that most closely represented the principles of the Federation.

¹²⁰*National Union of General Workers' Journal*, February, 1921, London, accessed at the Working Class Movement Library, Salford.
