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Visions of equality
women's rights and political change in 1970s Britain

Homans, Elizabeth

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VISIONS OF EQUALITY

Women's Rights and Political Change in 1970s Britain

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By Elizabeth Homans

SUMMARY

The 1970s are widely thought to have marked a watershed for women. Women's lives underwent considerable transformations, even as the limits of those changes were bound by continued assumptions about gender roles. The British women's movement enjoyed its most vibrant upsurge in half a century and a raft of legislation marked the most significant advance in women's rights since the 1920s. The landmark equality legislation is well known: the 1970 Equal Pay Act and the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. The 1970-74 Conservative Government passed a series of laws strengthening the rights of married women. The 1974-9 Labour Governments introduced statutory maternity leave, child benefit, and addressed some gender inequalities in pension provision. They also passed the 1976 Domestic Violence Act, and the 1977 Sexual Offences Act, which offered women some new protections.

This thesis concentrates on those measures which most directly affected women's economic status and their treatment as workers, in the home and in formal paid employment. It shows how feminists, women rights activists, and other interested parties advanced the cause of reform, and how party and government politicians perceived and responded to these challenges within the context of their broader concerns. The exploration of this particular set of policies shows how governments began to move away from the Beveridge assumptions, whereby women were viewed as dependents, towards a view which saw all women as economically independent workers. This work also shows how these policies, and the ideas about gender equality which they embodied, evolved within a broader political context, which saw the end of the postwar consensus and its replacement with a different set of ideals and assumptions. By adopting a broadly chronological approach, this work shows how the notion and practice of equality for women developed throughout the period which we so closely associate with women's liberation.

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CONTENTS

Commented [EH1]:

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEF	Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers
CBI	Confederation of British Industries
DEP	Department of Employment and Productivity
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
GMWU	General and Municipal Workers Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NALGO	National and Local Government Officers Association
NCCL	National Council of Civil Liberties
NCW	National Council of Women
NEC	National Executive Committee (of the Labour Party)
NJAC	National Joint Advisory Council
NJACCWER	National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights
NJCWWO	National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations
NLWAC	National Labour Women's Advisory Committee
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUVB	National Union of Vehicle Builders
NLWAC	National Labour Women's Advisory Committee
NWAC	National Women's Advisory Committee (of the Conservative Party)
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
SWC	Status of Women Committee
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trades Unions Congress
WAC	Women's Advisory Committee (of the TUC)
WIM	Women in Media
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement
WNAC	Women's National Advisory Committee (of the Conservative Party)
WNC	Women's National Commission

INTRODUCTION

The 1970s are widely held to have marked a watershed for women in Britain.[1] Against a backdrop of broad social, cultural and economic change, the British women's movement enjoyed its most vibrant upsurge in over half a century. A raft of legislation marked the most significant advance for women since the 1920s. There were the 1970 Equal Pay and 1975 Sex Discrimination Acts. Lesser known reforms also promoted women's rights. The 1970-74 Conservative Government passed a series of laws strengthening married women's rights.[2] The subsequent Labour Governments introduced statutory paid maternity leave, child benefit, and addressed some gender inequalities in pension provision. They also passed the 1976 Domestic Violence Act, and the 1977 Sexual Offences Act. This work explores the various pressures for reform. It evaluates the impact of the women's movement. It also goes beyond this to explore how, within the context of a wider political debate about the nature and desirability of equality and opportunity, political, economic, social and cultural factors also helped define the women's rights agenda. In turn, these developments reflected and contributed to the erosion of the historical compact around the 'male breadwinner model family'.[3]

National and International Contexts

The backdrop to this episode encompassed what Rodney Lowe describes as 'the great division of the postwar years'.[4] In Britain, the 1970s were marked by the protracted and tumultuous death of the postwar consensus.[5] Founded on a commitment to the welfare state, a mixed economy, and full employment, this had been underpinned by Keynesian techniques of economic management and assumed cooperation between government and organised labour.[6] For Eric

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[1] D. Sandbrook, *State of Emergency: The Way We Were* (London, 2010), pp. 418-419; A. Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out: Britain in the Seventies* (London, 2009), pp. 231-3.; P. Whitehead, *The Writing on the Wall: Britain in the Seventies* (London, 1985), pp. 309-321; 'Women's History Timeline', Women's Hour Website, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/timeline/1970.shtml, accessed 26/02/2008; S. Bruley, *Women in Britain Since 1900* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 148 & 151.

[2] H.L. Smith, 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship, 1960s-2000', in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), p. 282.

[3] For a summary of the development and erosion of this historical compact see C. Creighton, 'The Rise and Decline of the 'Male Breadwinner Family' in Britain, in *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 23 (1999), 519-541.

[4] R. Lowe, 'Review Article: Life Begins in the Seventies? Writing and Rewriting the History of Postwar Britain', in *Journal of Contemporary History* 42 (2007), 169.

[5] Lowe, 'Life Begins in the Seventies?', 169; V. Bogdanor, 'The Fall of Heath and the End of the Postwar Settlement', in S. Ball and A. Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government 1970-1974: A Reappraisal* (Harlow, 1996), pp. 371-89.

[6] For general discussions of 'the British postwar consensus see D. Dutton, *British Politics Since 1945*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1996); M. Pugh, *State and Society: A Social and Political History of Britain 1870-1997*, 2nd edn (London,

Hobsbawm, 1945-73 represented a 'Golden Age'.[7] Unemployment was low.[8] Trade unions enjoyed considerable bargaining power.[9] Real incomes and consumer spending rose.[10] In the 1970s, as these trends stalled or reversed, the settlement crumbled. Many contemporaries believed that the political left and the forces of organised labour were the rising political power in Britain.[11] After 1979, it became clearer that society and politics had shifted right, towards an embrace of market forces and individualism.[12] Lowe explains:

> [A] serious attempt...to achieve a 'fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power'...was halted abruptly, nominally by successive oil crises but in reality by a much more fundamental power struggle... Within Britain, the 'crisis' was overlaid by the replacement of the social and political values of one generation by those of another. The discipline and collective instincts of the first had been forged by the experience of market failure in the 1930s and war. Those of the second were shaped by increasing post-war affluence and a perception of state failure. [13]

Globalisation –as manifested in terms of economic harmonisation and interdependencies, and the increased propensity of ideas and fashions to transcend national boundaries - meant that events in Britain paralleled those in other Western capitalist countries.[14] The formal granting of political equality to women earlier in the century, had presented only a limited challenge to the belief that families should be based on a husband responsible for earning and a wife responsible for caring and household work.[15] Nonetheless, increasing numbers of women were entering the labour market, a development possible partly by economic and industrial changes.[16] In this

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1999), pp. 269-96. The degree to which policy consensus was underpinned by ideological consensus is a moot point. See, for example, A. Taylor, 'Economic Statecraft', in K. Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 133-43.

[7] Quoted in M. Donnelly, *Sixties Britain* (Harlow, 2005), p. 1.

[8] H. Pemberton, 'The Transformation of the Economy' in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Compainion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 192-3. Until 1971 unemployment did not exceed 3 per cent. Even then, it dropped back again for a period.

[9] D. Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (Lancaster, 2006), p. 687. For evidence on their general approval rating see R.J. Wybrow, *Britain Speaks Out, 1937-87. A Social History as seen through the Gallup data.* (London, 1989), p. 160.

[10] I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Living Standards and Consumption' in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 228-30.

[11] Bogdanor, 'Fall of Heath', p. 376.

[12] D. Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London, 1989), p. 486; S. Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show', in S. Hall & M. Jacques (eds), *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London, 1983), pp. 19-39; Bogdanor, 'Fall of Heath', p. 376; D. Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979* (London, 2012), pp. 801-6.

[13] Lowe, 'Life Begins in the Seventies?', 162.

[14] C. R. Schenk, 'Britain in the World Economy', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain, 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 463-481.

[15] J. Freedman, *Feminism* (Buckingham, 2001), pp. 45-56.

[16] Ibid, pp. 45-56; C. Briar, *Working for Women: Gendered Work and Welfare Policies in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1997), p. 4.

context, the international emergence of a 'second wave' of feminism is unsurprising.[17] As Holger Nehring reminds us, 'social movements and pressure groups tell us much about the times in which they appeared, often before these trends have reached the sphere of high politics.'[18] Despite this, much was specific and particular to Britain. Although international influences were visible in the re-emergent British women's movement it remained distinct from its international cousins. British attachment to the male breadwinner ideal remained markedly strong, and social policy responses diverged from those developed in other countries experiencing similar changes.[19]

The Role of the Women's Movement

Elizabeth Meehan noted in 1990 that it was 'commonplace now to see feminism in Britain as rising in the 1960s, flourishing in the 1970s and achieving a clutch of legislative victories…'[20] Various examples can be provided. In his survey of postwar Britain, Kenneth Morgan described 'legislation to remedy aspects of sexual discrimination' as one of the 'many beneficial consequences' of the 'newly active women's movement.'[21] In Andy Beckett's account of the decade, his description of the governments' 'response' to the women's movement comprised a brief description of the legislation.[22] Harold Smith wrote in 2001 of 'a powerful if somewhat diffuse reform movement that culminated in numerous social experiments and [an] important burst of legislation.'[23] Dominic Sandbrook adopted a more cautious approach to ascribing

[17] For a brief discussion of the international nature of the movement see M. Walters, *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 97-116. Numerous connections can be made between women's entry into the labour market and changes in female consciousness. For example, Lewis refers to French data which suggests that is is not women's entry into the labour market per se which has led to an abandonment of marriage, but the fact that it prompts dissatisfaction with the 'double-shift' and awareness of the tensions within marriage. See J. Lewis, 'Marriage', in Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*, p. 78. Historians have also recognised that in areas where women were able to continue in steady employment after marriage, such as industrial Lancashire, gender relations tended to take on very distinctive forms. See Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family', 521.

[18] H. Nehring, 'The Growth of Social Movements', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain* (Oxford, 2007), p. 389. See also Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* 2nd edn (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 315.

[19] For comments on social policy responses see Briar, *Working for Women,* p. 4. For comments on attachment to breadewinner ideal, see Lewis, 'Marriage', p. 76.

[20] E. Meehan, 'British Feminism from the 1960s to the 1980s' in H.L. Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 1990), pp. 189-204, esp. p. 189. This is also accepted by today's feminist movement. See C. Redfern and K. Aune, *Reclaiming the F Word: The New Feminist Movement* (London, 2010), p. 8.

[21] K.O. Morgan, *Britain Since 1945: The People's Peace,* 3rd edn (Oxford, 2001), p. 356.

[22] Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out,* pp. 230-31.

[23] Smith, 'Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship', p. 278.

causality by using the Sex Discrimination Act to illustrate 'how much things had changed'.[24] The inter-relationships between the revitalisation of the women's movement and the 'women friendly' reforms were complex and multi-stranded. Highlighting the ambiguity of the relationship, Paul Byrne has cautioned against mistaking coincidence for causality.[25] Yet although the aforementioned histories provide little, if any, supporting evidence for their claims there is good reason to assume some form of causal relationship. Whilst, for example, increased reliance on female workers may influence a government's response to equal pay demands, it is difficult to argue in light of history, that this alone would have convinced governments of the need for legislation. Surveying the period since 1918, Pat Thane concludes that 'significant changes to women's lives and opportunities came only when people – mainly women – campaigned for them and gained legislative change or measures of positive discrimination.'[26]

Different reforms owed different debts to the women's movement. There had been pressure for equal pay from within the trade union movement and the wider women's movement for several decades prior to 1970.[27] The campaign for family allowances also had a long history. That of the Sex Discrimination Act was somewhat shorter but its origins are generally recognised to have pre-dated the emergence of women's liberation.[28] Vicky Randall claimed that the Employment Protection Act (as it related to maternity leave) was 'instigated or strongly influenced by second wave feminism'[29] However, histories of women in the trade union movement show that this had long been a concern of women activists there.[30] By contrast, legislative gains which offered some protection to victims of domestic violence and rape have widely been attributed to the 'new' women's movement or women's liberation.[31] For reasons explained more fully below, this thesis focuses on those reforms which had the greatest impact on women's position in the workplace and upon their financial standing.

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[24] Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 394.
[25] P. Byrne, 'The Politics of the Women's Movement', in *Parliamentary Affairs* 49 (1) (1996), 55
[26] P. Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make? Women in public and private life in Britain since 1918', *Historical Research*, 76 (192) (2003), 285.
[27] For example, see Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 378-9; A. Carter, *The Politics of Women's Rights* (Harlow, 1988), pp. 69-70; Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 318.
[28] E.M. Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work: Campaigns and Policy in Britain and the United States* (Basingstoke, 1985), pp. 29 & 79; Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 113. O. Banks, *Faces of Feminism* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 219-20.
[29] V. Randall, *Women and Politics: An International Perspective*. 2nd edn Chicago, 1987), p. 246.
[30] S. Lewenhawk, *Women and Trade Unions: An Outline History of Women in the British Trade Union Movement* (London, 1977), p. 98.
[31] Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 378-9; Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* pp. 69-70; Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 318.

As the most visible, vocal, photogenic, and distinctive part of the women's movement in the second half of the twentieth century, the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) dominates narratives of 1970s feminism. Some chroniclers use the phrase 'women's liberation' to loosely describe what Coote and Campbell see as 'a particular phase of the women's movement that was a product of the 1960s...peaked in the 1970s and faded in the 1980s,' but the WLM did not encompass the whole of the women's movement, nor even the whole feminist movement.[32] This work draws out these distinctions where possible and appropriate, partly out of respect for those who fought for reform, but also because it helps us to better understand their motivations.[33]

Despite ambivalence towards politics generally and the merits of political reform specifically, it is clear that the WLM did not exclude itself entirely from reform campaigns.[34] Rowbotham explained that:

> [W]hile women's liberation has tended to be extremely suspicious of the state in theory, in practice it has drafted and lobbied and given evidence.'…[A]s campaigns emerged from women's needs, the importance of legislation became inescapable.'[35]

The movement's broader nature can be gauged from the accounts which form the basis of its histories. These collections of contemporary writings and/or personal testimonies, reflect the belief that 'the personal is political', the validation of women's subjective and individual experiences, and the rejection of formalised structures. They convey the spirit and 'feel' of a dynamic, evolving, movement with diverse interests and multifarious causes and capture a sense of its transformative power in terms of its impact on individual lives.[36] There is little sense of a

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[32] A. Coote and B. Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation,* 2nd edn (Oxford, 1987), preface. Most definitions of feminisms depended to rely heavily upon the vantage point of the observer. An honest and humorous source for understanding this area remains A. Sebastyen, 'Tendencies in the Movement: Then and Now' (and accompanying chart), in *Feminist Practice: Notes from the Tenth Year* (1979), pp. 17-24. Copy available from the pamphlet section at the Feminist Library, London. For some discussion of contrasting and contradictory definitions of feminism see Freedman, *Feminism,* pp. 1-7. See also below, pp. 91-8.

[33] For some discussion of the historically difficult relationship between activists in the cause of women's rights and the 'feminist' label. See Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make?', 279.

[34] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* p. 110-13. For notes on the WLM's ambivalent attitude towards reform see, D. Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the United States* (London, 1983), p. 119; Byrne, 'Politics of the Women's Movement', 55; Nehring, 'Social Movements', pp. 391-2.

[35] S. Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us: Feminism in Action since the 1960s* (Boston, 1989), p. 152.

[36] Three widely referenced collections of contemporary writings are M. Wandor (ed.), *The Body Politic: Women's Liberation in Britain, 1969-72* (London, 1972); S. Allen, L. Sanders and J. Wallis (eds), *Conditions of Illusion: Papers from the Women's Movement* (Leeds, 1974); Feminist Anthology Collective (eds), *No Turning Back: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement, 1975-80* (London, 1981). Examples of recollections include A. Sebestyen (ed.), *'68, '78, '88: From Women's Liberation to Feminism* (Bridport, 1988); M. Wandor (ed.), *Once a*

coherent overarching narrative which, in one respect, is unsurprising since, by their nature, social movements present methodological challenges for historians attempting to construct narrative accounts.[37] In *English Feminism*, Barbara Caine argued that there is an additional related challenge here because the WLM's creation of its own history privileged certain events and people. This has resulted in an account which excluded 'others' including 'provincial women', 'women not involved in Left politics', and 'women who were either too young or old to be university students or mothers in the places where there were consciousness raising groups in 1968.[38]

Some participants did subsequently produce overviews of the movement. Beatrix Campbell and Anna Coote's *Sweet Freedom* offers a useful sketch of key developments and issues but lacks depth. It is, moreover, as the authors concede, their account of what happened, 'just one side of the story.'[39] Greater detail and nuance is provided by Shelia Rowbotham's *Feminism in Action since the 1960s.* Yet as a participant with her own 'axes to grind', Rowbotham rejected the task of writing the movement's history and confined herself to an account of 'ideas and assumptions'.[40] With the notable exception of Eve Setch, who explicitly decided against focusing on 'the large public campaigns broadly associated with the movement such as the Anti-Sex Discrimination Campaign', historians to date have drawn heavily upon these sources, adding little by way of additional research.[41] In 2009, Rachel Cohen, of the Women's Liberation

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Feminist: Stories of a Generation (London, 1990); L. Segal, *Making Trouble: Life and Politics* (London, 2007). More recent examples of collections of personal testimonies are: V. Honeybourne, L. Singer (eds), *Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism*, vol. 1; (2001); L. Singer, V. Honeybourne and R. Williams (eds), *Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism*, vol. 1; (2003). For a good example of the emphasis still given to personal testimony in WLM history see: Women's Library, *Ms Understood: Women's Liberation in 1970s Britain* and *Section Two: The Development of the Movement* (London, 2010). See also *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the Women's Liberation Movement.* Available at the British Library, http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/sisterhood/, accessed 02/02/2014.

[37] Rowbotham notes, social movements tend to be politically 'untidy' from a historian's perspective. See Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us*, pp. xiii-xiv. It has been suggested that, given the nature of the WLM, attempts to 'overview' the movement are impossible in the sense that no one definitive history would suffice. See E. Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain: Organisation, Creativity and Debate', unpublished PhD thesis, University of London (2001), p. 19.

[38] B. Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 262-3. See also E. Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Postwar Britain: 1945-1968* (London, 1980), pp. 202-3.

[39] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. viii. Various conversations with feminist activists have suggested to me that the book caused a deal of controversy among certain sections of the original movement.

[40] Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us*, pp. xi-xii.

[41] E. Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain'. See p. 22 for comments regarding her decision not to focus on these campaigns. The only published version of this was E. Setch, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: The London Women's Liberation Workshop, 1969-79', in *Twentieth Century British History* 13 (2) (2002), 171-90. Key feminist tracts such as Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* are often also cited, although these works often had little to do with the WLM itself. See Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain', p. 15-16. For

Movement Research Project, called for 'further research and scholarly writing...so that we can more fully understand the aims, ideas and achievements of such an important movement.'[42]

In addition to exploring the WLM's direct engagement with reform campaigns, this work also highlights other ways the WLM generated pressures for reform. 'Networking' provided an important conduit for ideas and means of influence.[43] Meehan observed that many women used their experiences in the WLM, often in women-only groups, as 'a base for fuller participation in other organisations such as political parties, trade unions and professional associations.'[44] 'Networking' provided an important conduit for ideas and means of influence.[45] Although this sort of activity can be difficult to trace, it can be rendered partially visible through the spread of certain ideas. More broadly, as references to women's liberation – positive, negative, ambiguous, often garbled - percolated into elite, popular and public culture, this helped to create a climate conducive to reform.[46] It is impossible to determine the exact processes at work here, but this thesis explores and expands upon the idea that the existence of a radicalised feminism created a space for greater acceptance of some feminist ideas and principles even as it alienated large numbers of 'ordinary' men and women from the cause. According the assessments of contemporaries, distinctions between the WLM and the wider women's movement, were invisible, unimportant or irrelevant to outsiders. One scholar reported that in everyday speech, 'women's liberation' – or women's lib – described 'virtually every and any effort not only to change but even to comment on the status of women.'[47] The phrase 'Women's Lib' carried

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examples of histories by non-activists see Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge.* See also Caine, *English Feminism,* pp. 256-71; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movment,* pp. 312-353. It was only in the second edition that Pugh added the two short chapters on the post 1959 period. Caine titled the brief section on the post 1969 period, appropriately, 'afterword'. See also A. Lent, *British Social Movments since 1945, Sex, Colour Peace, Power* (Basingstoke, 2001), esp. pp. 64-78. Lent was concerned primarily to construct a framework for the understanding of postar social movements.

[42] Women's Library, *The Development of the Movement,* p. 46.

[43] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* p. 321.

[44] Meehan, 'British Feminism', pp. 194-5. For a more specific example of this phenomenon see Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* pp. 155-6.

[45] Whitehead also noted what he described as 'the networking movement.' See Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* p. 321.

[46] This has been widely observed. See, Byrne, 'Politics of the Women's Movement', 55; S. Lowry, *The Guilt Cage: Housewives and a Decade of Liberation* (London, 1980); Sandbrook, *State of Emergency,* pp. 380-389; A. Marwick, *British Society Since 1945,* 4th edn (London, 2003), pp. 202-3; Meehan, 'British Feminism', p. 201. For remarks on the impact of this see, example, Lent, *Social Movments Since 1945,* pp. 77-8; Banks, *Faces of Feminism,* pp. 219-20; Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights ,* p. 133; Randall, *Women and Politics,* p. 289.

[47] M. Currell, *Political Women* (London, 1974), p. 115. The feminist organiser, Virginia Novarra, agreed. She believed that to the 'average uninformed member of the general public it is vaguely summed up as 'Women's Lib and all that.' See V. Novarra, 'The Next Five Years: A Report for the Fawcett Society', July 1973, p. 2, London, Women's Library [hereafter WomL], 6WIM/F/02.

humorous, diminutive, and outright negative connotations, along the lines of 'have you burned your bra?'[48] In light of such negative (mis)portrayals of feminism, it is not surprising that most 'ordinary' women were reluctant to self-identify as feminist.[49] Paradoxically, it has been argued, these negative perceptions helped to create a space for greater acceptance of some feminist ideas by, as Carter puts it, making 'more traditional claims for full legal and economic rights appear moderate and reasonable.'[50]

Despite the WLM's significance, success in achieving legislative reform was heavily dependent upon traditional methods of campaigning and lobbying and upon co-operation with existing campaigners.[51] Thane and Smith both claim that the Fawcett Society exerted an important degree of influence over the equality legislation.[52] In a brief discussion of the subject in *Aspects of British Political History*, Stephen Lee mentions the British Federation of Business and Professional Women, the National Joint Council for Working Women's Organisations, and the Status of Women Committee, among others.[53] Unfortunately, none of these works expands on their claims or provides supporting evidence or references.

The most fully researched and detailed work on the subject remains Meehan's 1985 *Women's Rights at Work*, which compared the origins and implementation of legislation for equal pay and opportunities in Britain and the USA.[54] Meehan gave significant space to describing the efforts of numerous groups who campaigned and lobbied for the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.[55] Since most government and official papers were unavailable at that time, her sources were drawn primarily from papers she was able to access from the Fawcett Society and the - National Council of Civil Liberties (NCCL), both of which 'bridged' various wings of the women's movement. Meehan highlighted the roles played by older sections of the women's

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[48] Bra burning, one of the most enduring images of women's liberation was a myth, born of a faked photograph. A reporter added the flames to a genuine picture of a group of women dumping their bras and girdles into a 'freedom trash can' in protest against the concept of beauty contests in Atlanta, USA. See M. Stott, *Before I Go: Reflections on my life and Times* (London, 1985), pp. 21-2.
[49] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, pp. 155-7.
[50] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 52. Sanbrook tentatively implies something similar, but also regards this alienation as 'feminism's greatest failure.' See Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 415-7.
[51] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, pp. xii & 318-9; Randall, *Women and Politics*, p. 231; Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 51.
[52] Smith, 'Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship', p. 279; Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make?', 285.
[53] S.J. Lee, *Aspects of British Political History1914-1995* (London, 1996), p. 345
[54] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work.*
[55] Ibid. pp. 33-58.

movement, and the links and overlaps between various elements of the organised women's movement and Parliament. She showed that the campaigns for reform comprised broad coalitions. Although her analysis shows that these pressures were only one part of the interrelated range of forces which finally convinced governments to legislate, her work indicates that the campaigns and campaigners exerted some influence.[56]

Two other works from this period also discuss relationships between the women's movement and legislative reform. Vicky Randall's W*omen and Politics: An International Perspective* (1987) included a chapter on 'Feminism and Policy Making' which spanned a decade and a half and compared the policy areas of abortion and equal employment rights in Britain, the USA and other Western European countries. Randall argued that the abortion issue provoked probably the greatest response from the feminist movement.[57] On the subject of employment rights, Randall provided little coverage additional to Meehan's. Interestingly, however, she was specifically forthright in dismissing the claim that actions by feminist groups (particularly Women in Media) forced the hand of the Conservative government over anti-discrimination legislation. Randall argued that 'the extra-parliamentary lobby was…relatively weak and what mattered was MP's willingness to pay it attention.' Like Meehan she noted the importance of the climate of 'social reformism' and an increased political willingness to recognise the rights of individuals and identifiable groups.[58]

April Carter's 1988 book, *The Politics of Women's Rights*, explored the main social, political, and economic developments which affected the status of women, in law, at work, and in politics, in the four decades after 1945.[59] Carter provided a useful synthesis of existing work, drawing additional information from published sources such as Hansard and Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) reports. In the section on legislative reform Carter also drew heavily on

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[56] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* pp. 78-87. In a later essay, intended only as a brief overview, Meehan discussed feminist campaigns in relation to a wider range of policy areas. She highlighted feminists' involvement, of various stripes, in campaigns concerned with issues from equal pay to domestic violence and concluded that 'the impact of feminism [was] mixed'. See Meehan, 'British Feminism', esp. p. 201.

[57] Randall, *Women and Politics*, pp. 262-315.

[58] Ibid. p. 289. Margarita Rendel, scholar and feminist activist argued strongly that it was moderate 'reformist' tactics which were responsible for changing the terms of the debate on sex discrimination, ultimately paving the way for Sex Discrimination Act of 1975. See M. Rendel, 'Legislating for Equal Pay and Opportunity for Women in Britain', in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3 (4) (1978), 897-908, esp. 900. There is a sense here that differences of interpretation owe at least as much to disagreements among feminist activists and theorists as they do to academic rigour. For more on the climate of social reformism, see below, pp. 74-5.

[59] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights*.

Meehan's work.[60] Unsurprisingly, she highlighted similar issues and drew similar conclusions. Though weak on analysis, the book's primary value to this work is its emphasis on the importance of paying attention to the broader political and social contexts in which the reforms were conceived, fought for and enacted. There is one notable absence from all the above literature. Coote, Campbell, and Smith agree that the campaign for child benefit was 'one of the most successful 1970s feminist campaigns'.[61] Yet the episode has attracted barely any attention from historians or feminists, an omission which arguably owes something to the controversy and ambivalence the issue aroused in women's movement.[62]

Academic interest in the relationships between the women's movement and legislative reform declined after the 1980s. This may reflect the diminishment of feminism, and perhaps the decline of women's studies. Arguably it also owes something to the subject transitioning from being a relevant area of enquiry for social and political scientists to a matter of historical interest. Although campaigns for legislative reform comprised only part of 1970s feminism, and were one of its less colourful manifestations, they offer a window on to under-explored aspects of the movement.

Feminist Debates and their Historical Contexts

The feminist tradition has always incorporated numerous philosophical and political strands, though different forms of feminism have dominated at different times.[63] At the project's heart lies two unresolved questions: 'What does equality for women, or gender equality, mean?' and 'How can this be achieved?' Feminists have disagreed amongst themselves, about the causes of inequality, about the nature of woman, and therefore over the question of what should be done.[64] Despite the historical distinctiveness of women's liberation there were overlaps and continuities with earlier feminist traditions. Although historians have placed varying degrees of emphasis on

[60] Ibid. pp. 112-124.
[61] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* p. 95; Smith, 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship', p. 282. See also Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 180.
[62] The fullest exploration of the episode can be found in the MA which preceded this work where there is some discussion of the relationship between that campaign and the formation of the controversial Wages for Housework Campaign. See E. Homans, 'Wages for Housework in the Decade of Women's Liberation', unpublished MA dissertation, Bangor University (2008), pp. 41-53. For some reference to disagreements among activists turned chroniclers, see S. Fleming, 'Eleanor Rathone: Spokeswoman for a Movement', in *The Disinherited Family with an Introductory Essay by Suzie Fleming*, ed. S. Fleming (Bristol, 1986), p. 95.
[63] Wilson, *Halfway to Paradise*, p. 4.
[64] Banks, *Faces of Feminism,* p. 260.

their extent and nature, it would be an overstatement to suggest that there are significant divergences in opinion, largely because the area is still relatively under-explored.[65]

The late 1960s and 1970s saw a slew of feminist theorising as a new generation of feminists sought to explain and rectify women's secondary status. Traditionally, the feminism of this period is split into three strands: liberal, socialist and radical, with the latter two generally assumed to comprise the WLM. Liberal feminism is rooted in the enlightenment tradition; it is equal rights and worth based. It does not see women as oppressed, but as discriminated against. Though often criticised for placing too much faith in legal reforms, liberal feminists recognise the importance of challenging embedded attitudes. By contrast, socialist and radical feminists see women as an oppressed group that cannot be 'liberated' by reform. Although socialist feminism can be traced back to the nineteenth century, the socialist feminists of the WLM shared with their 'radical' sisters a recognition of and opposition to patriarchy. Socialist feminists hold that women are oppressed within an exploitative capitalist system, that, ultimately, there can be no liberation without socialism. Radical feminists do not believe that socialism could liberate women since men are the *primary* source of oppression and this form of oppression can exist independently of all others.[66] Increasingly, it is recognised that these divisions have been overstated.[67] In particular, as Setch demonstrated, these theoretical distinctions break down when grass-roots and campaigning activities are examined.[68]

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[65] Despite the early date, Banks, *Faces of Feminism,* remains one of the best explorations of how the key philosophical and political traditions in feminism linked the feminism of the late sixties and seventies to its predecessors. See esp. pp. 219-223. Pugh highlighted an ideological departure that owed a debt to New Left thinking but highlighted recurrent themes. See Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. xii & 318-9. Caine demonstrated how 'the ground was prepared for Women's Liberation' from the mid sixties by 'an extensive critique of the project of women's emancipation' but describes women's liberation as the ultimate rejection of that project. 'Most evident' to her was 'the complete disjunction and contrast between the aims, goals, and methods of the older feminists and those of the new.' See Caine, *English Feminism,* pp. 10, 239 & 250-54. For somre more recent discussion the 'distinctiveness' of the British 'second wave' see P. Thane, 'Response to Lynne Segal: Jam Today' at the workshop for Reassessing the 1970s at the British Academy, 23 September 2009. For an example of the WLM's claim to be a new and distinctive feminist movement see Juliet Mitchell, *Women's Estate* (Harmondsworth, 1971).

[66] The section draws from Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, pp. 62-92; Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* pp. 166-179; Randall, *Feminism and Politics,* pp. 5-10. For an excellent summary of how these debates shaped historiography see L.L. Downs, 'From Women's History to Gender History', in S. Berger, H. Feldner, K. Passmore (eds), *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (London, 2003), pp. 268-9. For an example of how these divides were used to understand the WLM and its impact see Byrne, 'Politics of the Women's Movement', esp 60-61 and 67.

[67] This is a central contention of E. Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain'. See also Freedman, *Feminism,* p. 6. See also Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 323.

[68] For example, Meehan described the policy areas which she perceived as 'epitomizing' the three ideological strands of feminism (liberal, socialist, and radical) as equal pay and opportunities; taxation and social security; and freer abortion and also outlined key campaigning issues. See Meehan, 'British Feminism', p. 195. Setch demonstrated that Meehan's categorisations did not withstand close scrutiny, particularly when she strayed beyond

Surveying the longer history of feminism, one of the most apparently consistent divisions has been between 'equality' and 'difference' feminists. As Jane Freedman summarises, this is fundamentally 'a debate over whether women should struggle to be equal to men or whether they should valorise their differences', be they natural or biological, or resulting from social and economic conditions. This debate occurs within and between the different strands of feminism. For historians this can appear to offer an apparently more fruitful approach to the history of the women's movement.[69] For feminist activists however, the apparent equal/different dichotomy can present an impossible choice. As Lewis and Astrom observe, it translates, in policy terms, into claims 'based on women's status as paid workers or on their status as mothers.' Opting for equality 'means acceptance that difference is antithetical to it', and opting for difference 'means admitting that equality is unattainable.'[70] Most feminists recognise these constraints and argue that there are – or should be – subtle and flexible dimensions to equal/different debate.[71] From a historical perspective, Lewis suggests that feminists have been aware of the impossible nature of the choice and have sought to avoid it by using both arguments strategically.[72] However, strategic control of reform campaigns has often proved challenging for the women's movement. Failure to attract mass support for their policies has often necessitated alliances with other groups, sometimes with the result that feminist concerns and arguments have become diluted and the potentially revolutionary elements of their programme overshadowed.[73]

Partly for these reasons, Joanne Workman has argued that historical accounts which have attempted to divide feminists into two polemically opposed camps, have produced unhelpful interpretations of the women's movement. The same is true for studies which have attempted to

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her knowledge of campaigns for equal pay and opportunities. See Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain', pp. 236-7. Meehan stressed that 'theoretical differences' did not 'isolate' the strands and that feminists often co-operated. She did not claim that any campaign was ideologically pure, merely that 'courses of action…varied according to which type of analysis was prevalent.' (See Meehan, 'British Feminism', pp. 189-204..

[69] Freedman, *Feminism*, pp. 8-12, 24 & 51; J. Workman, 'Wading though the Mire: An Histroriographical Study of the British Women's Movement Between the Wars', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History* 2 (2001), 3. See also L. Morris, *Dangerous Classes: The Underclass and Social Citizenship* (London, 1994), pp. 132-5.

[70] J. Lewis and G. Astrom, 'Equality, Difference and State Welfare: Labour Market and Family Policies in Sweden', *Feminist Studies* 18 (1) (1992), 59-60.

[71] Briar, *Working for Women*, p. 178. She draws upon notions of hegemony to argue that the establishment and use of (false) 'either/or dichotomies' between for example, work and welfare, is 'a central feature of the patriarchy.'

[72] Lewis and Astrom, 'Equality, Difference and State Welfare', 60.

[73] This charge is most typically levelled at what is sometimes disparagingly referred to as 'welfare feminism'. See S. Pedersen, *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 177; Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, pp. 248-9 & 253-4. See also Workman, 'Wading though the Mire', esp 6 and 9 for a balanced assessment.

divide feminists into 'conservative' and 'radical' camps. Indeed, she argues that it is true for all of those which have attempted to impose a definition of what constitutes feminism.[74] Reliance subsequently imposed definitions, Workman argues, prohibits proper appreciation of the movement 'in its contemporary, cultural environment.'[75] In particular, she argues, the imposition of narrowly defined definitions allows 'politically motivated' scholars to 'trivialise the skills and achievements of...women who set out in earnest to challenge and reformulate their society.'[76] By the same token, she maintains, revisionist responses working within the same framework are capable only of producing 'confused and unpersuasive arguments' in response.[77]

In practical strategic terms, the feminist debates most directly relevant to this work have centred on the idea - or ideal - of the 'male breadwinner family' and the 'family wage.' For reasons discussed below, feminist critiques of both have been deservedly stern. In 1982, feminist writers and activists, Mary McIntosh and Michelle Barrett, compared feminist attacks on the family wage to atheists' attacks on God. 'She wants to say that it does not exist, that the false belief that it does has evil consequences and that even if it did exist it would not be a good thing.'[78] Materially, a pure breadwinner model never existed. From a historical perspective however, it is important to recognise that both concepts had a deeply rooted material and ideological existence. Moreover, as Lewis explains:

> there were historical periods in some countries and for some social classes for which the model more accurately described the reality than others: for people of the middling sort in the United Kingdom and the United States in the late nineteenth century and large tracts of the middle and respectable working-classes in the years following World War II.[79]

Creighton has drawn upon numerous studies to show how the male breadwinner family was:

> a multidimensional phenomenon which involved a 'compact' between workers, employers and the state, and between men and women, over the sexual division of labour, appropriate forms of mating relationships, the distribution of time between family and workplace, and

[74] Workman, 'Wading though the Mire', 1-12.
[75] Ibid. 6.
[76] Ibid. 9.
[77] Ibid, 6.
[78] Michelle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, 'The 'Family Wage', in E. Whitelegg et al (eds), *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford, 1982), p. 76.
[79] J. Lewis, 'The Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model: Implications for Work and Care', *Social Politics* (2001), 153.

> the distribution of employment between families and the manner in which non-waged individuals should be supported.[80]

This compact developed in an uneven and fractured manner. The notion that a male breadwinner would or should earn enough to support a dependent wife and children was not widely familiar in early nineteenth century Britain, though men's wages were generally higher than women's.[81] The increasing dominance of the 'separate spheres' ideology – the notion of a public male space and a domestic female space – helped to create a middle-class idealised family form comprising of an 'idle' wife, and children, supported by the male head of the household.[82] This male breadwinner family model assumed and supported stable, heterosexual, married unions. It assumed also that children would be born, raised, and supported within them.[83] Marriage and family life came to hold very different meanings for men and women. Whereas the primary responsibility of a 'good' wife was to care for her husband, her children and perhaps other sick, infirm or elderly relatives, the primary responsibility of a 'good' husband was to provide financial support for his wife and children. Thus, whilst women's commitment to their unpaid domestic and caring duties were expected to take precedence over paid work, men were expected to prioritise employment.[84] As breadwinners, men were expected to be disciplined and reliable workers.[85]

There has been some debate over the extent to which organised labour accepted this model as an ideal to aspire to *per se* as opposed to the degree to which they endorsed it as a tactical device, a method of presenting their demands in terms acceptable to (at least some) politicians and employers.[86] The male breadwinner family ideal rested on more than the ideology of separate spheres. It was underpinned also by a popular moral economy which said that jobs should go to 'providers' – one from each family before any family became entitled to two. By prioritising the

[80] Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family', 520.
[81] H. Land, 'The Family Wage', *Feminist Review* 6 (1980), 56-7.
[82] Downs, 'Women's History to Gender History', pp. 270-71. The notion of separate spheres has attracted valid criticisms. See A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36 (2) (1993), 383-414. It nonetheless remains a useful historical concept.
[83] Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family', 524-5.
[84] H. Land, *Women and Economic Dependency. A Report published by the Equal Opportunities Commission* (London, 1986) pp. 1-2.
[85] Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family in Britain', 523.
[86] Land, 'Family Wage', 57-8. Feminists have also disagreed about the extent which the family wage was a patriarchal imposition on women, as opposed to a useful working-class strategy that was in the interests of both men and women. For some discussion of this, see A. Assiter, *Althuser and Feminism* (London, 1990), p. 75; I. Bruegel, 'Women's Employment', in J. Lewis (ed.), *Women's Welfare, Women's Rights* (Beckenham, 1983), pp. 160-162.

criterion of family need, these standards contrasted sharply with the dictates of the free market system and can be seen 'as part of the wider working-class project of moralising the relations of capitalist production'.[87] In practical terms, restrictions on the employment of married women and children strengthened men's bargaining power and gave weight to demands for a 'living' or family wage.[88] Higher wages for husbands enabled some families to obtain better living standards and spared many wives from the burden of the 'double shift'.[89] From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there appears to have been growing support for the idea among working-class women generally.[90] Yet some women, particularly those in higher skilled, better paid, occupations defended their right to work. So did widows and single women – although this group of women often objected to married women working on the basis that their presence in the labour market increased competition for jobs and lowered wages.[91]

To the extent that the establishment of the 'compact' around the male breadwinner family model brought significant gains to large parts of the working-class, the benefits were enjoyed most directly by men and came largely at the cost of women's independence. The model made provision for women's domestic and caring work, but did so implicitly, by recognising it as 'part of the package'. Their work in the home was not directly remunerated, nor was a value assigned to it.[92] Whilst it is true that the model's definition of 'providers' could include self-supporting single women or women with dependents, the model's gender dimension placed married men at the top of the hierarchy.[93] The degree to which women 'chose' to prioritise caring duties remains hotly contested, but economic dependency had undeniable and often profound effects on the dynamics of relationships and family life.[94] It also rendered women and children who did not fit the model, such as those in single parent families, economically vulnerable.[95] Working-class time gains won as a result of the campaigns for shorter working

[87] Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family in Britain', 525.
[88] Land, 'Family Wage', 57-8.
[89] Ibid. p, 58; Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family', 522; Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, pp. 312-13.
[90] Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family', 522.
[91] Ibid.
[92] S. Giullari and J. Lewis, 'The Adult Worker Model Family, Gender Equality and Care: The Search for New Policy Principles, and the Possibilities and Problems of a Capability Approach', *Social Policy and Development Programme Paper Number 19, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development,* (April 2005), p. 1.
[93] Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family in Britain', 525.
[94] Giullari and Lewis, 'Adult Worker Model Family', p. 11; Land, 'Family Wage', 57-8. See also A. Wolf's reference to the 'vicious little war...between writers' on the issue. A. Wolf, *The XX Factor: How Working Women are Creating a New Society* (London, 2013), p. 29. For more on impact on relationships, see below, pp. 252-7.
[95] Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family in Britain', 525.

hours were used in different ways by men and women. Men had looked for time for 'self-improvement' and, over time, became increasingly involved in specifically male leisure activities. By contrast, women's time was perceived as a 'family', rather than as an individual, resource.[96] The internal logic of the male breadwinner model perpetuated and deepened the inequalities regarding time use, the gender division of labour, and differential wages and employment opportunities.[97]

A 'family wage', adequate to support a worker and his family, remained an elusive goal for many breadwinners. In these instances, adherence to the model resulted in hardship. Many married women, whose employment opportunities were increasingly restricted, were obliged to contribute to the family income by taking in money for jobs which were often low-paid extensions of their normal domestic work: for example, they took in lodgers, went out charring, and undertook child-minding.[98] Despite these inadequacies the male breadwinner ideal was built into welfare state from the early nineteenth century. The assumptions that underpinned it became increasingly embedded in social policy through a cumulative process of policy decisions and welfare measures.[99] This was not an alien imposition on the working-classes. The original state insurance model had been founded on the normal practice of friendly and mutual societies.[100]

Of the campaigns discussed in this thesis, the campaign for equal pay has the longest history and can be traced back to the early nineteenth century.[101] Some of the earliest claims to equal pay were seen primarily as a means of protecting wage standards. In this respect, it was not contradictory to advocate equal pay whilst maintaining that a woman's place was in the home. However, by the late nineteenth century, a growing number of people saw equal pay as a matter of 'justice for women.'[102] The Trades Union Congress (TUC) first resolution on the issue in

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[96] Ibid, p. 524.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Land, 'Family Wage' 60. Estimates based on the 1911 census suggest that only 41 per cent of working-class families relied solely on the man's earnings which, on average, comprised only 70 per cent of family income.
[99] For the classic feminist critique of this process see E. Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State* (London, 1977), pp. 149-158. For more on feminist opposition see O. Banks, *The Politics of British Feminism* (Aldershot, 1993), p. 21. See also Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 295.
[100] H. Land, 'Paper 3: Social Security and the Division of Unpaid Work in the Home and Paid Employment in the Labour Market', Reprinted from Social Security Research Seminar , DHSS (1977), 44.
[101] Lewenhawk, *Women and the Trade Unions,* p. 33.
[102] Ibid, pp. 39, 89 & 94-5. See also Bruley, *Women in Britain since 1900,* p. 23.

1888 endorsed both justifications.[103] However, the TUC never paid more than lip service to the principle, cleaving closer in practice to the sentiment expressed by one speaker at the 1875 Conference who looked forward to 'a condition…where their wives should be in their proper sphere – at home – instead of being dragged into competition against the great and strong men of the world.'[104]

It took the First World War to bring the issue to the fore. Women workers were required to cope with the demands placed on industry by the loss of male workers and by war production. Since employers took advantage of women's low wages, the Government was obliged to address the issue in order to avoid aggravating the established male workforce. They agreed a compromise with trade unions and employers which, although it represented some improvement, fell short of endorsing equal pay.[105] The War's end witnessed a backlash against women workers as returning servicemen asserted their moral claims to jobs.[106] Altered to the complexities of the challenges they faced, some feminists concluded that 'equal pay for equal work' was a demand not worth fighting for.[107]

'New' feminists, like new liberals, looked beyond classic formulations of equality.[108] Eleanor Rathbone, their most prominent spokeswoman, urged her sisters to 'stop looking at all our problems through men's eyes'.[109] She argued that women were not, and did not aspire to be, like men. Most were, and would probably continue to be, mothers and housewives first. Their needs differed from men's and they stood to gain little from winning equal rights in a man's world.[110] Thus, instead of demanding equal pay for equal work, new feminists sought re-evaluation of the kinds of work already done by women for little or no pay.[111] They argued that the economic implications of the male breadwinner/family wage model (though not the traditional family

[103] Lewenhawk, *Women and the Trade Unions,* p. 91.
[104] Land, 'Paper 3', pp. 43-61. See also activists comments in *The Times,* 3 September 1969.
[105] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. 27-8; Bruley, *Women in Britain,* pp. 39-43.
[106] Workman, 'Wading through the Mire', 6; For a more general account of the War's impact on women's lives see Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. 6-42
[107] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 28.
[108] Ibid. p. 237.
[109] Rathbone quoted in, H. Land, 'Eleanor Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', in H.L Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 1990), p. 115.
[110] H.L Smith, 'British Feminism in the 1920s', in H.L Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 1990), p. 48.
[111] Fleming, 'Eleanor Rathbone', pp. 50-52; E. Rathbone, *The Disinherited Family With an Introductory Essay by Suzie Fleming* (Bristol, 1986), pp. 187-95 & 250-53.

itself) were detrimental to the position and wellbeing of women.[112] As early as 1900, Rathbone had concluded that mothers' and wives' dependence on male wages (assumed or real) was not only unjust; it rendered equality in the workplace impossible by serving as a justification for unequal pay and unequal opportunity. Moreover, it provided men with money for numerous phantom children whilst condemning many real ones to poverty. Even in so far as it existed in reality, she asserted that the family wage was wasteful, and injurious. Nevertheless, Rathbone observed:

> …the theory exists, and clumsy, misshapen, shambling, stuttering thing that it is, it is the only living offspring to which the thoughts of economists, industrialists and moralists has given birth, which expresses the fact that society has to somehow provide for its own reproduction.[113]

The proposed solution was a cash payment for mothers from the State. The introduction of old age pensions in 1908 suggested that such demands were not fanciful.[114] The introduction of separation allowances in the First World War set another precedent. Adjusted for family size, they had been paid directly to the wives of serving men. However, early attempts to introduce conditionality, by threatening to withdraw the allowance from wives found drunk and disorderly, had been stymied after having met with outrage from women's organisations and indignation from spokesmen for soldiers' or 'citizens' rights.[115] Crucially though, it was never categorically stated whether separation allowances were part of serving men's remuneration or if they were paid in recognition of the mother's work, in which case conditionality was justifiable. The ambiguity was important. As Pedersen observed: 'allowances may have been paid in recognition of a man's rights to have his dependents maintained when undertaking a service to the state, but for the vast majority of wives receiving the money at the Post Office, the allowance felt like wages, money for their own work as housewives and mothers.'[116]

Some feminists perceived separation allowances as a working experiment in adjusting wages to family size. They had placed cash directly in mothers' hands, where it was most likely to be spent on the children. Their payment had also suggested the possibility of state recognition of

[112] Rathbone, *Disinherited Family*, p. 195.
[113] Ibid. p. 235.
[114] Fleming, 'Eleanor Rathbone', p. 38.
[115] Land, 'Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', pp. 108-9.
[116] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State,* p. 113.

women's work as mothers.[117] In 1917, Rathbone and six other feminists formed the Family Endowment Committee.[118] It was the beginning of a campaign which would have tangible consequences for women in 1970s Britain.[119] The Committee proposed that all mothers with children below school age, and those children, should receive endowment payments. The support would be withdrawn as the youngest child went to school and the mothers would be expected to return to work.[120] They were clear that it was women's *work* as mothers, not their *status* as wives (as with separation allowances) that entitled them to support.[121] In this they echoed the view, widely held in women's organisations on the left, that housewives *worked.*[122]

Although family endowment came to form the cornerstone of the new feminist programme, most new feminists also supported calls for equal pay. By the same token, some 'equality' feminists supported calls for family allowances.[123] Nevertheless, there were divergences of opinion.[124] Equality feminists tended to emphasise the sexes' 'common humanity' and feared that a feminist emphasis on women's difference would reinforce the traditional and misguided notions which underpinned so much discrimination.[125] They did not believe that negation of the need to earn a 'family wage' would challenge what they perceived to be the underlying cause of unequal pay, namely sex discrimination. In contrast to those new feminists who tended towards a traditional – though not necessarily prescriptive - view of the family, equality feminists tended to envision something closer to a gender-neutral society.[126] By contrast, Pamela Graves argues that most Labour Women (who she distinguishes from middle-class feminists) saw equal pay primarily as a means of improving working-class life as a whole by protecting male wage rates. Labour Women largely accepted the view that jobs should go to providers first; they did not regard equal

[117] Land, 'Rathbone and Economy of the Family', pp. 107-8; Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State,* pp. 141-7. For more on family budgeting see Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State,* pp. 159-60. For reference to Rathbone's own experience in this field see Land, 'Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', p. 107.
[118] Land, 'Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', p. 114. Rathbone was the only Liberal. The others were either Labour members or supporters.
[119] Ibid. p. 105.
[120] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State,* p. 145.
[121] Ibid. p. 145.
[122] Ibid. pp. 161 and 212.
[123] Smith, 'British Feminism in the 1920s', pp. 48 &58; Land, 'Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', pp. 111-13; Land, 'Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', p. 114.
[124] Workman, 'Wading through the Mire', 6-7.
[125] Smith, 'British Feminism in the 1920s', pp. 48 & 61.
[126] Ibid. p. 48; Land, 'Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', p. 119. These ideas led some, like Winifred Holtby, to challenge the division of labour within the family.

pay in purely feminist terms, or as an end in itself.[127] Proposals for family endowment sparked other disagreements within the women's movement. Those who cleaved to a more classical liberalism objected to the suggestion that fathers should effectively be relieved of responsibility for their children.[128] Other feminists, not opposed to state provision per se, worried about replacing private with state patriarchy. In light of the attempts to impose conditionality upon separation allowances, their fears were not ungrounded. In this view, only waged work outside of the home could secure independence.[129]

High unemployment during the interwar years created a hostile environment for equal pay and trade unionism even as it increased the need for them.[130] Despite some sympathetic hearings, proposals to grant mothers economic independence through family endowment were probably never a realistic possibility. Feminists faced opposition on several fronts and the civil service and the labour movement united against the idea of valuing women's unpaid work.[131] The postwar years saw the cultural and economic reassertion of the male breadwinner ideal, whilst fears – or hopes – of rising female political power resulting from female suffrage were unfulfilled.[132] Having recognised that plans to endow motherhood had been rendered utopian, Rathbone and fellow campaigners changed tack, hoping to appeal to a wider audience.[133] In 1924, Rathbone published *The Disinherited Family* which re-stated and expanded the arguments about the unsuitability of the 'family wage' as a means of distributing income.[134] Proposals to endow motherhood directly were replaced with the suggestion that basic wages should be adequate for two people ('the functions performed by the working mother do not all arise out of her maternity. She is also her husband's housekeeper; a service equally needed by the unmarried or childless man and for which he should be able to pay out of his wages'). Wives should have a

[127] P. Graves, *Labour Women Women in Working-Class Politics 1918-1939* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 131-5.
[128] In Millicent Fawcett's reading of history, for example, only the 1834 Poor Law strictures had successfully tackled the depressed wages, increased illegitimacy rates, and the 'economic and moral ruin' inaugurated by the Speenhamland type poor relief systems, which she likened to family endowment. See J. Walley, 'Children's allowances: and economic and social necessity', D. Bull and P. Townsend (eds), *Family Poverty: Programme for the seventies* (London, 1971, pp. 105-107.
[129] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, pp. 147-9.
[130] S. Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions* (London, 1980), p. 155-7; Lewenhawk, *Women and the Trade Unions*, p. 229.
[131] Briar, *Working for Women*, p. 63 & 69n.
[132] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, pp. 152-75; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. 72-100. As Banks argued, whist the political climate was favourable, the ideological was not. See Workman, 'Wading through the Mire', 6.
[133] Smith, 'British Feminism in the 1920s', p. 57; Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, pp. 178-80.
[134] Rathbone, *Disinherited Family*.

strengthened claim on their husband's wages but children's allowances should be paid to the mother.[135] The Family Endowment Committee re-formed as the all-Party Family Endowment Society in 1924. In addition to its original membership, it attracted churchmen, intellectuals, medical experts, industrialists, and numerous Liberals, including William Beveridge who had converted to the cause after reviewing the book.[136]

Family allowances received a mixed reception within the labour movement. On the left, in the Independent Labour Party specifically, they were re-cast as part of the 'living-wage' proposals which, advocates believed, would reduce inequality and hardship whilst creating domestic demand to stimulate the economy leading towards 'socialism in our time'.[137] According to Graves, Labour Women supporters of family allowances understood them as a socialist measure, as a means of 'eliminating the barriers to social equality represented by the impoverishment of the working-class family, rather than - as Rathbone and her feminist colleagues understood them - a method of challenging the 'barriers to equality that had their origin in the unequal distribution of power within the working-class family'.[138] However, the TUC judged that family allowances would probably not be funded through vertical re-distribution, as socialist advocates hoped, and would be used instead to justify reduced wages (as in France). They therefore rejected any notion of political interference with wage bargaining and vetoed the proposals. The issue was abandoned, until another war, by the party which had held out the greatest hope for Family Endowment supporters.[139]

Debates within the women's movement crystalised over the issue of sex based protective legislation. Protective legislation had its birth in the appalling conditions suffered by workers, particularly children, in the early days of the industrial revolution and had been extended to cover adult women in 1844. On the one hand it can be seen as a reform which benefited the working-classes and, indeed, there was real hope that protection might eventually be extended to *all* workers. On the other, feminists saw that protective legislation was supported by people –

[135] See especially Rathbone's discussion 'Should Direct Provision be made for the Mother, or only the Children?' in Rathbone, *Disinherited Family*, pp. 362-4.
[136] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, pp. 181-4. The Society, however, did not prescribe a specific scheme and key questions, including those relating to funding arrangements, were left open.
[137] Ibid. pp. 189-93.
[138] Graves, *Labour Women*, pp. 136-7. For this reason, they argued consistently for allowances to be funded through vertical, rather than horizontal, distribution. See Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, p. 196n.
[139] Ibid. pp. 179 & 197-223.

employers, politicians and working men – who were not concerned so much with women's poor employment conditions as with the perceived need to protect women's morals and to ensure that their true sphere of endeavour remained in the home. Moreover, they noted, it provided employers with a convenient excuse to limit women's opportunities and with a ready justification for their lower pay. On this reading, sex based protective legislation has been seen as part of the framework which helped create and reinforce the male breadwinner family model and the associated gender division of labour by acting to 'protect' limited jobs for men whilst strengthening their claim to a family wage.[140]

Some feminists took a strict liassez-faire view and argued that the legislation was restrictive. Women would only overcome unequal pay, they argued, in open competition within a free and open labour market. Defenders of protective legislation replied that women workers were not the same as male workers, in biological, social, or economic terms. Revoking the laws that protected them in the present, for the sake of an abstract notion of equality in the future, would not cause those differences to disappear, nor mitigate the risk of exploitation.[141] Others took a middle course. Some, for example, argued that judgements should be based on the views of women and its effect on the community involved. Others suggested basing the legislation on the nature of the job, rather than the person doing it.[142] There was an undeniably sharp class dimension to the debate and Graves has shown how it marked 'the decisive break between labour and feminism in Britain....as class tensions and ideological differences between labour women and middle class feminists developed into open conflict'.[143]

There was a marked reluctance to recruit women into industry, particularly married women, during the Second World War.[144] Nonetheless, pressures for equal pay returned as parts of the trade union movement began to push on the issue and feminist hopes were revived. In practice, however, trade unions tended to help maintain gender pay differentials. Like the Minister for

[140] EOC, *Health and Safety Legislation: Should we distinguish between Men and Women?* (London, 1979), pp. 9-16. For a TUC perspective see TUC, *The History of the TUC 1886-1968. A Pictorial Survey of a Social Revolution* (London, 1968), p. 84. For a more critical view of trade union and government motives see Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. 29, 98-9, 133. The debates were prompted by attempts to introduce new Factory Acts in 1924 and 1926 to introduce new Factory Acts.
[141] Graves, *Labour Women*, pp. 138-153. For further reference to female trade union support for protective legislation, see Briar, *Working for Women*, p. 63.
[142] Graves, *Labour Women*, p. 143.
[143] Ibid. pp. 138-9.
[144] Briar, *Working for Women,* p. 82. Although these women were encourage to 'volunteer'.

Labour, Earnest Bevin, they placed great store in the importance of the family wage. In frustration, campaigners formed the Equal Pay Campaign Committee to which one hundred women's organisations affiliated. Their hopes of achieving even limited success in the civil service and teaching professions were thwarted when, in 1944, Churchill and Bevin united to remove an amendment to the 1944 Education Act which would have granted equal pay to teachers – Churchill on grounds of cost, Bevin through fear of male worker unrest. The government established a Royal Commission to 'examine' the matter and shelved the issue.[145] After all, there was no significant public pressure for equal pay. Most women – and men – were eager to return to normal as soon as possible.[146]

Yet, the campaign for family allowances had borne some fruit. Family allowances, as opposed to wartime separation allowances (paid again during World War Two), were introduced in 1946. In their final form they represented an extreme mutation of Rathbone's initial conception. They ignored the first child's existence and were exempted from annual reviews.[147] Beveridge himself had never fully renounced the breadwinner ideal. He merely proposed shrinking the size of the putative family whose needs the 'family wage' was supposed to meet from a dependent wife and three children to a dependent wife and one child. Concerned by falling birth rates, Beveridge hoped this would make motherhood (i.e. large families) more attractive.[148] Civil servants had further diluted these proposals. Whereas Beveridge had proposed setting the universal benefit at subsistence level, they ensured the actual rate was set low enough to eliminate any suggestion that it was based on the cost of raising children. They also ignored completely any suggestion that the state should recognise the work of mothers. In this final guise, the purpose of family allowances was the alleviation of extreme poverty in large families. The degree to which government was persuaded of their efficacy in combating a potentially inflationary wage spiral is a moot point, but it made the policy more attractive. As if to reinforce the message that family allowances were shorn of any feminist rationale, it was proposed to pay them to fathers. Only a

[145] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. 271-9.
[146] Ibid. p. 285.
[147] Hilary Land and Roy Parker, 'Family Policies in Britain: The Hidden Dimension', Paper given at International Working Party on Family Policy, 1977, p. 14. In these respects, family allowances were unique.
[148] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State,* p. 343; Land, 'Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', p. 113; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 279. It has been argued that too much emphasis has been placed on Churchill's (alarmist) use of the 'dwindling birthrate' argument, with damaging consequences. See Wally, 'Children's Allowances', pp. 108-9, and below, pp. 230-31.

determined campaign by Rathbone and her supporters reversed this decision.[149] Rathbone never lived to see the first allowances paid and, inadequate as the scheme was, the movement ceased immediately.[150]

Pedersen argues that 'universal allowances distributing the cost of children among the population as a whole *never* really became acceptable to the government.' By and large, politicians, civil servants and trade unionists perceived them as 'largely irreconcilable with a welfare system aimed at compensating men *and their families* for a loss of wages and with a wage system…left relatively free of state interference.'[151] As Pratt observed, even in Labour Party mythology so closely associated with the welfare state, family allowances had a low status.[152] The assumption of 'full employment', upon which the postwar welfare state was built, applied to men only. The system treated single men and women broadly similarly, but whereas married men were insured primarily for loss of wages, married women were insured 'against the loss of men.'[153] Overall, the Second World War, like the First, did little to alter the long-term position of women in the workforce. Arguably, the overall effect had been detrimental in some respects. In the interests of productivity, government policies on issues such as part time work had been designed to enable women to carry their 'dual burden'. This reaffirmed their responsibility for it whilst maintaining women's lowly position in the labour market.[154]

Discrimination had never been a major issue in the same way as equal pay, but it was not an entirely new battleground to 1970s feminists. The 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, which deemed 'a person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post', had proved a hollow victory for women. It contained no enforcement provisions and, particularly in the face of high unemployment, had proved

[149] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State,* pp. 344-51. Pedersen suggests that John Macinol (in J. Macinol, *The Movement for Family Allowance, 1918-45: A Study in Social Policy Development* (London, 1980), pp. 216-9) overstated the importance of the anti-inflationary argument. For a thought-provoking discussion of the relationship between family allowances to the maintenance of the low-wage sector required by capitalist systems see A. Pratt, 'The Labour Party and Income Support Policy 1970-79', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bradford (1988), pp. 146-264. For a feminist account of the episode focusing on women activists see Fleming, 'Eleanor Rathbone', pp. 81-91. Walley notes that family allowances had already been accepted by Churchill's Wartime Coalition Government, with the TUC's blessing in 1942. See Walley, 'Children's allowances', p. 109.
[150] Banks, *Politics of British Feminism,* p. 23.
[151] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State,* pp. 350-51. Emphasis in original.
[152] Pratt, 'Labour Party and Family Income Support Policy', p. 243.
[153] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State,* p. 354
[154] Briar, *Working for Women,* p. 70, 82 & 93.

ineffectual.[155] During the Second World War, a group of feminists led by Dorothy Evans of the Six Point Group and supported by such notables as Vera Brittan and Edith Summerskill, attempted to introduce a Bill to 'establish equal rights for women by law'. No political party was willing to endorse it and the campaign died with Evans in 1944.[156] In 1953, Edith Summerskill attempted to introduce a 'blanket Bill' to deal with legal discrimination against married women. Again, it was almost immediately lost.[157] The issue was neglected for another decade and a half.

There is an accepted consensus that the last half of the twentieth century, the final quarter in particular, witnessed a 'decline' of the male breadwinner model.[158] Increasing numbers of women entered the labour market and family structures underwent significant changes. Lewis detected a 'pendulum shift' in policy makers' assumptions, away from a male breadwinner family model towards what she describes as an 'adult-worker model family' whereby it is assumed that all adults are in work.[159] Relationships have been re-cast in gender neutral language. Mothers and fathers are now 'parents' and it is assumed that women and men will all be 'citizen workers.'[160] This change has reduced gender inequalities and brought undoubted gains for women. It has, however, brought other problems.[161]

There is, in many instances, a gap between the new ideal and reality. In most families, partners are not fully individualised, that is both working and economically independent.[162] What often emerges is a 'one-and-a-half-earner' model. Women still tend to earn less than men.[163] Part-time work remains a predominantly female phenomenon. According to Alison Wolf's recent research, although female graduates are more likely to work full-time, 'the less educated the women, the more likely they are to work part-time, especially if they are married.'[164]

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[155] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 93; Banks, *Politics of British Feminism,* p. 83.
[156] Banks, *British Feminism,* pp. 20-21.
[157] Account of Baroness Summerskill in House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination (No.2) Bill [H.L]. Minutes of Evidence and Proceedings of the Select Committee on the Bill, Session 1971-72* (London, 1972), p. 197.
[158] For example, A. Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Oxford, 1998), p. 16.
[159] Lewis, 'Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model', 153-4.
[160] Giullari and Lewis, 'Adult Worker Model Family', p. 3.
[161] Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family', 519.
[162] Lewis, 'Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model', 155.
[163] Ibid. 156.
[164] Wolf, *XX Factor,* pp. 25-6.

Correspondingly, patterns of unpaid work have remained alarmingly traditional.[165] Despite the gender neutral language, women still experience greater pressures than men to care, for a variety of reasons.[166] One 2013 British poll found that 'British women today are still responsible for the majority of traditional chores associated with housekeeping.'[167] Whereas caregiving was recognised as an implicit part of the male breadwinner model, the new set of assumptions largely assume the commodification of care, and that caregiving will occur outside of the family. [168] Critics argue that is not possible to fully commodify care and that attempts to do so are misguided and potentially harmful.[169] Nevertheless, successive UK Governments and policy makers have extolled the value of paid work, however insecure and low paid, and little value has been placed upon caring work, either inside or outside the labour market. Women who 'choose' to care for their children instead – particularly lone mothers – have often experienced distain.[170] As Briar concludes, 'women's 'right to work' demanded by feminists at the beginning of the twentieth century has increasingly become an *obligation* to work in de-skilled, dead-end jobs which still do not pay a living wage.'[171]

However, change has been uneven and has occurred against a backdrop of widening inequalities. As Robert Taylor observed, 'What appeared to be the slow social emancipation of working-class women was taking place during a period when many working-class men felt themselves being forced onto the defensive in the face of change.' [172] Dolly Smith Wilson has highlighted the gender dimensions of the changes in the labour market inaugurated by massive restructurings and redundancies, the drive to reduce wage costs, and by the increased use of contracting out, part-time workers, and benefit reductions. She argued that 'as traditional skilled jobs disappeared from the 1970s onwards, many working-class men suffered a crisis of self-image as the masculine ideal of the breadwinner was eroded by an increasing need for two-income families.' Whilst men continued to display a tendency to 'refuse service jobs that paid much lower wages than in manufacturing and mining', women appeared comparatively willing to

[165] Giullari and Lewis, 'Adult Worker Model Family', p. 1.
[166] Ibid. p. 19; Wolf, *XX Factor*, p. 57.
[167] Poll findings from YouGov Poll. Quoted in L. Chambers, 'Women Still do the Housework'. Available online at http://yougov.co.uk/news/2013/09/02/women-still-do-housework/ , accessed 13/01/2014.
[168] Giullari and Lewis, 'Adult Worker Model Family', pp. 8-10 & 19
[169] Ibid. pp. 8-12. They emphasise that caregiving is a complex, constantly changing task. It has both active, but also seemingly passive elements. It involves relationships and emotional labour.
[170] R. Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 401 & 501n.
[171] Briar, *Working for Women*, p. 177.
[172] R. Taylor, 'The Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain* (Oxford, 2007), p. 379.

undertake low-paid, low-skilled work.[173] Based on research carried out in 1970, and 2002, Polly Toynbee argued that the overall position of the low-paid had deteriorated and that women in un-skilled jobs had been the 'main victims' of the developments that drove these changes.[174] After the mid-1970s there was an increasing divergence in individual rates of pay.[175] Whilst opportunities increased for qualified women, they reduced for unskilled men. As the number of workless and work scarce families increased, so too did the number of households with 'two highly-skilled full time earners. The resultant divergence in family incomes contributed to the growth of poverty and to greater social polarisation.[176]

In her recent book, *The XX Factor: How Working Women are Creating a New Society,* Alison Wolf argues that the sisterhood has 'fractured.'[177] The 'top fifth' of today's female population (as defined by 'higher education, good incomes, and prestigious occupations) live lives increasingly similar to those lived by the corresponding top fifth of the male population.[178] However, they have fewer interests in common with other women than ever before.'[179] Although marriage and the nuclear family are strongest and most intact among this group, they are more likely to remain childless, or to have fewer children later.[180] In contrast to the many new mothers who are unemployed for a time, or seek work to fit around motherhood, women at the top of the pyramid are more likely – after a period of maternity leave – to remain in full-time employment. To help them achieve this, Wolf argues, they have 'reinvented the servant class.'[181] By contrast, the other four-fifths of women live and work in a 'distinctively female world'.[182] In the labour market, they are concentrated in female dominated occupations where, despite women's rates of pay increasing across the occupational spectrum at a faster rate than

[173] Dolly Smith Wilson, 'Gender: Change and Continuity', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 251-2.
[174] Taylor, 'Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes', p. 384.
[175] Lowe, *Welfare State*, p. 373.
[176] Ibid. Creighton, 'Male Breadwinner Family', Wolf, *XX Factor,* p. 269. Taylor, 'Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes', pp. 384-5.
[177] Wolf, *XX Factor*, p. 13.
[178] Ibid. pp. 13 &23. Wolf notes that 'highly educated, high-earning professional men also number only about 15 to 20 per cent of males in the developed world.
[179] Ibid. p. 13.
[180] Ibid. pp. 279 and 39. As the final draft of this was being prepared, an article appeared in the *Guardian,* 25 October 2014, headlined, 'Growing wealth divide allows career women who can afford childcare to have families, say US economists.
[181] Ibid. pp. 58-77. For a tiny minority of couples however, where the husband's income alone is sufficient to buy an affluent lifestyle, this is different again. These couples are display much more traditional patterns: they have higher numbers of children younger and the mothers are likely to commit themselves full-time to motherhood.
[182] Ibid. p. 18.

men's (something which has been crucial in maintaining household incomes), the average pay remains low.[183] It is within this context that the early twentieth-first century has witnessed a new feminist resurgence. Viewing their 1970s predecessors as particularly concerned with equality in the workplace, today's feminists are careful to call for 'equality at work and at home.'[184]

From the outset the planned title for this project was 'visions of equality'. The title was intended to draw attention to the non-linear, often contradicted, always complex, nature of the feminist project. As Winifred Holtby observed, even in 1935:

> The march of women is never regular, consistent nor universal…it advances in one place while it retreats in others. One individual looks forward, another backward, and the notions of which is 'forward' and which is 'backward' differ widely as the directions followed.[185]

In 2011, in *Shattered: Modern Motherhood and the Illusion of Equality*, the feminist writer, Rebecca Asher, recounted a conversation between herself and a mother with one son and another child due imminently. The woman was the family breadwinner and, despite being officially on maternity leave, she proudly told Asher about her long working hours and her son's 'greater attachment to her husband.' According to Asher, she believed that 'this reversal of standard roles was equality in action.'[186] Asher reflected:

> …I didn't share her vision of equality between the sexes. It is not about women wrenching, powerful, main-earner status from men and marching out the door leaving their partners to vacuum the stairs…it is about mothers and fathers having the opportunity to participate equally in raising the children they have conceived and combining this with other activities that keep their entire selves alive.[187]

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[183] Ibid. p. 283. Figures from 2006 show that when part-time earnings are taken into account, the hourly pay gap remains about 20 per cent. TUC, *Closing the Gender Pay Gap* (2007) quoted in Redfern and Aune, *F Word*, p. 115

[184] Redfern and Aun, *F Word*, p. 106. They expand: 'We don't want to be house-slaves, but neither do we want to be wage slaves' We want to share work *and* home equally with men.' Of course, this is only one demand of the new feminist movement. Others include a 'Popular Culture free from Sexism', and 'End to Violence against Women'.

[185] Winifred Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilization* (1935) quoted in Workman, 'Wading through the Mire', 10.

[186] R. Asher, *Shattered: Modern Motherhood and the Illusion of Equality* (London, 2011). Her work was an attempt to understand why, in twenty-first century Britain, all the gains that women have supposedly made over the last few decades 'suddenly vanish as the time machine of motherhood transports us back to the 1950s' See pp. 5 & 184. For remarks on the interviewee see p. 186.

[187] Asher, *Shattered*, p. 186.

A key aim of this work has been to explore how, in the 1970s, as now and before, competing versions of gender equality existed, along with numerous and contradictory ideas about how it could or should be achieved.

Party Politics and Reform

Political histories of the period pay scant attention to the reforms discussed here, and to gender issues more broadly.[188] Biographies and autobiographies of key players suggest that compared to other prominent issues in the 1970s, such as industrial unrest, economic crises, the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland, and the 'Europe question', these were peripheral concerns – or seemed so at the time.[189] It is nevertheless clear that both parties, neither of which managed to secure a solid majority in this period, were aware of the need to appeal to women voters and sought to do so to varying degrees.[190]

Labour is often seen as more sympathetic to feminist claims - and to reform more generally - than the Conservatives, and as a more 'natural' home for feminists (certainly for women's liberationists). The role of Labour women in pushing for recognisably feminist reforms is often highlighted. A typical example is Deidre McCloskey's reference to Labour's 'progressivity' on women's employment issues.[191] Lee also claimed that Wilson's Government was 'strongly influenced' by the 'women's movement within the Labour Party' with respect to equality legislation.[192] Elsewhere, feminist historian Sue Bruley asserts that 'the commitment amongst Labour women MPs and the influence of the WLM on the Labour Party more generally' was 'a key factor' behind the 'wave of legislation favourable to women'.[193] She claims that the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts, the Employment Protection Act and the introduction of Child Benefit together represent nothing less than 'a new approach to women by the Labour

[188] For example, in a collection of twenty-one essays on the Wilson and Callaghan Governments, only one or two paragraphs mention the subject: see A. Seldon and K. Hickson (eds), *New Labour, Old Labour: The Wilson and Callaghan Governments, 1974-9* (London, 2004), pp. 111-2 & 115. For a similar absence see S. Ball and A. Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government, 1970-74* (Harlow, 1996).

[189] H. Wilson, *Labour Government, 1964-70: A Personal Record* (London, 1974), pp. 907 and 987; H. Wilson, *Final Term: The Labour Government 1974-1976* (London, 1979), pp. 15, 123 and 126-7; R. Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London, 1992), pp. 376, 389 & 426; Healey, *Time of My Life*, pp. 448-9; J. Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London, 1987); M. Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (London, 1995); S. Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves* (London, 2009); B. Castle, *Fighting all the Way* (London, 1993).

[190] Smith, 'Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship', p. 281; Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 78.

[191] D. McCloskey, 'Paid Work', in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), p. 171.

[192] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History*, p. 345

[193] Bruley, *Women in Britain Since 1900*, p. 158.

administration'.[194] Defenders of the much maligned 1974-9 Labour governments have also stressed their record on issues relating to race and gender equality.[195]

Four main criticisms can be levelled at this picture. The first questions the basis of the claims about the role of Labour women and the influence of feminism on the Party. None of the works cited above supplies supporting evidence or references. Labour women *were* active in these causes but claims about the significance of their influence appear unfounded, seemingly originating from personal experience or knowledge, or from an essay by the Labour MP Oonagh McDonald entitled 'Women in the Labour Party Today' and published in a 1977 collection of essays entitled *Women in the Labour Movement.* Propaganda as much as history, James Callaghan directed the foreword to 'the new generation of women…contemplating playing an active part in Labour politics.'[196] Bruley's claim echoes Labour's 1979 General Election manifesto assertion – that it had created a 'new deal for women'.[197] As regards the WLM's influence, Randall claims that the 'influx of socialist feminists' into Labour did not occur until the late 1970s. She argues that it was Labour's 'greater responsiveness to feminist claims which drew women in (rather than the other way round).[198] Similarly, Sarah Perrigo suggests that it was Labour's shift to left *after* 1979 which 'provided the initial context for women's mobilisation' by providing them with 'important new opportunities to articulate their demands'.[199]

The second criticism highlights Labour Party culture. The party's roots in working-class politics and its close ties to the trade union movement imbued it with a culture arguably more 'masculine' than that of the Conservatives.[200] Whilst accepting that some changes prior to 1979 made the party potentially more favourable to gender issues – a declining traditional working-class and increasing new middle-class membership and a growth of female membership in

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[194] Ibid. p. 160.
[195] See for example, N. Tiratsoo, "You've Never Had it So Bad?' Britain in the 1970s', in N. Tiratsoo (ed.), *From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain Since 1939* (London, 1997), p. 175; R. McKibbin, 'Homage to Wilson and Callaghan', *London Review of Books,* 24th October 1991, cited in K.O. Morgan, 'Was Britain Dying?', in A. Seldon and K. Hickson (eds), *New Labour, Old Labour. The Wilson and Callaghan Governments, 1974-9* (London, 2004), p. 304.
[196] Bruley was active in the WLM. See O. McDonald, 'Women in the Labour Party Today', in L. Middleton (ed.), *Women in the Labour Movement* (London, 1977), pp. 144-160. For Callaghan's remarks in the Foreward, see p. 9.
[197] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto 1979: The Labour Way is the Better Way,* (1979).
[198] Randall, *Women and Politics*, p. 233
[199] S. Perrigo, 'Women and Change in the Labour Party 1979-1995', in *Parliamentary Affairs* 49 (1) (1996), 117.
[200] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movmen,* p. 313.

affiliated unions – Perrigo also argues that Labour remained 'extremely male dominated' and not 'a favourable site for gender struggles'.[201] The party culture reflected deeply held assumptions about gender difference: women were seen primarily as 'wives and mothers'.[202] Steven Fielding's work on *Labour and Cultural Change*, shows that Labour women themselves partly accepted this view. Although unanimous in their demands for equal pay, they were more divided over women's proper role and the meaning of gender equality.[203] Bruley herself recognises the strength of resistance to feminist claims. Although praising the 'administration's' new approach under Harold Wilson, she believes that 'radicalism disintegrated in the later seventies as Labour under James Callaghan 'swung back to representing its more traditional interests, particularly those of skilled male workers.'[204]

The third criticism draws attention to the wider contexts in which these reforms were formulated. Women do not exist as a homogenous group isolated from society. Their experiences, like men, are shaped by social class, ethnic background, age, geographical location, education and so on. Laws designed to promote one type of (gender) equality can only have a limited effect if the broader thrust of economic and social policy is designed to promote or accept greater inequality.[205] It has been widely observed, not least by Shirley Williams, that moves towards greater race and gender equality were made against a backdrop of generally widening inequalities.[206] As Land observed in 1977, 'legal policies have been more responsive to economic and social changes than fiscal and social security policies in recent years.' 'That in itself', she added, 'is an interesting phenomenon probably related in part, at least, to the differential impact the policies have on the social classes.'[207] Whilst these are generalised observations, they are easily turned into critiques of Labour policy because Labour is concerned with equality in a way that Conservatives are not. In this light, the equality legislation is seen as symptomatic of Labour's failure to address wider inequalities. Meehan argued that Labour's adoption of legislation on race relations, equal pay, and sex discrimination was not 'an accretion

[201] Perrigo, 'Women and Change in the Labour Party', 116-120.
[202] Ibid. 118.
[203] S. Fielding, *The Labour Governments 1964-70, Volume 1. Labour and Cultural Change* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 113-38.
[204] Bruley, *Women in Britain*, p. 160. Emphasis added.
[205] Briar, *Working for Women*, p. 138. For a more detailed discussion of the nature of equal opportunities and equality see B. Bagilhole, *Equal Opportunities and Social Policy: Issues of Gender, Race and Disability* (London, 1997), esp. pp. 29-39.
[206] Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves*, pp. 385-6.
[207] Land, 'Social Security and the Division of Unpaid Work and Paid Employment', 51.

of eclectic past traditions but a product of the difficulties it confronted in solving class inequalities by collective means'.[208] In a similar vein, Polly Toynbee and David Walker noted that if the Wilson and Callaghan governments failed to address 'fundamental inequality', Wilson at least 'created space for substantial 'equalities' legislation on gender and race.'[209]

The fourth criticism questions the extent of the differences between the parties. In a general sense this challenge is inherent in the traditional feminist critique of the legislation. Loopholes, exemptions and general weaknesses are highlighted; the narrowness of the definitions of 'discrimination' and 'equality' are described; the visible lack of political will to enforce the new laws is demonstrated; and it is argued that these measures failed to challenge assumptions about the gendered division of labour which underpins most explanations for gender income and wealth inequality. Thus, runs the argument, no real departure can be detected - on either side of the political divide.[210] It can also be noted that many of the reforms were championed by individuals or groups of MPs with unusually high levels of cross-party support.[211] In *Conservative Women: A History of Women and the Conservative Party, 1874-1997,* G.E. Maguire argues that 'there was little difference in the two parties' attitude towards women' in this period.[212] Maguire believes that Conservative commitment to equal rights for women peaked under Edward Heath's leadership and she describes his 'dynamic espousal of women's causes'.[213] She also shows that this 'commitment was…based on pragmatic considerations'. Although some party members remained 'hostile…the party calculated they had more to gain by endorsing [reforms]'.[214] It is in this respect that Maguire believes the parties' attitudes to women were broadly similar:

> Even when the parties have supported a more clearly feminist issue – as in the case of equal pay... – they have done so because they knew most people were in favour... Politicians generally wait until social attitudes have changed before introducing major

[208] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 82.
[209] P. Toynbee and D. Walker, 'Social Policy and Inequality', in A. Seldon and K. Hickson (eds) *New Labour, Old Labour: The Wilson and Callaghan Governments, 1974-79* (London, 200), p. 115.
[210] For example, see I. Bruegel, 'Women's Employment, Legislation and the Labour Market', in J. Lewis (ed.), *Women's Welfare, Women's Rights* (Beckenham, 1983), pp. 130-169. J. Lewis, 'Introduction', in J. Lewis (ed.), *Women's Welfare, Women's Rights* (Beckenham, 1983), pp. 1-15; Briar, *Working for Women,* pp. 115-165.
[211] E. Vallance, *Women in the House* (London, 1979); M. Phillips, *The Divided House* (London, 1980).
[212] G.E. Maguire, *Conservative Women: A History of Women and the Conservative Party, 1874-1997* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 138. Olive Banks makes a similar argument. See Banks, *Politics of British Feminism,* pp. 108-110.
[213] Maguire, *Conservative Women,* pp. 163 and 206.
[214] Ibid. p. 163.

> reforms. Basically, the attitudes of both parties have been shaped by political advantage.[215]

This assertion is based, as far as Labour is concerned, on general observations about politicians rather than specific evidence. Yet the argument remains an interesting one and one this work examines more fully.

Maguire also draws attention to the fact that Conservatism does not preclude feminism.[216] Granted, Conservative feminists were much keener than their Labour counterparts to emphasise the distance between themselves and women's liberation (a compliment re-paid with equal fervour by women's liberationists).[217] Historically however, feminists have been aligned with, and active in, both parties. Maguire rightly notes that there have been tensions between socialism and feminism at a theoretical, a party, and often at a personal level, and that similar tensions are present on the right of the political spectrum and for individual Conservative women.[218] These tensions often manifest themselves in similar ways. In both parties, for example, there is an observable tension between viewing women in the context of the family, that is as mothers, wives and carers, or viewing them as individuals and 'workers'. [219] However, these tensions are underpinned by different ideological conflicts. In Labour, a socialist commitment to equality often conflicted with a labourist commitment to a masculine movement founded on a commitment to the family wage and a corresponding view of the gender division of labour.[220] For Conservatives, the underpinning conflict lies between a conservative commitment to traditional family values, and a liberal espousal of freedom of choice and the merits of 'free enterprise'.[221]

Kevin Hickson has argued that although Conservatives have disagreed over the levels of inequality that are desirable, a commitment to maintaining or widening existing inequalities is a

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[215] Ibid. pp. 203-4.
[216] Ibid. p. 205.
[217] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* pp. 133.
[218] Maguire, *Conservative Women,* p. 205.
[219] Ibid. p. 133.
[220] Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, pp. 224-6; Land, 'Family Wage', 55-77, esp. 56-8. See also A. Perkins, *Red Queen: The Authorised Biography of Barbara Castle* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 334-5.
[221] Wilson, *Halfway to Paradise,* pp. 168-9

unifying principle common to all Conservative philosophies.[222] This 'ideology', as Hickson suggests it be called, has implications for Conservative attitudes towards gender (in)equality. For Conservative traditionalists sex inequalities could be justified by recourse to the expression of support for the traditional family.[223] From this point of view there is no need for 'natural' inequalities to be justified by abstract principles.[224] By contrast, the Conservative New Right believed that there were rational justifications for inequalities: 'those who were the most economically productive would automatically rise up within an economy characterised by having good incentives.' One of the most significant dimensions of this form on Conservatism was the emphasis on individual liberty which allowed a rational, and even moral, defence of inequalities which were understood as a necessary counterpart to a free society and the freedom of the individual.[225] It was this element of their philosophy which allowed Conservatives to extol the virtues of 'equal opportunities' for women, albeit a notion of equal opportunities which contrasts sharply with that espoused by the collectivist or social democratic left.[226]

These developments help to provide an explanation for Maguire's observation (in 1998) that 'in recent times Conservative women have developed their own idea of feminism: one that refuses special assistance specifically for women on the grounds that it encourages men to continue to think of them as inferior.'[227] This view finds support in Beatrice Campbell's book, *The Iron Ladies: Why do Women Vote Tory?*[228] Although *Iron Ladies* contains some historical content, it is best described by its title. A self-declared feminist-socialist, Campbell set out in the late 1980s to answer a question which perplexed many of her sisters. Antagonisms between women's liberation and the Conservatives had encouraged and strengthened associations between the political right and anti-feminism, helping to create what Wilson described as 'an oversimplified understanding of the relationship between feminism and the wider political

[222] K. Hickson, 'Inequality', in K. Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 192.
[223] Ibid. p. 191.
[224] Ibid. p. 187.
[225] Ibid. p. 192.
[226] From the late nineteenth-century architects of New Liberalism to the late twentieth–century architects of the Third Way, adherents argued that any meaningful implementation of equality of opportunity required some collectivist solutions. See Pugh, *State and Society*, pp. 58-62; Lowe, *Welfare State*, pp. 32-4. For some more in depth discussion of equal opportunities theory see I. Forbes, 'Equal Opportunity: Radical, Liberal and Conservative Critiques' in E. Meehan and S. Sevenhuijsen (eds), *Equality Politics and Gender* (London, 1991), pp. 17-35; Bagilhole, *Equal Opportunities and Social Policy*, pp. 29-41 & 47-51
[227] Maguire, *Conservative Women*, p. 205.
[228] Campbell, *Iron Ladies*, pp. 199-232.

spectrum.'[229] In *Iron Ladies* Campbell reported that 'much to the surprise of many in the women's movement and on the left, but no surprise to right-wing women, the Thatcher government has not prescribed women's return to the home…the problem has been working out exactly what the government has been up to.[230]

Campbell described the ideological elements of Thatcherism as diverse and contradictory: 'classical liberalism laced with misogyny and proto-feminism.'[231] Having provided an extensive although often sympathetic critique of the blind spots and limitations of Conservative feminism she suggested 'that Conservatives were able to believe in 'women's equality without having a theory of inequality.' The classic liberal strand within Conservatism allows Conservative women to be feminists; it also precludes much of the analysis central to second wave feminism, and indeed, left wing political philosophy. There was 'no space…in the Conservative feminist lexicon' for words such as 'oppression, discrimination, or exploitation.'[232] By the early 1980s, it was becoming clear to many observers that Thatcherism was not, despite the political overtones, pushing women back into the kitchen. As Lynne Segal noted, under Thatcherism jobs were not determined by Tory family rhetoric on women's place, but were left to market forces in an economic climate of industrial decline, re-structuring and deflationary policies.'[233] Interestingly however, *Iron Ladies* does suggest that a strict 'classic liberal' view of late twentieth century Conservative feminism is actually too limited. In the mid-1980s, Conservative women scored a notable victory against their own government on the issue of payment of family credit to mothers. For Campbell, this showed that 'their feelings about the family reached beyond the idea and the institution to a concern with women's conditions of existence within the family.'[234]

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[229] Wilson, *Halfway to Paradise*, pp. 168-9. This understanding proved remarkably persistent. See, for example, S Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990* (London, 1999), p. 349.
[230] Campbell, *Iron Ladies*, p. 205. This sense of confusion and dislocation among feminists trying to come to terms with the realities of the Thatcher project is also evident in J. Gardiner, 'Women, Recession and the Tories', in S. Hall and M. Jacques (eds), *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London, 1983), p. 195.
[231] Campbell, *The Iron Ladies: Why do Women Vote Tory?* (London, 1987), p. 200.
[232] Ibid.
[233] L. Segal, 'The Heat in the Kitchen', in S. Hall and M. Jacques (eds) *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London, 1983), pp. 210-11. See also Barrett and McIntosh, 'The Family Wage' p. 72; J. Fink, 'Welfare, Poverty and Social Inequalities', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2007), p. 275-6.
[234] Campbell, *Iron Ladies*, p. 165.

Many general histories of this period treat the equality legislation and related 'women's issues' as marginal and peripheral – or best consigned to a special chapter on women.[235] By contrast, this work argues that the reforms it focuses on should be understood in the much broader context of the political and economic developments and debates, about the desirability and possibility and nature of equal outcomes and equal opportunities, associated with the ending of the postwar consensus.

Theoretical influences and conceptual approaches

This work aims to analyse the extent to which the 1970s marked a watershed for women. The association between the development of policy in the 1970s and women's liberation suggests at least a causal link. Yet the relative historical neglect of these specific policies during this decade has meant that the question remains largely unanswered.[236] Studies of the 1960s have looked at 'permissive' or 'civilising' legislation and used the focus of legislative reform to examine the nature and impact of pressure group politics, and to shine a light on broader political, social, and cultural changes.[237] Whereas, in popular and politicised accounts, the reforms relating to abortion, divorce, homosexuality, and censorship had been placed at the centre of the 'permissive sixties' narrative, closer historical analysis revealed that their origins lie in preceding decades, and were the result of very different and often contradictory pressures. Moreover, it was shown that, contrary to some accounts, the reforms did not reflect any revolutionary shift in social behaviors or attitudes. Rather, there was a widespread suspicion of them among a socially conservative public.[238] In other words, social reforms may not always be directly indicative of social change but they do allow us insights into its deeper nuances.

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[235] For example, see the chapter headed 'Who Needs Men?' in Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 368-419. In Whitehead, *The Writing on the Wall*, the chapter is called 'The Woman's Hour'. See p. 309.

[236] As this work began, the author attended one of the earlier workshops on reassessing the 1970s. The workshop highlighted how little historical work had, at that time, been done on the period. For summary of workshop see L. Black and H. Pemberton, 'Reassessing the seventies: the benighted decade', paper from workshop on 23 September 2009. Available online at The British Academy, http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2009/seventies/INDEX.cfm, accessed 26 October 2010.

[237] M. Jarvis, *Conservative governments, morality and social change in affluent Britain, 1957-64* (Manchester, 2005); T. Fisher, 'Permissiveness and the Politics of Morality' in *Contemporary Record* 7 (1) (1993), 149-165; B. Pym, *Pressure Groups and the Permissive Society* (Dawlish, 1974); P.G. Richards, *Parliament and Conscience* (London, 1970). My BA dissertation drew upon these approaches. See E. Homans, 'Swinging Sixties: The Abolition of Capital Punishment', in *History Today* 58 (12) (2008).

[238] For an excellent summary of the historiography see A.J. Holden, 'Letting the Wolf through the Door: Public morality, politics and 'permissive' reform under the Wilson Governments, 1964-70', unpublished PhD these, Queen Mary, University of London (2000), pp. 8-39. Also, the thesis more generally.

Whilst the reforms that form the central focus of this work - the Equal Pay, Sex Discrimination, and Child Benefit Acts – certainly had important cultural and social implications, they, and the changes they signified, also incorporated significant economic dimensions, both at the national and political levels, in terms of changes to labour market structures and the State administration of taxes and benefits, and at the level of households and individuals, in terms of familial economic relationships of support and dependency.[239] More broadly, a solid body of evidence reminds us that neither feminists nor historians should lose sight of the economic dimension of women's inequalities.[240] To this extent, this work is grounded in an appreciation of economic change and material contexts which offers helpful insights into the reasons for change (or lack of it). It is not necessary to adopt a deterministic approach in order to acknowledge the power of economic change to act as a catalyst to political change or personal decisions, or to constrain choices or create opportunities.[241] As E.P Thompson reflected, 'ideas and values are situated in a material context, and material needs are situated in the context of norms and expectations, and one turns around this many-sided societal object of investigation.'[242] There is an inherent class dimension here. This work also employs a gendered approach.

Inspired by the theoretical innovations of women's liberation, some feminist scholars adapted Marxist theories to help them relate experience to situation in order to explore and explain women's oppression. For example, in 1980, Nicola Charles produced a study of 'Women and Trade Unions in the Workplace', which drew upon althusserian notions of ideology, to explain why 'familial' (ie. relating to traditional notions of family based around a gendered division of labour) ideologies predominated at the local level in spite of widely expressed support for egalitarian principles. Charles argued that her subjects tended to live by the beliefs that reflected their daily material lived realities.[243] As feminist theorists sought to reconcile competing

[239] For some discussion of the gendered impact of changes in the labour market and social security in the 1980s see Morris, *Dangerous Classes*, pp. 119-135.
[240] M. Waring, *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women are Worth* (London, 1999).
[241] For a useful discussion of the dangers of determinism and the usefulness of Marxist theory to history, see P. Tosh and S. Lang, *The Pursuit of History*, 4th edn (Harlow, 2006), pp. 221-42.
[242] E.P. Thompson, 'Agenda for a Radical History', in E.P. Thompson, *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (New York, 1994), p. 361. In the field of Social science, Anthony Giddens has developed his theory of 'structuration', to describe how micro level activities (agency) and social structure (macro forces) constantly feed into one another. Since the social structure is reproduced by individual acts (in addition to constraining them), it can in fact be changed. See David Gauntlett, *Media, Gender and Identity: An introduction* (Abingdon, 2008), p. 201.
[243] Charles, 'Women and Trade Unions', 3-21, esp. 3-4 & 19-20. Althuser described ideology as 'the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.' L. Althusser, 'Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London, 1972), p. 196, quoted in Assiter, *Althuser and Feminism*, p. 123. The most famous critique of althusserian theory was provided by E.P Thompson. See EP Thompson, 'The Poverty

explanations for women's oppression, it was increasingly argued that this gendered division of labour was the 'crucial point in women's subordination'.[244] Similarly, in historiographical terms, the socialist/radical intersection within women's liberation had initially manifested itself as a tension between whether capitalism or patriarchy should be understood as the primary source of working women's oppression. Historians soon came to recognise that women were oppressed both within an economic system, and within a set of roles, with related assumptions and expectations about those roles – patriarchy. [245]

The subsequent development of gender history was based on the recognition that the categories 'male' and 'female' carried meanings 'beyond any observable reality.' [246] The implied insistence, that the sexes can only be understood in relation to one another, offered a conceptual tool which negated the need for a separate 'women's history' – and indeed a separate 'men's' history with women confined to walk-on parts.[247] Although the development of gender history was often seen as part of the post-structuralist challenge to traditional approaches to history, it could also complement Marxist inspired approaches by serving to collapse the barriers between the public and private spheres, allowing for a greater understanding of the complexity of people's lives and historical change.[248] In so far as this work focuses on constructions of gender, it does so primarily by focusing on articulations of gender equality, or 'women's rights,

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of Theory: or an Orrey of Errors', in E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), pp. 193-398, esp. 197-205. On some readings, Althusser offers only a bleak dehumanised structuralist counsel of despair. Yet, Assiter maintains that althusserian approaches do offer feminists a useful to understandings of women's place in the family. See Assiter, *Althusser and Feminism*, pp. viii, ix, and 122-51.

[244] For a brief summary of dual systems theory see Freedman, *Feminism*, pp. 47-51. For a full discussion of the emergence of dual systems theory, and the related 'domestic labour debate' see Setch, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain', pp. 154-192. See also E. Malos, 'The Politics of Household Labour in the 1990s: Old Debates, New Contexts', in E. Malos (ed.), *The Politics of Housework*, 2nd edn (Cheltenham, 1995), pp. 206-217; Assiter, *Althusser and Feminism*, pp. 68 – 74.

[245] Downs, 'Women's History to Gender History', p. 268; M. Rubin, 'Cultural History I: What's in a Name?' , available from *Institute of Historical Research* (2008), 2, http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/cultural_history.html, accessed 11/11/2013.

[246] Rubin, 'Cultural History', 2. It was Joan Wallach Scott's 1986 essay, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis' which pointed the way forward for women's historians who were frustrated by their seeming inability to do more than simply 'add' women onto an apparently universalist (male) history. See J.W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', in *The American Historical Review* 91 (5) (1986), 1053- 1075. However, the concept of gender, as distinct from sex, was not new to feminist theorists. Simone De Beauvoir's work is seen as the precursor to a concept which was in wide use by the 1970s. See Freedman, *Feminism*, pp. 14-18.

[247] For an example of how history can be constructed and understood around the concept of gender as a key axis of power in society see Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain.*

[248] Tosh and Lang, *Pursuit of History*, pp. 246-7. The classic study, whereby constructed gender identities were shown to underpin the formation of the industrial middle class, is Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (1987). This work is discussed also in Downs, 'Women's History to Gender History', pp. 270-271.

primarily in terms of the challenges this new agenda posed to the male breadwinner ideal and the gender division of labor implied therein. It examines the challenges to the status quo posed by feminists, reformers, and women's rights campaigners, and explores how parties, politicians and governments were able, or unable, to reflect, challenge, influence, or re-affirm attitudes towards women and gender relations in the workplace and in the family within the context of their broader agendas.

As Thane has remarked, 'it is always difficult to establish who or what brings about legislative change, since the processes involved are complex.'[249] In many respects, this work owes several debts to key ideas developed within the new political history.[250] On the one hand, n the attempt to provide a broad, rather than narrow, understanding of the processes involved, this work has gone beyond a narrow focus on policy development, to explore the nature of extra-parliamentary activity and the influence of social and cultural values on both the formulation and reception of political ideas and policies.[251] On other hand, by focusing so directly on legislative reforms, this work takes seriously Jon Lawrence's reminder that 'state power matters, not just as an end in itself (as the spoils of the party game) but as a force for transforming social structures.'[252] Indeed, as the studies of the 1960s reforms demonstrated, social reform could be imposed from above to the extent that legislators actually ran ahead of majority opinion.[253] Nevertheless, it is clear that the politicians were not insensible to the views of interest groups or to wider public opinion, nor did they form their ideas within a cultural and social vacuum. They were engaged in a – albeit often intermittent - discourse about women's rights in which communications and messages from all sides often became distorted, either purposefully, or inadvertently, as different groups sought to advance their cause.[254]

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[249] Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make?', 274. See also Byrne, 'Politics of the Women's Movement', 55.
[250] S. Fielding, 'Political History', available from *Institute of Historical Research* (2008), 1-4, http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/cultural_history.html, accessed 11/11/2013. As Fielding summarises, this was an attempt to combine the insights offered by cultural studies of the 'people' with the recognition that politics has the power to shape society.
[251] J. Vernon, 'What is a Cultural History of Politics?', in *History Workshop Journal* 52 (2001), 261. Many thanks to Duncan Tanner for discussing this approach and its applicability to my work.
[252] J. Lawrence, 'Political History', in S. Berger, H. Feldner, K. Passmore, *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (London, 2003), pp. 198-9.
[253] Ibid. See also remarks on the liberalising legislation of the 1960s in Donnelly, *Sixties*, p. 117.
[254] L. Black, 'What Kind of People are You?', in J. Callaghan, S. Fielding & S. Ludlam (eds), *Interpreting the Labour Party: Approaches to Labour Policies and History* (Manchester, 2003), p. 24. This approach 'emphasises parties' attempts to build constituencies of support by the interpretation they place on change and 'interests.'. This echoes James Vernon. See J. Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Harvard, 2007), viii. The rise of Thatcherism convinced him that the role of politics – and the challenge the political left faced – was not to 'follow the forward march of any one class but to create constituencies of support that cut across socioeconomic groups, by providing

Method and Structure

In order to explore broader pressures for change, a wide range of primary material has been used which extends beyond the official records normally associated with policy studies. Extensive use has been made of official papers and party materials held at the National Archive, the Conservative and Labour Party Archives at Oxford and Manchester respectively. The TUC archive, held at the Modern Record Centre in Warwick, has also been used. However, there were some noticeable 'gaps' in this material. For example, the National Archive holds barely any material relating to governments' views and intentions on anti-discrimination legislation. This probably owes much to the relatively non-partisan nature of so many of the debates around women's issues and the fact that so many of the key issues were addressed by Parliamentary Committees. Yet, by the same token, Committee Reports, many of which are now available online from the Parliamentary Papers resource, have proved particularly helpful in offering a breadth of opinion from various groups and individuals who had an interest in the reform agenda. Published reports by the Equal Opportunities Commission, and by the National Council of Civil Liberties have also proved useful, not only in terms of allowing insights into contemporary debates, but also because both of these bodies produced carefully researched reports. Hansard records, newspaper reports, political diaries, autobiographies and memoirs have been used to help provide, among other things, a guide to the sequence of events, insights into individuals' views and motivations, and as a guide to contemporary discourse. Public opinion polls and surveys, of which many relevant ones are available in the Conservative Party Archives, have also proved illuminating.

Research on the campaigns relating to equal pay, anti-discrimination, and family allowances threw up numerous challenges, not least because of the variety and number of individuals and groups involved to varying degrees, at different ways and at different times. Meehan counted 108 organisations which 'participated to a greater or lesser extent in campaigns for equality for work.' As she noted, 'the difficulties of tracing the impact, let alone the activities, of such an amorphous collection of groups are enormous.'[255] Added to this is the fact that the decentralised nature of many feminist campaigns – particularly those more closely related to the women's liberation arm of the movement - means that there are very few, sometimes no 'traditional'

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them with the most credible way of experiencing and understanding the world.' He claimed that his fellow historians 'had nothing to lose but their materialist chains.'

[255] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* pp. 42-3.

forms of organisational records available to researchers. For this reason, it is particularly sad to note that the records of one of the key umbrella organisations in this period, the Fawcett Society, remains unavailable.[256] However, a wide variety of other materials are available and things like correspondence records, or newspaper reports, can allow groups with no archival material 'of their own' to become visible. Some organisational records are available for groups which were run along more traditional lines, such as the Status of Women Committee. The records of the Women's Rights Group of the NCCL are now available in Hull and the Women's Library, as it was in 2009, released a good deal of material generated by the Women in Media group, who were leading campaigners in the battle for anti-discrimination legislation. The Feminist Library in London holds a great deal of 'semi-published' material such as journals and newsletters, such as *Women's Report* or the *Women's Liberation Newsletter,* from which it is possible to glean a good deal of information and much insight. Oral testimony was not intended to be a main pillar of this research. It has been used only where it has been felt that it could offer significant amounts of information not available elsewhere, or valuable insights into materials already available.

This work comprises five chapters. The first provides a contextual background to the events, themes and issues discussed in this thesis, namely the social, cultural, economic and political manifestations of the breadwinner ideal, the political contexts, and the emergence of a political focus on individual rights and family poverty. Finally, it examines the revitalisation of the feminist movement. The middle three chapters focus on equal pay, sex discrimination, and child benefit (as family allowances became) respectively. As far as possible, these chapters follow a chronological framework. There is an unavoidable but significant degree of chronological overlap between Chapters Three (sex discrimination) and Four (child benefits). For ease of understanding, more narrative detail has been provided in Chapter Three than in Chapter Four. Within this framework, each chapter explores the pressures for reform, and the wider influences that helped drive, limit and shape policy. Although each stands as a case study, a key aim of this work has been to explore the interrelationships between these issues – equal pay, child benefits, and equal opportunity. Taken together, these chapters argue that the Equal Pay Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Employment Protection Act (maternity leave), and the introduction of

[256] Communication with the Women's Library, London. Due to the vast quantity of material and the sums of money required to make the collection accessible it is not known when the papers will be opened. Since writing, the Women's Library has been closed and the archives transferred to the LSE.

child benefit constituted the beginnings of a discernibly new approach towards gender equality, a decisive, though often half-hearted and incomplete, move away from the old assumptions about the male breadwinner model family.[257] However, the transition away from the old model had barely commenced before the political and economic developments of the latter 1970s set in motion a series of developments which, it is argued here, mitigated against women's progress towards equality. In this respect, the concluding chapter sketches the final years of the decade, after the 'high tide' of reform had receded. It attempts to show how the impact of each of these reforms was shaped by the political and economic environment and, in turn, how policy decisions relating to pay, opportunity, and child support (or political neglect of those issues) helped, in most cases to reinforce, rather than to challenge, these trends.

[257] Anne Oakley wrote about the 'equality package' in A. Oakley, 'The Failure of the Movement for Women's Equality', in *New Society*, August, 1979, p. 392. See also P. Hewitt, *A Step by Step Guide to Rights for Women* (London, 1975). However, for reasons that will become clear below, contemporary feminists rarely included child benefit within this 'package.'

OUT OF THE SIXTIES
FEMINISM REVITALISED: THE WINDS OF CHANGE

The lives of women altered profoundly in some way in the decades after the war and remained largely unchanged in others.[258] Sandbrook describes a 1960s 'revolution' in the way women were seen and saw themselves, highlighting increased educational opportunities, higher employment levels, changing perceptions of marriage, a greater emphasis on female sexuality, increased availability of contraception, and the legalisation of abortion.[259] Still, as veteran feminist activist, Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan, asserted in 1968, women remained 'second class citizens without equal rights and opportunities'.[260] This chapter examines these changes and continuities. It explores the main implications of the male breadwinner ideal, and the factors which challenged and reinforced this paradigm. Many changes were driven by long-term trends, primarily economic and demographic which, in turn, influenced social, cultural and political attitudes. However, as the section on women and politics shows, politicians were remarkably reticent about acknowledging these developments, for a number of reasons. Yet, although it was not clear at the time, the new focus on race discrimination and the rediscovery of poverty in the 1960s, were to influence debates on women's rights well into the 1970s. As the final section of the chapter shows, the revitalisation of the feminist movement and its re-emergence into public consciousness at the end of the decade owed much to these developments.

A Woman's Place, at Work and at Home.

The old feminist argument that women's interests were ignored because they were not represented retained strength in the 1960s.[261] The Queen was Head of State but otherwise, men dominated public life. Between 1945 and 1970, there were never more than twenty-six female MPs.[262] There were only ten women in the House of Lords in 19868.[263] Women were excluded

[258] I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Introduction', in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 1-15, esp. p. 13
[259] Sandbrook, *White Heat*, pp. 656, 658, 664.
[260] H. Hunkins-Hallinan, 'A Revolution Unfinished', in H. Hunkins-Hallinan (ed.), *In Her Own Right: A Discussion Conducted by the Six Point Group* (London, 1968), p. 9.
[261] Traditionally a suffrage argument. But later feminists noted that the vote and the opening up the professions had made little difference. See, for example, V. Woolf, 'Three Guineas' (originally published in 1938), in V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas Edited and with and Introduction and Notes by Michele Barrett* (London, 2010), pp. 130-42. As Hilary Land discovered when working on one Committee in the 1970s, Senior Civil Servants, for example, were not above defending sexist policies from a personal male point of view (i.e.'speaking as a man and not as [a civil servant]'. See Interview with Hilary Land, *Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism, Volume Two*, pp. 68-9.
[262] Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women: Report of a Labour Party Study Group* (London, 1972), p. 45.

from the Anglican and Catholic Priesthoods.[264] Some feminists celebrated the 11 per cent of Local Government posts that were held by women and the one quarter of magistrate posts held by. But since these were largely unpaid positions, this is best understood as a continuation of the tradition of middle-class female involvement with voluntary work.[265] Women were underrepresented in the professions and management, to the point of being virtually or entirely absent.[266] About one third of the non-manual civil service were women, but they were employed primarily in the lower echelons and held virtually no key posts.[267] In 1969 the Board of Inland Revenue estimated that men owned about two thirds of the total net wealth of individuals.[268] Women's average hourly earnings were about 60 percent of men's.[269] This reflected the fact that women were more likely to be engaged in low paid, low status occupations such as cleaning, cooking, typing or clerical work.[270] Because women also worked less paid hours than men, income differentials were even greater still.[271]

Key ideas and assumptions about gender roles and relationships were woven into laws and rules and regulations. Only British men could confer nationality onto foreign spouses.[272] Only male students could claim allowances for a dependent spouse and children.[273] There was virtually no protection or help to women seeking to combine motherhood and employment and it was legal to sack women on account of pregnancy, regardless of length of employment.[274] Policy makers in

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[263] P. Hornsby-Smith , 'Women in Public Life', in Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan (ed.), *In Her Own Right: A Discussion Conducted by the Six Point Group* (London, 1968), p. 141. Women had first been admitted in 1958.
[264] NCCL, *Women* (London, 1965), p. 30. Women were also excluded from the Methodist and some Presbyterian ministries but were admitted to the Baptist, Unitarian and Congregational Free Churches minisitres.
[265] For figures on women in local government see Hornsby-Smith , 'Women in Public Life', pp. 141-2. For figures on magistrates see NCCL, *Women*, p. 27.
[266] NCCL, *Women*, pp. 14-16. No woman had ever worked in the main Stock Exchanges. In 1965 one bank appointed female managers – in two of its 2,380 branches. Of 41,424 members of the Institute of Directors in 1965, 850 were female. Women accounted for 4.1 percent of architects, 1.1 percent of chartered accountants, and 2.9 percent of solicitors. See M. Rendel et al, *Equality for Women* (London, 1968), p. 7.
[267] NCCL, *Women*, p. 14. For example, out of 420 full-time members of the forty nine public boards (for example, the Post Office Board, Electricity Council, and British Rail Board) five were female. See also Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women*, pp. 44-5.
[268] Central Office of Information, *Women in Britain* (London, 1971), p. 6.
[269] Department of Employment and Productivity and Ministry of Labour, 'Women at Work: Findings of an Inquiry by the Government Social Survey', 6 May 1968, p. 9. Copy available at Warwick, Modern Records Centre [hereafter MRC], MSS.292B/134/4. Other estimates put the figure as low as 50 percent.
[270] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 29.
[271] Department of Employment and Productivity and Ministry of Labour, 'Women at Work', p. 9, MRC, MSS.292B/134/4. Other estimates put the figure as low as 50 percent.
[272] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 39.
[273] A. Coote and T. Gill, *Women's Rights: A Practical Guide* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 128. Unless the husband was deemed as physically or mentally disabled and thus incapable of supporting himself.
[274] C. Smart, *The Ties that Bind* (London, 1984), p. 26.

the Departments of Health and Education explicitly resisted the demand for day nurseries, believing that young children should remain with their mothers who should create a 'proper' home'.[275] In 1967, less than one percent of under-fives attended nursery schools.[276]

The administration and collection of taxes, benefits, and social security had a profound impact on the day-to-day lives and expectations of people. The 'co-habitation rule', often enforced using evidence provided by the notorious 'special investigators', was based on the assumption that if a woman was living with a man, even outside of marriage, she and her children were financially dependent upon him.[277] Since domestic and caring work was deemed a 'female' preserve, women caring for children alone were denied the housekeeping tax allowance granted to men in the same circumstance.[278] Most married women chose to 'opt-out' of the National Insurance Scheme and rely on their husband's entitlements. This meant they lost their entitlement to unemployment or sickness benefits, and any individual pension entitlement they had built up as single women. Nevertheless, the decision would have seemed eminently sensible to many people. Where wives were not employed, or were in low paid work, the decision to continue paying an independent stamp for her would have represented a significant or even impossible financial commitment. Moreover, the returns were dubious since women were not entitled to the same rate of benefits as men, nor was there any guarantee that they would receive the pension they accumulated.[279] For tax purposes, a wife's income was treated as part of her husband's. This obliged her to disclose her financial situation to her spouse without reciprocity, prompting many heartfelt complaints from married women, many of whom did not consider themselves feminists but who had, nonetheless, regarded their personal savings and income as an independent and private matter. They were often appalled at officialdom's assumption of their

[275] A 1960 circular explicitly forbade local authorities from any expansion in nursery places (expect for children of female teachers). These views were also expressed clearly in the Plowden Report. For discussion of this see Coote and *Women's Rights,* p. 214; Briar, *Working for Women*, pp. 104-5; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 286; M. Wynn, *Family Policy: A Study of the Economic Cost of Rearing Children and Their Social and Political Consequences* (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 311-12.

[276] This figure did not improve. In 1974, there was 5 day nursery places for every 1000 pre-school children (or 0.5 percent).

[277] Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* pp. 121-4. Women found to be co-habiting were denied state assistance This much remains true today, although the gender dimension has officially gone, as have the worst of the intrusive investigations.

[278] W. Collins, E, Friedman, A. Pivot, *Women: The Directory of Social Change* (London, 1978), p. 46.

[279] Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* pp. 65-92. If the husband's pension entitlement was calculated to be worth more this effectively superseded the wife's right to her own pension.

'dependency' and apparent chattel status[280] Commercial financial services adopted similar assumptions which made it very difficult for single women to get mortgages or obtain credit arrangements. These women were often asked for a male guarantor if they sought to purchase something on credit. Married women would have found both nearly impossible without their husbands' signature.[281]

It is true that girls and women benefited from the increased opportunities provided by an expanding education system. Despite repeated recommendations throughout the 1950s and 1960s that girls should be better prepared for their adult domestic role, they received a similar basic academic education to boys. Beyond this, however, girls were steered towards 'feminine' subjects and encouraged to study 'domestic science' whilst boys did woodwork and metalwork.[282] As age increased, the gender divide widened. Girls outperformed boys in the 11 plus examination.[283] Despite similar O level attainment, girls opted out of education earlier than boys.[284] In 1970, 28 percent of higher education students were female, which represented a small improvement on the previous decade.[285] Of the other main routes taken by school leavers in 1970, 42.3 per cent of boys, compared to 7.1 per cent of girls, entered apprenticeships. Three quarters of those female apprenticeships were for hairdressing and manicure.[286] More than three quarters of female school leavers entered employment which offered no further training compared to less than one half of males.[287] Although these outcomes partly reflected overt discriminatory practices it is important to recognise that girls themselves accepted many of the assumptions and prejudices which underpinned them and inclined to view their future selves primarily as housewives and mothers,.[288] A 1971 Political and Economic Planning Report on *Sex, Family and Career* observed that women were 'trained and encouraged' not 'merely to

[280] Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* p. 56; Letters and other examples and others cited in Equal Opportunities Commission, *Income Tax and Sex Discrimination* (London, 1979), pp. 19-21. Some husbands also complained that they had no wish to accept responsibility and liability for their wife's tax affairs.
[281] Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* pp. 260-67.
[282] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* pp. 36 & 38-9.
[283] Donnelly, *Sixties,* p. 164; Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 37. Some County Councils awarded 'handicap grades' to ensure equality in grammar school intake
[284] Rendel et al., *Equality for Women,* pp. 5-6.
[285] Donnelly, *Sixties,* p. 164; NCCL, *Women,* p. 6. (25.4 percent)
[286] Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women,* p. 7.
[287] Ibid. p. 8.
[288] *Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations 1965-8. Chairman: the Right Hon. Lord Donovan.* Cmnd. 3623 (London, 1968), p. 92; Observation also made by Gillian Tindall, writing in the *New Society,* May 1968, cited in Donnelly, *Sixties,* p. 123.

accept' their low status and lack of opportunity in the workplace. They were 'trained and encouraged to think them right'.[289]

In the mid-twentieth century the historic situation, whereby females outnumbered surviving males began to reverse so that by 1961 there were more male than female under-thirties.[290] Some contemporaries speculated that a 'surplus' of men might decrease their status.[291] Yet one of the earliest visible consequences was to render marriage an almost certain prospect for young women.[292] More people were getting married, and doing so younger (a trend which was much more pronounced among the manual working-classes).[293] Marriage was as close to being a universal experience as it has ever been: 95 percent of men and 96 percent of women aged under forty-five were married.[294] In the 1960s, a bride's average age was twenty-two. More than half of all babies were born within the first five years of marriage, and more than three quarters within the first eight.[295] Three out of five babies were born to women aged under twenty five.[296] In 1971, mean age at first birth fell to a record low as marriage peaked in popularity.[297] Family size decreased but childlessness also became increasingly rare. Families with two or three children became more common. In effect, women's childbearing period had been shortened and compressed.[298]

The beginnings of another demographic trend could be detected too. 1966 marked the beginning of what some demographers called a 'baby slump' – a one third fall in births between 1966 and

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[289] Quoted in *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families. Chairman: the Hon. Sir Morris Finer. Volume One.* Cmnd. 5629 (London, 1974), p. 37

[290] Figures taken from Marwick, *British Society Since 1945,* p. 139. Overall, men continued to outnumber women until late into the century.

[291] See, for example, Dr. Jo Klein, interviewed for *Man Alive: Spinsters,* Interview Script, 19 March 1968, Caversham, BBC Written Archives [hereafter, BBCw], T14/2,575/1. Organised feminists also made note of the fact that women 'had acquired equality of opportunity to marry.' See, for example, Janet Newton, 'Report on the Fawcett Society Conference – 'Women in a Changing World', June 1967, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archives [hereafter CPA], CCO 4/10/B14. Marwick makes a similar argument. He suggests that 1960s permissiveness was a 'last golden age' for men: 'never again would they have it so easy.' See Marwick, *British Society Since 1945,* pp. 139-40.

[292] Nancy Seear, 'The World of Work', in Hunkins-Hallinan (ed.), *In Her Own Right,* p. 50.

[293] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families.* pp. 25-30.

[294] Sandbrook, *White Heat,* p. 463.

[295] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families,* p. 32; Donnelly, *Sixties Britain,* p. 160.

[296] Donnelly, *Sixties,* p. 160.

[297] D. Coleman, 'Population and Family' in A.H. Halsey and J. Webb (eds), *Twentieth Century British Social Trends,* 3rd edn (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 41-4 & 55-8.

[298] Ibid. p. 36; *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families,* pp. 31-2.

1976.[299] It was not perhaps immediately apparent in the 1960s but more couples were leaving it longer after marriage before starting their families, and then having their last child more rapidly. The trend towards delay was more marked among non-manual workers and was closely related to the length of time spent in education.[300] In Britain, in 1971, there were 18.3 million households. Of these, 26.7 per cent comprised married couples with no children; 6.7 per cent were lone parent households; 22.2 per cent were 'unrelated households' – that is single or unrelated adults residing together – up from 17 per cent a decade earlier; and 43 per cent were married couples with children, down from 48 per cent a decade earlier.[301] Families became increasingly home-centred in the 1950s and 1960s, a phenomenon driven by 'push' factors, as workplace production hastened and fragmented and as traditional communities and 'street life' deteriorated, and by 'pull' factors, as the lure of home increased. For many people, home was more comfortable and less crowded than ever before.[302] Women especially benefitted from the 'domestic technology revolution'. Hot and cold running water, gas and electric cookers and heaters, fridges, vacuum cleaners and washing machines all greatly lessened the physical and arduous nature of housework.[303] However, there was a negative side to these developments. Loss of established community and extended family networks deprived many people of their traditional means of support.[304] Many women, particularly those who did not work outside of the home experienced acute feelings of isolation.[305]

Although conservative commentators have often located the roots of the 'decline of the family' in 1960s permissiveness, contemporary would-be reformers perceived little in these trends to suggest that family life was in decline. They argued that liberalising the laws around abortion,

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[299] *Guardian*, 26 February 1980, quoted in M. Ingham, *Now We Are Thirty* (London, 1981), p. 200.
[300] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, June 1978, pp. 4-5, London, The National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA] CAB 184/516. The longer people stayed in education the later they started their families.
[301] Data taken from table based on information from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, *Social Trends* (1976) reproduced in Land and Parker, 'Family Policies in Britain', p. 41. The number of lone parent households had remained exactly the same.
[302] Sandbrook, *White Heat*, pp. 62-4 and 376; J. Harris, 'Tradition and Transformation: Society and Civil Society in Britain, 1945-2001', in K. Burk (ed.), *The British Isles Since 1945* (Oxford, 2003), p. 101.
[303] I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Housewifery', in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 159-60.
[304] K. Holden, 'Family, Caring and Upaid Work' in I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), p. 141; Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London, 1957), pp. 164-5 cited in Holden, 'Letting the Wolf Through the Door', pp. 69-70. Some warn against over-exaggerating the effects of this. For example, see P. Thane, 'Population and the Family', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2007), p. 54.
[305] Hannah Gavron, *The Captive Wife Conflicts of Housebound Mothers* (Harmondsworth, 1966, pp. 61, 135 & 139; Interview with Sara Morrison, 10 May 2011. Morrison referred to experience as local councilor.

contraception and divorce would improve family life by removing some of its most wretched attendant miseries.[306] Whatever point of view one takes, there is little doubt that the associated reforms had a pronounced impact. Divorce reform was followed by an acceleration in an already increasing divorce rate.[307] This became the greatest contributor to the small but significant and increasing number of one-parent families.[308] Reduced restrictions on abortion gave women more control over their bodies and their lives. After abortion was legalised there was a steep drop in the numbers of marriages associated with pregnancies – a trend particularly pronounced among the under-20s.[309] The newly available contraceptive Pill offered women a relatively reliable, safe, comfortable and independent contraceptive. Limited in use in the 1960s, by 1975 it was used by 58 percent of couples in England and Wales.[310] Thane believes that the Pill's most important effect was to allow 'women to delay starting families without sacrificing sexual relationships, and to establish themselves in a career.'[311] As early as 1963, the Family Planning Association had come to believe that 'voluntary parenthood' is now 'part and parcel of our culture.'[312] Although this represented a significant liberation for women, the related re-definition of parenthood – specifically motherhood – from an inevitability or something ordained by luck or fate to an active choice arguably had some more ambiguous consequences.[313]

These demographic developments underpinned women's changing relationships with the labour market.[314] Between 1851 and 1951 women's contribution to the labour force remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 29 and 32 per cent. It crept up to 33 per cent in 1961 and

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[306] Holden, 'Letting the Wolf Through the Door', p. 32.
[307] Donnelly, *Sixties*, p. 122.
[308] Lewis, 'Marriage', p. 75. Other reasons include separation, children born out of wedlock, and death. For some discussion of declining stigmatisation see Bruley, *Women in Britain*, p. 139.
[309] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, pp. 2-3, TNA CAB 184/516.
[310] Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make?', 281; A. Leathard, *The Fight for Family Planning* (London, 1980), p. 205; Donnelly, *Sixties*, p. 123.
[311] Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make?', 268; M. Ingham, *Now We Are Thirty: Women of the Breakthrough Generation* (London, 1981), p. 216. Ingham, who moved into adulthood at this time, described the 'confrontation between the sexes in the early 1970s when, armed with education and the pill, married women suddenly flooded the job market and put off having children...'
[312] F. Lafitte, *Family Planning the Sixties*, Report of the Family Planning Association Working Party, quoted in Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 299. For some discussion of this phenomenon in Germany and the USA see pp. 299-303.
[313] Rachel Cusk has also very recently advanced this argument: 'The erstwhile notion of 'family planning' and the subsequent growth of reproductive technology constitute an invitation to shape the life narrative…– the author's hand is these days more conspicuous… One might ask what inevitability ever did for us, now that it's gone. One answer might be that it gave common cause to our mistakes, that the sense of ourselves as part of and subject to some grand, mysterious design was socially cohesive in a way that the narrative of 'choice' cannot replicate. A parent, these days, is someone who has got what they wanted and can be left alone.' See R. Cusk, 'Immaculate Conceptions. Book Review', in *New Statesman*, 14-20 June 2013, p. 40. See also below, pp. ??
[314] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 36.

by 1971 it had reached 37 per cent.[315] Much of this increase was driven by the increasing tendency of women to continue work until the birth of their first child and then return to work after a period spent as a full time housewife and mother. Prior to the Second World War it had been customary for women to quit their job permanently upon marriage. Older female workers were mostly spinsters.[316] More strikingly, the proportion of married women in employment rose from 10 percent in 1931, to 22 percent in 1951, to 46 percent in 1964, to 51 percent in 1971.[317] In 1965, more than half of the female population aged 16-64 was in paid work. Two thirds of them were married.[318] In other words, the basic structure of the female workforce altered from being primarily young and single to married and middle-aged.[319] The number of children was an important determinant on whether the wife went out to work. In 1965, 42 per cent of wives with no dependents went out to work. Only 36 per cent of wives with one child went out to work, and 28 per cent of wives with two children.[320] Over the next ten years these figures increased markedly.[321] Estimates from 1970 census data suggest that married women were the chief economic supporter in only 300,000 households. Women's contribution to household earnings generally remained secondary; on average, working wives contributed somewhere around 20 per cent of total household income. Even so, in 1970, the Department of Health and Social Security showed that the numbers of poor two-parent families with fathers in full time employment would have nearly trebled without the mother's contribution.[322]

McCloskey has argued that 'ideological…as much as demographic change…sent women out to work' in the 1960s.[323] However, as the above suggests, any ideological change was built on, and was made possible by, trends already being driven by a combination of demographic and economic factors. Rosemary Simon suggested in 1968 that, although 'this is probably not the first generation of women to feel dissatisfied with the confines of domesticity…[I]t is the first

[315] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 35. It is recognised that data, particularly older data, on the employment of women may contain inaccuracies due to a failure to recognise casual, temporary or seasonal work.
[316] D. Smith Wilson, 'A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain', in *Twentieth Century British History* 17 (2) (2006), 208; Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Housewifery', p. 158; *Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations,* p. 92.
[317] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 209.
[318] Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women,* p. 11.
[319] Gavron, *Captive Wife*, p. 42.
[320] This fell to 22 per cent when there was three dependent children and 19 per cent when there was four dependent children. See Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 207. Data taken from Inland Revenue figures 1965.
[321] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, pp. 12-13, TNA CAB 184/516.
[322] H. Land, 'Women, Supporters or Supported?' in D. Leonard Barker and S. Allen, *Sexual Divisions in Society, Process and Change, London, 1976*, p. 119.
[323] McCloskey, 'Paid Work', p. 170.

generation…who have been able to revolt against it.'[324] Longer lives, a more compressed childbearing period, and a lessening of some of the heavier demands of homemaking, left women with more time to seek employment outside the home.[325] Various factors combined to increase the employment opportunities available to women.[326] An expanding economy and full employment, combined with a structural shift away from heavy industry towards clerical and service work, created more jobs 'suitable' for women.[327] In 1961, 47.6 per cent of jobs had been in industry and 47.8 per cent in services. By 1971, the respective figures were 43.8 and 53.1 per cent.[328] Nearly all the growth in the service industries was due to the increased number of women workers, most of them part-time.[329] In 1951 part-time work had accounted for just over one tenth of female employment. By 1971, it accounted for a third.[330] These trends were paralleled in much of industrialised Europe and the USA. As early as 1962 Viola Klein asserted that though 'ideological and historical factors may retard the increase of employment among married women…they have nowhere been able to check the general trend.' She went on: 'whether the increasing employment of married women is regarded as a 'necessary evil' or…a 'sign of progress'' depends almost entirely on…social traditions.' [331]

The argument that married women should not work so as not to deprive men (and their families) of a wage held less power than it had done in the days of high unemployment.[332] Yet the belief persisted – that women's entry into the labour force threatened the security of working men and their families. This was evident in the second most popular box office film of 1971, a feature length version of the popular working-class situation comedy, *On the Buses.*[333] The film's sexism blatant and unapologetic.[334] Yet it does suggest other reasons for the widespread unease about the changing order of gender relations in the workplace. Nearly all the programmes' storylines pitted the central characters, the workers Stan and Jack (bus driver and conductor)

[324] *The Times*, February 14 1968.
[325] McCloskey, 'Paid Work', pp. 168-9.
[326] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 208.
[327] Ibid; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 289; Sandbrook, *State of Emergency,* p. 393.
[328] P.W. Daniels, 'The Geography of Economic Change', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2005), p. 213.
[329] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. Report Number 8: Fifth Report on Standing Reference*. Cmnd. 7679 (London, 1979), p. 228.
[330] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 209.
[331] V. Klein, 'Europe's Working Wives', in *New Society*, 29 November 1962, p. 17.
[332] Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Union Movement,* p. 247.
[333] Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 45.
[334] Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 410.

against their boss, Blakey. The first part of the film shows how the bus yard is affected by the staff shortage. Despite the inconveniences, the workers are empowered. For example, during one scene, set in the staff canteen at lunchtime, Jack protests at the lack of hot meals:

> **Jack**: 'That's it. We're not standing for it'
>
> **Blakey**: 'Look, it's a staff shortage. You can't get the cooks. Same as the bus crews. You can't get any staff these days.
>
> **Jack**: 'That's no concern of ours, mate. As shop steward, I'm here to tell you that we're entitled to a hot meal. Am I right? [general agreement from workers gathered in the canteen] It's a union agreement mate. Com'n Stan, we're going home for our lunch.
>
> **Blakely**: 'You're not going home mate. You're due out in another hour and if you're not back on time, you'll get the sack, the pair of you.
>
> **Jack**: No mate, them days is over. Can't you get it into your little head? There's a staff shortage. [General laughter. Stan and Jack leave to go home for lunch.][335]

Blakely encourages the management to employ women drivers as a way of overcoming both the staff shortage and worker intransigence. The film portrays this as a threat to the men's job security, their financial well-being, the workplace culture, and their established patterns of home life. When Stan loses his overtime, his mum and sister are left unable to pay the instalments on a new and long sought after automatic washing machine. Stan's sister goes to work as a cook at the bus company (until pregnancy forces her to leave) to make up the difference in household income.[336] The fear that increased employment of women would drive up the cost of living and force wives and mothers out to work was widespread. It was a view which found expression in all areas of society, from the shop floor to the *Economist.*[337]

Perhaps more fundamentally, waged employment was seen to conflict with a woman's primary role in the home. In the early postwar years, attitudes towards married women workers, and mothers in particular, had remained censorial. Bowlby's theories on maternal deprivation in particular had offered a moral and rational justification for the male breadwinner idea. Consequently, juvenile delinquency was widely blamed on working mothers and 'latch-key

[335] Harry Booth, *On the Buses* (Warner, 1971).
[336] Ibid.
[337] *Economist* article mentioned in Minutes of the Status of Women Committee, 12 July 1966, London, Women's Library [hereafter WomL], 7AMP/B/01/4; E.L. Eley to General Secretary, TUC, 25 April, 1970, MRC, MSS 292B/119/6. Also see below, pp. 377 and 347n.

kids'.[338] Smith Wilson has shown how two developments allowed women to challenge this discourse. First, the increased availability of part-time work enabled mothers to meet criticisms of neglecting their children (it also allowed wives to meet opposition from husbands who feared disruption to their domestic routine).[339] The second factor was the spread of affluence. The working-classes were able to attain a middle-class standard of living, but only by spending increased time and energy at work.[340] Smith Wilson argues that, by changing ideas about acceptable standards of living, 'affluence' changed the meaning of 'needing' to work.[341] Many men could and did work overtime.[342] But for most couples, a second wage was needed to enjoy the benefits associated with affluence.[343] The primary reason that women gave for working outside the home was financial: they 'needed' the money or sought to raise their family's standard of living.[344] 'Having' to work removed much of the stigma from working mothers.[345] Similar arguments also allowed women to overcome their husbands' objections.[346] The resultant gender conflict was played out in women's magazines: their traditional home-centred message became increasingly self-defeating as they exhorted readers to 'take advantage of the range of consumer goods available to them.'[347]

In this way, the archetypal 'good mother' and 'good wife' was changing from one that stayed at home full-time, to one that balanced paid work with domestic commitments in order to raise her family's standard of living.[348] As early as 1962, Canon Gordon Dunstan had argued, in *The Family is not Broken*, 'that it is sometimes the inadequate mother who is also too inadequate to

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[338] For general discussion of this see Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 296; Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother' 210-214. Key texts cited by Pugh and other writers on the period are Benjamin Spock's, *Baby and Child Care* (1947) and John Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (1951).
[339] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 223-4. See also Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 291. Comments regarding husbands made in a survey by Viola Klein cited in S. Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Union Movement,* p. 247.
[340] Marwick, *British Society Since 1945,* p. 127.
[341] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 216-7. She cites E. Roberts, *Women and families: An oral history 1940-1970* (Oxford, 1995), p. 126: 'An extensive oral history project showed that "we needed the money' did not have the same meaning in 1960 as in 1935.'
[342] Marwick, *British Society Since 1945,* p. 127.
[343] Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Union Movement,* p. 246.
[344] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 217.
[345] Ibid., 220.
[346] Ibid., 208-9. Many working-class wives overcame initial objections by working for a specific financial goal such as a holiday or furniture
[347] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. 291-2. For more general comment on women's magazines and their role in reinforcing domesticity see Smart, *Ties that Bind,* p. 52.
[348] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 218. See also Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us,* p. 50; Briar, *Working for Women,* p. 177; Bruley, *Women in Britain ,* pp. 174 & 178.

work; her very fecklessness keeps her at home.'[349] Whilst some husbands remained opposed to their wives going out to work. Indeed, many welcomed the extra money and reported that they found their wives 'more interesting when she's not stuck at home'.[350] Traditionally, a wife 'that did not have to work' had been a source of male pride.[351] Evidence suggests that this attitude persisted to some degree. According to the 1966 census, the higher the husband's social class, the less likely his wife was to work outside the home.[352] Yet attitudes were changing. One 1957 survey found that 58 percent of housewives' husbands did not want them to work.[353] In 1965, another found that one third still disliked the idea.[354] By 1973 however, Young and Wilmott claimed most husbands 'let' their wives work and 'even looke[ed] forward to the day' since 'his own standard of life will be raised if she is no longer dependent on him.'[355] Crucially though, most women did not challenge the primacy of their husband's wage. However significant their contribution, they worked for 'extras' or 'pin money'.[356] Smith Wilson argues this strengthened the male breadwinner ideal in the face of a major social shift regarding married women's work, and confirmed women's status as second class workers.[357] The vital role that women played, as producers, in the creation of the affluent society was effectively masked.

Men's expectations and experiences were also shaped by a belief in the moral and practical rectitude of the male breadwinner ideal. Although they jealously guarded their primary earner

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[349] Cited in *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 37. See also a Bermondsy community, where many married women worked part-time evening shifts at the factory, described: '…energetic and resourceful individuals, living the busiest of lives, much helped in their domestic affairs by co-operative husbands and sensibly brought up children. They appeared to devote their extra income largely to their well-kept and efficient looking homes, to more ample meals, better clothes and shoes, and a holiday away…they kept the children's welfare very closely in mind. Going out to work was trying physically…but…worth it. Often these women seemed to have taken hold of a new lease of life through their work. They were not feminists, they accepted domesticity as a normal part of their lives and their children were well looked after. They were part of a community with a long tradition of working mothers and of techniques for dealing with the family organisation demanded by this dual role.' Quoted in K. Hudson, *Men and Women: Feminism and Anti-Feminism Today* (Bristol, 1968), pp. 81-2. He reports that similar studies carried out in 1964 in South London and Lancashire made similar findings.

[350] Hudson, *Men and Women*, p. 83.

[351] Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Union Movement*, p. 245.

[352] M. Young and P. Willmott, *The Symmetrical Family: A Study of Work and Leisure in the London Region* (London, 1973), pp. 119-22. The Inland Revenue also produced figures from 1965 showing that the higher the income of the married couple, the less likely the wife was to work. See Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 208.

[353] McCloskey, 'Paid Work', p. 169. See also Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 655.

[354] Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 655.

[355] Young and Willmott, *Symmetrical Family*, p. 102. See also Amy Cohen, 'How to be a Working Wife', in *Getting Married* (London, 1970), p. 85.

[356] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 217.

[357] Ibid., 229.

status, many of them perceived that this came at a cost.[358] Numerous men worked in jobs they disliked, with no opportunities for career development. Certainly, this is what sociologist Huw Beynon found at the Liverpool Ford car plant in the late 1960s. The following comments were made by production line workers who, almost to a man, got through their working day by 'letting their mind go blank' and 'looking forward to pay day and the weekend.'

> I suppose you could adapt to anything really. It depends on your circumstances. I'm married and I've taken out a mortgage. This affects your attitude to work. I just close my eyes and stick it out. I think about the kids and the next premium being paid. That's about all there is with this job.[359]

> Everyone comes to realise that they're not doing a worthwhile job. They're just on the line. For the money…It's bad when you know you're just a little cog. You just look at your pay packet – you look at what it does for your wife and kids. That's the only answer.[360]

One early women's liberationist spoke of her discomfort of being used as 'society's lever', as a 'blackmail' to men to 'stay in lousy jobs…'[361] Yet, however lowly the status of male workers the status of female workers was lower still. Many industries' pay scales incorporated a 'women's rate' below the 'unskilled male' rate.[362] Where equal pay had been formally granted – as in to non-manual civil servants and teachers - it had made little difference.[363] Women rarely reached the higher ranks. Moreover, men were more likely and able to augment their wages with premium overtime and shift rates.[364] More fundamentally, what Carter described as a 'reverse factor' is observable. Skills and occupations were low status and low paid *because* they were 'women's work'. For example, the two female dominated professions - nursing and primary

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[358] In the studies cited above the men made it 'clear' that although they did not resent the 'extra money' they 'would always like to be the main breadwinner in the household.' See Hudson, *Men and Women,* p. 83.
[359] H. Beynon, *Working for Ford* (London, 1973), p. 113.
[360] Ibid. p. 113. Eleanor Rathbone famously identified this attitude as a component of the 'Turk Complex': *And the Devil did Grin, For his darling sin, Is selfishness masked as Chivalry.* See Rathbone, *Disinherited Family,* pp. 344-345.
[361] Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, p. 86, London, Feminist Library [hereafter FemL], Special Collection 2, Box 1.
[362] NCCL, *Women,* pp. 17-19. Even allowances provided to trainees at Government centres differentiated between the sexes.
[363] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 300.
[364] Department of Employment and Productivity and Ministry of Labour, 'Women at Work', p. 4, MRC, MSS.292B/134/4. Figures for administrative, technical and clerical staff in the Ministry of Labour in 1963 show that the average hourly rate for women was 4s 3d, for men it was 7s 1/2d. Figures from NCCL, *Women,* p. 18.

school teaching – were comparatively badly paid, as was other 'female' work such as typing, cooking and cleaning.[365]

These disadvantages were compounded by female under-representation in the trade union movement. In the mid-1960s one quarter of the female workforce belonged to a trade union, compared with one half of the male workforce.[366] A growth in white-collar and public sector unionism saw this increase to a third by 1970. Despite this growth, women remained underrepresented in the higher echelons.[367] There are various explanations, all partially valid. The industries in which women worked were less likely to be unionised (a potentially circular argument); women were less likely to remain in one job for a long period of time; and domestic commitments prevented their fuller participation.[368] The masculine culture of trade unions probably also helped to discourage many women from greater involvement.[369] Arguably, the most fundamental reason for the troubled relationship between women workers and the trade union movement was that the trade union movement sought for its members a 'family wage' (most pay claims and associated commentary were based on the two child family).[370] The 'family wage' argument effectively denied women a proper role in the workforce, and by the same token, an equal role in trade unionism. For example, during the 1970 Pilkington Strike, the General and Municipal Workers Union (GMWU) paid a hardship allowance of £12 to men. They paid £6 to women.[371] In a similar vein, Beynon found that several of the shop stewards at Fords in the 1960s took the view that a steward's wife should not work because it might 'cause antagonisms which could be particularly severe and damaging during a strike.' One explained:

> During a strike a man whose Judy is working is obviously better off than the man with a wife and three kids about the house. So you're bound to get some backbiting – "Oh it's alright for him his missis is keeping him in ale and ciggies".[372]

Women were widely understood to view their work differently from men and to be overly compliant as workers, to the overall detriment of the workforce.[373] *On the Buses* provided a

[365] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* pp. 29-30; Rendel et al, *Equality for Women*, p. 7.
[366] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* pp. 46-7.
[367] For example National Union of Public Employees' (NUPE) delegation to the 1967 TUC conference comprised twenty-four men, despite its membership being 51 percent female. See Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, p. 265. See also Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 47.
[368] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 47.
[369] Ibid. See also J. Morton, 'Equal Pay for Women in Seven Years', in *New Society*, 8 August 1968, p. 195.
[370] Barrett and McIntosh, 'The 'Family Wage', p. 71.
[371] T. Lane and K. Roberts, *Strike at Pilkingtons* (London, 1971), p. 70.
[372] Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 123. These sorts of complaints naturally made it difficult for a steward to recommend his members to stay out on strike.

particularly misogynistic portrayal of this belief. There was no real suggestion that women were incapable of driving buses (that point had been proven during the war, an episode still within living memory). Instead, the female bus drivers were portrayed as comically 'butch' and soulless characters, unlike the attractive 'real women' who worked as clippies or in the canteen, and who presented no challenge to the status quo. Capable of doing the job, the women drivers are portrayed as potentially hysterical and over-eager to please, unable or unwilling to stand up for themselves as workers.[374] *Carry on at Your Convenience* made a similar point. In contrast to the central character, the bolshie shop steward who fails to represent his members and who makes totally unreasonable demands, the women workers here are portrayed, albeit much more sympathetically, as no-nonsense, sensible and willing to get out without complaint.[375]

Certainly, there is a strong element of chauvinistic prejudice and stereotyping here. Yet, many women activists acknowledged observable differences between men and women's perception of, and approach to, work. For example, the National Labour Women's Advisory Committee (NLWAC) reported:

> women's inferior position in industry is not all the result of inadequate training….' A 1965 Government Social Survey of 10,000 women indicated that 'women's main motivation for returning to work remains – as ever – financial; but a substantial proportion said that they were bored at home and wanted companionship… Women, it seems, even when qualified, still do not become 'careerists,' and are less interested in 'getting to the top' than men. Indeed, a position of responsibility might, for many women, detract from the pleasure and companionship they find in doing the job.'[376]

In the progressive journal, *New Society*, Janet Morton agreed. She noted that, when asked about the most important features of a 'good job', women's stated priorities were 'a short journey to work' and 'pleasant' companions', Morton opined that 'women do not 'seem to care very much

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[373] For a more recent assertion of this nature see, P. Hitchens, *The Abolition of Britain*, Revised edn (London, 2000), p. xxxiv.

[374] *On the Buses.* There is one exception which proves the rule. There is one attractive driver who Stan dates. Jack and his other fellow workmates object. In one scene Stan takes her back home. They are interrupted by Jack and fellow workmates standing menacingly outside of the house demanding that he ends the relationship immediately. Stan ends the relationship. Shortly after the woman demotes herself to clippie against declaring that she 'can't stand working with those frumps.' Jack thus declares her available 'crumpet' again.

[375] Gerald Thomas, *Carry On at Your Convenience* (ITV Studios Home Entertainment, 1971). It has been described by cultural historian Alwyn Turner as a 'wildly inappropriate…middle class assault' on trade unions. The film bombed at the box office. Carry On films normally recouped their costs within three days. It took *At Your Convenience* five years. See A. Turner, *Crisis, What Crisis? Britain in the 1970s* (London, 2008), pp. 78-9.

[376] National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women: A Report on the Position of Women Today* (London, 1968). p. 8.

about the amount they are paid…for the mass of women workers work is a social as much as an economic activity.'[377] Employers reported that even when women were offered the opportunity and incentive to increase their earnings through piecework and overtime, women workers tended, in sharp contrast to men, to respond by seeking a stabilisation of earnings and a reduction of hours.[378] Arguably, many such women understood themselves to have accepted a part in the tacit bargain: they would accept their secondary status as workers on the understanding that the rights of male workers (i.e., their husbands, fathers and sons) were prioritised.

Discrimination in the workplace was widespread and widely accepted. Many professional job adverts were directed specifically at men. Even when they were not, most employers admitted that they would not consider employing a woman.[379] Away from the professional sector, there was open hostility from male bus drivers and workers when, from the late 1960s onwards, bus conductresses pressed to become drivers and inspectors.[380] It was this real life event which provided the subject material for *On the Buses.* A report entitled 'Limitations to the Recruitment and Advancement of Women in the BBC', comprising largely of reported interviews, provides particularly fascinating insight into the ways gender played out in the workplace. Notably, women's comparative intellectual abilities were not questioned. Such views, even if held, were probably unacceptable. Yet, other concerns were voiced about women's inferior abilities – their lack of physical strength and stamina; the unappealing pitch of their voice; their lack of 'authority; and a belief that they did not 'have the same comedy brain as men'.[381] More significant, was the belief, evident throughout the report, in the male breadwinner ideal and the associated gender division of labour. The Head of Television Light Entertainment, for example, said that, 'faced with a choice between a man with a wife and children and a woman he would, other things being equal, give the job to the man'. This, he opined, 'was the law of the land'.[382] Yet, whilst reluctance to employ and promote women was justified partially by concerns about their willingness and ability to commit to the job, there was also a deep suspicion of those who

[377] J. Morton, 'Equal Pay for Women in Seven Years', in *New Society*, 8 August 1968, p. 195; Department of Employment and Productivity and Ministry of Labour, 'Women at Work', p. 4. MRC, MSS.292B/134/4.
[378] 'Note for the Record: Engineering Pay Negotiatoins', 1 Novemeber 1968, Oxford, Bodelian Library, MS Castle 272.
[379] NCCL, *Women*, p. 10. Based on a survey conducted of job adverts in the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer* in 1965.
[380] Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us*, p. 230.
[381] Douglas Morgan, 'Limitations to the Recruitment and Advancement of Women in the BBC: A Report', 5 January 1973, p.23, BBCw, R78/2, 257/1.
[382] Ibid. p. 29.

were committed and ambitious. The same manager went on to say, for example, that he did not like to see 'trousered girls charging about the studio in a sexless way.[383] One man, pushed to explain why so few girls were apprenticed to skilled occupations, summed up these sentiments succinctly: 'they don't like the sort of women who want that sort of job.'[384]

There was also an observable concern about female encroachment into 'male' areas which manifested itself in worries about (inappropriate) closeness between the sexes, particularly on location and around dressing rooms, and a belief that men would not like or would feel 'insulted' by a female boss.[385] Allied to these sentiments was widespread and strong notion of 'chivalry'. One manager worried that (male) workers would be 'obliged' to break from their own work to help any female co-workers with strenuous physical tasks, whilst another worried about women having to deal with 'uncouth wholesale managers'.[386] An editor felt that if an audience saw a woman Correspondent placed in danger, 'protective instincts [would be] aroused and the audience…[would]…feel uncomfortable.'[387] One dissenting male voice belonged to the Controller of European Services at the BBC. He explained that he had grown up being used to women 'doing the bricklaying and clearing the snow'. He thought there was 'a curious establishment view in England regarding women…it is almost though men and women are racially different.'[388]

Whilst older workers, according to the report, were more 'content' with 'the role of handmaiden', there was some discontent, particularly among the younger female workers. They said that they were not encouraged to progress in the same way as male colleagues or offered the same opportunities. Speaking about failed applications for Producer's Assistant training courses, secretaries pointed out that 'no-one would ask a cameraman how his wife is going to manage

[383] Ibid. p. 23. See similar comments from the Editor of Radio News on p. 4.
[384] Quoted in J. Morton, 'Equal Pay for Women in Seven Years', in *New Society*, 8 August 1968, p. 193.
[385] Morgan, 'Limitations to the Recruitment and Advancement of Women', p.30, BBCw, R78/2, 257/1.
[386] Ibid. p.12.
[387] Ibid. p.14. Other examples abound in the report. See pp. 10 and 14. Similar views were voiced by workers at a Mill in Huddersfield. See Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 393. Hudson made a similar observation, based on the reticence of the detective-sergeant in the Moors Murder trials to show the female chairman of the magistrates the photographic evidence. He noted that, 'one of the major battles women still have to win is the fight to be allowed mental robustness.' See Hudson, *Men and Women*, p. 159. He points out that this attitude did not extend to all women, certainly to those who broke the bounds of convention. In 1962, Miss Pat Arrowsmith, pacifist and advocate of nuclear disarmament, was force fed (effectively tortured) in Holloway prison in the same way as her suffragette forebears. See p. 20
[388] Morgan, 'Limitations to the Recruitment and Advancement of Women in the BBC', p. 28, BBCw, R78/2, 257/1.

whilst he is away.'[389] However, there was also an element of self-censorship. One woman described herself as 'ambitious' but said that, 'with a husband and children to look after, it would be unfair to the BBC and her family to seek promotion.' She also reported feeling 'uneasy…when competing against married men' and that she would have felt 'guilty' about her recent promotion had a married man not been promoted alongside her.[390]

In 1968, Kenneth Hudson, a BBC industrial correspondent in the 1960s, explained why he had felt compelled to write a book on *Men and Women: Feminism and Anti-Feminism Today*. Having seen, at close quarters, the conditions in which women worked, and 'a little way into the mind of industrialists and politicians', he had reached the inescapable conclusion that 'whatever the suffragettes may have achieved' women were still getting a 'raw deal.' Hudson directly challenged what he perceived to be the dominant male viewpoint: 'nostalgia' for the days of 'unquestioned male domination' and a belief that 'women's wish to follow careers and to work outside their homes was no more than a temporary fashion' which would dissipate of its own accord 'given patience and goodwill and a steady increase in male earning power.'[391]

Despite all of this there was a widespread feeling in 1960s Britain that women and men had achieved some form of 'equality'.[392] This narrative focused on various changes. One was the notion of 'sexual liberation' commonly associated with the Pill. However, this notion of female liberation tended to reflect male desires and often translated into an expectation of female sexual availability.[393] Other prominent themes in the new equality narrative focused on changing patterns of female employment and the related phenomenon of the putative 'equal', 'modern' or 'symmetrical' marriage.'[394] In this respect, social commentators and researchers argued that

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[389] Ibid. p. 25.
[390] Ibid. p. 32. Similar sentiments were voiced by Halifax's first female bus driver in 1970. She had barely left the yard before there was a 'lightening stoppage' in protest. The following day she reported back to work as a conductress saying 'I do not like the thought of men losing their wages because of me.' See *The Times*, 6 June 1970.
[391] Hudson, *Men and Women*, p. 8.
[392] A. Neustatter, *Hyenas in Petticoats: A look at twenty years of feminism* (London, 1990), pp. vii-10; Sandbrook, *White Heat*, pp. 656-7; Hunkins-Hallinan, 'Revolution Unfinished', in Hunkins-Hallinan, *Revolution Unfinished*, p. 9; Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, p. 118.
[393] Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 656. He uses Bond Girls as an example. See also Donnelly, *Sixties*, pp. 161-3. It is well known, for example, that women were left to make the coffee and carry out the domestic chores whilst the men discussed revolution. See Neustatter, *Hyenas in Petticoats*, p. 8. Many thanks also to the residents of Old Hall Community, East Sussex, for discussing their experiences point with me.
[394] Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 657; Neustatter, *Hyenas in Petticoats*, p. 7.

traditional gender roles within marriage were, albeit unevenly and at varying rates, changing, breaking down, and merging.[395]

It is worth emphasising that 'equality' meant different things to different people. It is questionable how representative Hanah Gavron's survey of the marriage relationship was, but it is interesting to note that she reported that the middle-class couples in her study were more likely to interpret equality as 'independence' ('helping to make the wife feel like an independent person in her own right.'), whereas the working-class couples interpreted equality as 'closeness' (fusing identities so that everything was shared.').[396] There is no doubt that numerous men and women subscribed to the notion of 'equality' inherent in the 'equal but different' formulation. As one housewife explained: 'Andrew is out there slogging away for us and I'm doing my bit on the home front.'[397] And, whilst it was certainly not true in all cases, some women could wield considerable power within the home.[398] The traditionally minded, 'Old Labour' MP, Joe Ashton claimed:

> even in those…days of Miss World…Benny Hill…and *Carry on Camping*...no one ever doubted that it was women who ran every establishment from Buckingham Palace to the Rovers Return. Basil Fawlty never ran Fawlty Towers. Nor did Alf Garnett run his house in Wapping[399]

Yet these 'strong women' were confined to domestic settings.[400] Tellingly, Ashton also touched on some of the difficulties experienced by women MPs in this period. It was not with

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[395] M. Young and P. Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London, 1957), pp, 4-15; Young and Wilmott, *Symmetrical Family*, p. 30; R. Fletcher, *Britain in the Sixties: Family and Marriage* (Harmondsworth, 1962), pp. 130 & 153; C. Roser and C. Harris, *The Family and Social Change: A study of Family and Kinship in a South Wales Town* (London, 1983; originally published 1965), p. 128; Gavron, *Captive Wife*, pp. 138-41. There were marked local and regional patterns. The highest concentration of women workers was in the North West, the lowest in Wales. For details see Leonora Lloyd, 'Women, Work and Equal Pay', in M. Wandor (ed.) *The Body Politic* (London, 1971), p. 155. In high concentration areas avoidance of paid work would soon reflect badly on women. See Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 218. Conversely, a 1956 survey of a Yorkshire Mining Community showed that gender roles remained as strictly defined as they had been at the turn of the century. *Coal is our life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community* cited in A. Holdsworth, *Out of the Doll's House* (London, 1988), p. 27.

[396] Gavron, *Captive Wife*, esp. pp. 66-7 & 135-43.

[397] Quoted in Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 392.

[398] Stott, *Before I Go*, pp. 109-110. Two sociology lecturers temporarily staying in St Helen's, to research and report on a strike recorded: 'St Helen's is a rugby league town, a man's town. The Women's Liberation Movement has not yet arrived: in St Helen's the women do as they are told. They play bingo while the men go drinking.' See Lane and Roberts, *Strike at Pilkingtons*,p. 33.

[399] J. Ashton, *Red Rose Blues. The Story of a Good Labour Man* (London, 2000), p. 133.

[400] Turner, *Crisis, What Crisis?*, p. 114.

disapproval that he described how they were put into 'categories…from Linda Lusardi Page Three girls to Sloane Rangers'. True to his roots and political allegiances Ashton compared female Labour MPs favourably to Tory MPs arguing that whilst 'upper-middle-class Tory women' were 'used to being treated with deference' Labour women had 'grown up among the rude wise-cracks, abuse, fury and fire of picket lines, union meetings and Party Conferences' and had 'learned to live with it'[401] In spite of these approving tones the implication is clear: beyond the world of home, women had to seek acceptance on men's terms. Other commentators admitted to greater confusion and divided loyalties. In an article for the popular British Medical Association's annual publication, *Getting Married*, Moinca Furlong expressed relief that the old barriers and expectations were breaking down and wondered about the future:

> …the war game between the sexes [is] much more complex than I had previously understood. Not only is there an elaborate system of undercover agents, but there is an even more elaborate system of double agents and possible even of double double agents. We are deeply implicated, changing sides, giving out information in code… The difficulty is to work out what is really going on. Which side is winning? What does victory consist of? What is the whole battle *about*? We are living in the middle of a sexual revolution and we simply do not know what women will be like, or men either, when all the turmoil dies down… [402]

The younger generation seemed more likely to embrace 'modern' ideas, particularly about working wives. [403] However, the extent and pace of change should not be overstated. Contemporary material shows that modern marriage was still framed in terms of the breadwinner ideal.[404] Changes in the gendered division of work were more evident outside than inside the privacy of the home. The evidence presents a somewhat confused picture over the sharing of housework. Some suggests that it was more commonly a middle-class trait. Other evidence points to the contrary. Generational change and local custom was almost certainly at least as important as the class dimension, with younger couples more inclined to share at least some

[401] Ashton, *Red Rose Blues*, pp. 131-50.
[402] Monica Furlong, 'The Little Woman' in *Getting Married* (London, 1970), pp. 55-9.
[403] For more on changes over generations see, for example, letter from Marianne Simmons, in Neustatter, *Hyenas in Petticoats*, pp. 192-4. See also Anne Bradley, 'Just a Kept Woman' (1957), in M. Stott (ed.), *Women Talking: An Anthology from the Guardian Women's Page* (London, 1987), pp. 37-9. For social commentary and analysis, see G. Carstairs, 'Reith Lectures, 1962: This Island Now: Lecture 4: The Changing Role of Women' Tx 3 December 1962. Transcript available to download from The BBC Reith Lecutre Archive, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/the-reith-lecutres/transcripts/1960/, accessed 17 April 2013.
[404] See for example Fletcher, *Britain in the Sixties*, pp. 151-4; G. Brandreath, *The Complete Husband* (London, 1978), pp. 11-12, 86 & 261; Amy Cohen, 'How to be a Working Wife', in *Getting Married* (London, 1970), p. 85; 'The Daily Grind', in *Getting Married* (London, 1972-8), p. 21.

household tasks.[405] The essential fact was that, as more women had gone out to work, men overall had not taken on a *corresponding* amount of domestic chores. They were also inclined to 'help' rather than accept responsibilities.[406] In 1965, three quarters of women in paid work also carried responsibility for the home. One third of the housewives (defined officially as 'the person other than a domestic servant who is responsible for most of the domestic duties) who went out to work had responsibility for at least three people in addition to themselves.[407] Working wives – full-time and part-time – were the groups with the least leisure time.[408]

Traditionally, women's liberationists maintained that housework was 'domestic servitude', that housewives were 'subordinate' and 'inferior', and that 'content' housewives must be labouring under false consciousness.[409] Zweiniger-Bargielowska argues that whilst this analysis 'struck a chord', particularly with middle-class women in the 'specific circumstances' of the late 1960s and early 1970s, full-time housewifery was 'a popular aspiration' for many working-class, black and immigrant women 'in the face of low-status, low paid employment opportunities which were not perceived as liberating but as additional burdens.'[410] It is difficult to establish what individual women felt but it is clear that it was a contentious topic. Complaints from women bored to tears with looking after babies and running a home were met with assertions from other women saying how much they enjoyed their domestic role and how important they thought it was.[411] In the 1960s, much attention focused on the '*Observer* Wife'. Wilson describes these

[405] Compare Sandbrook's remarks on research by Jackson (1968), Oakely (1976), Young and Wilmott (1975), on p. 397, with Gavron, *Captive Wife*, pp. 93-4 & 140-41. In Gavron's sample, working-class husbands were more much more likely to share the housework. However, whereas 67 percent of the working-class wives thought their husbands were more helpful than their fathers had been, this fell to 56 percent among the middle-classes.
[406] See, for example, Goldthrope's survey of Affluent Workers in Luton cited in Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, p. 11. For more discussion see Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 224.
[407] Department of Employment and Productivity and Ministry of Labour, 'Women at Work', p. 2, MRC, MSS.292B/134/4. For definition of housewife see A. Hunt, *The Home Help Service in England and Wales,* Government Social Survey, HMSO, London, 1970, p. 424, cited in H. Land, 'Who Cares for the Family?' in *Journal of Social Policy*, 1978, pp, 259. Hunt also found that 'one in five housewives aged between thirty-five and forty-nine years of age had a disabled person or someone aged over sixty-five in the household.' Among those aged between fifty and sixty-four one quarter 'had an elderly or infirm person present.' Hunt concluded that 'between the ages of 35 and 64 roughly half the housewives can expect at some time or another to give some help to elderly or infirm persons.'
[408] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, p. 13, TNA CAB 184/516. Based on 1970 figures
[409] The classic analysis was A. Oakley, *Housewife* (London, 1974), esp. pp. 91 & 223. See also Lee Comer, *Wedlocked Women* (Leeds, 1974); S. Rowbotham, 'Women's Liberation and the New Politics', in M. Wandor (ed.), *The Body Politic* (London, 1972), pp. 3-30.
[410] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Housewifery', p. 151.
[411] Monica Furlong, 'The Little Women', in *Getting Married* (London, 1970), p. 55. For another example see *Guardian*, 21 June 1970.

women as from 'that tiny elite of girls who had made it to university but who, five years later, found themselves doing the same job of housework and child care as the girls who had left school at fifteen.[412] In this respect, the 'lonely and bored' housewife problem was widely perceived as a 'graduate wife' problem. One survey of suburbanites tells of Mary Johnson, 'a forthright woman in her forties' who clung to her 'traditional working-class values', who described her neighbour as, 'typical of the attitude of educated women that I've found around here, she seems to think that running a home and bringing up children in something beneath her.'[413] Nonetheless, discontent with housewifery and domestic confinement was not confined to the middle-classes. Even if, given the predominant discourse, women may have felt uncomfortable admitting that the *main* reason they wanted to work outside the home was not financial, it is noteworthy that so many gave the same secondary motivations - most commonly a desire for company and a wish to escape boredom.[414]

In many respects, the experiences of middle-and-working-class women became increasingly similar. Due to the postwar decline in domestic service, middle-class women setting up home in this period were among the first to be expected to cope with housework and childcare alone.[415] Whereas a significant proportion of working-class wives had always undertaken some form of paid work, often out of economic necessity, middle-class women had not.[416] It is true that there had long been a small (and slowly expanding) minority of highly educated and professional women who prioritised their careers over marriage.[417] Wilson and White argue that, in general,

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[412] Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State*, pp. 159-60. For contemporary discussion see *The Times*, 6 May 1968.
[413] J. Deverson and K. Lindsay, *Voices from the Middle Class* (London, 1975), pp. 95-6.
[414] Department of Employment and Productivity and Ministry of Labour, 'Women at Work', p. 9, MRC, MSS.292B/134/4. Contemporary researchers without feminist agendas appeared generally willing to accept and to relay the view that women worked *for* their families. See, for example, *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 38. The report notes, reassuringly, that 'All the surveys suggest that most mothers who go out to work are motivated by desire to strengthen their families, not to escape from them.'
[415] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Housewifery', p. 151. In 1968, Hudson diagnosed the 'vocal opposition to working-class women earning money in industry' that tended to come for 'middle and upper-class women over the age of 45' as a 'class reaction.' Hudson believed that this generation and class of women resented 'the independence of their former source of domestic servants.' See Hudson, *Men and Women*, p. 81. Davidoff too has also noted the 'frustrations experienced by servantless middle-class women whose burden of unpaid work had substantially increased.' Quoted in Holden, 'Family, Caring and Unpaid Work,', p. 140.
[416] Ingham, *Now We Are Thirty*, p. 59.
[417] Department of Employment and Productivity and Ministry of Labour, 'Women at Work', p. 2, MRC, MSS.292B/134/4; Young and Wilmott, *Symmetrical Family*, p. 119-22. Their figures were based on the 1966 census. Even when these women married they tended to remain committed to their jobs.

middle-and-upper-class women did not 'fully begin to abandon the idea of 'marriage as a career' until the early 1960s.'[418]

In 1968, the Conservative Party commissioned a survey to 'measure the attitudes of voters, and particularly women, to a wide range of political and social questions of special relevance to women.'[419] They found remarkable agreement between the sexes in response to a 'series of statements designed to elucidate the popular view as to 'women's place'. There was also a notable degree of confusion about where that place should be.[420] 76 per cent of all respondents (77 per cent of men and 76 per cent of women) agreed that 'a mothers place is in the home caring for her family.' Yet 46 per cent (44 and 48 percent respectively) agreed that 'women with children are too tied to their homes'. Two thirds (68 and 64 per cent) agreed that 'married women with young children should not have jobs outside their homes.' But two thirds also agreed that 'married women with young children who are trained nurses, teachers etc, should be given help by the Government to go out to work if they want to.' When asked if 'just being a housewife and mother is...enough to give a woman a full and happy life', 43 per cent of all respondents thought that it was not.[421] As regards differences between sub-groups, two slight trends can be discerned. Firstly, younger age groups were less likely to agree with traditional sentiments. Secondly, the sub group least likely to agree with traditional sentiments and most likely to approve of mothers working outside the home was women aged 21-34 (the same people most likely to be at home caring for young children). Yet even here, 64 per cent agreed that 'a mothers place is in the home.'[422] When asked how 'life could be made better for married women with children' the top answer, by some way, was more government provisions of nursery schools and play groups. This was suggested by one quarter of men, over a third of women, and nearly half of all women aged 21-34.[423] A society in which ideas about 'women's place' were in such flux, and in which they conflicted so frequently with reality, offered fertile soil for feminism.

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[418] Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State* (London, 1977), p. 160; C. Smart, *The Ties that Bind* (London, 1984), p. 52.
[419] Conservative Research Department, 'Poll Summaries: Opinion Research: Women's Interests and Problems', 11 April 1968, and Opinion Research Centnre, *A Survey on Women's Interests and Problems,* March 1968, p. 2, both in CPA, CCO 180/33/1/1.
[420] Conservative Research Department, 'Poll Summaries: Women's Interests and Problems', and Opinion Research Centre, 'A Survey on Women's Interests and Problems', pp. 1- 2, both in CPA, CCO 180/33/1/1.
[421] Opinion Research Centre, 'Women's Interests and Problems', p. 2, CPA, CCO 180/33/1/1.
[422] Ibid, pp. 6-7.
[423] Ibid. p. 8.

Women and Politics

Labour's victory at the 1964 General Election, coming after thirteen years of Conservative Government, marked the beginning of what Marwick describes as fifteen years of 'Labour hegemony' (though the Conservatives would hold power between 1970 and 1974).[424] General Elections were closely fought and both main parties were aware of the need to attract women's votes. A 1969 Conservative Research Department report stated that, since the war, and probably since the late nineteen-twenties a majority of men have voted Labour and it is only because women have the vote and are both more numerous and more likely to vote Conservative that we have ever been able to win a General Election during this time.'[425] Labour was well aware of this. In the 1960s, official policy had been to make the party more attractive to young wives and mothers. It failed. Between 1959 and 1964 the gender gap doubled and by 1966 it stood at 8 percent.[426]

The 1960s saw the emergence of two key debates which held particular significance for women. One was about the nature the welfare state and poverty, and the other was about discrimination, particularly race discrimination.[427] Since the 1950s, governments had been concerned about apparently inherent problems with Britain's welfare state.[428] In the 1960s these concerns began to crystalise around the 're-discovery' of poverty. On Christmas Eve 1965, Labour academics and researchers, Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend, Richard Titmuss' colleagues at the LSE, published *The Poor and Poorest.* By using a relative definition of poverty (akin to notions of social exclusion) combined with new research methods they confirmed what many social workers had long known. Contrary to prevailing wisdom, poverty was widespread. More unexpectedly, poverty was shown to be widespread among children.[429] By establishing a link between poverty and low pay, *the Poor and the Poorest* identified a need for improved family

[424] Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, p. 184. However, the electoral dominance of the two main parties was challenged in the 1960s and began to diminish throughout the 1970s as the Liberal and national parties gained ground. See C. Cook & J. Stevenson, *Longman Companion to Britain Since 1945*, 2nd edn (Harlow, 2000), pp. 58-60.

[425] Conservative Research Department,(James Douglas', Secret Report on Policy for Women (1969), quoted in Maguire, *Conservative Women*, p. 121.

[426] Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, p. 114.

[427] For more on the implications of the re-discovery of poverty, see below, p. 235. For more on implications of debate about discrimination see below, pp. 151-2.

[428] Lowe, *Welfare State*, pp. 147-8.

[429] B. Abel Smith and P. Townsend, *The Poor and the Poorest* (London, 1965), pp. 57 & 65-6. Excerpt re-produced in M. Jones and R. Lowe (eds), *From Beveridge to Blair* (Manchester, 203) pp. 74-5. See also editors' accompanying commentary. For more discussion see Lowe, *Welfare State*, pp. 148-9. Previously, poverty had been thought to be primarily concentrated among the aged population.

provision.[430] According to their contemporary, Margaret Wynn, it 'put the problem of the poor family with an earning father on to the agenda of political parties and of public discussions of social problems.'[431] The related discoveries led directly to the formation of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in 1965.[432] They used the media to adopt a high profile and their overall approach was distinctly Fabian. They believed, according to McCarthy, that 'Labour would listen to them and ameliorate the problem, once it knew its scale.'[433]

Politically and intellectually however, there were important areas of disagreement about the nature of Britain's welfare state and its problems, which focused on the question of universalism versus selectivity. As a leading postwar social democratic thinker, Titmuss saw the welfare state as the embodiment of a decent society and the dispenser of social justice. Materially, it corrected the market's neglect of the social costs of economic change which tend always to fall upon the poorest. Culturally, it 'elevated society by institutionalizing a deep sense of community and mutual care.' On this reading, universalism was advocated on the grounds of efficiency and ethics. This was anathema to the emerging New Right who believed that economic growth would and should allow the welfare state to 'wither away' by reducing poverty and inequality. They argued that all citizens should purchase their services (e.g. health, education, pensions etc.) in the open market. If necessary, this process could be supported by subsidy or, possibly, by a selective guaranteed 'minimum personal income'. This, they argued, would increase efficiency through competition whilst serving to bolster individual responsibility, initiative, and freedom. In the 1960s much of this debate remained academic since actual policy initiatives stalled on electoral considerations. Labour policy makers like Richard Crossman, and James Callaghan believed that the electorate would not accept the levels of re-distribution that Titmuss and the universalists proposed.[434] Equally however, Heath's Conservative's were disillusioned with the low take-up of means-tested benefits and they they feared the electoral consequences of removing universal benefits from the poorest whilst decreasing the tax burden on the better

[430] M. McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor: CPAG and the Politics of Welfare* (Beckenham, 1986), p. 26.
[431] Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 186.
[432] McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, pp. iii and 41-3. It had been originally called the Family Poverty Action Group but was quickly given its more emotive title.
[433] Ibid. pp. 72-4.
[434] As Callaghan remarked in 1967, middle income groups and skilled manual workers were unwilling to sacrifice any further erosion in their standard of living' for the purpose of raising the living standards of those poorer than themselves, particularly a minority of large families.' Quoted in the *Guardian*, 22 July 1967 cited in McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, p. 84. See also, Lowe, *Welfare State*, pp. 161-2 & 25-31. For a very good account of the rise of the New Right and the activities of the IEA see R. Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1931-1983* (London, 1995).

off.[435] In Chapter Four we will see how these debates influenced the reform agenda around family allowances and child benefits.

The intellectual and political development of the concept of discrimination held more obvious significance for women.[436] Chapter Three examines this topic more thoroughly but the outlines are sketched here because the idea of discrimination, and a set of related ideas about universal human rights, equality of opportunity and the nature of social conditioning, increasingly became part of the backcloth of ideas from the 1960s onwards as they began to be integrated into social policy.

Throughout most of history differences, or, more accurately, perceived differences, between groups of people were assumed to be natural and immutable.[437] This system of thought came under a two pronged attack. As the democratic ideal gained in ideological strength from the late eighteenth century, the idea of a god-given hierarchy was increasingly rejected in favour of the belief that all humans were 'equal in dignity and rights.'[438] When the social sciences developed from the mid-nineteenth century, they began to advance the idea that consciousness of one's self and of others is conditioned and shaped by environmental factors. In other words, nurture explained much of what most people took to be natural.[439] The related concept of discrimination started what Michael Banton describes as 'its intellectual career' in the USA in the 1940s when sociologists began to distinguish between prejudice as an attitude and discrimination as a form of behavior.[440] In the post-holocaust world, these ideas were particularly germane. The United Nations Charter of 1945, issued in the spirit of never again, aspired to promote 'human rights and fundamental freedoms for all 'without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.'[441] At first, the idea of discrimination related almost exclusively to race. By the late 1950s, the term had come increasingly to denote 'some act or practice which denies equality of treatment and is

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[435] Lowe, *Welfare State*, pp. 161-2 & 25-31.
[436] The political relationship between sex and race discrimination was evident as early as 1964 when Harold Wilson's pledged, in a lecture on 'Law Reform and the Citizen', 'government action in the fields of race relations and women's rights.' See, H. Wilson, *The New Britain: Labour's Plan* (London, 1964), pp. 81-90 cited in Holden, 'Letting the Wolf Through the Door', pp. 16-17.
[437] Freedman, *Feminism*, p. 9.
[438] M. Banton, *Discrimination* (Buckingham, 1994), p. 90. Thus it was that Mary Woolstonecraft drew upon the ideals that underpinned the early French Revolution to write *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).
[439] Banton, *Discrimination*, p. 6.
[440] Ibid. Either one can lead to the other, but does not necessarily have to. A prejudiced person does not have to discriminate.
[441] Ibid. p. 2.

therefore objectionable.'[442] In 1958, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 111 on discrimination defined it as 'any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin…' etc. This was probably one of the first legal applications of discrimination, and probably also the first important legal instrument to use the expression 'equality of opportunity' as something to be promoted.[443]

Anthony Lester QC, lobbyist for race relations legislation, Labour Lawyer, human rights expert, and close colleague of Roy Jenkins, that one of the key drivers behind these intellectual and conceptual developments was that the 'imperatives of modern industrial society' since:

> the rise of the industrial, urban society…created ever increasing demand for a skilled and mobile working population with widely differing and changing functions…and generated the need for careers to be open to all with talent. [444]

Like the American sociologist and scholar Daniel Bell, Lester argued that equality of opportunity, based on individual merit, had been transformed from a moral ideal into an economic and social necessity.[445] Noting the 'powerful belief in the malleability of man' that had accompanied this transformation, Lester maintained that the unequal characteristics of humans were coming to be seen less as a reflection of innate abilities but as a reflection of a people's environments. If environmentally or superficially imposed inequalities were removed, humans would be able to fulfil their potential.[446] Notably, Lester also believed that, unlike many of his political contemporaries, Jenkins was 'sensitive to the pressing international imperatives of the second half of this century, which have made equality of opportunity a requirement for a civilised modern society.'[447] Although Lester was writing about racial discrimination, these ideas were applicable to sex discrimination. Historically, apparently 'natural' or innate differences between the sexes had been used to explain and justify the inequalities evident in nearly all areas of life from political representation to educational achievement.[448] In what came to be a highly influential work for many second wave feminists, the American Anthropologist,

[442] Ibid. p. 90.
[443] Ibid. p. 7.
[444] A. Lester and G. Bindman, *Race and Law* (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 74-5. For more on Anthony Lester's work with Roy Jenkins see Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, pp. 152-3.
[445] D. Bell, *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society* (New York, 1999, first published 1973), p. 409.
[446] Lester and Bindman, *Race and Law*, pp. 74-5.
[447] Ibid. p. 149. See also the chapter 'The liberal hour' in Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, esp. pp. 208-9.
[448] Freedman, *Feminism*, p. 9.

Margaret Mead, demonstrated in *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1949), that gender roles were different in different societies.[449] As Simone de Beauvoir famously observed in another profoundly influential book, *The Second Sex* (1949), 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman.'[450]

The meritocratic ideal encompassed ethical and practical dimensions. It carried the promise of social justice for the individual, and greater national efficiency.[451] Not all contemporaries endorsed the aspiration.[452] The man who coined the term, sociologist and Labour thinker, Michael Young, perceived it as inherently problematic and potentially damaging.[453] Like the political philosopher John Rawls he saw a danger that the consequence of fair opportunity would be a 'callous' society.'[454] Meritocracy also had had its champions. Bell acknowledged potential difficulties with what amounted to a 're-definition of equality', from a focus on equality of outcome to equality of opportunity, but he endorsed the meritocratic ideal as a progressive liberal concept, worth striving for.[455] The ideal of equality of opportunity, he argued, derived from a fundamental liberal tenet, that the individual rather than the family, or the community, or the state, is 'the basic unit of society' and that 'the purpose of societal arrangements is to allow the individual the freedom to fulfil his own purposes.'[456]

In policy terms, the watershed came in 1964 when the concept of discrimination as developed thus far was brought into legal existence in the USA. Spurred on by a strengthening civil rights movement and by rising social and political tensions, the Kennedy administration sent a comprehensive Civil Right Bill to Congress.[457] Hoping to scare off some of the Bill's supporters, a Southern Congressman introduced an amendment outlawing sex discrimination (an

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[449] R. Rapp, 'After Mead', (2003), transcript available online at *The Scholar and Feminist Online*, http://sfonline.barnard.edu/mead/rapp.htm, accessed 12/09/2013.
[450] Quoted in Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*,p. 65. For more discussion on Beauvoir's works, and the influence they had, see M.E. David, *Personal and Political: Feminisms, Sociology and Family Lives* (Stoke on Trent, 2003), pp. 33-4.
[451] Banton, *Discrimination*, p. 15.
[452] For some discussion of the debate at the time, listen to David Goodheart, 'Making the best of a bad job', in the *Analysis Series*, Tx 18 February 2013, BBC Radio 4, available to download from the BBC Radio 4 Archive, at http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01hp4k7.
[453] M. Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy (With a new introduction by the author)*, (London, 1994, first published 1958), p. xvii. See also Young's now widely cited retrospective reflections in *Guardian*, 29 June 2001.
[454] J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (1972), pp. 100-107 cited in Young, *Rise of the Meritocracy*, p. xvii.
[455] Bell, *Coming of the Post-Industrial Society*, p. 425. Later in the book, he asserte that 'a well-tempered meritocracy can be a society not of equals but of the just.' See p. 455.
[456] Ibid.
[457] H. Brogan, *Penguin History of the USA* (Harmondsworth, 2001), pp. 615-44.

act which suggests much about his assumed hierarchy of human worth). His plan backfired when the Bill passed through Congress aided by those who were genuinely concerned about sex discrimination. It was received in the Senate with the longest filibuster in American history – eighty three days – where it eventually passed with a narrow majority.[458]

Circumstances in the UK were different. Race relations had not been poisoned to the same degree. During the earlier stages of postwar immigration, it had been assumed that that legal equality was sufficient to guarantee economic and social rights. Indeed, some felt that identifying a particular group for further protection would be 'dangerous'.[459] However, pressures grew upon legislators to formally recognise the social injustices which arose from race discrimination and to take measures to prevent them. Whether the 1960s Race Relations Acts are seen as a 'palliative drafted to salve Labour's troubled conscience as Ministers adhered to an essentially racist immigration policy' or as a response to pressure from local authorities forced to adopt ad hoc solutions to growing social and economic pressures, Meehan argues that the 1965 Race Relations Act marked a turning point: 'special measures for special groups were necessary and justifiable.'[460]

Although the 1965 Race Relations Act was essentially toothless, the Race Relations Board it created sponsored the first systemic investigation into race discrimination in the UK. The resultant 1967 PEP report was published as a Penugin Special, *Racial Discrimination in England* (1968). It showed that discrimination ranged from 'the substantial to the massive'. Unless action was taken, the problem was likely to worsen.[461] Based on this assessment, the Race Relations Board advanced a five point justification for anti-discrimination legislation: the law is 'an unequivocal declaration of public policy'; 'it provides support for those who do not want to discriminate but who feel compelled to so by social pressures'; 'the law offers protection and redress'; it 'provides for the peaceful and orderly adjustment of grievances and the release of tension'; and 'reduces prejudice by discouraging the behaviour in which prejudice finds

[458] Meehan, *Women's Rights At Work,* pp.62-3; Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, pp. 44-5.
[459] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* pp. 84-5.
[460] For background to 'palliative' remarks see Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, p. 139; Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work*, pp. 84-5.
[461] Banton, *Discrimination*, p. 69. Lester and Bindman, *Race and Law*, pp. 80 & 128. For more on the background of the 1965 Act see pp. 108-119.

expression.'[462] The Street Committee was asked to assess the effectiveness of anti-discrimination legislation in other countries and to advise on the type of law that might be appropriate in Britain. It advised a similar approach to the USA: 'the primary aim is not to seek out and punish discrimination' but 'to create the climate of opinion which will obviate discrimination.' Although discrimination in personal relationships was felt to be beyond the proper reach of the law, they argued that the law had to be wide enough to cover the 'most damaging' forms of discrimination – in employment, in housing, and in a wide variety of public and private services and facilities.[463] This helped convince opinion formers and policy makers (Jenkins needed no convincing) of the need for further and tougher legislation. The 1968 Act covered housing and, by covering employment, subjected the workplace to anti-discrimination legislation for the first time. [464]

Ben Pimlott has bracketed the Race Relations Act alongside the 'civilising' or 'permissive' legislation of the 1960s, and the Equal Pay Act on the basis that 'this exceptional period of reform quietly consolidated a mood of change in British society' and 'provided a legal framework for more civilised social values.'[465] As we will see in Chapter Three, the Sex Discrimination Act has a far better claim to belong in this group than the Equal Pay Act. However, it is true that throughout this period there was an ongoing debate about how politicians and the law should respond to changing social mores. The raft of civilising reforms helped to accustom politicians and the electorate to the notion that certain social issues should be dealt with in a relatively non-partisan manner. [466] This political mood, and the related emphasis on

[462] Lester and Bindman, *Race and Law*, p. 85.
[463] Ibid. pp. 98-9. For discussion on the direct relevance to the development of the Sex Discrimination Act, see below, pp. 167.
[464] Donnelly, *Sixties*, p. 115. For more on Labour attitudes during this process see Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, pp. 139-164, esp. 153. For a detailed account of the process by two men closely involved see Lester and Bindman, *Race and Law*.
[465] B. Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London, 1992), p. 487 quoted in Holden, 'Letting the Wolf Through the Door', pp. 12-13. Others also regard the Equal Pay Act as part of the 'permissive' or 'civilising' legislation passed by Harold Wilson's government. See, for example, Lee, *Aspects of British Political History*, p. 211; Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, p. 120.
[466] As Edward Bishop memorably put it politicians tried to answer the question: 'how to ensure the law keeps pace with present day trends without being trendy?' See T. Bishop, 'Labour's Silent Revolution', in *Labour Woman*, Vol 60, No. 3, March 1970, pp. 54-5. For a helpful summary of the literature see Holden, 'Letting the Wolf Through the Door', pp. 1-39. See also below for Seear's remarks on effects on attitudes in the House of Lords.p. 184.

individual rights and freedoms, was potentially far more receptive to the claims of feminists and women's rights activists than what had gone before.[467]

The specific subject of women and social change was highlighted by the Finer Committee on one-parent families. As Labour's Minister for Health and Social Security, Richard Crossman had developed ambitious plans to reform social security. However, this process highlighted a lack of knowledge about families with children and about one-parent families in particular and prompted the appointment of a Committee to 'consider the problems of one-parent families', to examine the help available to them, the 'special difficulties' they faced, and to consider what further assistance might be provided.[468] Over the course of four years, they gathered an impressive range of evidence about single parent families, and about the broader changes in the lives of women as mothers and workers. In their attempts to understand the problems faced by single parent families the Committee identified and analysed key drivers of women's inequalities. Describing the 'revolutionary alterations in women's lives as wives, as mothers and as workers', the report argued that 'Britain had not yet begun to fully assimilate the social meanings of this transformation.'[469] Many of its findings later appeared in other government papers on women's rights and helped to form the basis for recommendations.[470]

On the face of it, there was no significant discernible difference between the approaches the two main parties took to women. In election materials, designed to appeal to the widest number of voters, females appeared most commonly as 'housewives' who were concerned with consumption - primarily with rising prices, though they could sometimes be concerned about issues like health and education.[471] Much more noteworthy is the ambiguity in public pronouncements about the increasing numbers of married women going out to work. For

[467] This emphasis on rights could be detected in various discourses. For example, Shapely has argues that welfare beneficiaries were moving away from being passive, grateful recipients to 'consumers' of welfare – with 'rights'. See P. Shapely, *The Politics of Housing: Power, Consumers and Urban Culture* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 15, 74, 167, 172-5 and 213-4.

[468] *National Superannuation and Social Insurance*. Cmnd. 3883. quoted in *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, pp. 1-2. It has been suggested that the 'liberal' Morris Finer was appointed Chair at Abel-Smith's suggestion. See M.L Meyer-Kelly, 'The Child Poverty Action Group 1965-1974: The Origins and Effectiveness of a Single Issue Pressure Group', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol (2002), p. 146.

[469] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 33.

[470] See for example, *Equality for Women.* Cmnd. 5724 (London, 1974), p. 1.

[471] For example, see Conservative Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 26 September 1964; Conservative Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 13 October 1964; Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto 1964: The New Britain* (1964)*;* Labour Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 12 October 1964; Conservative Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 24 March 1966.

example, in a 1964 television broadcast, Wilson rebutted Conservative claims to have 'given' the people prosperity:

> They haven't, you've done it, often in spite of them. And in very many cases it's only been possible through long hours of overtime and because of wives going out to work.'[472]

This can be read as a hymn of praise to the hard working British people, and also as an echo of Ron Hayward's 1960 assertion: 'If Jack was all right' it was only because 'Mrs Jack had a part-time job in order to maintain her family's standard of living.'[473] In other words, Wilson implied, men should be paid more, enough to sustain a family so that wives did not have to work.

The truth was, however, that the British economy needed married women in the workforce. In the context of the drive for economic growth, *more* were required, specifically more skilled women workers. This had been recognised relatively early on by the Ministry of Labour and it was a view that gained increasing traction among the political and opinion forming elite. In 1958, spurred by concerns about the effects of 'working mothers' and potential public hostility to any perception that mothers were being encouraged to go out to work, the Ministry of Labour attempted to assess what would happen if married women were expelled from the workforce and replaced by younger workers or machines. According to Smith Wilson, 'the resulting prospects were so dire officials immediately dropped the topic'.[474] By 1963, the Ministry was coming to the conclusion that 'basic ideas about women had to be changed.' Girls' education should be modified from the earliest age, focused more on maths and science, and extended. A Manpower Study, *The Pattern of the Future* asserted: 'Girls must be discouraged by educational and financial policy, and by public opinion, from settling at the earliest possible age for a job far below their potential capacity.' Only in this way could the acute shortage of labour be overcome and the future of Britain be ensured.[475] These conclusions were echoed by a Conservative Women's National Advisory Committee (WNAC) report the following year.[476]

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[472] Harold Wilson speaking in the, Labour Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 28 September 1964. See also Shirley Williams speaking in the, Labour Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 5 October 1964.
[473] Quoted in Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, p. 126.
[474] 'Note on the Economic Effects of a Withdrawal of Married Women from the Labour Market', 23 June 1958, LAB 8/2380, TNA, cited in Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 211.
[475] Ministry of Labour, 'The Future Employment of Women, Manpower Studies No. 1 The Pattern of the Future' (n.d cited, dated to c. 1963 from TNA online catalogue), cited in Maguire, *Conservative Women*, p. 127.
[476] Maguire, *Conservative Women*, p. 128.

In 1965, under the new Labour government, the Department of Employment and Productivity (DEP) commissioned Audrey Hunt to conduct a survey of 10,000 households to discover 'why women, particularly married women, go out to work or remain at home, and to what extent their decisions might alter with circumstances; and to find how far women at work were employed to their full capacity both in hours worked and in qualifications and training potential.[477] The survey was the first of its kind and the publication of its findings in 1968 prompted a leader in *The Times* which described the 'The Urgent Need for Equal Pay'. This was described as 'the very minimum standard of equitable treatment'. The leader also called for greater efforts to accommodate women's particular needs in order to 'avoid a great waste of potentially useful skills.'[478] The same point had been made less than two months previously in the Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations, chaired by Lord Donovan. Presented with Nancy Seear's paper, 'The Position of Women in Industry', the Committee had found 'the facts…so disturbing, and the implications – both social and economic – so important' that they had singled out the issue of women's access to skilled work for discussion. Economic considerations were paramount: 'Lack of skilled labour has constantly applied a brake to our economic expansion since the war…Women provide the only substantial new source from which extra labour, and especially skilled labour can be drawn.'[479] The report, which dedicated only two of its 349 pages to the subject, aimed its fire at the 'conservatism and prejudice' among male employers and trade unionists which, it argued, reinforced the practical obstacles faced by women seeking work - namely that 'women with family responsibilities often cannot work…normal hours' and that women returning to the workforce after a long break did not have 'the same chance of promotion as…employees who have not been absent at all.' The report also warned of the social implications of girls and women having to take jobs 'below their capacities'. It stopped short of challenging the notion that a woman's primary responsibility was to home and family. It merely asked that society look *also* to women's role in the workforce.[480]

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[477] Department of Employment and Productivity and Ministry of Labour, 'Women at Work', p. 1, MRC, MSS.292B/134/4.

[478] *The Times*, 6 May 1968.

[479] *Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations,* p. 92. A similar point was made by the Finer Committee. It noted that 'so many occupations traditionally dependent on the reservoir of unmarriageable women now have to attract the indispensable but inelegantly described 'married woman returner.' See *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 37. Seear herself had become, in her position of Reader at the London School of Economics between 1948 and 1978, an expert on women in Employment. As a Liberal Peer she was later a key figure in the Parliamentary lobby for anti-discrimination legislation. One early example of Seear's work in this vein is N. Seear, 'Womanpower needs a Policy', in *New Society*, 29 November 1962, pp. 14-17. More generally see C. Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary* (London, 2000), p. 133.

[480] *Report of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations*, pp. 90-92.

Politicians were even more reticent about directly and openly challenging the status quo, confining themselves to hints and suggestions that more skilled woman workers might be needed.[481] Even when the value and of women as workers was recognised and promoted, women's primary identities were not forgotten. Both parties claimed that, by improving education and employment opportunities for girls and women, they were helping to create better mothers for the future.[482] Teaching was perceived as something of a special case and both main parties proposed to solve the teacher shortage explicitly aimed to by 'winning back' the thousands of women lost to marriage.[483] Yet any recognition of the importance of women workers to the British economy was balanced with a denial that they were being coerced into the labour market.[484] For example, in a 1969 *Women's Hour* interview, Wilson conceded that women were 'essential' to the economy but:

> On the basis that those who want to work should be able to find work and find congenial work and reasonable and fair paid work, but not on the basis that others who don't want to work or who have heavy family responsibilities have got to be driven into industry to maintain the family income, …let's start from there. [485]

There is a degree to which this reticence reflected the politicians' instincts against challenging its supporter base and the perceived beliefs of the wider electorate. But this approach also had the benefit of effectively relieving the government of any obligation to address the specific needs of working women (or the impact on their families). If women's going out to work was perceived as personal choice, then it followed that the responsibility for juggling the competing demands of work and home should fall on women rather than the state.

Politically, there were very few channels through women could air their concerns, and some evidence suggests that female voters felt underrepresented. Notably, the greatest divergences of opinion between the sexes in the 1968 Conservative survey, had appeared on the subject of

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[481] For example, see Edward Boyle speaking in the, Conservative Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 6 October 1964; Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto 1964.*

[482] Harold Wilson 1964 speech quoted in NCCL, *Women,* p. 8. See also in Maguire, *Conservative Women,* p. 128.

[483] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto 1964.* Government policies under the Conservatives also sought to solve the teacher shortage by encouraging married women to return to/become teachers. See Briar, *Working for Women*, pp. 104-5.

[484] This view was implied in *The Times* leader on equal pay. 'The fact is, women want to work…' *The Times,* 6 May 1968.

[485] Harold Wilson, interviewed for *Women's Hour,* Tx 4 November 1969. Full transcript available from Bodliean Lib., MS Wilson, 1253.

politics. Suggestively, men were slightly more likely to perceive politicians and parties as sympathetic to women's issues. However, whereas one quarter of women said they would be likely to take advice from their spouse on how to vote, only 5 percent of men did.[486] Yet, despite this apparent lack of political assertiveness, women were much keener to see more of their sex represented. Over two thirds of women, compared to just half of men, wanted more woman MPs and more female councillors.[487] One question in particular suggested that male voters were potentially highly resistant to female encroachment into 'male' politics. In 1965, Barbara Castle had become the first female Minister for Transport. In 1967, in what was widely perceived as an onslaught on specifically male preserves, she introduced the breathalyser and extended speed limits and seat belt requirements.[488] When respondents were asked if they thought it was 'a good or bad thing to have a woman as Minister for Transport?', women were split fairly evenly, with 30 and 31 per cent answering 'good' and 'bad' respectively. However, 44 per cent of men said 'bad', and 17 per cent answered 'good.'[489] Other notable divergences of opinion appeared over the question of whether marriage and divorce laws offered enough protection for women. 36 per cent of women, as opposed to 23 per cent of men thought that they did not provide enough.[490]

In 1969, the Government announced the establishment of the Women's National Commission to replace the old Women's Consultative Council.[491] It comprised representatives of national women's organisations and bodies such as the TUC. The Government expressed its hope that the new Commission would prove 'an effective and authoritative body.'[492] Feminists expressed concern that the terms of eligibility had excluded some of the most principled and assertive groups in the field of women's rights, namely the Fawcett Society, the Six Point Group, and the Status of Women Committee. The women's editor of *The Times* worried that the Commission

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[486] Opinion Research Centre, 'Women's Interests and Problems', p. 18, CPA, CCO 180/33/1/1.
[487] Ibid. p. 11.
[488] Perkins, *Red Queen*, pp. 206-16. One particularly vile letter threatened: 'We'll get you, you old cow' See Barbara Castle, 'No Kitchen Cabinet', in S. Maitland (ed.), *Very Heaven: Looking Back at the Sixties* (London, 1988), p. 53.
[489] Opinion Research Centre, 'Women's Interests and Problems', p. 11, CPA, CCO 180/33/1/1. 38 percent of both sexes answered 'don't know.'
[490] Ibid.
[491] No author, 'Status of Women Commisssion', 29 November 1968, Paper of the Women's Advisory Committee 2/3. MRC, MSS 292B 823/1. The Council had been formed in 1963 following a request by the National Council of Women to 'consult with representative women's organisations on matters of special concern to British women arising in the negotiations of the European Economic Community. In 1965 it had been reorganised 'to bring to the notice of the Government matters of particular concern to women's organisations'
[492] Tilney to V. Feather, 21 July 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/821.5/2. For general details on the establishment and composition of the Commission see the other papers in MRC, MSS 292B/821.5/2

would do little more than 'compound the cosy, self-congratulatory inefficiency from which the total [women's movement] has tended to suffer.'[493] The Commission was charged 'to ensure by all possible means that the informed opinion of women is given its due weight in the deliberations of Government and in public debate…'[494] The environment in which it operated was inherently obstructionist to the point of hostile; the civil service, particularly in the top ranks, did not tend to view the idea of equal opportunities for women favourably.[495] The Commission was able to do no more than express 'hope' that Departments would consult them.[496] In 1973, Virginnia Novarra passed a damning, but by all available evidence justified, verdict: 'one has the impression that it[the Commission] is absorbed its own, rather inward looking concerns and regards itself as accountable only to its constituent bodies…there seems to be little available evidence…that it has had any effect on official thinking.[497] Feminists seeking to influence policy would have to find other means.

The Re-Emergence of Feminism

Although Banks has described the 1960s as 'crucial years in the history of British feminism', the decade remains under-explored.[498] It sits uncomfortably in the standard periodisations of the historiography of the British Women's Movement, sometimes discussed as part of a 'postwar but pre-Women's Liberation' period, and sometimes as part of 'Women's Liberation and beyond'.[499] There were two key developments in the 1960s. One was the revitalisation of an already existing movement. The other, more familiar and more studied development, was the emergence of a British Women's Liberation Movement. Although historians have now disproved the earlier belief, that feminist activism was stifled to death in the conservative climate of the postwar

[493] *The Times*, 10 November 1969.
[494] 'Women's National Commission: Constitution, Appendix A in Memorandum to the Prime Minister', n.d. (c. 1970), MRC, MSS.292B/821.5/2
[495] Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, pp. 121 & 347. For a contemporary reference to the civil service view of women see, Conservative Research Department, 'Women's Rights. Conservative Targets.', 11 April 1973, CPA, CRD 3/38/2.
[496] 'Letter issued to Private Secretaries in all Government Departments' from M.M. Davison, 25 November 1969. MRC, MSS.292B/821.5/2.
[497] Novarra, 'The Next Five Years', p.13, WomL, 6WIM/F/02. There is little to challenge this appraisal in the WNC's own legacy document which claims that one of its 'strengths' was its international influence and status at the United Nations. See Women's National Commission, *Engagement with Women Across the UK: Next Steps* (December 2010). Available to download from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women's_National_Commission, accessed 08 March 2011.
[498] Banks, *Politics of British Feminism*, pp. 3 & 7.
[499] Examples of the former include Wilson, *Halfway to Paradise;* Banks, *Politics of British Feminism*. Examples of the latter include Meehan, 'British Feminism', Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. 333; Smith, 'Women's Movment, Politics and Citizenship'.

years, it is nevertheless recognised that feminist opinion during these years leaned predominately towards a notion of equality formulated in terms of 'equal but different', or within the framework of 'citizenship.'[500] Nevertheless, women continued to campaign for feminist objectives from within the trade union movement, from within the Labour and Conservative Parties, and from within feminist and women's organisations.[501] According to Smith, it was 'women working through organisations like these' who helped bring about the mid-1960s' feminist revival that was already underway when the first WLM groups were formed.[502] When the British WLM emerged at the end of the decade, it did so largely independently, or at least largely unaware of, the women's movement already in existence.[503]

In 1964, one survey counted 120 national women's groups with a combined active membership of three million.[504] The largest groups were the Women's Institute, the Townswomen's Guild, the Mother's Union, the Women's Co-operative Guild, and the women's organisations of the main political parties. There was also a range of smaller professional women's associations such as the Association of Headmistresses.[505] Generally, the big organisations were at least as concerned with social activities, and with promoting active citizenship, as they were with specifically feminist aims. Although one school of thought emphasises the inherent feminism of women's collective action, it remains the case that that many members of these groups held distinctly anti-feminist sounding opinions.[506] For example, one official of the Mothers Union opined that 'the breakdown in communication between parents and children [was] directly related to the mothers' absence at work.'.[507] Though active throughout the 1960s, it would be inaccurate to describe these groups as dynamic. In many respects they were declining. They had difficulties in recruiting younger women, which owed something to the fact that so many more now worked outside the home, and something to the fact that the organisations appeared

[500] For a useful summary of the historiography in this field see S. Clements, 'Feminism, citizenship and social activity: The role and importance of local women's organizations, Nottingham 1918-1969', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham (2008), pp. 32-7.
[501] For examples, see Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, pp. 219-277; Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, p. 114; Maguire, *Conservative Women*, p. 146; Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise*, pp. 171-5 & 180-85.
[502] Smith, 'Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship', pp. 278-9. See also Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, p. 177.
[503] Banks, *Politics of British Feminism*, p. 6; Smith, 'Women's Movment, Politics and Citizenship', pp. 278-9.
[504] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 42.
[505] Clements, 'Feminism, citizenship and social activity', p. 244.
[506] Ibid. p. 32.
[507] John Barr, 'The Modern Suffragettes', *New Society*, 17 December 1964, p. 7.

increasingly out of touch and irrelevant.[508] Of the 120 groups, only fifteen were described as 'feminist'.[509] Some of the most principled were the smallest, notable examples being the Fawcett Society, the Six Point Group and the Married Women's Association. There were also various umbrella organisations such as the National Council of Women and groups, such as the Status of Women Committee, which comprised representatives of other women's organisations. Beyond the formal 'women's movement', and with a good deal of crossover, there were feminists and women activists in the trade union movement and in groups such as the Fabian Society.

There were signs of a politically active feminism in the early 1960s. In 1963 the cause of 'reasonable feminism' celebrated a victory when a Bill to abolish turnstiles, which had been championed by the National Council of Women, became law as the Public Lavatories (Abolition of Turnstiles) Act.[510] Feminists celebrated another victory that year when the Employment of Women Bill was defeated. This episode is described in some detail here since it proved to be the beginning of a train of events that would, as Chapter Four shows, eventually, result in the maternity provision clause of the Employment Protection Act of 1975.[511]

In 1962 the Tory MP, Lord Balniel, won a place in the Ballot and used the opportunity to introduce what was, in effect, a Government Bill seeking to regulate the employment of women for a period after childbirth by imposing fines on employers who contravened the rules. Opinions in the Labour Party were divided. However, having formally endorsed the principle behind the Bill only three years earlier, the Party in Parliament supported the Bill and allowed it to pass its second reading without opposition. The women's organisations, however, were vocally opposed.[512] Dee Wells explained in the *Herald,* 'this is help that women don't want'. Most working mothers, she explained, 'work because they need the money.' In professional and higher ranking jobs, 'posher and more glossily employed women' already enjoyed a period of unpaid leave to have their babies. The Bill was not going to extend that privilege to women in less well paid or secure jobs. Instead, it prevented women from returning to work without

[508] Clements, 'Feminism, citizenship and social activity', p. 32 & 42-3; M. Stott, *Organisation Women: The Story of the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds* (London, 1978), pp. 214 & 221-4.
[509] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 42; Banks, *Politics of British Feminism,* p. 23.
[510] Clements, 'Feminism, citizenship and social activity', p. 250.
[511] See below, pp. 282-3.
[512] Judith Hart, 'Employment of Women after Childbirth', 17 November 1963. MRC, MSS 292B/823/3.

placing any obligation on employers to hold a job open. It offered women no protection, and no rights. Wells suggested it could even backfire by allowing unscrupulous employers to sack expectant or new mothers thereby increasing the hardship and anxiety suffered by the most vulnerable. Wells had another objection too:

> The Bill has to do with how soon after childbirth a working mother should return to work. It doesn't, of course, deal with that lah-de-dah nonsense called housework. It doesn't mention the happy new mothers who loll about for a full voluptuous week in hospital and then return to three small children, nappy washing, a string bag full of potatoes, and three meals a day to cook and wash up after. *They* don't work for what the Bill calls "reward" (And how true, how very true.) This Bill deals only with women who do.[513]

The Status of Women Committee sent a deputation to the Minister for Health. The Open Door Council, the Fawcett Society, and the National Council of Women, among others, also presented objections. Their principle Parliamentary spokeswomen were the Labour MP Judith Hart and, from the other side of the political divide, Joan Vickers. Both tabled numerous amendments and did much to ensure that the Bill was talked out and 'decently buried.' [514]

One consequence was that the TUC's Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) was prompted to undertake a thorough examination of the issue. They did not believe that women would wish to return to work within weeks of childbirth unless their financial circumstances were exceptional but they did oppose the principle of restricting the employment of women after childbirth. (At the very least they believed that women should be allowed to return to work if they could show that it would not harm their health or their baby.) Like other women's organisations they also drew attention to the importance of avoiding any measure which could make it difficult for a woman to return to work after a still-birth.[515] Instead, they recommended that adequate financial support should be provided, under the National Insurance Acts, for mother and child to be able to

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[513] *Herald*, 7 March 1963.

[514] This account draws from the following sources: John Barr, 'The Modern Suffragettes', *New Society*, 17 December 1964, pp.6-7; 'Employment of Women Bill, Report of a Conversation with Mrs. Horton, Fawcett Society', 14 February 1963; Amy Fleming to Secretary of TUC, 9 March 1963; 'Employment of Women Bill. Explanatory Memorandum by Lord Balniel', n.d; Kenneth Robinson, 'Employment of Women after Childbrith', 16 November 1963; Judith Hart, 'Employment of Women after Childbirth', 17 November 1963. All papers available from MRC, MSS 292B/823/3.

[515] Maternity Sub-Committee, 'Social Security Provision for Motherhood', 25 October 1963. MRC, MSS 292B/823/3. For a summary of the history of the TUCs deliberations see Women's Advisory Committee of the Trades Union Congress, 'Employment of Women Following Childbirth', 31 January 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/134/2.

stay home from work after childbirth.[516] The TUC's Social Insurance Committee disagreed. In line with TUC General Council policy – reiterated in 1961 – they believed that women's employment should be restricted after childbirth and, to this end, cited ILO policy which recommended at least twelve weeks maternity leave, six of which were to be compulsory.[517] In response, the WAC pointed out that the ILO had also recommended that new mothers be entitled to adequate financial provision. The General Council suggested that the two Committees should discuss the issue.[518] They agreed that there was an opportunity to undertake 'a comprehensive examination of the problem of providing security for all mothers, both for those in the home, and for those who worked in outside employment' and set up a small joint sub-committee to consider the issue.[519] They agreed a compromise: the General Council had good reasons for maintaining its policy for compulsory restriction of employment after childbirth but prohibition would not be necessary if financial provision were adequate. The TUC requested, albeit with scant conviction, that the Government improve maternity and home confinement provision - to no avail.[520] However, the tone of the WACs papers became more assertive throughout the decade and continued activity on their part would bear fruit some years later in the Employment Protection Act.[521]

Yet overall, there is a sense that the women's movement as a whole was unfocused. In 1964, John Barr described 'an unnecessary proliferation of women's organisations, a duplication of aims and methods and far too little co-ordination.' Furthermore, he noted, their methods were often 'amateur to the extreme.'[522] Joyce Butler's experience bears this out. As an MP, and one of the earliest inspirations behind the Sex Discrimination Act, she had contacted various women's organisations in 1966 with a view to formulating an approach, or a plan, or an idea.

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[516] Maternity Sub-Committee, 'Social Security Provision for Motherhood', MRC, MSS 292B/823/3.
[517] ILO policy stated in 'Maternity Protection', 12 February 1974, MRC, MSS 292B/823/3. For a history of the ILO policy on this issue which dates back to 1897 see Lewenhak, *Women and the Trade Unions*, p. 98.
[518] Women's Advisory Committee of the Trades Union Congress, 'Employment of Women Following Childbirth', MRC, MSS 292B/134/2.
[519] Minutes of the Social Insurance and Industrial Welfare Committee, 19 April, 1963, Extract filed in MRC, MSS 292B/823/3.
[520] Women's Advisory Committee of the Trades Union Congress, 'Employment of Women Following Childbirth', MRC, MSS 292B/134/2.
[521] Minutes of the Social Insurance and Industrial Welfare Committee, 14 January 1974, MRC, Filed with SIIWC Minutes, October 1969-July 1970; Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, p. 301. See below, pp. 282-3.
[522] J. Barr, 'The Modern Suffragettes', in *New Society*, 17 December 1974, p.5. This impression is borne out by a description of a NWC meeting in the Conservative Party's WNAC minutes. Moreover, when the WNAC's Mrs Lister described the NWC meetings as 'dreary', her colleagues on the WNAC encouraged her to keep up attendance on the basis that 'to pull out completely would leave the field open for opposition parties. See Minutes of Women's National Advisory Committee, Outside Organisation Sub-Committee, 26 November 1970, CPA, CCO 170/1/3/3.

She found what she described as 'a curious kind of vacuum. No one seemed to have any strong ideas.'[523]

Nevertheless, there were signs of activity and signals that women were striving to rejuvenate the movement. In the mid-1960s the Abortion Law Reform Association was revitalised by a new generation of leaders. In 1967 they would achieve a measure of success in the Abortion Act.[524] In 1962 the 'indomitable' Joan Vickers took over chairmanship of the Status of Women Committee (SWC).[525] She was experienced in representing women's interests in Parliament and at the UN and her chairmanship marked the start of a very active period in the Committee's history. For the 1964 General Election, they produced a manifesto calling for equal pay and opportunities in employment; equality in tax and National Insurance matters; equal moral standards; and equal domicile and guardianship.[526] In 1963 Margherita Rendel and two other members of the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) had been met with a cool reception when they tried to persuade the NCCL to take up the cause of women's rights.[527] In 1964, however, the AGM passed a resolution requesting that the 'Executive Committee undertake a detailed study of the incidence of discrimination against women…'[528] The result was a thorough and concise booklet, *Women* (1965), which answered the question whether women 'really suffer serious injustice' with an articulate 'yes'. [529]

In 1965, the Six Point Group held a conference to 'conquer differences among groups and to blast off a new campaign to accomplish things that feminists have worked for unsuccessfully for years.[530] The following year, the Fawcett Society and the Six Point Group started making alliances between themselves and other groups including professional associations and the

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[523] Interview with Joyce Butler, 18 August 1978, (interviewed by author) quoted in C. Callender, 'The Role of Women in the Development of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, 1970-1975', unpublished BSc dissertation, Bristol University (1979), p. 28.
[524] Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning,* pp. 127-32; See also Madeleine Simms, 'The Choice of Motherhood', in Hunkins-Hallinan (ed.), *In Her Own Right,* pp. 106-120.
[525] Patrick Cosgrave, 'Vickers, Joan Helen, Baroness Vickers (1907–1994)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006), [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.unicat.bangor.ac.uk/view/article/55820, accessed 14 April 2014.
[526] John Barr, 'The Modern Suffragettes', *New Society,* 17 December 1964, p. 5; Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary,* p. 151; Status of Women Committee, 'Manifesto of the Status of Women Committee', n.d., WomL, 7 AMP/B/09/3.
[527] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 44.
[528] NCCL, 'Report of the Annual General Meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties', 9 May 1964, LSE, HCA/NCCL, Box 1, Folder 5.
[529] NCCL, *Women.* Minutes of Executive Committee of Six Point Group, 6 September 1966, WomL, 5SPG/A/140.
[530] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 45.

National Council of Women. Concerned by 'too many societies…struggling for the same objects with inadequate resources' they 'aimed to co-ordinate consistent pressure for equal opportunities, equal pay, equal taxation and better treatment for unmarried mothers.'[531] The 1967 Fawcett Conference on 'Women in a Changing World' was attended by twenty groups, eleven unions, and various experts. One speaker argued that the women's movement had to broaden its class base. Shortly afterwards, the Fawcett Society advised women to join trade unions and, if necessary, to strike for equal pay.[532] In 1969, journalist and women's rights champion, Susanne Puddefoot, confidently claimed that the persistent 'existence and activities' of women's organisations caused 'many a ministerial headache.'[533]

There was no shortage of publications from the older feminist organisations. Like the NCCL, feminists and activists sought to expose the continued injustices that women suffered behind what Hunkins-Hallinan described as the 'façade of equality' wrought by legal emancipation.[534] In 1968, for example, the Six Point Group produced a compilation of short essays entitled *In Her Own Right*; the Fabian Society published *Equality for Women*; the Fawcett Society published *Half a Whole;* and the Federation of Business and Professional Women published an enquiry into women's careers. Although these carefully researched and discussed publications never enjoyed a fraction of the sale figures of Germaine Greer's, *Female Eunuch,* or its cultural significance, they amounted to a growing body of irrefutable evidence that women had not attained equality with men.[535]

Ideas also came from across the Atlantic, where a new women's movement had come into existence. In the USA, some of the first Women's Liberation groups had been founded by women from the Civil Rights Movement who had been enraged at the hypocritical contempt and ridicule they had faced from male colleagues when they raised the issue of women's rights.[536] As it quickly became evident that the new Civil Rights Bill had not been designed with sex

[531] Clements, 'Feminism, citizenship and social activity', pp. 246-7.
[532] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 46.
[533] *The Times,* 10 November 1969. For an example, see A.M. Pierottie to R. Gunter, 6 February 1966, TNA LAB 10/2396; Minutes of the National Council of Women, 19 June 1969, London, London Metropolitan Archives [hereafter LMet], Filed in the National Council of Women Great Britain collection.
[534] Hunkins-Hallinan, 'A Revolution Unfinished', in Hunkins-Hallinan (ed.), *In Her Own Right,* p. 14.
[535] Hunkins-Hallinan (ed.), *In Her Own Right;* M. Rendel et al, *Equality for Women. For general discussion of the phenomenon see* M. Rendel et al, *Equality for Women.* See also below, p. 151, for impact.
[536] Banks, *Faces of Feminism,* p. 225. See also NCCL, 'For Favour of Review, 'Women", 13 June 1965, Hull, Hull History Centre [hereafter HHC], NCCL Collection, DCL 100/50.)

discrimination in mind, the failure of the new Equal Employment Opportunity Commissioner to take cases of sex discrimination seriously acted as a catalyst to the emergence of the American women's movement, most particularly, Betty Friedan's National Organisation for Women (NOW).[537] Freidan's bestselling *Feminine Mystique* (1963) had identified the 'problem with no name'. Her evocation of middle-class white American suburbia portrayed bored, lonely, unfulfilled, even neurotic women prone to unnecessary housework and consumption. She argued that women's identities were constrained by the public image of the 'happy housewife' which filled the glossy magazines and television commercials serving to mask their realities.[538] Adopting what Pugh describes as 'a brisk, middle-class attitude that housework ought not to be very demanding if properly organised', Freidan famously observed that 'housework expands to fill the time available' and argued that liberation lay in education, employment, and preferably a career.[539]

There was nothing new about the recognition of the poor quality of the day-to-day lives of housewives.[540] In 1930s Britain, Lord Taylor had identified 'suburban neurosis' as a 'reaction to uselessness', 'most prevalent among active women whose children were growing up, and whose household duties were no longer demanding.'[541] Simone de Beauvoir later likened the endless repetition of housework to 'the torture of Sisyphus'.[542] Yet, as so often with feminist messages, ideas needed to be rediscovered and reasserted. Three years after the *Feminine Mystique*, British sociologist, Hannah Gavron, showed that the 'lonely and bored housewife problem' was not confined to middle-class graduates. Focusing on young mothers, Gavron argued that working-class women often suffered more acute problems than their middle-class counterparts due to factors like poor housing. Her stance on housework was different to Freidan's. She believed that 'in a work-orientated society, those who do not work have some reduction in their status, and housewives, no matter how arduous housework actually proves to be, do not feel themselves to be at work.'[543] Gavron called for 'some deliberate attempt to re-

[537] Meehan, *Women's Rights At Work,* pp.62-3; Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, pp. 44-5.
[538] B. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London, 1965).
[539] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 298; Freidan, *Feminine Mystique*, pp. 205-25 & 297-8. For some discussion of Freidan's essentially liberal approach see, Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us,* p. 182.
[540] Rowntree's 'deadening monotony' remarks quoted in Land, 'Social Security and the Division of Unpaid Work in the Home and Paid Employment in the Labour Market', 53. Lenin's remarks quoted in Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge,* p. 70.
[541] Cited in Carstairs, 'Reith Lectures, 1962: This Island Now: The Changing Role of Women'.
[542] S. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, pp. 189-90 quoted in Hudson, *Men and Women*, p. 89.
[543] Gavron, *Captive Wife*, pp. 149-50.

integrate women in all their many roles with the central activities of society' through, for example, reforms in education and changing attitudes towards working women. She advocated the creation of a situation 'whereby life with young children would no longer be so utterly different from life without them and motherhood would cease to be a kind of captivity.'[544] During the 1960s, many women (usually white and middle-class) found these texts both relevant and inspiring.[545]

This increased volume of work on the 'women question' in the mid-to-late 1960s was mirrored by a broad and general increase in discussions about women and their situation in the press.[546] In her brief survey of this public discourse, Caine detected a shift in emphasis. New issues, long the concern of feminists, came to the fore. Instead of asking 'why married women worked', there was an 'emphasis on the need for and the meaning of equal pay'. Reasons for women's limited job opportunities were sought. There were concerns too about abortion, about a woman's right to control her own reproductive pattern, and with the inequities of the marriage contract.[547] Prompted partly by the appearance of some of the British publications listed above, the *Sun* carried a series of articles on the position of women in early 1965 under the title, 'The Wasted Sex.' One article highlighted Britain's apparently determined effort to ignore Britain's growing reliance on working wives pointing to things like the failure to provide nursery places. The article called, among other things, for equal pay and better training, for the sake of girls and women, and for the sake of the nation which was wasting a valuable resource.[548] The newspaper reported receiving 'thousands of letters from women who wanted to get involved.'[549] Magazines such as *Nova*, first published in 1965, and described by one of its first writers, Carolyn Faulder, as 'the thinking magazine for thinking women', discussed the ideas flowing from the feminist movement.[550] There was also more honesty about the strains of family life which owed little, until the end of the decade, to feminist critiques.[551] Perhaps the most notorious and direct attacks

[544] Ibid. pp. 149-50.
[545] David, *Personal and Political*, pp. 33-5. Carolyn Faulder has described, for example, how they prompted the awakening of a self-aware feminist consciousness. Interview with Carolyn Faulder, 11 June 2011.
[546] Caine, *English Feminism*, pp. 250-52.
[547] Ibid. pp. 250-51. See also observations in Novarra, 'The Next Five Years', p. 2. WomL, 6WIM/F/02
[548] *Sun*, 25 April 1965; 26 April 1965; 3 May 1965
[549] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 45.
[550] Carolyn Faulder.
[551] In 1967 the BBC's *Man Alive* television programme asked, 'Can children break a marriage?' One reviewer described it as 'a raw programme, often embarrassingly so'. See See papers and reviews in *Man Alive: Marriage Under Stress*, BBCw, T14/2515/1.

on the nuclear family in the 1960s came from the academic charged with delivering the BBC's 1967 Reith Lectures, Dr Edmund Leach:

> Today the domestic household is isolated. The family looks inward upon itself; there is an intensification of emotional stress between husband and wife, and parents and children. The strain is greater than most of us can bear. Far from being the basis of the good society, the family, with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets, is the source of all our discontents.[552]

The contexts in which British feminism re-emerged into public consciousness stand in stark contrast to those from which the women's movement first emerged. In mid-Victorian England, there had been a 'surplus' female population with almost one third of women aged 20-44 being unmarried. It is not unreasonable to suggest, as many have, a relationship between these demographic facts and the emergence of a movement determined to break the male monopolies over education and the professions, and to challenge the laws and customs which made it so difficult for middle-class women to support themselves.[553] In 1960s Britain, however, the 'surplus women problem' had reversed slightly and the majority of women were married. There were comparatively few formal barriers to equality. The single woman was *expected* to support herself. Wives and mothers had not moved out of the home but they had moved into the workforce. They had not acquired the right to work, but there was a growing expectation that they *should*. Although unemployment rates were very low by today's standards, Pugh argues that worries about rising unemployment and threatened living standards 'intensified the competition for jobs between men and women'.[554] These contexts provide some explanation for the concerns of feminists. They also help to explain why so many women came to what may loosely be described as 'feminist consciousness' at this time.

Many women emerging into adulthood experienced a considerable and often jarring gap between their expectations, fostered by the rhetoric of equality, and their actual experiences. Women who succeeded in getting a foot on the career ladder often found that the birth of their first child immediately changed them back from being a 'new kind of woman' to being a 'traditional

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[552] Leach, E. 'Reith Lectures 1967: A Runaway World: Ourselves and Others' Tx. 26 November 1967, Transcript available to download from the BBC Reith Lecture Archive, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/the-reith-lecutres/transcripts/1960/, accessed 17 April 2013.
[553] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 23; See also Randall, *Women and Politics*, p. 215; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 1; Gavron, *Captive Wife*, pp. 20-21.
[554] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, p. 314.

woman'[555] Janet Brewer's experience is illustrative. She worked briefly as a Research Assistant at Lancaster University after graduating. In 1967 she left to marry. Looking back, she describes herself, aged 26, 'feeling here I am in my small house with my two children and this isn't the way I thought it would be.'[556] Carolyn Faulder was lucky to find help and support from a farsighted philosophy professor at Bedford who admitted her onto their undergraduate course in 1960 as the first married woman with children they had accepted. When she went on to work at *Nova*, she was aware of many well educated women, contemporaneous to her, who had married young and had children, and wondered what had happened to them.[557] Recognition of inequalities was not confined to women. Gyles Brandreth related his girlfriend's experience of looking for a job. Returning from one job interview she reported:

> Do you know what the puffy-face boy from the personnel department said to me?...As I was about to go he had the nerve to pat me on the shoulder and remark, 'Don't take it as a personal reflection on you dear, if you don't get this job; you see, it's a man's world.' Men! They're so arrogant![558]

Brandreth felt inclined to agree. Edward (Ted) Bishop, who would become a key agitator within the Labour Party for women's rights related how he became involved in the battle for equal rights 'as a result of his four professionally qualified daughters experiences' and the problems they faced.'[559]

Discontent with the limitations of the traditional female role found practical expression in the Housebound Wives Register (NHR). Although it was not a political organisation, it did, in some cases, help to give rise to the new women's movement. One typical member described it as:

> …a kind of lifeline for people who found themselves at home with children, with no kind of acceptance that you might be looking for a part-time job or that you wanted a life outside the home. It was set up absolutely for people like that to meet each other and to have a live which explored intellectual interests and which gave them something else. A

[555] Gavron, *Captive Wife*, p. 137. See also Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us*, p. 95. This much remains true today. See above, p. 30 and 30n.
[556] Summary of an Interview with Janet Brewer, in *Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism Volume Two*, pp. 9-10. See also S. Gail, 'The Housewife (1965-7)', in Malos (ed.), *The Politics of Housework*, pp. 88-94.
[557] Many thanks to Carolyn Faulder for discussing her experiences with me.
[558] *Women's Hour,* Tx 12 May 1969, Partial transcript available from BBCw, Scripts Room.
[559] Ted Bishop, interviewed 15 February 1978 (interview by author), cited in Callendar, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 27.

number of people who were quite key in the women's movement in Bristol met that way.[560]

Indeed, the NHR was one of several organisations, including a nursery school campaign, which emerged from the seeds sown by *Guardian* letters and articles. *Guardian* journalist, Mary Stott, detected a growing 'self-help' impulse among women.[561] Though, as Gavron noted, this was largely a middle-class phenomenon.[562] Organisations concerned with the plight of the single parent also increased in numbers and strength. In the 1960s, Tessa Fothergill and her two children left her husband. Her subsequent struggle for a flat of her own and a job led her to set up Gingerbread, a group to help women going through similar experiences. Other groups included Mothers-in-Action and the National Council for One Parent Families. Though not always nominally feminist, these groups concerned themselves primarily with the problems of women. By highlighting the problems of single parents they exposed the myriad of ways in which society was structured around the male breadwinner ideal.[563]

A growing awareness and active celebration of Human Rights also held significance for the feminist movement. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, 1968 was declared 'Human Rights Year'. In Britain, this had a darkly ironic significance. The 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act had effectively removed the right of British Passport holding Asians to enter the UK. Although Anthony Lester successfully challenged the law before the European Commission on Human Rights, the British Labour Government simply ignored the ruling.[564] However, as the UN made clear, human rights had a direct significance for women. The Declaration of Human Rights included a call for women's equal rights inside and outside of marriage.[565] The 1967 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women declared:

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[560] Summary of Interview with Janet Brewer, *Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism, Volume Two*, pp. 9-10.
[561] Stott (ed.), *Women Talking*, pp. 225-233; B. Jerman, *The Lively Minded Women: the First Twenty Years of the National Housewives Register* (London, 1981), p. 5.
[562] Gavron, *Captive Wife*, p. 142.
[563] G. Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London, 1971), p. 322; Collins, Friedman, Pivot, *Directory of Social Change*, pp. 52-62.
[564] Ibid. 821 -2.
[565] Walters, *Feminism*, p. 97.

> Discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and of society, prevents their participating on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries and is an obstacle to the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity.[566]

The full articles covered equal pay, maternity leave, and family allowances.[567] Although Britain signed with the longest list of exceptions ever submitted to the United Nations, its existence remained a useful fact for feminists and women's rights activists.[568] In Britain, one of the four objectives of the International Human Rights Year Campaign was 'the elimination…of all forms of discrimination against women'.[569] In November 1968 there was a conference of all interested bodies to formulate a plan of action. Working parties from fifty organisations attended. They discussed women at school and in training, at work, at home, women in society, and 'myths and attitudes.' The discussion panel included Barbara Castle; her Conservative opposite, Robert Carr; Anne Mackie of the CBI; Liberal Peer and feminist activist, Nancy Seear; veteran women's rights campaigner and Labour Peer, Baroness Summerskill; and David Bassnett of the TUC.[570] The declaration they produced covered equal pay and opportunity; equality under tax and social security laws; and equality under matrimonial law. It was, in essence, a call for economic and legal equality. Significantly, issues such as nurseries and maternity pay were afforded a secondary status since the proclaimed majority view was that unless 'fundamental questions of equal pay and opportunity' were settled, 'the right climate for tackling other disabilities facing women today will not be achieved.'[571] Although such declarations wielded little direct influence, the celebration of a formally accepted set of universal rights provided feminists with a framework in which to present and justify their grievances and aims, and with opportunities to draw attention to their cause. [572]

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[566] Quoted in Status of Women Committee, *Votes for Women 1918-1968, Golden Jubilee Celebration* (London, 1968), p. 4. Available from the Women's Library, Pamphlet collection, 62462.30941. See also Stott, *Before I Go*, p. 20.

[567] 'Article 10 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women', MRC, MSS 292B. 823/1.

[568] For notes on the exceptions see Briar, *Working for Women*, p. 116. For example, see Betty Lockwood to Harold Wilson, 6 December 1968, Bodelian Lib., MS Wilson 807.

[569] The other two were (1) education and publicity regarding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and (4) assisting the people in Britain's dependent territories to realise their human rights.

[570] *The Times*, 4 November 1968.

[571] *The Times*, 9 December 1968.

[572] See for example, 'Resolutions Passed at the Annual Conference of the National Council of Women, 1968', MRC, MSS 292 B/821/1. At a more local level, a school in Hampton undertook a project for to mark the occasion by comparing men and women in society and studying the subject of women's rights. See A. O'Reilly to TUC, 1968, MRC, MSS 292B. 823/1.

By coincidence, 1968 was also the fiftieth anniversary of women having been granted the vote. The Queen's 1966 Christmas broadcast had marked the centenary of Parliament first being asked to grant women the vote. Addressing her speech 'especially to women' the Queen said:

> The struggles against inhuman prejudice, against squalor, ignorance and disease, have always owed a great deal to the determination and tenacity of women… In the modern world the opportunities for women to give something of value to the human family are greater than ever, because, through their own efforts, they are now beginning to play their full part in public life…[W]e know that the tyranny of ignorance can be broken; we know the rules of health and how to protect children from disease. We know all these things are important in our own homes, but it needs a very active concern by women everywhere if this knowledge is to be used where it is most needed.[573]

Hardly strident, the speech could nonetheless be interpreted as feminist and it put the highest stamp of legitimacy of calls for women's greater involvement in public life. The occasion also stimulated media interest in the 'woman question'. Labour's NLWAC reported that, since the end of 1967,

> the mass media have taken up the 'woman question' in earnest: the 50th anniversary of the franchise, coinciding with human rights year, the Divorce Bill and the impact of the recent Reith Lectures, all contrive to keep the subject of women and the family continually in the colour supplements and on the feature pages. [574]

There were numerous events to mark the Golden Jubilee.[575] The SWC, under the leadership of Vickers, hired two feminist public relations officers and went to great lengths to ensure the occasion was marked in style.[576] The celebration in Westminster's Central Hall was a very grand occasion attended by 2000 people.[577] The glossy full colour programme opened with a message from Queen Elizabeth. The next page was dedicated to an extract from the Queen's Speech. The following page cited the UN Declaration of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Speakers included the leaders of each of the three main parties – Harold Wilson, Edward Heath and Jeremy Thorpe, the first Women Presidents of the Oxford and

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[573] The Queen's Christmas Broadcast, 1966. Transcript available online at The Official Website of the British Monarchy, http://www.royal.gov.uk/ImaagesandBroadcasts/The QueensChristmasBroadcasts/ChristmasBroadcasts/ChristmasBroadcast1966.aspx, accessed 18 October 2011.
[574] National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. 5.
[575] See for example, Minutes of the National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, 15 February 1968, Bangor Universtiy [hereafter BU], NEC Minutes microfilm collection.
[576] Minutes of the Status of Women Committee, 3 October 1967, WomL, 7 AMP/B/01/4.
[577] *The Times*, 28 March 1968.

Cambridge Union Societies, leading female politicians including Shirley Williams and Margaret Thatcher, and various well-known feminist leaders such as the President of the Fawcett Society, Thelma Cazalet-Keir, and the peace worker, Kathleen Courtney.[578] In attendance were numerous notables, including two hunger striking suffragettes, Grace Roe and Leonora Cohen.[579] Despite all these markers of establishment approval, it is notable that even this occasion was met with a dismissive attitude in some quarters. In *The Times,* Christopher Warman reported, 'for two hours speaker after speaker harangued and cajoled the audience.'[580] Nevertheless, the event, and other similar ones, broadcast loud and clear that women had not achieved equality. Feminism, at least so far as it was concerned with opposition to discrimination, was presented as a respectable cause. Joyce Butler, champion of the Sex Discrimination Act, considered the Central Hall event to have been 'seminal': it marked a growth in influence of the organising Status of Women Committee and 'a revival of energy in the Fawcett Society.'[581] Sue Bruley, herself active in the WLM, later reflected that the Jubilee anniversary 'produced a last flowering of the old suffrage movement spirit and a determination to pass on to younger feminists the message that there was still a long way to go.'[582] Yet 1968 was not a simple baton change between generations. Many feminists and women's rights activists had worked for the cause for many years prior to 1968 and continued to so, pushing forward with their ideas when they saw the opportunity and, when the occasion offered or demanded, they did so in collaboration with the new, younger, and often more radical generation of feminists.

British Women's Liberation Groups started appearing in 1969. Numerous influences fed into the early movement. There was the 'self help' impulse and the quest for fulfilment beyond the kitchen sink evident in the NHR. There were also some American influences.[583] Generally though, the British Movement was more socialist in orientation and, in this respect, it drew upon influences from the Labour movement, from Marxist groups and the New Left, and from Trotskyist and even Maoist groups. Many early recruits to the WLM came from left groups, where they had been alienated by attitudes towards women but there were also housewives,

[578] Status of Women Committee, *Votes for Women 1918-1968, Golden Jubilee Celebration.* Dame Joan Vickers was, rightly, very proud of having organised this Jubilee event. It remained one of her strongest and fondest memories of her involvement with the women's movement. Interview with Dame Joan Vickers, April 1991, Recording available at WomL, 8NLS/6/1&2.
[579] Stott, *Before I Go*, p. 21.
[580] *The Times*, 28 March 1968.
[581] Cited in Mary Stott (?), 'Draft of untitled article', n.d. (c. 1973), WomL, 6 WIM/C/04.
[582] Bruley, *Women in Britain*, p. 149.
[583] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge,* pp. 52-60

mothers, and white-collar workers.[584] Overall, members were predominately young, white and middle-class. Early activity focused in small groups where women discussed their experiences and ideas in ways that allowed them to explore the multi-faceted and interconnected nature of women's oppression. The central tenet of the movement – 'the personal is political' - allowed women to draw political conclusions.[585] Whatever their differences, women's liberationists agreed that the liberation of women required nothing less than the transformation of society. At the WLM's first conference at Ruskin College in 1970, four demands were agreed: Equal Pay, Equal Education and Opportunity, 24-Hour Nurseries, and Free Contraception and Abortion on Demand.[586] It should be noted though that to focus solely on the demands of the WLM is to misunderstand it. The demands were initially adopted at the prompting of Maoist and Trotskyist groups 'concerned that the movement would disintegrate into 'psychological' discussions of problems. As Rowbotham pointed out, the demands did not reflect any organisational developments within the movement. They were 'handy answers for…when we don't know how to reply to the question 'But what do you want?'[587]

Many of the women were active within new feminist groups and also within other groups, or trade unions. Feminist ideas could also be transmitted through personal friendships or family connections. For example, Tony Benn, not the earliest of converts to feminism, was challenged by his daughter about the sexual division of labour at home. Melissa put up posters in the hallway (cartoons of her mother hovering) and leafleted her father to 'End Sexism in the Benn Household.'[588] Banks claimed that many of the older women's organisations 'not only held aloof' from the new movement, but felt alienated by much of its message.'[589] Kathleen Haplin is representative of this reaction. Born in 1903, she first became involved with the feminist movement in 1920. She recalled her impressions of the new, young, women's liberationists:

[584] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, pp. 5-12.
[585] Setch, 'Women's Liberation Movment', p. 8; For example see 'The London Women's Liberation Workshop Manifesto', *Shrew* (Decemeber 1970).
[586] Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 23-4.
[587] S. Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain' (1972), in M. Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, pp. 23-4.
[588] Description of Benn's early response to women's liberation given by one of his women's liberationist constituents. Interview with Helen Taylor, 3 September 2008. Account of Benn Household related by Melissa Benn in interview on *Women's Hour,* Tx 9 May 2009, BBC Radio 4.
[589] Banks, *Politics of British Feminism*, p. 26.

> …there wasn't any common ground because they were as different, if not more, than the suffragettes…to the suffragists… I remember…saying, 'Well we quite all us agree that society wants changing. Now, what are you going to put in place of it…How are you going to change it? And they said, 'Oh, that's what we're trying to do. That's actually what we're trying to find out.' So I said [or thought] that they were anarchists really…They were trying to destroy everything before they had anything to build on…I mean, everything they did was negative really.[590]

Haplin's views were not shared by all. The Status of Women Committee discussed the 'impact of Women's Lib on public opinion' and concluded: 'provided the Committee did the serious work which was its function, there was no need to be diverted by Lib activities…there were both advantages and disadvantages…from the publicity achieved by Women's Lib.'[591] There were also would-be bridge builders, personified at their most enthusiastic by Mary Stott. Born in 1907, lifetime supporter of 'The Cause', Stott sought to avoid aligning herself with one section of the movement in opposition to another:[592]

> Some, chiefly the 'Trads', members of the older women's organisations with which I have been involved since my youth and whose work for the betterment of women's lives I have so long admired, may think some of my views too permissive. Some of the younger women, the 'Libs' whom I have come to know and love in the last decade in the women's liberation movement may think me moralistic, prejudiced and soaked in out-of-date sex prejudices…I tend to think of myself as a 'Trad-Lib'.[593]

In 1973 Novora, another bridge builder, provided this assessment:

> To those actively [in the Women's Movement] involved it presents a confusing kaleidoscope of organisations, objectives and activities, despite the existence of numerous co-ordinating bodies and inter-organisation committees. …Groups unite for specific campaigns – equal pay and anti-discrimination are notable examples of this – but on the whole, fragmentation is more in evidence than co-operation.[594]

Some feminists maintained their claim to equal rights on the basis of their difference from men. Dora Russell, for example, an experienced feminist activist, wrote in 1968 that she had never seen the point 'in fighting to get women into politics, if they were just the same as men.' She

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590 Interview with Kathleen Mary Haplin. September 1990, Recording available at WomL, 8NLS/2/15.
591 Minutes of the Status of Women Committee, Liaison Committee, 24 May 1971, WomL, S/SWC/A3.
592 Stott, *Before I Go*, p. 48.
593 Ibid. p. ix.
594 Novarra, 'The Next Five Years', p. 2. WomL, 6WIM/F/02.

believed women's nurturing role should be celebrated rather than denigrated and argued that modern women were bored by home and small children because work outside the home had been overvalued whilst domestic work and work with children had been undervalued.[595] However, this was not a prominent view among feminists at this time. Early women's liberation in particular was characterised by its rejection of traditional female roles.[596] To the extent that any feminists agreed with Russell, feminisms grounded in female difference were all too easily exploited by those seeking to justify inequalities. Patricia de Jour's analysis of the changing role and status of women in *The Times* illustrates this:

> Everyone is perfectly justified in expecting a worthwhile return for his-or her-labours. But I wonder whether…we do not fall too easily into the trap of equating 'rewarding' with 'money'…Haven't we made their [modern women's] world spin too fast by seeking to give them an equality written too heavily in economic terms?[597]

For this reason, some feminists agreed with the conclusions of the Conference on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, discussed above, and argued the necessity of treating women and men as exact equals. The NCCL employed this argument in *Women* when it proposed that debates over 'women's roles' and 'women's rights' should be considered as 'completely separate issues' so that arguments about roles could not be used to justify lack of rights. However, most feminists were aware that this overlooked many of the key realities of women's lives, their childbearing function and the social, cultural and economic dimensions of their roles as 'housewives'.[598] Many reformist women's rights activists took something from each approach. They accepted women's 'dual role' as a new fact, born of economic and demographic circumstances, and sought ways to integrate that with a feminist agenda.[599] To this end, common proposals included improved provision for the training of women, equal employment opportunities, greater provision of part-time work, more nursery places, better access to birth control and abortion and improved provision for maternity leave.[600] Banks has

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[595] Quoted in Wilson, *Halfway to Paradise*, pp. 179-180.
[596] Homans, 'Wages for Housework'.
[597] *The Times*, 15 May 1967. A stance barely removed from the view of the British Housewives' League who considered 'Coo, Mum, that was jolly good' to be 'heart-lifting payment for the properly home centred woman. Cited in John Barr, 'The Modern Suffragettes', *New Society*, 17 December 1964, p. 7.
[598] NCCL, *Women*, p. 3.
[599] Banks, *Politics of British Feminism*, p. 25.
[600] The National Council of Women of Great Britain, 'Working Mothers and their Children', January 1966, MRC, MSS 292B 821/1; Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, pp. 256 & 274-5. See also the collection of essays Hunkins-Hallihan (ed.), *In Her Own Right*.

labelled this form of feminism – with its focus on measures designed to make 'the lives of working-class wives and mothers easier' – 'working-class feminism'.[601] As we will see below, conservative feminism might be an equally appropriate label.[602]

Another form of 'working-class feminism' found expression in the approach of key Labour women such as Lena Jeger and Barbara Castle, though Castle would have been reticent about accepting the label in the 1960s.[603] Here, inequality between the sexes was seen in the context of an unequal society.[604] One of Jeger's favourite quotes was Tennyson's: 'The woman's cause is man's. They rise or fall together.'[605] Ever present within these traditions was an impatience with the general population of women, with their apparent failure to recognise their second-class status, and with their unwillingness to combat those injustices.[606] Although women's liberation was more consciously aware of the need to consider the reality of women's lives, particularly working-class women, and the need to avoid blaming women for the strategies they used to cope with their oppression, this tendency did not entirely disappear.[607]

Although the emergence of an active and vibrant feminist movement impacted public opinion, its impact was not always what feminists intended.[608] Ordinary women's liberationists, acutely aware of the fact that their movement was predominantly 'young, white, highly educated and middle class', were keen to reach out to 'ordinary working-class housewives'[609] However, there was clearly some distance between their values, and those of the women they sought to liberate. In 1971, for example, Marge Proops, a well-known *Mirror* columnist and self-declared 'battler for women's freedom' asked if 'the Women's Liberation Movement [is] inadvertently in danger of doing more harm than good to the women they aim to liberate?' She answered a firm, 'yes',

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601 Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, p. 251-2.
602 See below, pp. 187-8 and 205.
603 Perkins, *Red Queen*, pp. 334-5. See also Castle's comments in B. Castle, 'No Kitchen Cabinet', in *Very Heaven: Looking Back at the 1960s*, p. 51.
604 Castle's biographer suggests that her concern for women's rights should be seen as a socialist's concern for the 'underdog': 'gender was relevant only because more women were underdogs than men. See Perkins, *Red Queen*, pp. 334-5.
605 Lena Jeger, 'Power in Our Hands', in Hunkins-Hallinan (ed.), *In Her Own Right*, p. 155. For more on Jeger see Phillips, *Divided House*, pp. 161-2.
606 John Barr, 'The New Suffragettes', *New Society*, 17 December 1964, p. 7; Minutes of the Status of Women Committee, 12 July 1966, WomL, 7 AMP/B/01/4. For example, Dee Wells exhorted Britain's working women, 'Off with those mental yashmaks'. See *Herald*, 31 January 1963.
607 For example, Germaine Greer interviewed on *Women's Hour*, Tx 4 February 1971. Partial transcript available at BBCw, Scripts room.
608 Banks, *Politics of British Feminism*, p. 133.
609 Setch, 'Women's Liberation Movement', p. 57. See also *Women's Report* (May-June, 1977).

and worried that she and her fellow feminists were making their more 'unquestioning' sisters feel 'guilty', or causing them to question their long-held values. In her view, 'if a woman is happy to stay at home and be a loving wife and mother, she's entitled to do so without guiltily worrying whether she should engage in the battle for freedom.'[610] Proops was a relatively sympathetic commentator. Much information was relayed by a media which was not above presenting a wilfully distorted picture. Even apparently sympathetic commentary could subvert the message. One early article in the *Sun*, for example, asked 'While more and more cry for liberation, is it true the majority really want things to stay the way they are?' The *Sun's* 'Pacesetter', Ann Monsarrat, opined:

> The saddest thing about the current battle of the sexes is that it has brought the image of wife and mother into almost total disrepute…At least two generations of women have been made to feel dissatisfied, ill-used and foolish by the great Liberation revival…It has made them resentful of their husbands and unwilling to enjoy sharing in their success; and fed up with their children…all it offers is pie in the sky. Because, for most women, alternative employment can only be a different form of drudgery. It means work in an office, a factory, or a shop, with a boss breathing down your neck.[611]

Monsarrat conceded that there might be some 'really good causes for the militants to work on' like the unfair discrimination in the tax system and the fact that some jobs were still 'absolutely closed to women.' However, the tone of authentic concern was called into question by accompanying illustrations. The headline, 'It's silly to swop one set of chains for yet another', was illustrated by a large photograph of a young woman perched on a stool, clad in a bikini and chains, gazing mournfully into the camera.[612]

Most of the population were largely unaware of the details and nuances of the women's movement and feminist ideas. To many, women's liberation was a movement of middle-class women concerned with middle-class women's needs. It was widely perceived as anti-men, anti-family, and generally extremist or batty (or a mixture of both).[613] There was also a belief, even among women who had long fought for things like equal pay and nurseries, that women's liberation 'glorified' outside work as a means of liberation.[614] Nonetheless, Doris Lessing, an

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[610] *Daily Mirror*, 25 March 1971, p. 11. Ingham, *Now we are Thirty*, p. 139.
[611] *The Sun*, 22 February 1971, p. 9
[612] Ibid.
[613] Neustatter, *Hyenas in Petticoats*, p. 226; Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 212; Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 415-6.
[614] Rowbotham, 'Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, p. 26. See also Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, p. 158.

astute observer of her times, believed even in 1971 that the advent of Women's Liberation meant that feminist concerns were being more seriously and widely discussed even if, as she noted, 'there was a tendency among those who had been previously hostile or indifferent to say, 'I support their aims but I don't like their shrill voices and nasty ill-mannered ways.'[615]

Conclusion

It is not necessary to downplay the dedication, hard work, or even influence of the women's movement, to note that the same economic and demographic circumstances which helped give rise to the re-emergence of British feminism also created pressures for reforms and an environment more conducive to their acceptance. Despite the growing economic reliance upon married women workers, at the national and household level, the resilience of the male breadwinner paradigm was evident. This created certain pressures and tenesions. Culturally and socially, there may have been a greater trend towards 'crossover' but the gender division of labour remained remarkably robust. Paid employment offered many married women an otherwise unobtainable degree of financial independence, but the cost was often a double shift comprising poorly paid and unpaid work. An individual couple determined to go against the grain would have found that unequal pay, unequal opportunities, and inadequate provision for maternity leave meant that husbands could usually earn more. Thus, if one partner was to subordinate employment to domestic and child-care responsibilities, it usually made economic sense that it was the wife. By earning more, the husband retained his 'masculine' identity as 'the family's supporter' which, in turn, was likely to discourage him from greater efforts in the home.[616] In the home, most domestic and caring work continued to be done by women. In the labour market, and in the minds of policy makers and politicians (even those who knew better), men continued to see themselves, and continued to be seen, as primary breadwinners whose right to a family wage usurped women's rights to be treated as an equal part of the labour force.

The difficulties imposed upon women, as they combined, in various ways, the roles of mother, wife and worker, varied markedly depending upon class, education, age, and so on. Although most never became feminist or women's rights activists, or even accept the label 'feminist', the 1960s saw an increasingly assertive articulation of the disjuncture between the rhetoric of

[615] Author's preface to *The Golden Notebook,* June 1971, in D. Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (London, 1972), p. 8.
[616] Smith Wilson, 'Good Working Mother', 224

equality and the reality. There was an element of serendipity about the coincidence of the convergence of events around 1968. Looking back, Mary Stott thought there was 'something in the stars favourable to the women's cause in…that *anno mirabile*.'[617] In the Conservative Party, policy makers reflected upon the strong force with which this particular wind of change was blowing.'[618] There was no defined feminist programme and feminists did not speak with one voice. As we shall see below, some of those who would prove among the most determined champions of women's rights or of particular reforms, did not even identify as feminist, or at least, with the new Women's Liberation Movement. Yet, the opportunities provided for the women's movement by the events in 1968, brought with them stategic certain risks also. As the following chapters show, the growing prominence of a language of individualistic 'equal rights', 'equal opportunity', and 'discrimination' made it easier to articulate some of the injustices women suffered, but only in so far as they were analogous to those experienced by other minority groups. As the battle for equal pay illustrated only too clearly, attempts to articulate and redress the inequalities that women endured as a result of their being 'women', in biological, cultural, or socio-economic terms, would prove more challenging.

[617] Stott, *Before I Go*, p. 23.

[618] Conservative Research Department, 'Third Draft for Pamphlet on Equal Pay', nd (January 1970), p. 1, CPA, CRD 3/38/4. They mentioned factors such as the equal pay obligations under the Treaty of Rome, the Race Relations Act which 'by outlawing one form of discrimination has made other forms seem more objectionable and anomalous than before', the Fords strike witch 'drew attention to the low grading given to much work done by women' and the 50th anniversary of women's suffrage which 'reminded many that equality of opportunity for women was still not fully achieved.'

(UN)EQUAL PAY

The 1970 Equal Pay Act marked a milestone in British Women's history. It represented the end of a decades' long battle and signalled the beginning of a vibrant period of British feminism, and the start of the most active period of policy making in the area of women's rights for half a century. This chapter discusses the events leading up to the Act, and the debates surrounding it. It highlights and analyses the key impediments to equal pay. Most immediately apparent was the explicit reluctance of employers to pay women the same as men. Less apparent, but no less obstructive, was the reluctance of political parties, Governments, and trade unions to enact in practice the principal they endorsed in public. Aversion to equal pay stemmed, most immediately, from economic concerns. But, since equal pay presented a direct challenge to the male breadwinner family ideal, it was also deeply rooted in social and cultural contexts. These concerns were coloured and overlaid, in various ways, by ideological and political beliefs. As we shall see below, that there were identifiable divergences in the approach of the main political parties, and other interested parties such as the trade unions. Overall, as we shall see, the episode raised more questions than it answered. The sewing machinists' strike at Fords and subsequent and related developments demonstrated that there were fundamental difficulties associated with attempts to articulate and realise equal pay in an unequal labour market. Equal pay, in theory at least, could not be granted in isolation since it undermined the assumptions upon which social security, and numerous other policies and social and economic arrangements were based. As the issue of 'protection' for women workers came to the fore again, it became evident that, for many women, the offer of equality implied in the Equal Pay Act was something of a double edged sword. Instead of the concession embodied in the Equal Pay Act serving to quell demands for women's equality, it acted to prompt further interrogation into the causes of, and explanations for, sex inequalities.

Resistance to Equal Pay

The international political climate after 1945 rendered it essentially impossible to openly oppose the principle of equal pay.[619] In 1951 the ILO passed Convention 100 calling for equal pay for 'work of equal value.'[620] Six years later, the Treaty of Rome insisted on the rather more

[619] Briar, *Working for Women*, pp. 99-100. See also above, pp. 70-71.
[620] 'Report of the Working Party on Equal Pay', 27 October 1965, pp. 38 - 41, TNA LAB 10/2529.

achievable equal pay for 'the same work.'[621] This was apparently at the insistence of the French who believed – or flattered themselves – that they had achieved equal pay and were worried about competition from fellow signatories.[622] Yet, despite publicly expressed support for the principal of equal pay, governments of both parties actively sought to avoid its implementation, mainly on economic grounds. Although, as we shall see, claims of affordability reflected hierarchies of priorities as much as anything else, and equal pay, for various reasons discussed below, was not a political priority, unless it was forced on to the agenda by activists.

In 1947 the Labour Government announced that it supported the principle of equal pay but that it was unable to implement it because it would be inflationary and detrimental to the British economy.[623] The following year, the TUC moved to side with the government despite having issued an apparent clarion call for equal pay the previous year.[624] The Equal Pay Campaign Committee continued to campaign using methods such as mass rallies, leafleting and questioning of election candidates. The uncertain outcome of the 1950 General Election encouraged both main parties to include a commitment to equal pay in their manifestos.[625] In 1951, the new Conservative Government pledged to make a start on equal pay as soon as the economic and financial condition of the country allowed.[626] Yet when, in 1952 the House of Commons passed a motion in favour of equal pay, the Government declined to act on financial grounds. [627] In 1954, with another General Election approaching, the Government was forced to re-examine its position. Cabinet minutes show that there was no desire to implement equal pay since it was believed that it would place an increased economic burden on government, on local government and, if the principle were applied across the board, on British industry generally.[628] Peter Thorneycroft, then President of the Board of Trade, argued that if the Government was seriously committed to improving competitiveness, any 'spare' money should be spent on reducing the burden of taxation. Addressing the concerns of his colleagues, he observed that political pressure for equal pay was nothing new:

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[621] Ibid. p. 42.
[622] National Women Officer of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers to George Woodcock, 29 December 1960, MRC, MSS: 292B/118/3. See also, Transcript of Interview with Nancy Seear, p. 41, WomL, 8/NLS/4/3.
[623] Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, p. 233.
[624] Ibid. pp. 234-5. Boston refers to a 1947 TUC pamphlet, *The Q & A of Equal Pay*.
[625] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, pp. 300-301.
[626] Quoted in Top Secret Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 24 March 1954, TNA CAB 128/40.
[627] Briar, *Working for Women*, p. 100.
[628] Top Secret Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 24 March 1954, TNA CAB 128/40.

> For years past governments which had been committed to the principle of equal pay had contrived to avoid applying it in practice, even though proposals to do so would have been carried by a substantial majority in the House of Commons.'[629]

What Thorneycroft did not acknowledge was that no government could be sure that the next would continue to conspire in this hypocrisy. This potential if unpredictable ratchet effect suggested that equal pay was, ultimately, inevitable. Over two Cabinet meetings the Chancellor, Rab Butler, persuaded his colleagues to accept a limited and gradual introduction of equal pay in the non-industrial civil service as a matter of political expediency.[630] He explained that the Conservatives were 'deeply committed' to equal pay and that it would be very difficult to frame a statement for their next manifesto without repeating the 'financial conditions formula' or 'coming out against equal pay'. It would be difficult to claim the former, Butler noted, while also claiming that the Conservatives had overseen a general improvement in Britain's economic and financial condition.[631] Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, maintained that equal pay was 'economically indefensible' and, he added, women might lose jobs. However, he continued, 'if it is going to happen anyhow, we might get credit.'[632] In this vein, the Cabinet Minutes record, 'a general disposition to accept this [equal pay] as a necessary evil.'[633] Despite Thorneycroft's continued objections, Cabinet committed to a very limited introduction of equal pay on the grounds that there was no 'great risk that it would cause the principle of equal pay to be applied generally throughout industry', thereby hopefully avoiding the imposition of any new economic burden.[634] The equal pay that was implemented in instalments between 1955 and 1961 was exceedingly limited. Since it only applied only to civil service grades where there was common recruitment of men and women, it excluded large numbers of women's jobs like typing. In 1956 a similar scheme was applied to teachers, the gas and electricity boards, and the NHS but there was no suggestion that the principle might be extended. Nonetheless, middle-class women had largely achieved their primary objectives and the Equal Pay Campaign Committee voted to dissolve itself at the end of 1955.[635]

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[629] Ibid.
[630] Ibid; Top Secret Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 31 March 1954, TNA CAB 128/40.
[631] Top Secret Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 31 March 1954, TNA CAB 128/40.
[632] Cabinet Notebooks for Cabinet Meeting of 24 March 1954, TNA CAB 195/12.
[633] Top Secret Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 24 March 1954, TNA CAB 128/40.
[634] Top Secret Minutes of Cabinet Meeting of 31 March 1954, TNA CAB 128/40.
[635] Briar, *Working for Women,* p. 100; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* pp. 300-301.

Pressure for equal pay increased again from the beginning of the 1960s as the absence of further progress became obvious.[636] In 1961 the TUC's General Secretary, George Woodcock, wrote to the Minister of Labour asking the Government to ratify the ILOs convention on equal pay. During the exchange that followed, Woodcock and the TUC publicly acknowledged that real progress towards equal pay might require legislation.[637] This was an important departure from the usual insistence on free collective bargaining and it carried an implicit admission of failure on the part of the trade union movement to do more than pay lip service to equal pay. The Government, however, expressed a deep reluctance to interfere with the principle of free collective bargaining.[638] Publicly, they announced they were 'unable to accept the case for immediate action' but that 'careful consideration would be given to the views of the TUC.' The matter was kicked back into the long grass.[639]

Although the ILO Convention on equal pay carried little weight with policy makers, there was a belief that government might take its potential obligations under the Treaty of Rome more seriously.[640] There is little evidence to suggest this was the case. On the ground, UK employers did not believe equal pay to be a fact in the Common Market and they therefore perceived no obligation to implement it, in practice, in the event of the UK joining. Indeed, they feared that it would damage their competitiveness.[641] The Treaty's definition of equal pay - the same pay for the *same* work – was as narrow as possible. In 1962, using this definition, the Ministry of Labour estimated that equal pay would add 4-5 per cent to the national wages bill. Officials proposed that the UK should be prepared to introduce equal pay three years after accession to the Common Market', and that they should be prepared, if necessary, to give effect Treaty's equal pay provision. Tellingly however, when officials prepared papers on the subject, Ministers

[636] The TUC conducted a survey on progress towards equal pay in 1960. Many of the responses make for less than heartening reading. See for example, F. Cousins to G. Woodcock, 29 December 1960, MRC, MSS: 292B/118/3; National Woman Officer of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers to George Woodcock, 29 December 1960, MRC, MSS 292B/118/3.
[637] G. Woodcock to J. Hare, 28 July 1961, TNA LAB 10/1623
[638] Meeting with Economic Committee of the TUC, 28 November 1961, TNA LAB 10/1623.
[639] Ministry of Labour, 'Press Release: the Minister of Labour Meets TUC about Equal Pay', 28 November 1961, TNA LAB 10/1623.
[640] For notes on the ILO Convention see Meeting with Economic Committee of the TUC, TNA LAB 10/1623. It was not customary for the UK to ratify ILO conventions until after their requirements had been met. For notes on the Treaty of Rome obligation, see also Ministry of Labour, 'The Minister of Labour Meets TUC about Equal Pay', TNA LAB 10/1623.
[641] B. Castle, *The Castle Diaries, 1964-1970* (London, 1984), 24 October 1968. To a great extent, they appear to have been correct. See Ministry of Labour, 'Experience in Other Countries', December 1966, TNA LAB 10/2378.

either neglected to take them to meetings or Committees merely 'took note.'[642] The reason for this apparent indifference was that a decision had been taken to 'adopt policies which would facilitate [Britain's] eventual joining the Common Market unless positive disadvantages would flow from their adoption'. Equal pay fell into the latter category.[643] It is worth noting also that when the CBI later questioned the Ministry of Labour's assertion that membership would 'necessitate' legislation, the Ministry's legal expert found 'some support' for the CBI's objection. It was not entirely clear to him that entry into Europe would 'necessitate legislation in order to give the individual a legally enforceable right to equal pay.'[644]

Pressure for equal pay continued to mount in the labour movement. The 1963 Labour Party Conference was promised that if Labour were returned to office, they would 'at an early stage in its first term in office, seek ways and means of implementing [equal pay]'.[645] Labour's 1964 and 1966 manifestos repeated the commitment.[646] Labour's General Election victories heightened expectations.[647] Despite their continued phlegmatic approach, trade unions also began to press harder on the issue. Some of their women members had lost patience with the seemingly endless delays and excuses and had decided to make their voices heard against a backdrop in which women's rights were beginning to rise up the public agenda.[648] The Labour Government, ever mindful of the economic and social implications of equal pay, were less exercised. Publicly, Wilson sought to avoid any perception that the government was rowing back on its commitment but, privately, he did not push for action, even when the opportunity arose.[649] Similarly, Ray Gunter, Minister for Labour between 1964 and 1968, displayed neither urgency nor enthusiasm. The Government's position was best summarised in a 1965 letter to the TUC:

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642 Equal Pay, Note for the Chairman, 19 February 1962, TNA LAB 10/2094.
643 J.A. Tannerhill to Gillett, 7 May 1964, TNA, LAB 10/2094.
644 H. Huxham to I.F Hudson, (n.d.) December 12 1966, TNA LAB 10/2878.
645 Cited in Resolutions Received, Home Policy Sub-Committee, Re.191, September 1967, Bangor, Bangor University Wisca Archives [hereafter WISCA], NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 876.
646 Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto 1964;* Labour Party, *General Elecion Manifesto 1966.*
647 See for example, see Home Policy Committee, Resolutions Received, 31 January 1966 – 25 February 1966, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 829.
648 The General Secretary of the Newcastle and Discrict Trades Council wrote to Gunter specifically on this issue describing 'the rising anger and impatience of women workers through this ever continuing delay in the implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal value work…' W. Collins to R. Gunter, 9 November 1967, TNA, LAB 10/2396. See also Annual Report TUC 1966, p. 415, cited in Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions,* pp. 266-7.
649 P. Shore to H. Wilson, 27 May 1965, PREM 13/3554; Prime Minister's Office to P. Parker, 6 July 1965, London, National Archives, PREM 13/3554. This correspondence refers to a negative report in the *Sun,* 27 May 1965. See also J. Wood to Miss A.M. Pierotti, 23 February 1966, TNA LAB 10/2396.

> The full implementation of equal pay is a task of very great magnitude which raises important and complex economic and social questions. A full appraisal of all these matters will take time but we shall complete it as soon as possible.[650]

This was, however, a step forwards from the old argument that equal pay would be too economically detrimental to introduce. Gunter established a civil service working party to undertake the appraisal.[651] Their correspondence and draft reports reveals a considerable reluctance to advocate equal pay and a deep reluctance to legislate. As usual, the immediate concern was cost. Yet there was also apprehension over the potentially profound social implications.[652] Working party officials believed that the most important 'social consequence' of equal pay would be 'quite a sharp relative decline in the standards of a married man with a dependent family.'[653] A civil servant from the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance put the case most strongly:

> I…agree with the Treasury that we must try to reckon up what equal pay might ultimately cost not only in holding back wage advances…but in terms of the full acceptance and enforcement by the Government that the doctrine of the concept of the 'family wage' (which has much older roots than the TUC or the women's movements!) is officially dead. To put the issue provocatively, all families would come to be regarded as 'fatherless families' and…the responsibility of the State.[654]

Against this, was a clear awareness of the need to encourage more women into the labour market. The working party speculated about the potential effects of equal pay on women's desire to work. Margret Weaver pointed out that if more industrial women workers achieved equal pay, the relative position of the private domestic cleaner ('which is purely women's work') would decline thereby discouraging women from undertaking such work. This meant that highly qualified married women, who often relied upon such help, might actually be less able to undertake employment.[655] Her argument was echoed in a 1971 PEP report which argued that dual career families, with highly qualified women in high level employment, would be heavily

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[650] R. Gunter to G. Woodcock, 19 May 1965, London, National Archives, PREM 13/3554.
[651] Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, p. 128.
[652] M.E Johnston to J.L.B Garcia, 28 July 1965, TNA, LAB 10/2529; M.E Johnston to C.J Maston, 13 August 1965, TNA, LAB 10/2529; Working Party on Equal Pay, Draft Minutes of the Third Meeting, 12 August 1965, TNA, LAB 10/2529; Draft Report of the Working Party on Equal Pay, c. April 1965, TNA, LAB 10/2529.
[653] M.E Johnston to J.L.B Garcia, 28 July 1965, TNA, LAB 10/2529. They were well aware, though that, even when family allowances and tax allowances were taken into account, the family wage did not adequately meet the needs it pertained to. See 'Draft Report of Working Party on Equal Pay, April 1965, TNA LAB 10/2529, p. 12.
[654] J. Walley to C.J. Maston, 12 August 1965, TNA LAB 10/2529.
[655] M. Weaver to Sheriff[?] and Garcia, 9 August 1965, TNA LAB 10/2529.

reliant on servants.[656] It was also suggested that equal pay might induce married women to move from full-time to part-time work. Or that it might tempt more mothers out to work, perhaps leading to a rise in juvenile delinquency.[657] They also speculated that equal pay would create pressure for increased family allowances 'to offset the attraction which higher rates of pay might have for women with young children' and to compensate fathers of young children for the higher pay being given to women without similar family responsibilities.[658] It is easy to read this material as illustrative of the sexism and gendered attitudes that ran throughout government and the civil service. However, the circuitous, confused, and slightly tortured nature of the discussions, also reveals the extent to which women's unequal economic position was tightly bound up with the workings of society and the economy at every level. There was a fully warranted suspicion that a truly meaningful implementation of equal pay might involve nothing less than a social revolution.

Mindful of Labour's political commitments and unable to delay longer, the working party produced its report in October 1965. It was cautious in the extreme. One official later described it as 'not an impressive document.'[659] The report concluded that equal pay should be introduced within the strictures of the prices and incomes policy, a process which, at best rough estimate, would take seven to ten years. Legislation was not recommended. Instead the report proposed initiating discussions with the TUC and leading employers, namely the Confederation of British Industries (CBI), with a view to reaching a tripartite agreement on implementation through collective agreements.'[660] Gunter duly initiated talks with the CBI and the TUC in what Castle described as 'a non-committal way'.[661] The talks represented the first meeting between government and the two sides of industry on equal pay, but any cause for optimism ended there.[662] The CBI unhelpfully claimed it had no mandate to speak for its members and no obligation to discuss anything beyond the limited implications of Common Market

[656] PEP study, *Sex, Career, and Family*, conducted in the 1960s and published in 1971, cited in Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State*, pp. 166-7. For more discussion on this, see above, pp. 66 and 66n.
[657] Report of the Working Party on Equal Pay', paras 47 and 54, TNA LAB 10/2529.
[658] Ibid. para. 49.
[659] Ministry of Labour, 'Brief for the Minister's Meeting with the TUC and CBI', 7 December 1967, TNA LAB 10/3131.
[660] 'Report of the Working Party on Equal Pay', TNA LAB 10/2529.
[661] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 24 January 1966.
[662] Ministry of Labour, 'Brief for Parliamentary Secretary', 14 July 1966, TNA LAB 10/2878.

membership.[663] In so far as action might be necessary, they favoured a voluntary approach. The TUC, by contrast, favoured the ILO's much wider definition of equal pay. Although they conceded that 'voluntary methods were preferable', they requested that the Government set an example by implementing equal pay in the industrial civil service.[664] However, the Government's Economic Policy Committee had already rejected this idea, one which they must have suspected the TUC would suggest.[665]

Eight months later officials at the Ministry of Labour reported that the group had made 'very little progress.' Deadlock had been reached and there was no impetus to break it.[666] At the final meeting, in December 1967, the deadlock was reaffirmed and the group's actions were confined to agreeing to further studies.[667] Publicly, Government spokesman, Roy Hattersley, reaffirmed the Government's commitment to equal pay. He said that 'in the present economic circumstances' it was 'not possible to take immediate steps.' Although Common Market membership might necessitate a review of statutory wage legislation, the preference was still for voluntary methods. Another working group would be established to further study the cost implications and the implications of the Treaty of Rome.[668] In the interests of presentational politics, officials privately suggested that the working parties might like to present their work to the Minister at the beginning of 1969. Although the Government had be seen to maintaining some momentum, it was quite clearly accepted by all those closely involved that equal pay was not 'a matter of great urgency'.[669]

This political inertia was a fair reflection of the electorate's attitudes on the issue.[670] On the one hand, it was deemed politically very risky to openly and directly challenge the principle of equal pay. To have done so would have been to imply that women were somehow 'less equal' than men. On the other, Nancy Seear may well have been right to belive that the 'electorate would

[663] Ministry of Labour, Draft Note of a Joint Meeting with Representatives of the Trade Union Congress and the Confederation of Industry on Equal Pay, 18 July 1966, TNA LAB 10/2878.
[664] Ibid.
[665] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 24 January 1966.
[666] P.A. Mawson to Mr Lawrence, 8 March 1967, TNA LAB 10/2878.
[667] Ministry of Labour, Brief for the Minister's Meeting with the TUC and CBI' 7 December 1967, TNA LAB 10/3131.
[668] Ministry of Labour Press Notice, 7 December 1967, TNA LAB 10/2878.
[669] Brief For Chairman, Meeting with Officials of the CBI and TUC on 16 February 1968, TNA, LAB 10/3291. See also notes in Draft Report of the Working Party on Equal Pay, April 1965, para. 3, TNA LAB 10/2529
[670] Certainly, this was the view in the civil service. See Draft Report of the Working Party on Equal Pay, April 1965, para. 4, TNA LAB 10/2529

have voted against equal pay in a referendum suggests, public sentiment over equal pay was distinctly ambivalent.[671] As the CBI observed, 'political' pressures for equal pay were 'rarely reflected in wage negotiations' on the shop floor.[672] The 1968 Conservative commissioned survey on women's issues found that 72 per cent of those questioned (77 per cent of men and 67 per cent of women) agreed that 'it is right for men and women who are doing the same jobs to get equal pay.' There were no significant generational differences; the greatest difference was between social classes. One third of C2 (manual workers) respondents opposed the principle of equal pay.[673] Despite the majority support for equal pay for men and women doing the same jobs, there was less support for the idea that men and women *should* do the same jobs.[674] In this respect, it is arguable that much espoused support for equal pay stemmed from a desire to protect wages and maintain the idea of the 'rate for the job', as much as it did from any notion of gender equality.[675] Revealingly, when the questionnaire asked about equal pay in the context of the family wage argument - should women 'get equal pay with men doing the same job if the woman concerned is single and the man has a wife and family?' - overall support fell to 59 percent. Among the C2s, support fell to just 53 per cent.[676] There was almost certainly a high degree of sexism and male chauvinism here, but many respondents would have considered themselves fair minded. The notion of fairness encapsulated in equal pay often collided with the notion of fairness embodied in the family wage. In 1966, for example, an official of the National Federation of Professional Workers exaplained that, as far as she understood, the basis of the argument against equal pay 'is that a man has a wife and children to support.' A woman teacher,

[671] Transcript of Interview with Nancy Seear, 2 & 15 February 1991, p. 33 WomL, 8/NLS/4/3. The *Daily Mirror* was unsure enough that it ran an 'Equal Pay Competition' to 'test the opinion of...female readers. Information given to the Public Relations Company employed by the Status of Women Committee. See Minutes of a Meeting of the Status of Women Committee, 4 May 1970, WomL, 5/SWC/A2.

[672] Note for the Record, Equal Pay – Meeting with the CBI, 22 July 1968, TNA LAB 10/2378.

[673] Opinion Research Centre, 'Women's Interests and Problems', p. 7 CPA, CCO 180/33/1/1. Unfortunately, the data was not broken down by sex *and* age *and* class.

[674] Ibid. p. 8.

[675] The General and Municipal Workers Union (GMWU) investigated low pay in 1967 and 1968. They were most disturbed by evidence showing that 'one and a quarter million *adult male full-time workers* were earning less than £15 a week'. They recognised that most women were also low paid and resolved to tackle the issue, partly because it would prevent employers using 'the threat of substituting cheap female labour as a device to drag down male earnings.' They observed that 'industries employing a large number of women tend also to have a large number of low paid men.. See 'Low Pay: Statement to be presented ot the Annual Congress of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, 53rd Congress', 20-23rd May, 1968. Bodelian Lib., MS Wilson, 805.This duality of support for equal pay had a long history. See above, pp. 18-19.

[676] Opinion Research Centre, 'Women's Interests and Problems', p. 8. CPA, CCO 180/33/1/1.

for example, could afford 'continental holidays' whilst 'a married man can hardly afford to go to Southend.'[677]

With the CBI opposed, the TUC unenthusiastic, public opinion non-committal, and the government willing to accept any excuse to evade its commitment, there seems no reason to suspect that there would have been any action on equal pay at this time. Two developments changed the course of events. One was the Fords Strike of 1968. The other was Gunter's replacement by Barbara Castle in April 1968.[678] Initially, Castle seemed willing to repeat the line articulated by Gunter: the Government was committed to the principle of equal pay but, unfortunately, economic conditions precluded action.[679] Less than one month before the Fords strike hit the headlines, Castle reiterated that position to Joyce Butler, who was then attempting to introduce an Anti-Sex Discrimination Bill under the ten minute rule. She told Butler that the fight for equal pay required women to join trade unions adding, somewhat cryptically, that if equal pay were achieved 'the inducement to women to join trade unions would be diminished.'[680] A cynical Richard Crossman thought that Castle used equal pay as a means of attempting 'to make good' her reputation after the failure of *In Place of Strife*.[681] Yet, despite all of this, Castle's diary suggests that she was more committed to equal pay than her colleagues.[682] As a socialist, she was also less resigned to the plight of the low paid worker than her predecessor.[683] As a woman (and one in the unusual position of receiving equal pay), Castle also felt the sting of the injustice of blatant sex discrimination more personally and sharply than her male colleagues.[684] Her new Ministerial position necessitated close involvement with industrial disputes where her experiences confirmed her suspicions that trade unions afforded a much lower priority to women's equal pay than they did to the pay and conditions of skilled male

[677] Quoted in Hudson, *Men and Women*, p. 68.
[678] Fielding, *Labour Party and Cultural Change*, p. 129.
[679] Castle to the Secretary of Battersea Labour Party n.d (April 1968) LAB 10/2396 cited in Fielding, *Labour and Cultural Change*, p. 129.
[680] Note for the Record, 21 May 1968, TNA, LAB 10/3310.
[681] R. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* (London, 1977), 12 October 1969.
[682] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 24 January 1966.
[683] Compare B. Castle, Policy for Productivity, Prince and Incomes: Draft White Paper: Low Paid Workers, 11 November 1969, TNA, CAB 129/145 with R. Gunter and P. Shore, 'Prices and Incomes: Low Paid Workers', 20 March 1968, TNA CAB 129/136/25.
[684] In 1972 she was asked if she thought a man would have pushed equal pay through. She replied, 'No…I wouldn't have got the policy through Cabinet at a time of great economic difficulty if I hadn't been a woman and therefore cared passionately about it.' Quote taken form Anthony King, *Women in Politics*, Tx. Radio Four, 14 January 1972, BBCw, Scripts Room.

workers.[685] Motivations aside, Castle was a tenacious politician, a quality that would prove invaluable in the fight for equal pay.[686]

The Strike of the Ford's Sewing Machinists

The strike of the Fords' sewing machinists was not an entirely isolated incident but its impact was spectacular. Since it occurred only weeks after the Jubilee celebrations, it came at a time when women's rights were close to the forefront of public consciousness. The strike challenged the notion that women were docile workers who didn't really care about the same issues as men. The press, guessing that the strike and particularly the strikers would capture the public imagination, gave the event the oxygen of publicity, even if they often persisted in using gendered and patronising language.[687] The Fords strike provided a sympathetic Castle with an opportunity to re-open the equal pay issue. Although the strike is best remembered as the equal pay strike, there was some debate, then and since, as to whether it was about equal pay or job grading.[688] In practice, the two issues are near inseparable. The events at Fords illustrated in microcosm the complex interrelationships between the factors which underpinned women's economic inequality and demonstrated some the some of the key difficulties associated with attempts to define and win a meaningful form of equal pay for women.

In Britain, about 900 of Ford's 42,000 employees were women; about half of these were employed to make seat covers and other interior padding for cars.[689] Relatively speaking, the women were well paid, earning 8s 5 ½ d per hour at a time when most women earned about 5s.[690] It is important to emphasise that the sewing machinists' strike was some months in the making, and was bound up with wider developments at Fords. Prior to 1967, Ford's employees had been graded, as across much of industry, as skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled and women.

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[685] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 9 September 1969. See also entries for 18 October 1968, and Monday 24 January 1966.
[686] Crossman's diaries suggest that, over time, the Equal Pay Bill came to be seen as Castle's hobby horse, a nuisance Bill. See Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 12 October 1969; 27 January 1670; 14 May 1970.
[687] For example, see talk of a 'Petticoat Revolt' in *The Times*, 17 June 1968. See also Donnelly, *Sixties*, p. 163. He describes the reporting of the 'plucky girls.' See also *The Times*, 29 June 1968. Many feminists may also have winced at what Germaine Greer described as 'the disgusting expedient of [Castle] having a cuppa with the women and talking it over heart to heart'. See Greer, *Female Eunuch*, p. 117.
[688] For a modern interperation of the strike focusing on the achievement of equal pay see Nigel Cole, *Made in Dagenham* (Paramount Home Entertainment, 2011). For discussion of the ambiguity surrounding the nature of the strike see, for example, Transcript of Interview with Nancy Seear, p. 34, WomL, 8/NLS/4/3.
[689] *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Sir Jack Scamp into a dispute concerning sewing machinists employed by the Ford Motor Company Ltd.* Cmnd. 3749 (London, 1968), p. 8.
[690] J. Morton, 'Equal Pay for Women in Seven Years', in *New Society*, 8 August 1968, p. 193.

Women's basic pay was 92 per cent of unskilled male workers. In July 1967, following lengthy negotiations between Fords and the unions, a new wage structure was introduced. Each job was evaluated and placed in a grade from A to E, with E representing the highest grade. Women were to be paid 85 per cent of the equivalent male rate (although there were no women in the top two grades).[691] During the negotiations the unions had mooted, but not pushed for, equal pay.[692] Fords had offered to pay women 90 per cent of the equivalent male rate subject to their agreeing to work shifts but since the unions 'felt unable' to accept this condition the matter was dropped.[693] When the new gradings were announced, the sewing machinists protested that their job had been wrongly graded. In their view, it was a grade C job, rather than the lower grade B it had been assigned.[694] They claimed that their job profile had been singled out for discriminatory treatment, and pointed out that while any male could enter a grade B job without prior experience, the only grade B job where employees had to pass a test – on three machines – was that of sewing machinist.[695] According to one of the unions representing the women, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers (AEF):

> Women employees had felt for a long time that they were not given the same consideration as men. … They had therefore welcomed job evaluation since it was supposed to be objective and would thus abolish discrimination of this sort. The women machinists had however been disappointed to find that even in the new wage structure their skill was not recognised.[696]

The National Union of Vehicle Builders (NUVB), who represented a large proportion of the sewing machinists, began perusing an upgrading claim at the beginning of August 1967.[697] When Fords rejected the claim, the NUVB, either unaware or careless of the strength of the women's feelings, took no further action.[698]

Huw Benyon, a sociologist on fieldwork at the Halewood Ford Plant in Liverpool during this time witnessed the build up to the strike in its wider contexts. He argued that the grading assessments were based more closely on the values of 'managerial efficiency' than upon the

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691 *Court of Inquiry into dispute concerning sewing machinists,* pp. 8-9.
692 Castle, *Castle Diaries,* 22 June 1968.
693 *Court of Inquiry into dispute concerning sewing machinists.* p. 37.
694 Ibid. p. 12.
695 Ibid. p. 26.
696 Ibid. p. 16.
697 Ibid. p. 12.
698 Ibid. p. 44.

'collective experience of work.'[699] Throughout the process there was widespread suspicion that Fords were grading the men. Fords insisted that they were 'scientifically catergorising' the jobs.[700] The frequent result, as Beynon observed, was that the 'rationality of job evaluation' was seen to conflict with the 'common sense rationality of workers in the work situation.'[701] The new differentials and job statuses made little sense to the workers. It upset and angered a lot of them. One assembly-line worker complained that the process had upgraded the fork-lift truck driver, a perceived 'cushy' job, to a grade above his job:

> There are no good jobs in this place but theirs is one of the better ones. I don't see why they should be paid more than us. We *make* the cars, and we work a damn site *harder* than they do. Yet they're on a higher grade than us. It doesn't make any sense to me.[702]

At Halewood, over one hundred grading grievances were submitted within six months of the new agreement. One group of men used the slogan, 'equal pay for equal work', in a grading dispute to argue that all paint spraying work should be equally remunerated - whatever car parts were being painted. Their claim was rejected by 'the computer'.[703] In all, only three upgrading claims were accepted. Halewood stewards described the plant as a 'volcano waiting to erupt.'[704] According to Benyon, the catalysts behind the sewing machinists' strikes at Halewood were overwork and a personality clash:

> The girls had been complaining for weeks about working 'tight schedules'… In Mick's [the Convenor's] absence Eddie and Gerry [his deputies] had made some headway with the dispute… Trouble flared up when Mick returned… 'Shut up you cod face' he said to one of the women and that was that. This wasn't a folk hero. He was the devil incarnate. They took off. …[T]he plant was in such confusion that Mick's only policy was to prevent lay-offs… [A]n agreement was reached over the schedules and the girls were summoned by telegram to a plant gate meeting at seven in the morning… But the girls weren't having any... The grading strike came soon afterwards… In frustration [at not having received a reply to their claim] the Dagenham girls went on strike with the Halewood girls in support.[705]

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[699] Beynon, *Working for Ford*, pp. 164-8.
[700] Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 164. This kind of re-grading exercise and related excericess around the concept of the 'measured work day' were widespread in industry at this time. See also Lane and Roberts, *Strike at Pilkingtons*, p. 210.
[701] Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 165.
[702] Ibid. p. 166.
[703] Ibid. p. 165.
[704] Ibid. p. 166.
[705] Ibid. p. 167.

In Dagenham, Essex, the leader of the sewing machinists, Rose Boland, thought that the Halewood women in Liverpool 'weren't so interested' because 'they've got a different way of life up there really, up there the man is boss.[706] Yet Beynon's account calls this assessment into question. At Halewood, workers told Beynon that 'the women are the only men in this plant.'[707] Assembly-line workers claimed 'those tarts have taught us a lesson. We out to go down there and shout a big fucking thank you.'[708] Boland also pointed to what she perceived as a generational shift in attitudes. She believed that, 'the youngsters of today won't have it, they want it on an equal basis.[709] As we saw above, there is limited evidence to support this case.

At a meeting in June, the AEF broke with normal protocol and declared that the strike was about equal pay. They explained that a matter of principle was at stake. A grading issue could have been dealt with through other procedural channels but because it was about 'equal pay and equal grading', 'drastic action' was needed. The NUVB maintained it was a grading issue but nevertheless gave their full support to the strike.[710] As one of their officials observed, the equal pay issue had created 'terrific press and TV publicity' which, he believed, was 'responsible for an immediate upsurge throughout the county demanding equality for women.'[711] Six weeks after describing 'The Urgent Need for Equal Pay', *The Times* leader argued that equal pay only came into the strike 'incidentally'. It expressed full support for the re-grading exercise which it perceived as a necessary step in 'transforming' Britain's industrial relations. *The Times* urged Fords to hold firm: 'the most disastrous thing that could happen would be for the employers to give way in any of these disputes or be encouraged to do so.'[712] For Beynon, 'it was ironic but equally true that the diversion of the claim to equal pay got…Ford…off the hook.' At that time, he perceived that equal pay was a 'relatively minor' issue for Fords. For Fords to have conceded ground on the grading issue would have been 'political dynamite...if the women got grade C the assembly line would have stopped.'[713]

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[706] Quoted in Rowbotham, 'Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, pp. 15-17.
[707] Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 166.
[708] Ibid.
[709] Quoted in Rowbotham, 'Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, pp. 15-17.
[710] *Court of Inquiry into dispute concerning sewing machinists*. pp. 13 & 16.
[711] Report of Meeting held in the House of Commons on 22 October 1968 regarding Equal Rights for Women in Industry', MRC, MSS 292B/119/4. See also, Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 24 June 1968.
[712] *The Times*, 24 June 1968.
[713] Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 168n.

Beynon's assessment is confirmed by Castle's account. Desperate to get the plant working again, Fords telegrammed Harold Wilson asking the Government to 'intervene urgently.'[714] Despite a Court of Enquiry having been set up under the Department of Employment and Productivity (DEP)'s trouble-shooter, Jack Scamp, the women had refused to return to work. Castle met a group of the Dagenham girls in her office. She described them as having 'a burning and genuine sense of outrage.' They believed that Fords had suppressed the grading assessment which put their job in grade C. Castle quickly discovered there had been no such suppression but the correct processes had not been followed and the girls had been 'kept in the dark'. Castle suspected union leaders of 'deliberate mischief making' and did not peruse the grading issue further.[715] Ford's labour relations Director, Mr Blakenham, told Castle:

> The one thing that mattered to the company was to preserve the present gradings intact. If the girls were upgraded nothing could prevent the thousands of men workers from demanding reconsideration of their gradings, too. Yet it was imperative to get work resumed before export orders were irreparably lost… [Fords] would be willing to [increase the equivalent female rate] to 92 per cent *as the very small price of peace.*[716]

In other words, Fords granted the equal pay concession as the lesser of two evils. Even though it was 8 per cent less than equal, the Dagenham girls voted to return to work having won more than they had originally struck for. A successful grading claim would have won them an extra 5d an hour; Fords offer gave them an extra 7d an hour.[717] In Liverpool the women were unhappy. The knew that a return to work was certain but, according to Beynon, 'the girls felt certain that they were being used.' They were summoned to the Adelphi Hotel (which, Beynon claims, was paid for by Ford). 'They had a laugh in their best clothes... They went back to work but they didn't like it.'[718] Initially, the Ford's women retained an overtime ban.[719] Seventeen years later they won their initial grading claim.[720]

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[714] Castle, *Castle Diaries,* Friday 28 June, 1968.
[715] Ibid.
[716] Ibid. Emphasis added
[717] Ibid. See *The Times,* 8 July 1968. At the time, Castle's Ministry confirmed their commitment to the principle of equal pay but denied any knowledge of Fords' offer. The Court of Inquiry under Jack Scamp later concluded that the strike had been about 'grading…not about equal pay.' They questioned if Fords had been right to effectively negotiate such an important change in the wage structure, concurrently with a return to work, when it had been agreed that the structure would stand for two years. See *Court of Inquiry into dispute concerning sewing machinists,* p. 44.
[718] Beynon, *Working for Ford,* p. 168.
[719] Report of Meeting on 22 October 1968 regarding Equal Rights for Women, MRC, MSS 292B/119/4.
[720] 'Audrey Wise' in M. Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist: Stories of a Generation* (London, 1990), p. 202; Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* p. 10.

The women's actions had clearly demonstrated the importance of their work and their potential industrial power.[721] As a later editorial in *The Times* remarked, without any trace of irony, 'although women in industry frequently occupy lowly jobs, they are often situated at points vital to the industrial process.'[722] As Fords workers had discovered during the grading process, a job might be important, even crucial. But this was not enough to imbue the worker and their labour with either high status or high market value. The Fords strike had also shown how there was often an additional gender dimension to this. Skills like sewing were 'women's work' and, accordingly, less value was placed upon them. As Lena Jeger said, 'If the job…was done by men, we should have been told, and the unions would have decided years ago, that it was so skilled it needed seven years apprenticeship and was worth £30 a week to sew a seat cover.'[723] Without this recognition of skill 'equal pay' meant little.[724] The women's hopes that objective job evaluations would overcome this difficulty had been disproved. At heart the strikers' demand was for their (female) skills to be measured, recognised and valued in the same way as men's. It is significant that this was the battle they lost.

Nonetheless, the Fords women are widely - and rightly – celebrated. Joyce Butler declared: 'when history comes to be written, seat covers will go down with matches as the two items which really bought emancipation for women.'[725] This was an exaggeration but there is no doubt that the publicity generated by the strike allowed equal pay a hearing in Parliament and gave champions of equal pay a greater negotiating leverage. In June 1968, whilst the strike was still on, the Chancellor, Roy Jenkins was attempting to push a Prices and Incomes Bill through the House. When the Conservative MP, Keith Speed, and Labour's Lena Jeager, tabled amendments which sought to exclude moves towards equal pay from incomes policy, the Speaker made it known that he was willing to allow a division. The Whips warned of Government defeat.[726] In the debate that followed, which amounted to a concerted effort to win a Government concession on equal pay, the Fords women were mentioned several times. As Dr Summerskill said, 'only when women go on strike, as they have recently, is the issue taken

[721] 'Audrey Wise' in M. Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist: Stories of a Generation* (London, 1990), p. 202.
[722] *The Times*, 3 September 1969.
[723] *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons.* [hereafter HC], 26 June 1968, c. 487.
[724] There were three male machinists who worked on the night shift who therefore were paid under a shift structure. *Court of Inquiry into dispute concerning sewing machinists,* p. 8.
[725] Joyce Butler speaking at the meeting, Equal Rights in Industry, 28 June 1968. Quoted in *The Times*, 29 June 1969.
[726] HC, 26 June 1968, cc. 479-572; Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 26 June 1968.

seriously.'[727] During the debate, Castle persuaded a worried Jenkins to allow her to announce immediate discussions with the TUC and CBI to agree a timetable for the phasing in of equal pay. Jenkins agreed and the Government avoided defeat.[728] In the talks and negotiations that followed, the Fords strike also allowed Castle to utilise the threat of uncontrolled industrial action. There were echoes of the 1954 Conservative Cabinet discussions when Castle told her colleagues that 'the position now was that there would be a move to equal pay...and it was far better that we should control it and get credit for it.' Her 'strongest support' came from Roy Mason who said that the Government had 'better face the fact that it was coming anyhow.'[729]

The Political Debate

Equal pay was a cross-party issue. It had supporters on both sides of the House and, by the same token, neither party enthusiastically promoted it. Nevertheless, some important differences in approach can be detected, both within and between parties. Economic concerns, overlaid by ideological and political concerns, which, in turn, influenced attitudes towards the social and cultural ramifications of equal pay, did much to influence a range of divergent positions on key issues, not only among the political parties but also among other groups including trade unions and feminist groups.

The key economic question, interwoven throughout the debates on equal pay, and underlying the various economic justifications for governments' failure to act on the issue, was how was equal pay was to be paid for? Bluntly, if women were to gain, who must lose? In essence, there were three views, although they often overlapped. The first was the most optimistic. It suggested that equal pay could be introduced without any negative financial impact on employees, employers, or the economy as a whole because the resultant increase in productivity would make it pay for itself.[730] This increase in productivity would be driven by various factors. The psychological effect of equal pay on women workers would spur them to greater efforts.[731] Equal pay would allow industry to tap into a hitherto wasted pool of labour by luring more women into the labour market and, simultaneously, encourage greater efficiencies by removing a pool of cheap

[727] HC, 26 June 1968, c. 499.
[728] HC, 26 June 1968, c. 522; Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 26 June 1968.
[729] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 4 September 1969. See also Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 September 1969, TNA CAB 128/44/42.
[730] See, for example, see Joyce Butler's speech, HC, 26 June 1968, co. 195.
[731] *The Times*, 3 September 1969.

labour.[732] Ted Bishop expressed this view when he asserted that 'one way of overcoming the balance of payments deficit in 1969 would be to make the best use of the potential energy and skills of our womenfolk.'[733] In this view there were no losers and everybody stood to gain.

The second, most dominant view was that any increase in women's wages must come at the cost of a reduction in men's wages, either directly through men holding their wages back whilst women 'caught up', or indirectly through the inflationary impact of wage increases unconnected to productivity.[734] This prevailed across government and the civil service and, as suggested above, across much of the electorate. It was, in the Chancellor's view, 'the only way.'[735] This line of reasoning carried potential undertones of sex war. The Conservative MP, Irene Ward, long time campaigner for equal pay, warned Castle that the opposition would be 'tremendous'. She asked, 'does she think that she will be very welcome if she comes to the North East Coast, with all the closing down of coals mines, and so on, and explains that the men will have to forgo some of their wage increases so that women may have pay increases?'[736] When Wilson told the 1969 TUC Conference that equal pay for women must be based on restraint in incomes policy generally, Germaine Greer recognised a formula perfect for 'invoking male paranoia.'[737] Arguably however, this was an oversimplified reading of the situation. As Chapter One, threats to the notion of the family wage threatened the ways of life of many people, men and women.

Whatever the private thoughts of male labour leaders, many got round the issue by recourse to the third view. For example, the Labour MP and trade unionist Stanely Orme MP said: '[Castle] is saying that if women are to get more than the norm men must get less. I do not accept that.'[738] In this view, expressed by many feminists and women activists on the left of the political spectrum, and implied in the rhetoric of some union leaders, increased wages could be paid for by decreased profits. As Daisy Nolan suggested, the money should come out of the 'unearned

[732] J. Morton, 'Equal Pay for women in Seven Years', in *New Society*, 8 August 1968, p. 193.
[733] T. Bishop, 'Men are Born Equal – But what about women?', in *Labour Woman* (February 1969), pp 34-5.
[734] See above, pp. 53-4.
[735] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 4 September 1969.
[736] HC, 26 June 1968, c. 520. For notes on Ward's commitment to the women's cause see Vallance, *Woman in the House*, p. 126.
[737] *The Times*, 3 September 1969; Greer, *Female Eunch*, p. 120.
[738] HC, 26 June 1968, c. 517.

income of shareholders' rather than 'out of the pockets of the higher-paid workers'.[739] This view was also inherent in the argument that women's progress towards equal pay was held back because of their failure to actively unionise.[740] From this perspective, women's lack of organisation allowed their exploitation.

In the Conservative Party, views were shaped by various factors. In social and cultural terms, there was a strong impetus to preserve 'the family', which occupied a central place in Conservative philosophy alongside 'God and Country'. Economically, there was a strong commitment to promote business and commerce. Observable tensions arose between traditional values and economic expediency.[741] In relation to equal pay, this manifested as a conflict between a desire to preserve women's traditional role at the centre of the family, and a desire to maximise the potential of women as workers in the national economic interest. A helpful insight into Party thinking is provided by the report of the results of a Party wide 'Political Contact Programme'.[742]

In October 1969, 389 discussion groups, comprising 4016 persons, participated in a discussion on 'The Rights of Women.'[743] According to the resultant report, 'all groups showed a primary concern for family unity, and balanced the social importance of family life against any economic advantages, or advancement of women's rights.'[744] One question asked if participants thought it 'desirable' that 'more and more married women should go out to work'. It is indicative of the contemporary dominant party and political discourse, that several groups openly wondered if the question were designed to 'stress an economic need to make maximum use of the skills and higher education of women.'[745] At one end of the spectrum, 127 groups opined that that it

[739] Miss D.C.M. Nolan quoted in TUC Women Workers' Conference 1969, 'Report of the 39th Annual Conference of Representatives of Trade Unions Catering for Women Workers', (London, 1969), p. 50 cited in S. Rowbotham, *A Century of Women* (London, 1997), p. 350.
[740] HC, 26 June 1968, c. 490.
[741] For a contemporary discussion on Conservative philosophies by policy makers see Minutes of Advisory Committee on Policy, October 6 1966, CPA, ACP 2/2. In the mid-1960s, there were concerns that Conservatism was becoming dangerously overshadowed by a perception that 'Conservatives stood for landlords, big business, and 'every man for himself'.
[742] Conservative Contact Programme, 'The Rights of Women: Three Way Contact Programme', October 1969, CPA, CRD 3/36/4. This programme sought the views of the wider Party on a range of subjects, and relayed it to the leadership.
[743] Conservative Research Programme, 'Report on Political Contact Programme, Discussion Paper No. 27, The Rights of Women', p. 1, CRD 3/38/4.
[744] Ibid.
[745] Ibid.

would be in the national and economic interest for more women to make use of their skills. They also believed it would be to the 'general advantage of the family unit and the country for the women of Britain to have wider horizons than those available to the traditional housewife.' To this end, they advocated improved and expanded facilities for the care and education of young children in order to overcome the disadvantages that might be faced by young families. Nonetheless, they stressed that 'home and family must come first' and were clear that children should only attend nursery when they were 'no longer in need of constant mother-care' and old enough to 'benefit' from it. For most women, they thought, regular part-time work would be the most suitable employment option.[746] Slightly more groups, 153, took a more traditional approach. Though they appreciated that it might be necessary for 'personal reasons', they did not believe it was desirable for more women to go out to work. From their perspective, married women with a home already had a 'full-time job' and they thought it was 'a sad reflection on the state of the country's economy that a young married couple should find it necessary for both to work in order to be able to afford mortgage payments and equip a house.' Where children of school age were concerned, it was 'especially undesirable', 'morally bad for the children, socially bad for family life, and economically bad because the state must inevitably bear the brunt of taking care of the youngest of such children.'[747] A significant minority (109 groups) stepped beyond the 'should they/shouldn't they' dichotomy and opined that 'the freedom of a married woman to go out to work or not was a matter outside the sphere of government…market forces would regulate the opportunities.' To which they added the observation that there were numerous disincentives to dissuade married women from going out to work, chiefly limited and expensive childcare and high surtax levels.[748]

On the subject of equal pay, the report noted general agreement that 'equal work should deserve equal pay.' Yet there was doubt about the possibility of defining equal work. Beyond a very limited field of employment, the phrase was held to be essentially meaningless. According to the report, participants thought that 'women should receive a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and this must be seen against the background of a free market for labour.'[749] It was generally agreed that equal pay legislation would deter employers from employing women, that it would

[746] Ibid. pp. 1-2.
[747] Ibid. pp. 2-3.
[748] Ibid. p. 3.
[749] Ibid. p. 4.

not add to productivity and that, in all probability, women would 'price themselves out of the market.' Participants broadly agreed that the only legislation that could help towards equal pay was the removal of restrictions on women's working hours. This would, ran the argument, create a more level playing field by opening up more opportunities for women.[750] Significantly, this approach chimed perfectly with the beliefs of Conservative free-marketers, whose ideas were then in the ascendance. The solution to Britain's economic woes, they argued, was less state interference[751] To this end, the Conservatives had developed a new industrial relations framework, 'based on civil law', which would allow employers and employees to 'freely negotiate on terms and conditions of employment.'[752] Formulated as an anti-dote to Wilson's interventionist habits Conservative policy makers were optimistic that the initiative would enable the next Conservative Government to withdraw from 'unjustified interference with normal negotiations between employer and employee.'[753] During the 1970 Conservative General Election campaign they therefore contrasted themselves to Labour Governments since 1965, and declared: 'We utterly reject the philosophy of compulsory wage control.'[754] The plans would become manifest in Heath's doomed Industrial Relations Act.[755]

A fair number of Conservatives, particularly women activists and MPs, were staunchly in favour equal pay. The Conservative WNAC noted, with concern, the:

> divergent views on this topic as between some of the Party's workers in the constituencies (many, of course, being women who have not done or do not do a salaried or wage earning job and view the prospect of equal pay with a certain amount of suspicion) and the many who support the principle of equal pay and have worked for it over the years.[756]

As equal pay became an increasingly realistic prospect, the WNAC became anxious to 'sell the policy to those Party stalwarts who they felt were 'rather out of step with modern thinking and

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[750] Ibid.
[751] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, pp. 3, 38-9 & 45. See also Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp. 159-199, and 200-203.
[752] Conservative Research Department, 'Women, Wages and Work: Draft Old Queen Street Paper on Equal Pay' 23 January 1970, pp. 1-2, CPA, CRD, 3/38/4.
[753] Conservative Research Department, 'Women, Wages and Work', CPA, CRD, 3/38/4. The next four years would dash their hopes.
[754] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970: A Better Tomorrow* (1970).
[755] Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 100-113 & 313-323.
[756] Chairman of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee, The National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, Women's National Advisory Committee to Robert Carr, 13 November 1969, CPA, CCO 20/36/6.

indeed with the majority view of both men and women – as shown by the opinion polls.'[757] Their concerns were shared by the Conservative Research Department (CRD) who advised the leadership that the Conservative's 'attitude to women' was related to their 'out of date image'.[758] Reminding them of their heavy dependence on female votes, the opinion poll findings on equal pay, and the fact that equal pay was more associated with Labour, they claimed that 'a large section of women' would place a 'high priority' on equal pay.[759]

Although many in Labour agreed with their Conservative counterparts about the desirability of stable, traditional families, their concerns were more directly focused on the practical concerns of family life, in this case the maintenance of an adequate family income, than on the institution itself. In 1968, Labour's Economic Brief had suggested that raising women's pay was of secondary importance to raising the rates of men at the bottom of the income scale, on the grounds that men were more likely to be heads of households.[760] This reflected a broader concern about (men's) low pay. Many in the Labour movement acknowledged, either directly or by implication, that one of the main problems of the system of free collective bargaining as it developed after the war, was its failure to solve the problem of the low paid worker. Low paid workers tended to be badly organised and lacking in economic strength. As Castle explained, 'under a wage system where increases go to the strong, the low paid have little hope of holding their own, let alone moving up the economic scale.'[761]

The idea of a (male) national minimum wage had gained some currency in the late 1960s as a potential solution to the seemingly intractable problem.[762] In 1967, the Government set up a working party to examine the proposal.[763] The working-party found that the reasons for low pay were complex and often highly individual. As suspected, many low paid workers were

[757] Ibid.
[758] James Douglas, Conservative Research Department, 'Policy for Women', 24 September 1969, attached to letter Douglad to Heath, Maudling, Jellicoe, 25 September 1969, CPA, CRD 3/38/4.
[759] J. Douglas to Fraser, 14 January 1970, CPA, CRD 3/38/4.
[760] Cited in J. Morton, 'Equal Pay for Women in Seven Years' in *New Society*, 8 August 1968, p. 193.
[761] Castle, Draft White Paper: Low Paid Workers, TNA, CAB 129/145. See also Castle, Draft White Paper: Low Paid Workers, TNA, CAB 129/145. See also Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 21 March 1968, TNA CAB 128/43. See also Gunter and Shore, Prices and Incomes: Low Paid Workers, TNA CAB 129/136/25.
[762] The TUC's definition of a low paid worker excluded women (it was 'a man earning less than £15 for a 40 hour week). For further reference to the fact this proposal was directed at men only see National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women* pp. 10-11.
[763] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 21 March 1968, TNA CAB 128/43. The Cabinet agreed that there should be no public reference to it and, given the potential direct and indirect costs of the policy, the matter was not raised directly with the TUC

concentrated within a few industries. However, a number were also 'scattered' throughout larger industries where the levels of pay were much higher overall. All available evidence suggested that higher paid workers, in the main, would not willingly allow an erosion in their relative position in order to help the least well paid. Therefore, the working party reasoned, the introduction of a national minimum wage would be likely to be seen as a new 'floor' upon which the workforce would seek to rebuild their existing differentials rendering the whole policy self-defeating.[764] Moreover, a minimum wage was not a sufficient anti-poverty strategy since it could take no account of family size. The report concluded that any meaningful attack on poverty had to involve wages and the tax and benefits structure.[765] Yet, as we shall see in Chapter Four, Labour held back from adjusting income to family size through the use of tax benefits. In the wake of the Ford strike, the TUC mooted a proposal that would have seen the introduction of equal pay tied to a stepped introduction of a minimum wage, but it had not pursued the issue with any zeal.[766] Ironically, there is a good case to be made that the introduction of equal pay as a stand-alone measure made the introduction of a minimum wage less likely. As one CPAG observer recorded in 1971:

> [T]he differences in average hourly earnings of men and women are so great that a shift to a common minimum would either involve pitching that at such a low level as to affect very few men or it would lead to a violent increase in the hourly earnings of a very high proportion of women. There is no escaping this logic, and it is likely to harden the resistance of the government to a national minimum wage. To put it another way, the main beneficiaries from a national minimum would be women workers and it might indeed have more dramatic implications for women's pay than 'equal pay' itself.[767]

However, supporters of equal pay within the labour movement had generally cleaved closer to the view that equal pay would protect wage rates. The underlying implication being that women workers would be 'brought up' to male wages rates. The NLWAC were among the strongest supporters of equal pay. Whilst they contested the focus on the low paid family man, they did not lose sight of the issue of low paid workers generally. Highlighting the correlation between

[764] Castle, Draft White Paper: Low Paid Workers, TNA, CAB 129/145. There were some reported exceptions to the rule. In the retail trade employers had insisted on a percentage increase (which had the effect of increasing differentials between men and women) rather than a flat-rate increase (which would have reduced the differentials). The men even offered to give up 6d of their own 10s in order that the women could get 9s 6d instead of 9s. The employers, probably fearful of the implications of this move in an industry staffed mostly by women, refused. See J. Morton, 'Equal Pay for Women in Seven Years', in *New Society*, 8 August 1968, p. 195.
[765] Castle, Draft White Paper: Low Paid Workers, TNA, CAB 129/145.
[766] Department of Employment and Productivity, Sub-Committee on Costs, 'Possible cost of Equal Pay and national minimum wage', 5 August 1968, LAB 10/3291.
[767] J. Hughes, 'Low Pay: a case for a national minimum wage?', in Bull (ed.), *Family Poverty*, p. 101.

industries with low paid women workers and low paid male workers, they argued that it was in the interest of both sexes to concentrate on equal pay as a first step to improving the position of all low paid workers.[768]

Interestingly, the Labour leadership seemed more inclined than the Conservative's to treat the public's avowed support for equal pay with scepticism. Cabinet Ministers thought that although an announcement to legislate would be 'greeted with enthusiasm' within the Party, it 'would not be particularly popular in the country generally.'[769] Although Castle told Wilson that 'the overwhelming mass of public opinion clearly regards equal pay for equal work as something that is fair and right and which ought to be applied by all good employers', this should be seen in the context of her attempts to sell the Bill.[770] Once Cabinet had accepted the policy, Castle accepted the view of her colleagues, including Roy Jenkins and Tony Crosland, that equal pay was not a 'vote winner' - although she hoped it would be a 'morale booster, vital for our own people.'[771] In this respect, the Labour leadership was under much greater pressure from its own party than the Conservative leadership. Not only was the trade union movement increasingly and publicly pushing for equal pay but many Labour activists had a moral – socialist or labourist – commitment to equal pay.[772] The advent of Human Rights Year had only added to this pressure.[773] Privately, Wilson remarked that there was a good deal of 'hypocrisy' among those who advocated equal pay.[774] (Castle's opposite number, Robert Carr, put it slightly differently: 'so often one finds that an overwhelming majority in general [favour] turns to opposition when one comes to specific points affecting specific persons' interests.'[775]) The labourist view of equal pay as a solution to low pay, helps to explain how so many in the labour movement felt able to advocate both equal pay and the necessity of a decent family wage. Yet, in terms of

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[768] National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women*, 1968, pp. 10-11.
[769] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 September 1969, TNA CAB 128/44/42.
[770] 'Equal Pay: Memorandum by the First Secretary' attached to letter, B. Castle to H. Wilson, 22 July 1969. TNA PREM 13/3554.
[771] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 5 September 1969. For notes on her colleagues' views see 4 September 1969.
[772] For example, the demand for ratification of the ILO convention on equal pay was commonly put forward as a Conference resolution. See, for example, Home Policy Committee, Resolutions Received, 31 January 1966 – 25 February 1966, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 829.
[773] For example, the GMWU lauhed a fresh campaign for equal pay in 1968 believing Human Rights Year 'a good time to launch a campaign for equal pay. See 'Equal Pay: Statement to be presented to the Annual Congress, 1968', Bodelian Lib., MS Wilson, 805. See also T. Bishop, 'Men are Born Equal – But what about women?', in *Labour Woman* (February, 1969), pp 34-5.
[774] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 4 September 1969, Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 Setpember 1969, TNA CAB 128/44/42.
[775] HC, 9 February 1970, c. 941.

broader electoral support, given the class differences between the parties' electoral bases, it is not surprising to find that Labour perceived equal pay to be less of a vote winner than the Conservatives did: it was quite possibly an accurate reflection of reality.[776]

The two proposed amendments to Jenkins' Prices and Incomes Bill illustrated how these ideological frameworks and political concerns played out in political debates on equal pay. In a phrase that resonated with its times, the Conservative Keith Speed declared it to be 'uncivilised' that 'eight-ninths of the women in employment do not receive equal pay for equal work.'[777] In terms of solutions, he was representative of the line of thinking in his party which highlighted the difficulties in arriving at a workable definition of equal pay and which argued that the primary problem was lack of equal opportunity. Looking to the context of discrimination, he proposed that workers doing the same work should not receive differential rates of pay based on their sex, nor, he added, on their 'age or reasons which may be historical, racial or even possibly religious.' [778] Lena Jeger, on the other hand, spoke of equal pay not as a 'feminist issue' but as 'an issue of social justice'. She displayed a highly considered awareness of the complex causes of women's unequal pay but, ultimately, placed the issue within the wider context of low pay. 'Lower-paid workers' she said, was a term 'synonymous with the word 'women." Recalling how the Equal Pay Campaign Committee had disbanded after having achieved equal pay for the ten per cent of women employees who were 'professional', 'articulate', and 'well-off', Jaeger drew attention to the fact that while women MPs received equal pay, the women working in the House of Common's Refreshment department did not. This was not simply about women, she said. Men were allowing their wages to be 'pulled down by tacitly accepting that women should be paid less than the rate for the job.'[779] Jegar's speech echoed the argument which she had outlined in an article for the *New Statesman* titled 'Equal Pay: Sex or Class War?' 'The real problem' she argued, was:

> how to evaluate on a civilised basis the contribution which various citizens make to the community. Should advertising agents receive more than teachers, secretaries more than nurses? The whole problem of equal pay between men and women is part of the larger problem of society's just appraisal of rewards.[780]

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[776] See above, p. 110.
[777] HC, 26 June 1968, cc. 481-2.
[778] Ibid.
[779] Ibid.
[780] Lena Jeger, 'Equal Pay: Sex or Class War?' in *New Statesman*, 22 April 1966, p. 563.

After the statement to the House on 26 June, which saved the Government from defeat over its Prices and Incomes Bill, Castle initiated talks with the CBI and the TUC. The tone differed from anything that had gone before. All related briefs and memos stated clearly that the talks were 'to discuss a phased programme for the introduction of equal pay.' There was room for debate over definitions and time-frames but the objective was non-negotiable.[781] Castle met the usual excuse – that equal pay could not be afforded – by saying that unless some ordered and phased progress was made, there would be a 'bursting of the banks' as unions employed increasingly militant and political tactics to demand equal pay settlements.[782] All estimates of cost (based on the narrow definition of equal pay) were speculative at best. Since women tended to be concentrated in particular industries, some sectors anticipated labour cost increases in excess of one third. However, the Interdepartmental Group on Equal Pay judged that the total addition to the wages bill would be between 3 and 5 per cent, leading to an overall rise in prices of 4 percent.[783]

The TUC wanted equal pay to be phased in over two years, the CBI over seven.[784] The TUC was warned of the threat of narrowing differentials at a pace and size that would prove 'unacceptable' to many men'.[785] The CBI was reminded of the threat of militancy resulting from a perceived lack of progress on the issue. A period of five years was agreed. The issue of definition was thornier. There were the expected disagreements. The TUC wanted to use the ILO's definition, and the CBI wanted to use the Treaty of Rome definition.[786] They argued that the 'same work' definition was more suitable because 'there would always remain areas of employment commonly recognised as 'women's work' which would remain unaffected by the concept of equal pay.'[787] The Interdepartmental Group came to a similar conclusion:

> While it would not be easy for men doing the same jobs as women to seek to restore their differentials following the introduction of equal pay…it is perhaps more likely that there

[781] See for example, 'Brief for the First Secretary for a meeting with the CBI on 22 July to discuss a phased programme for the introduction of Equal Pay', TNA LAB 10/3310.
[782] See, for example, 'Equal Pay for Women: Minutes of a Meeting between the First Secretary of State and the CBI', 17 September 1969, PREM 13/3554. See also Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 September 1969, TNA CAB 128/44/42.
[783] 'The Economic and Social Implications of Equal Pay for Women: Note by the Interdepartmental Group on Equal Pay', (n.d.) 27 August 1969, paras. 36 & 68-73, PREM 13/3554.
[784] In the second round of talks in the autumn of 1969 the TUC privately conceded four years, whilst the CBI increased their stated preference to nine years. 'Equal Pay', 24 September 1969, TNA PREM 13/3554.
[785] 'Equal Pay (No. 2) Bill, Brief for the First Secratay's meeting with the TUC, 18 Feb 1970', TNA LAB 111/11
[786] In the second round of talks in the autumn of 1969 the TUC privately conceded four years, whilst the CBI increased their stated preference to nine years. 'Equal Pay', 24 September 1969, TNA PREM 13/3554.
[787] 'Note for the Record, Equal Pay – Meeting with the CBI', 22 July 1969, TNA LAB 10/2378.

> will be pressure from men to maintain existing differentials between occupations which are predominantly men's and those which are predominately women's. Even more probably the pay of occupations predominately carried out by women many not in fact improve as much as one tends to assume… There will undoubtedly be a tendency …to classify jobs in a way which will leave those wholly or primarily carried out by women at a low rate of pay…. *Many of the lowest paid women are going to benefit least from equal pay.*[788]

The TUC was told that to introduce equal pay for work of equal value, 'the legislation would have to lay down a method of evaluation for all men's and women's work in the economy'. This would be a task of such gargantuan proportions that the CBI held it 'impossible to contemplate'. Even assuming it were achievable, the TUC were warned that 'women's work could not be evaluated in terms of men's work without evaluating men's work.' Castle said that it was out of the question to allow the differentials in men's pay to be upset as a 'side effect of equal pay legislation'.[789] She could have added that the Fords re-grading exercise demonstrated that there was no guarantee that such a scheme would produce satisfactory results. As Castle pointed out: 'Equal Pay for work of equal value does not apply now between one man and another and it is not clear why it should now apply as between women and men who are doing basically different jobs.'[790]

There were other indications that the trade union movement was reluctant to acknowledge what the Government, and others, took to be the necessary implications of equal pay. Where Wilson's announcement that equal pay would have to be based on restraint had received a cool response from the TUC conference, Frank Cousins was 'warmly applauded' when he described Wilson's speech as 'a call for higher paid workers to foot the bill'. He rejected Wilson's proposal as an inadequate response to equal pay demands. Conference then unanimously supported a resolution supporting the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and called on the Government to take 'immediate and effective steps' to implement the policy.[791] Yet, the Government had made their views clear: they did not believe that the cost of equal could be met painlessly. Many women workers were employed by the government, or by local government, and as such were paid for through common taxation. Government had never perceived a realistic prospect of men

[788] 'The Economic and Social Implications of Equal Pay for Women', paras 12-20, PREM 13/3554. Emphasis added.
[789] 'Equal Pay (No. 2) Bill, Brief for the First Secretary's meeting', TNA LAB 111/11. CBI's views on re-evaluation taken from 'Note for the Record, Equal Pay – Meeting with the CBI', 22 July 1969, TNA LAB 10/2378.
[790] B. Castle, 'Equal Pay: Memorandum by the First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity', 28 August, TNA CAB 129/144.
[791] *The Times*, 3 September 1969

voluntarily holding down their wages, in real or relative terms, while women came into line.[792] On this reading, the Government's decision to legislate forced upon the trade union movement that which the trade unions had demanded but which its members had been unwilling accept by other means.

Castle and her team recognised the limitations of the formula of 'equal pay for the same work', but they also believed that 'equal pay for work of equal value' was 'too vague'. They settled on a compromise of 'the same or broadly similar work'.[793] Women workers in manufacturing were expected to receive proportionately larger pay increases than women office workers – who were already better paid. The lowest paid women, concentrated in the service industries, would benefit least. Nonetheless, Castle seemed optimistic that if large numbers of women received wage increases as a direct consequence of legislation, it would 'pull up' the general level of women's pay throughout the economy.[794]

There were two notable omissions from the Bill. One was pensions and the other was equal opportunity. Castle had personally been very keen to include pensions in the Bill. Crossman described her as 'inveterate' on the question, despite his clear and repeated assertion (in his position at the DHSS) that he was not willing to 'go along with Castle' on this issue.[795] The DHSS foresaw enormous difficulties with attempting to define equal pensions. Crossman also worried about upsetting the private pensions industry, which he had worked so hard to woo for the purposes of his proposed superannuation scheme.[796] In the end, Crossman agreed to Castle announcing the Government's intention to introduce legislation on pensions before the Equal Pay Act came into force in 1975.[797]

The omission of equal opportunities caused widespread concern. Although the Bill sought to equalise employment conditions, it did not 'prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex in the

[792] See Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 September 1969 TNA CAB 129/44/42. For earlier remarks see Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 24 January 1966.
[793] See Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 3 September 1969, notes.
[794] Castle, 'Equal Pay', TNA CAB 129/144.
[795] Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 27 January 1970.
[796] Castle to Crossman, 13 February 1970, TNA LAB 111/11; Crossman to Castle, 25 February 1970, TNA LAB 111/11; Castle to Crossman, 2 March 1970, TNA LAB 111/11; Castle to Crossman, 30 April 1970, TNA LAB 111/11.
[797] Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 13 May 1970. See also 'Statement to be made by the First Secretary in the House of Commons on 27 May 1970: The Treatment of Pension Rights under the Equal Pay (No. 2) Bill', TNA, PREM 13/3554.

offering of employment'.[798] A long tradition of feminist thought, still prevalent at this time, saw unequal pay as symptomatic of unequal opportunities. If women had the same opportunities as men, ran the argument, the rest would surely follow.[799] Many people, including the Liberal Peer, Nancy Seear, and Castle's opposite number in the Conservative Party, Robert Carr, agreed. Indeed, they warned that equal pay legislation was likely to have a detrimental effect on the position of women workers without complementary legislation on equal opportunity since they believed that many employers would make efforts to ensure women were not employed in 'the same or broadly similar work' to men in order to suppress their wages.[800] A conference of sixteen women's organisations, chaired by Seear, passed a unanimous resolution which they sent to Castle. It applauded the progress on equal pay and called for a clause on equal opportunity to be included in the Bill. Castle told them that if she attempted to add such a clause, the Bill would be lost.[801]

Although Castle's assessment was probably correct, Castle herself was sceptical of the value of legislating for equal opportunities, as she explained in an exchange of letters between herself, Wilson and the Labour MP, Fred Lee. Lee had written to Wilson to suggest that equal pay could be 'political dynamite' in terms of winning women's votes. Yet, like others, he thought equal pay would be insufficient unless girls and women had the opportunities 'to achieve equality with men in the modern skills.'[802] The letter was referred to Castle. She agreed the country was not 'making proper use of the abilities of women' but, unlike Lee, she did not perceive inadequate training as the main problem. She told Wilson that the fundamental problem was attitudinal and essentially society wide. If any significant change were to be effected, 'the focus should be on widening girls' ideas about their future prospects before they left school'. For the time being, she continued, 'we must expect that married women – and they are now the majority of the women at work – will continue to put family and home first and the job second and what is more that society will expect this of them.[803] Interestingly, in a move which suggests that Castle was

[798] H. Wilson to F. Lee (draft letter by B. Castle, 24 March 1970), TNA LAB 43/568.
[799] Interview with Joan Vickers, 17 April 1969 for *Women's Hour,* Tx. 25 April 1969, BBC Radio Two, BBCw, Transcripts Room. See also above, p. 21.
[800] See also, Interview with Nancy Seear, WomL, 8/NLS/4/3. Minutes of Meeting of the Women's Consultative Committee at the Department of Employment and Productivity, 25 Novemeber 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/119/5 Women: Equal Pay; HC, 9 February 1970, c. 936.
[801] Transcript of interview with Nancy Seear, p. 32, WomL, 8/NLS/4/3.
[802] F. Lee to H. Wilson, n.d. February 1970, TNA LAB 43/568.
[803] B. Castle to H. Wilson, 25 March 1970, TNA LAB 43/568

well aware of the limits of her reform, even if she was unwilling to admit them publicly, Castle did not say as much to Lee. Instead, she wrote:

> There may be a case some day for legislation in this field but it would be prudent to wait and see…what effect the introduction of equal pay has on women's employment opportunities. It could be that when men no longer fear the undercutting of women of the price of their labour, they will be willing to admit women more freely…to work alongside them.[804]

Castle did, nevertheless, ask her Department to produce an 'urgent submission' on the 'possibility of legislation to prevent discrimination against women in obtaining employment.'[805] Yet, as we shall see in the following chapter, anti-sex-discrimination legislation was an idea whose time had not quite yet come. The reply provided by Castle's advisers was unhelpful and vague and the idea was abandoned.[806]

The decision of Wilson's Management Committee (the inner Cabinet) to support the Equal Pay Bill owed much to Castle's championing. In turn, the Cabinet was persuaded to accept the Bill.[807] However, support was not unanimous. Some Ministers viewed it as a sort of socialist duty, whilst much of the strongest argument came from those who said that the Government would be best to accept the inevitable. As Chancellor, Roy Jenkins supported the principle but opposed implementation on grounds of cost. Tony Crosland opposed the Bill, saying that equal pay would not be popular. Dick Marsh also opposed it, arguing that the priority should be the low paid.[808] Crossman, who supported equal pay, attempted to meet this last point by pointing out that fatherless families and spinsters were among those groups most afflicted by poverty.[809] Marsh, however, said that he feared the overall 'effect on the distribution of incomes between families would be considerable and in some cases regressive'. He believed that better paid men would probably be able to protect their real wages, leaving the cost of equal pay to be borne primarily by those low paid workers who were already finding it difficult to maintain their

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[804] H. Wilson to F. Lee (draft letter by B. Castle, 24 March 1970), TNA LAB 43/568.
[805] DB Smith to Miss Earl, 23 April 1970, TNA LAB 43/577.
[806] Minutes, and drafts attached, DB Smith to Mr Pickford, and DB Pointon to Mr Pickford, 30 April 1970, TNA, LAB 43/577.
[807] Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, September 4 1969.
[808] Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, September 4 1969; Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 4 September 1969; Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 September 1969, TNA CAB 128/44/42.
[809] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 28 July 1969.

standard of living.[810] Cabinet rejected the suggestion, mooted by one member, that equal pay could be linked with moves towards a national minimum wage on the grounds that it would 'be very damaging economically'. In the end, it was agreed only that 'further consideration would need to be given to ways of mitigating the adverse effect on low-paid male workers of introducing equal pay.'[811]

As legislation became an increasingly realistic prospect, both main parties became fully and keenly alert to the prospect of claiming political credit for initiative in the field of women's rights. Barbara Castle told *Women's Hour* that she did not see any difficulties with getting the Bill through Parliament because, 'whatever may be the secret hidden thoughts of some of my male colleagues about the question of equal pay, I don't really think any public man will dare to enunciate them publicly.[812] Carr told the Conservative Shadow Cabinet that, despite the potentially high levels of Conservative opposition to the Bill, it would, in light of the opinion poll findings which suggested high levels of support for equal pay, be 'politically very dangerous to oppose it.'[813] He suggested the best course of action was to appear to support the Bill whilst making it clear that they would seek to amend it substantially in Committee.[814] Away from public politics, Carr had established a Working Committee to 'submit proposals' on how it might be 'practicable to secure equality of opportunity, in remuneration and in conditions of employment in the private sector of the economy regardless of sex.'[815] The Committee articulated the imprecise and nebulous nature of the 'apparently simple concept' of equal pay:

> Rates can vary widely, even for apparently identical work, according to the pull of market forces, or the strength of a particular group's bargaining position. There can be substantial differences not only between firms but between plants of the same firm. Nor is equal work a straightforward concept: apparently similar jobs may differ in the degree of responsibility deemed to attach to one rather than another, the degree of effort required or the conditions under which they are performed.[816]

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[810] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 September 1969, TNA CAB 128/44/42; Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 4 September 1969.
[811] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 September 1969, TNA CAB 128/44/42.
[812] Castle speaking on *Women's Hour.* Tx. 29 January 1970. Partial transcript available at BBCw, Scripts Room.
[813] Rober Carr, 'Equal Pay', 20 January 1970, filed with the relevant minutes, Minutes of the Leader's Consultative Committee, 26 January 1970, CPA, LCC 1/2/19.
[814] Ibid.
[815] Conservative Research Department, 'Third Draft for Pamphlet on Equal Pay', nd (January 1970), Foreword, CPA, CRD 3/38/4.
[816] Conservative Research Department, 'Women, Wages and Work: Draft Old Queen Street Paper on Equal Pay' 23 January 1970, p. 5, CPA, CRD, 3/38/4.

Their proposed alternative to the Equal Pay Bill was an amendment to their proposed new industrial relations framework which would require 'the terms and conditions of employment applied in any firm or industry' to be 'applied equally, without discrimination on the grounds of sex.'[817] They warned, nonetheless, against 'misconceptions' of what could be achieved. Even if discrimination against women in employment were wholly removed, women's earnings would not entirely equalise with men's because of the high incidence of part-time work among women; their high concentration unskilled or low paid work; their reluctance to work overtime; and their tendency to prioritise factors such as flexible hours or nearness to home over pay when seeking employment.[818]

During the second reading debate of the Equal Pay Bill, Carr highlighted his Party's record of achievement on equal pay and he endorsed the principle of equal pay. He criticised the Bill for betraying 'a dangerous belief in the value of fussy interventionism', and for failing to address equality of opportunity. He also argued that legislation to amend (remove) the restrictions on women's night work should be pursued concurrently with Equal Pay legislation 'in the name of fairness' and to help increase equality of opportunity.[819] To this last point, Castle replied that she would continue to pursue the issue of protective legislation 'as a separate matter' and that she was in consultations with both sides of industry with a view to reaching an agreement.[820] The Equal Pay Bill received Royal Assent on May 29th 1970, twenty days before the General Election.[821] It would come into force in 1975.

Protective Legislation

Protective legislation had not been a dominant theme in the equal pay debates but it had been contentious. Under the Factory Acts, women factory workers were prohibited from working more than eleven hours in one day, and between the hours of 7pm and 8am. However the Act's scope was limited to factory workers. Non-factory workers (even those employed to clean factories) were excluded from its coverage. Employers could also apply for exemptions and

[817] Ibid., p. 5
[818] Ibid. p. 11
[819] HC, 9 February 1970,cc. 932-3, 936, 938-9. Many Conservatives argued for the removal of protective legislation in the name of equal opportunities. See G. Howe and B. Cooper, *Opportunity For Women* (London, 1969), p. 23.
[820] HC, 9 February 1970, cc. 922-3.
[821] Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, September 5 1969, notes.

often did so successfully.[822] Historically, the subject had tended to divide the women's movement along class lines, with working-class women and their representatives favouring protection.[823] Internationally, the women's movement was divided over the issue. Reporting on the International Conferences of Social Democratic women in 1961 and 1962, Viola Klein described the contrasts between 'Northern' and 'Southern' European views. The Scandinavians were 'completely egalitarian' and insisted on equal rights and obligations for women workers. Representatives of Southern and Central European countries favoured special protection for women as wives and mothers. The French and Belgians demanded equality and special protection and denied any inconsistencies between the two. When a Swedish MP defended her Government's recent decision to abolish protective legislation on the grounds of equity there was an 'uproar' from women appalled by what they perceived as the Swede's sacrifice of 'one of the oldest…and most elementary' pieces of factory legislation…to the 'Moloch of sex equality (or of industrial expansion, whichever way you look at it).' The British representatives took a middle course and differed between themselves.[824]

In the early 1960s, there were some signs that the British working-class women's movement might be ready to re-consider their position. The 1964 TUC Women's Conference carried a resolution agreeing that 'over-emphasis on measures to protect the health and welfare of women may encourage the continuance of discrimination against them in the employment field.'[825] When two more resolutions on night-working were submitted to the 1965 TUCs Women's Conference, it was agreed to defer consideration until a survey and assessment (which could take several years) of the issue could be carried out.[826] While this highly considered, even hesitant, approach was typical of the TUC, it also reflected a degree of disagreement between women trade union representatives and the trade union movement more widely. Ethel Chipchase, of the WAC, argued that protective legislation ran contrary to women's demands for equality: women 'must realise that they have to give up a little in the process – they can't have both privilege and equality…they can't expect equality and masses of protective legislation on the job.'[827] This

[822] A. Coote, NCCL, *Women Factory Workers: The Case Against Repealing the Protective Laws* (London, 1975), pp. 1-2.
[823] See above, pp. 23-4.
[824] V. Klein, 'Europe's Working Wives' in *New Society*, 29 November 1962, p. 17.
[825] Quoted in Secretary of the Women's Advisory Committee to Mrs Morley, 4 May 1964, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/1
[826] 'Trade Union Congress, 1965 Conference Resolutions', 15 September 1965, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/2.
[827] Quoted in J. Barr, 'The Modern Suffragettes', in *New Society*, 17 December 1964, p. 7.

echoed the view expounded by many of the older feminist organisations such as the Status of Women Committee and the Open Door Council.[828] The National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations (NJCWWO), which comprised representatives from the Labour Party, the Co-operative Guild and from trade unions, took the opposite view. In 1968, they successfully opposed and amended relevant section of the UK's Committee for Human Right's statement on 'Discrimination against Women' to reflect their views.[829] Nonetheless, it would be wrong to overplay the disagreements. Whilst some may have been ready to concede that protective legislation might damage women's employment prospects and, more immediately, prevent them from working the most lucrative hours, few would have argued that it was the principle explanation for women's inequality in the workplace.[830] Opinions were also mixed within the wider trade union movement. Some trade unions, such as the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO), and the British Actors Equity Association, had no objections to women working nights and their female members were not covered by the protective legislation in any case.[831] However, there was also a strong current of opinion which regarded any move towards greater night-work for women in industry as a 'retrograde step.'[832] The 1965 TUC Conference also carried a motion requesting the General Council 'to consider and report in greater detail on the effects of increased shift working on workers, their families and the community at large'[833]

In 1966, CBI representatives on the Ministry of Labour's National Joint Advisory Council (NJAC) complained that the 'legal restrictions on the employment of women and young persons [were] impeding the introduction of round the clock working'. Ministry officials replied that

[828] Open Door Council 'Paid Night Work for Women', leaflet attached to letter A. Fleming to G. Woodcock, 6 June 1968, MRC, MSS 292B/134/2. See also Aims of the Status of Women Committee cited in the Minutes of a meeting of the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations, 21 March 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 914.
[829] Minutes of a meeting of the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations, 21 March 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 914.
[830] J. Morton, 'Equal Pay for Women in Seven Years', in *New Society*, 8 August 1968; L. Jeger, 'Power in Our Hands', in Hunkins-Hallinan (ed.), *In Her Own Right*, pp. 153-4. Notably, the Status of Women Committee was prepared to soften its principles in order to co-operate with working women's organisations. See Minutes of a meeting of the Status of Women Committee, 24 June 1969, WomL, 7 AMP/B/01/4.
[831] British Actors Equity Association to George Woodcock, 9 July 1968, Warwick, Modern Records Centre, MSS 292B/128.7/3; General Secretary of the National and Local Government Officers Association to G. Woodcock, 23 September 1968, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/3. For more general comment on unions surveyed by the TUC see 'TUC: Hours of Employment of Women and Young Persons, N.J.A.C (cc) 6/3, July 23 1968, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/3.
[832] 1966 Trades Councils: Conference Resolution: Women and Night Work', MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/2.
[833] Shift Working by Women and Young Persons: Office note on Ministry of Labour Paper, N.J.C 18, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/2.

there was no evidence to support the claim, but they agreed to look into the matter further. The TUC responded by reiterating their longstanding policy, which was 'to seek reductions in the maximum permitted hours of work for women and young persons' but they were willing to review the Act on the grounds that a 'comprehensive enquiry' preceded any changes.[834] An NJAC Working Party was established, comprising representatives from the CBI, the TUC, the Nationalised Industries, and the Ministry of Labour. It was charged to 'examine the relevance to modern conditions of the employment provisions in…the Factories Act and associated legislation.'[835]

Their work was completed four months before the Fords Strike hit the headlines. The report explained that the need to consider the issue had arisen 'partly because the working environment and the social conditions have radically changed since the era in which the legislation was fashioned and partly because of the need to ensure that productive efficiency is not impeded by provisions which may no longer be necessary.'[836] Specifically, 'the constant introduction of expensive new equipment' meant that an increase in shift working would be necessary to 'maximise the economic return from the capital investment involved.' Before making further investments in such equipment, employers wanted reassurance that shift working would be possible so they could be sure of 'an adequate return.'[837] Ministry of Labour Representatives attached 'great importance' to these 'productivity considerations', which contrasted sharply with the TUCs emphasis on employment prospects and social implications.[838]

Although the Working Party agreed to maintain some control over the hours worked by young persons, they divided over restrictions on women's hours, particularly those relating to night work.[839] The TUC wanted to retain the prohibition, primarily on the grounds that a large proportion of working women had 'a multiplicity of jobs.' Most were married 'with not only house and husband but also often children to look after'. If the prohibition on night work was

[834] Working Party: Part V! – Factories Act, 16 May 1966, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/3; See also Extract of Minutes from the National Joint Advisory Council to the Minister of Labour (General Council Side)', 26 April 1966, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/3.
[835] Ministry of Labour, 'Hours of Work of Women Employed in Factories', November 1967, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/3.
[836] Ministry of Labour, 'Hours of Employment of Women and Young Persons Employed in Factories: Report of a Working Party of the National Joint Advisory Council on Part VI of the Factories Act 1961 and associated legislation', (n.d), January/February 1968, p. 4, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/3.
[837] Ibid. pp. 4-5.
[838] Ibid. p. 8.
[839] Ibid. p. 4. Young persons were defined as aged 15-18.

lifted, they argued, women might be tempted towards overwork against their better judgement, to the detriment of their personal wellbeing and to that of their families and society more generally.[840] Acknowledging the range of opinions within the trade union movement, they suggested that 'society is passing through a transitional phase', but maintained that the abandonment of all restrictions on women's hours of work would be 'controversial and not generally acceptable to present day public opinion.' They also argued that, if the restrictions were lifted, women would be rendered more vulrable to exploitiation in the event of a rise in unemployment.[841] The CBI and representatives of Nationalised Industries brushed away concerns about exploitation, arguing that a return to high unemployment was exceedingly unlikely. Moreover, they added, 'the movement towards equal pay will increasingly reduce the field in which exploitation might take place.' (This was the only mention of equal pay in the report and it was entirely instrumental).[842] They advanced the view that women should be treated in the same way as men. Women should be 'allowed to decide for themselves what is good for them and, like men, have the freedom to determine with their employers, against the background of the collective bargaining system, what their hours of work should be.' Pointing out that women with young children accounted for only a small proportion of the labour force, they argued that blanket legislation should not be addressed to the needs of this minority. They also highlighted the anomaly whereby factory workers were treated differently other workers, arguing that this 'illogicality' pointed to the removal of restrictions. The TUC replied that different treatment was not necessarily illogical since the true test of legislation 'was to see if it served a useful purpose where it was applied'. If it were necessary to make amendments to the laws on working hours solely to remove 'illogicallity' it would be far better, the TUC argued, to extend the protection to other workers.[843]

Unable to reconcile their differences, the working party ultimately deferred to custom and practice, concluding that 'whatever arguments may be put forward…historical and sociological reasons make the restrictions on night work the least likely candidates for removal. If there are to be any legal restrictions at all therefore, *we accept that night work should be prohibited for the majority of women.*'[844] Although the Department had tended towards the employers' side

[840] Ibid. p. 7.
[841] Ibid.
[842] Ibid. pp. 5-6.
[843] Ibid. p. 9.
[844] Ibid. p. 10. Emphasis added

throughout the discussions, they had remained relatively neutral. Yet, as equal pay became an increasingly realistic prospect, and night-work restrictions became a recurrent minor theme in discussions, one official bemoaned the fact that protective legislation provided employers with a 'ready justification…to account for the high differentials often paid [to men] in a three shift system' even though that differential usually also reflected the sex of the worker. Whilst he accepted that the social and industrial considerations relating to the prohibition of night work far outweighed the importance of the 'equal pay argument', he observed that it would be 'administratively convenient if this excuse did not lie readily to hand for employers.'[845] Swayed by productivity concerns and seemingly persuaded that removal of restrictions would increase women's employment opportunities, the Departmental view hardened quickly. By the end of 1968 they had come to believe that 'it would be best to abolish all restrictions on the employment of women.'[846]

When the subject was raised in the course of the equal pay discussions, Castle initially adopeed the Departmental position. Meeting with the TUC in September 1969, she told them that it was necessary to abolish the restrictions on women's hours 'provided it synchronised with equal pay.' According to Castle, the woman representative of the TGWU 'rushed in to say that women would fight it tooth and nail'. Castle replied that 'no one was forcing women to work nights: it was a question of freedom of choice, a vital part of job opportunity without which equal pay wouldn't get us very far.'[847] Publicly, Castle was more cautious. She requested the publication of the NJAC report (three years after the work's completion) and penned a foreword in which she expressed her hope that it would stimulate public debate and informed discussion.[848] In the meantime, her Department forged ahead. In Spring 1969, they circulated a paper stating:

> …it is no longer possible to sustain the traditional argument that women are more in need of special protection in the matter of hours than men, and the restrictions on their hours ought to be abolished. ..[This] would remove one of the grounds for sex discrimination in

[845] D. Richardson to M. Gracey, 12 December 1968, TNA LAB 10/3356
[846] M. Gracey to D. Richardson, 31 December 1968, TNA LAB 10/3356. Young persons however were deemed to be in need of protection. Accordingly, they also believed that restrictions should be extended to cover all young persons.
[847] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 9 September 1969.
[848] Department of Employment and Productivity, *Hours of Employment of Women and Young Persons employed in Factories* (London, 1969), p. iii.

> selection for employment and for inequalities in pay. It would also help remove one obstacle to increased productivity.[849]

According to a report in *The Times*, the TUC was told that the introduction of equal pay would be conditional upon the abolition of statutory restrictions on the hours of women factory workers.[850] In the face of mounting pressure, the TUC maintained that equal pay and protective legislation were separate issues. Equal pay was about 'payment for work done'.[851] Any other change should wait until after equal pay became a reality. The TUC's WAC firmly agreed. They observed that *all* workers in Northern European countries were prohibited from night work except under exceptional circumstances and expressed dismay that the DEP lagged behind this more enlightened approach.[852] More effectively, the TUC challenged the DEP on procedural grounds, pointing out that they had departed radically from the agreed NJAC report without prior consultation.[853] Castle quickly pointed out that the DEP was not 'committed in any way'.[854] Although seemingly as keen as anybody to lift the restrictions on women's working hours, Castle accepted that any move in this direction would depend on the implementation of equal pay - rather than the other way around.[855] Plans to make a clean sweep of restrictive legislation under the Equal Pay Bill were accordingly dropped.[856]

Castle's officials had believed that the TUC was using the issue of protective legislation as 'a lever to get action on equal pay'.[857] There are two good reasons to doubt this. Firstly, in so far as TUC women had been inclining towards the abolition of restrictions on women's hours, they did not do so after the NJAC working party had produced its report. The emphasis on

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[849] DEP, 'Possibility of New Legislation About Hours of Work of Women and Young Persons', April 1969, MRC, MSS 292B 128.7/4.
[850] *The Times*, 26 May 1969.
[851] 'Equal Pay for Women, Minutes of a Meeting between the First Secretary of State and the TUC Employment Development Policy Committee', 9 September 1969, PREM 13/3554.
[852] Minutes of the Women's Advisory Committee, June 16 1969, MRC, MSS 292B 128.7/4. See also the report of a conference on restrictive legislation in women's employment in *Labour Woman* (December 1969), p. 202.
[853] 'Hours of Employment of Women and Young Persons', May 22 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/128.7/2. See also draft letter to B. Castle, 3 June 1969, MRC, MSS 292B 128.7/4.
[854] B. Castle to V. Feather, June 20 1969, MRC, MSS 292B 128/7/4.
[855] Minutes on 'Equal Pay and Restrictions on Women's Hours', August 25 1969, and handwritten note by Barbara Castle on Minute, TNA LAB 43/544. See also B. Castle to A. Norman [draft] n.d, LAB 10/3482; Memo on 'Department's Comments in relation to the views of the TUC and CBI', n.d. c. December 1969, TNA LAB 10/3482.
[856] B. Castle, 'Equal Pay: Memorandum by the First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity', 28 August 1969, TNA CAB 129/44. Less than a month after the Bill had passed, the Conservatives were in power. Castle's replacement, Robert Carr, reassured the TUC that he would be 'reviewing the whole position' and that no legislation on hours of work would be introduced without further consultation. See R. Carr to V. Feather, 2 July 1970, MRC, MSS 292B 128.7/4.
[857] Minutes on 'Equal Pay and Restrictions on Women's Hours', August 25 1969, TNA LAB 43/544.

'productivity' had brought their deeply ingrained mistrust of employers to the fore. Forced to choose between a dubious method of widening opportunities for women or hiding behind the shield of women's 'difference' in order to protect women from potential exploitation they chose the latter.[858] Chipchase's experience on the working party had inspired a complete about turn, as she explained to a TUC Conference:

> If I may finally deal with this question of what is equality, how can we ask for equality and still continue to ask for concessions and protection? Well, on the working party…I found that I was having to eat the words that I had mouthed for many years. I had always argued that if you want equality, equality is equality and you do not ask for special protection – you accept responsibility in order to get equality' But I am damned if I was going to agree…to lifting restrictions on the employment of women simply to enable them to be used as a source of cheap labour.[859]

Kay Evans of the BBC Women's Hour, bastion of sensible middle-class feminism, presented the other side of the argument. In an interview with the TGWU's General Secretary, Frank Cousins, she put her point:

> It does sound a teeny bit, Mr Cousins…like Greeks bearing gifts…it's not the women who stopped women getting equal pay for the last fifty years; its men. And the argument has been 'Well you can't do all the same work so it isn't fair that you should have the money'. Now it sounds as if you are saying 'Well, of course you can't do all the same work but have equal pay anyway.'[860]

Cousins replied that 'ordinary working-class women' did not share her views and would want to be protected from having to do the jobs that men did not enjoy:

> …don't tie yourself to the idea that you can only get equal pay, provided you are prepared to accept the bad conditions which I as a male worker have been compelled to accept…. Say that we want equal opportunities with men to take the jobs that are available, we want the same opportunities to earn money as the men have, but not in fact be prepared to do the things that men are grumbling about and…find ourselves in the position to say 'well, women will do it but men won't'.[861]

One trade union woman, who favoured the removal of sex based protective legislation thought there was another reason for the TUC's reluctance to concede ground. According to her, many

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[858] Secretary of the Women's Advisory Committee to J. Ingleton, June 12 1968, MRC, MSS 292B.823/1.
[859] Trades Union Congress Proceedings at a Discussion Conference on Equal Pay, 21 November 1968 , p. 84, MRC, MSS 292B 119.91/1.
[860] *Women's Hour*, Tx. 24 July 1969, BBC Radio 2, transcript available from BBCw, Scripts Room.
[861] Ibid.

women had were ready to accept the same inconveniences as male workers, but 'the men were unwilling to allow their own claims on the unpaid labour of housewives to be jeopardized.'[862] Caring and domestic work had to be done. Women were expected to do most of it and men had no wish to substantially relieve them of their burden.[863]

Audrey Wise, of the Shop Workers Union (USDAW), and later to be a Labour MP, was generally suspicious of such arguments, remarking that 'all these women who think you can't claim equality without taking the rough with the smooth are not going to be the ones who have the rough.'[864] She fully understood, and preached, the necessity of challenging the gender division of labour in the home. But she also understood the illusory nature of free 'choice' in the face of economic necessity.[865] Wise was always fond of recounting a Gloucester Trades Council meeting where she had argued that women should retain the protection they had and that there should be no levelling down. A male trade unionist was telling her the 'usual things' like 'the economy demands it' and 'what about exports – we'll price ourselves out of the market' when another woman intervened and said, 'if the economy wants me to work night shifts, THEN I WANT A DIFFERENT ECONOMY.'[866] This was not an isolated viewpoint. It reflected a strong resistance in the labour movement to the notion that people were little more than machines and a fear that 'once shift work has been accepted by the workers, out of fear of losing their jobs, the decision will never be reversed.'[867]

However, events at Fords suggested that the dominant discourse of sex equality did not allow for women to argue for equal pay *and* protection for women. In February 1969, the Fords women were offered full equal pay on the basis that they accepted shift work. They refused.[868] They said that their husband's wouldn't like it', that they needed to prepare tea for their children, and

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[862] *The News of the World,* 9 September 1969 cited in Greer, *Female Eunuch,* p. 118.
[863] As Cousin's said to Evans: 'women have another responsibility [apart from paid work] that they can't shelve, and men are stupid if they think they should....' See *Women's Hour*, Tx. 24 July.
[864] 'Audrey Wise' in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist,* p. 209.
[865] A 1973 TUC report showed that the low paid worked the highest amount of overtime. As hourly earnings increased, overtime worked decreased proportionately. See J. Cousins, *The Shift Work Swindle… or how the EOC proposals to repeal protective legislation would <u>really</u> affect women workers* (London, 1979), p. 16. For notes on Audrey Wise's sharing of housework see 'Audrey Wise', in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist,* p. 205.
[866] A. Wise, 'Trying to Stay Human', in *Red Rag* 3, 1973, p. 4.
[867] P. Hewitt (ed.), *Danger: Women at Work. Report of a Conference Organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties on 16 February 1974* (London, 1974).
[868] BBC News Scripts, Tx. 12 Februay 1969, partial transcript available from BBCw, Scripts Room.

that they did not wish to travel to and from work at 'awkward hours after dark.'[869] They said, 'women shouldn't need to work shifts to get equal pay – it's unfair to those with families.'[870] An editorial in *The Times* asserted that, 'women cannot regard the award of equality in pay as a right without concessions on their part.'[871] An industrial correspondent similarly opined that, 'at the moment what the Ford Women seem to be asking for is to be allowed to be just that bit *more* equal than men' He believed that employers were entirely justified in rejecting women's equal pay claims unless they were prepared to accept the same conditions as men:

> [T]he hard battle of the lesson at Fords is that women can't expect to have their cake and eat it. It may seem ungracious to say this after all their past struggles for something like justice, but the fact is that by definition wage equality is indivisible.[872]

Pondering the reasons for the women's rejection of the offer he concluded that if more men were prepared to accept greater responsibility for home and children, women 'might not be so prepared to throw in the sponge just when the bright morning of equal pay is beginning to dawn'.[873] His suggestion would have been warmly supported by many feminists. Tellingly, the point was neither new nor original. Lenin had remarked of women's emancipation that 'it had been much easier to get it on the statute book than to get it applied in homes.'[874] However, beyond feminist circles, there was a noticeable reluctance to delve into the matter. Whether this arose out of a sense of guilt on the part of men (who perhaps suspected that they should really do more about the home) or out of a belief that home was a private affair can only be guessed at. During his interview Cousins had conceded that 'it is something we may have to work out'. However, he refused to respond directly to Evans' suggestion that men do 'a few more jobs around the place' by saying that he thought home was 'a private affair'.[875]

Equal Pay and Second Wave Feminism

There is a consensus among the activist chroniclers of the British WLM, that the Fords strike acted as a catalyst and defining moment in the development of the movement. It provided

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[869] *Women's Hour,* Tx. 13 February 1969, Radio 2, BBCw, Scripts Room.
[870] BBC News Scripts, Tx. 12 Februay 1969, partial transcript available from BBCw, Scripts Room.
[871] *The Times,* 3 September 1969.
[872] *Women's Hour,* Tx. 13 February 1969, Radio 2, BBCw, Scripts Room.
[873] *Women's Hour,* Tx. 13 February 1969, Radio 2, BBCw, Scripts Room. To bring about the required fundamental attitudinal changes he suggested that domestic science be included in the educational curriculum for boys. Reports suggest that the Ford's women's views remained unchanged. See Cousins, *Shift Work Swindle*, pp. 13-14.
[874] *Women's Hour*, Tx. 24 July 1969, BBC Radio 2, partial transcript available from BBCw, Scripts Room.
[875] Ibid.

women in political left groups with the justification to begin discussing the question of women's specific oppression.[876] It provided all women's rights activists with an immediate cause around which to gather.[877] The strike also precipitated the setting up of what became the National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights (NJACCWER). Although this group achieved little of significance, the ideas that it began to develop and articulate foreshadowed important elements of women's liberation.

Whilst the dispute was still running the NUVB, on the advice of interested MPs, arranged a meeting on 'Equal Rights for Women in Industry'. A coach load of Fords women, together with about forty of their supporters including MPs and trade union officials attended.[878] Edith Summerskill, veteran campaigner and Parliamentarian was eager to help. She arrived at Friends' House in Euston to find 'thirty or forty poor, little women who for the first time had struck on their own account.' Hugh Scanlon was also there but where, asked Summerskill rhetorically, 'were all those militant men we keep reading about who are meant to be supporting women in their fight to remove the grossest discrimination?'[879] The meeting adopted a resolution demanding that unions negotiate 'for no less than equal pay in all wage agreements'; that the government to ratify ILO Convention 100; and 'an end to the unjust exploitation in this Human Rights Year.' The second meeting, in the House of Commons, attracted over two hundred attendees including trade union representatives, Labour MPs and Communist Party spokesmen. The call to form a broad alliance of common purpose under the banner of the National Joint Action Committee for Equal Rights attracted forty names.[880]

At the first meeting Mr J. Jacobs, of the Communist Party, argued that their title was too broad. He thought they should focus on women's equal rights at work. Jacobs met opposition from union leaders who were anxious that the title should be as inclusive as possible. More significant, and reflective of the broader divides between the political left and women's

[876] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* pp. 9-10; Rowbotham, 'Beginnings of Women's Liberation', in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist,* pp. 15-17.
[877] Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us,* p. 166.
[878] *The Times,* 29 June 1968. The description given in *The Times* accords with that given in the minutes cited below.
[879] House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72,* pp. 71-2.
[880] Report of Meeting held in the House of Commons on 22 October 1968 regarding Equal Rights for Women in Industry', MRC, MSS 292B/119/4. Mr Blake of the Communist Party, whom Castle suspected of 'mischief making' in the Fords strike, was a prime mover. He became the Committee's first secretary and treasurer. See 'National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Equal Rights, Minutes of 1st Committee Meeting, 11 November 1968.', MRC, MSS 292B/119/4.

liberation, was the specifically female opposition headed by one of the Fords sewing machinists and Audrey Wise. They it was not simply about women in the workplace. Women wanted equal rights at home *and* at work.[881] This was a radical departure from the MPs' suggestions that the women demand 'equal rights for women in industry', and it represented a cogent response to the difficulties discussed above. According to Wise, the NJACCWER Fords women 'realised…they'd embarked on…something bigger than their union or the car factory, or anything.' They discussed the name, NJACCWER, for a long time and were very careful that they were *not* simply demanding equal pay. It was about more than wages. It was a 'recognition, it was something in the head as well as the pocket.' Wise has always stressed that not only did NJACCWER pre-date the famous Ruskin Conference, it also pre-dated any American influence on the WLM.[882] Much of NJACCWER's analysis was embodied in the long form of the WLM's equal pay demand, adopted in 1970:

> We have to understand *why* we don't have equal pay. It's always been said that a woman's place is in the home. We don't want to do equal work and housework as well. We don't want to do equal work when its shitwork. Equal pay means not just the same money for the same work, but also recognising how many women work not because they want to, but because they *have* to, either for money or for friends. Equal pay is the first step not just to more money but to control over how, why, and for whom we work.[883]

Rowbotham described 'two parallel developments' in the women's movement: a growing impatience among women trade unionists with continuing inequality which was expressed in terms of demands for 'equal rights', and the growing discontent of young educated middle-class women influenced by student politics and the New Left, who were demanding 'liberation' for women. Many of the latter were often young mothers, students, or at the beginning of their working lives and they focused most of their energies on issues such as childcare, or the portrayal of women in advertising. They perceived things like equal pay and equal rights as

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[881] 'NJACCWER, Minutes of 1st Committee Meeting, 11 November 1968.', MRC, MSS 292B/119/4.
[882] 'Audrey Wise' in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, pp. 201 & 203. In important respects, Wise was correct. Although various ideas were, no doubt, flowing across the Atlantic, the Tufnel Park WLM group (predominately American, mid 20s, with small children, husbands in revolutionary left politics and experiences in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign) did not form until 1969. This group emerged independently of the women's groups that had arisen out of the British political left. See Rowbotham, 'Beginnings of Women's Liberation', in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, p. 17.
[883] Quoted in Wandor (ed.), *The Body Politic*, p. 2.

'rather remote concerns', as 'other people's problems'. Women like Wise, who bridged these two wings, were influential but rare particularly in the early days.[884]

Wise was invited to speak at the Ruskin Conference. She wanted to 'inject a working-class thing', be 'a bit of a dose of cold water', and make it plain that feminism alone was not enough. She perceived a lack of appreciation among women's liberationists of some of the worst deprivations that women had'. She did not belief it was sufficient to focus on the oppression of women when 'the majority of the population was oppressed and deprived'. 'Who', she asked at Ruskin 'is more oppressed: the miner or the miner's wife?'[885] To which the reply came: 'the coal miner's wife.' 'If you knew the facts', Wise retorted, 'you wouldn't be so glib.'[886] It is true, however, that many women's liberationists, often influenced by the socialist philosophies that had brought them into political activism, took great pains to understand the problems faced by working-class women and made great efforts to reach out to them.[887] These attempts ultimately did much to shape the views of many influential feminists.[888]

In 1968, however, NJACCWER received only qualified and limited support from trade unions and feminist groups. The Status of Women Committee, for example, said they were willing to support a rally on equal pay but they 'could not support a rally on equal rights' because their terms were 'at variance'.[889] This reflected the differences between NJACCWER's developing feminism and the more limited concept of sex equality which still dominated the thinking of the Status of Women Committee. In 1970, for example, the latter had felt unable to support maternity provisions in employment legislation because it would put women in a 'privileged'

[884] Rowbotham, *Past is Before Us*, p. 166; 'Audrey Wise' in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, pp. 212-3.
[885] 'Audrey Wise' in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, p. 208.
[886] Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, pp. 63 & 80, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1. Wise reflected, 'its a pointless argument. The fact that miners can be what we now say male chauvinist pigs, doesn't alter the fact that to be a miner was and is to have a rotten job.' See 'Audrey Wise' in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, p. 208.
[887] For one of the most widely cited and earliest examples of such efforts see 'The Night-Cleaners Campaign (1971)' in Wandor (ed.), *The Body Politic*, pp. 225-234.
[888] For example see Hewitt, *Danger: Women at Work*. Many thanks also to Anna Coote for discussing this point with me. Among them were the women who went on to form the Women's Rights Units of the NCCL, and who, in later years, became influential in the Labour Party.
[889] Minutes of a Meeting of the Status of Women Committee, 27 February 1969, WomL, 7AMP.

position[890]. However, the SWC's most immediate concern was that 'certain political elements had taken the women's cause to further their ideals'.[891] Their observer reported:

> [NJACCWER] regards the issue of equal rights as a left wing party political one.... One speaker went so far as to say that the Tories would do everything in their power to prevent the implementation of equal rights. Another said that it was no use looking for help from women's organisations since these were largely middle-class and not interested in the problems of the workers…They are…in direct contrast to the views of the Status of Women Committee which believes that equal rights are the concern of all women, regardless of political allegiance or social class.[892]

Concerns about 'political elements' were widely shared in the trade union movement.[893] Yet it is true, as many feminists on the political left forcefully asserted, that women's rights could not be divorced from wider ideological or political concerns. As this work argues, attempts to deny the relationship between feminism and politics were strategically useful at best. At worst, they were misguided, short-sighted, and disingenuous.[894]

On 18 May 1969 NJACCWER held a march and rally in Trafalgar Square. Attendees included the Ford strikers and some nurses, who had never been on any demonstration before.[895] There were also old campaigners such as Lady Summerskill.[896] In Bristol, a group of women failed to organise a coach to the rally but they continued to meet regularly and soon morphed into Bristol Women's Liberation – one of the most dynamic groups in the UK.[897] The rally is of historical significance. It was born of the actions of working-class women, and represented a cross- over of 'old' and 'new' feminism. On the actual day, it rained. Whilst a thousand strong rally in Trafalgar Square was an undoubted achievement, the tone of NJACCWER's plans suggests that they would have been disappointed by the turnout. Greer thought it was as a 'sobering

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[890] Minutes of a Meeting of the Status of Women Committee, 9 October 1970, WomL, 7AMP.
[891] Minutes of a Meeting of the Status of Women Committee, 27 February 1969, WomL, 7AMP. The SWC had blanched a little at the radicalism of their sisters at Fords from relatively early on. They offered their 'warm support' to the Fords women whilst urging them to return to wok 'as a lead to other in the present economic state of the country' (this was before any concrete offer had been made by Fords). See Minutes of a Meeting of the Status of Women Committee, 27 June 1968, WomL, 7AMP.
[892] Note attached to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Liason Committee of the Status of Women Committee, 4 January 1971, WomL, S/SWC/A3.
[893] For example, see Secretary of the Women's Advisory Committee to B.G. Jeremy, 23 April 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/821/1.
[894] The prime example of the former is the comparison between race and sex discrimination, see pp. 222-3 and 225. The debates over protective legislation and the family debate in the latter 1970s are key examples of the latter. See pp. 297-8 and 331.
[895] 'Audrey Wise' in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist,* pp. 204-5.
[896] *The Times,* 19 May 1969.
[897] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* p. 10.

reflection' on the rarity of women activists.[898] NJACCWER was moribund within a year destroyed partly by bickering and attempted takeovers.[899]

Conclusion

Despite these disappointments, the fact remained that the Equal Pay Act was won by women for women. Governments had spent decades paying dutiful lip service to the principle of equal pay whilst simultaneously seeking excuses to renege on their commitment. Progress had been made only when they perceived that there was no politically expedient way of avoiding doing so. Over the course of many years, feminists, women's organisations, women activists and their supporters had worked hard to ensure that women's rights were widely and publicly discussed. They had made good use of events like Human Rights Year to bolster and broaden their case. Without these efforts it is less likely that the Fords sewing machinists strike would have had the impact it did. The strike forced a commitment from government to look again at equal pay. The resulting Bill reached the statute book because it was championed by another woman, Barbara Castle.

The trade union movement had been ambivalent to the point of unhelpful. Within the labour movement more broadly, support for equal pay often reflected a deep-seated distrust and dislike of worker exploitation and cheap labour. It did not necessarily reflect a desire to see justice for women. As the debates over protective legislation illustrated, many trade unionists firmly believed in a gender division of labour and the ways of life it represented. Moreover, many may have suspected that it was meaningless to demand equal pay for the work of the same value, or anything similar. The idea of the 'rate for the job', in so far as it alluded to an objective measurement to which all could agree, had always been a chimera. The existence of trade unions was testament to the fact that it was open to negotiation and represented the relative power of the negotiators. Significantly, the strikes of the Fords sewing machinists had culminated in victory and defeat. They had won 'equal pay', but they failed to achieve the recognition, or grade, that they thought their work merited. For the women, the sting of defeat would have been alleviated by the victory. Many male workers were left working in jobs which

[898] Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, p. 118.
[899] Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, pp. 88-9, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1.

had been reclassified according to a system which they did not recognise and often did not agree with.

The Equal Pay Act was a small step forward for women with limited implications. As this chapter has shown, three main interrelated, problems mitigated women's achievement of equal pay. First equal pay, certainly as it was conceived of in the Act, meant little to many women workers. It was rare to find women and men doing the same jobs.[900] Many women worked in jobs that were done mostly done by women. They did 'women's work.' If there were no men for them to be compared to, or if they were unable force a re-assessment of the value of their work, equal pay meant little. Secondly, it is not necessary to neglect the gendered dimension of unequal pay in order to argue that women's unequal pay was part of the broader issue pay inequalities. Low paid women workers and low paid male workers shared many problems. Essentially, they lacked power and they lacked status. As long there were low paid male workers, there would be low paid women workers. Nonetheless, many people hoped that it would be possible to overcome some of these challenges by addressing the third main problem: women's unequal opportunities in training and employment. As we shall see in the next chapter, by the time the Equal Pay Act was passed, investigations into discrimination against women were already well underway.

[900] Nancy Seear, *The Position of Women in Industry* (London, 1968) cited in Jane Morton, 'Equal Pay for Women in Seven Years', in *New Society,* 8 August 1968, p.194.

CHALLENGING SEX DISCRIMINATION

In 1960s Britain, the concept of discrimination was in its early stages of development. So far as it was recognised, it related mostly to race discrimination. Sex discrimination was largely unacknowledged and often denied outright.[901] In 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act rendered sex discrimination a legal concept and enshrined in law a notion of equal opportunities for women. A delighted Margherita Rendel observed that, 'in six years, an idea which had been thought unimportant had become a matter of government policy.'[902] This chapter focuses on the pressures which drove this development. It explores how key factors contributed to a growing recognition of sex discrimination, but also shows how feminists, reformers, and opponents of reform disagreed about its extent, nature, morality, and causes, and about what actions, if any, should be taken to combat it. From the late 1960s onwards, several groups, including Labour and Conservative Study Groups, undertook to investigate the subject and produce recommendations for reform. This represented the first serious attempts by the main political parties to constructively examine the issue. Analysis of their efforts, and others, shows how approaches towards the issue, and towards the broader subject of sex inequality and equal opportunities, were moulded by various ideological, cultural, political, and experiential influences. Despite the wide-ranging nature of these early discussions, attention increasingly focused on the more narrowly cast Anti-Sex Discrimination Bill as campaigners successfully forced the issue onto the political agenda. These developments forced politicians and policy makers to examine and articulate their attitudes and objectives within the context of their wider political, economic and ideological agendas. In this way, very different approaches towards the issues of sex discrimination and equal opportunities for women began to be developed.

The Concept of Sex Discrimination

Discrimination, like the related idea of equal opportunity, is an evolving and contested concept.[903] At its broadest, it refers to the ways that women, as a distinct group, are treated differently. Discrimination – or differentiation, as some would insist - is an everyday fact of

[901] See chapter one, pp. 70-72.
[902] Rendel, 'Legislating for Equal Pay and Opportunity for Women in Britain', 900.
[903] The process of case law well illustrates this. For an explanation of how the concept of discrimination continued to be developed throughout the following decades see Banton, *Discrimination,* pp. 9 and 90-93. For an outline of recent legal developments see J. Nairns, *Employment Law for Business Students,* (London, 2011), pp. 33-107. For some outline of debates on the related principleof equality of opportunity see B. Bagihole, *Equal Opportunities and Social Policy: Issues of Gender, Race and Disability* (Harlow, 1997), pp. 28-51

social life. In certain circumstances, for example, when a man gives up his seat for a woman, perhaps a pregnant woman, the claim may also be made that discrimination can be morally just.[904] However, the nature of the phenomenon obscures such arguments because one person may believe they are acting fairly whilst an observer concludes that they were influenced by prejudice.[905] In so far as the notion of discrimination is related to equality of opportunity, the question of how far governments and institutions should strive to create equal opportunities is a matter of ideological and political judgment.[906]

The interrelationships between discrimination and inequality are complex. Discrimination can create or increase inequalities, but it is only one possible cause. Existing inequalities can make discrimination more likely and, in this way, discrimination and inequality can often be mutually reinforcing.[907] Discriminatory acts do not occur in isolation. They should be seen in the context of wider patterns of social and cultural behavior.[908] Yet, this means that, even in the face of overwhelming evidence of inequality, discrimination can be very difficult to prove or locate. For example, a male dominated management team is not, by itself, proof of sex discrimination. It may be that fewer women applied for managerial roles, perhaps because they were less likely to possess the relevant qualifications and experience, or were more likely to have domestic and caring responsibilities that would have prevented them from taking up the post. These inequalities may have arisen from earlier or concurrent patterns and instances of discrimination, but they do not necessarily prove that the company itself discriminated against women.[909] Established patterns of inequality are transmitted through the generations so that people can grow up regarding them as right and natural.[910] As Chapter One showed, in the postwar decades, the claim, grounded in the male breadwinner ideal, that men and women were 'equal but

[904] Banton, *Discrimination*, p. 8. The Church of England, 'Women Bishops: the women priests debate'. Available to access online at The Church of England Website, http://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/women-bishops.aspx, accessed 20 September 2013.
[905] Banton, *Discrimination*, p. 8.
[906] Bagihole, *Equal Opportunities and Social Policy*, pp. 28-51; For a good discussion on some of the key areas of conflict and contradiction, with the focus on gender see Forbes, 'Equal Opportunity: Radical, Liberal and Conservative Critiques'. See below, pp. 331.
[907] Banton, *Discrimination*, pp. 18 & 19.
[908] Ibid. p. 8.
[909] Ibid. pp 10-11.
[910] Ibid. p. 5.

different', had provided a rationale for unequal treatment.[911] Some feminists later reflected that, culturally, the effect had been to render discrimination almost invisible.[912]

The crux of the claim increasingly made by feminists and women's rights activists was that many of the inequalities between men and women were unjust since they resulted from unfair discrimination based on prejudiced attitudes. Unequal pay had been identified as one form of discrimination, which was understood to stem partly from unequal employment and training opportunities.[913] For this reasons, some feminists and trade unionists were inspired by Convention 111 of the ILO to call for equal opportunities for women.[914] As Chapter One showed, Human Rights Year helped to foster awareness of discrimination generally and discrimination against women specifically, and a growing awareness of social conditioning drew attention to the power of stereotypes to shape behavior and expectations, calling into question the claim that inequalities between the sexes were the inescapable consequence of natural differences.[915] The numerous studies by women's and feminist groups in the 1960s, charting the extent of the various inequalities between men and women, helped convince some policy makers of the need for further investigation.[916]

Developments in the field of race relations policy were a crucial influence.[917] Contentious as they were, they helped to bring the concept of discrimination to public awareness and they gave feminists and women's rights activists a new weapon in their armoury.[918] Recognition of race

[911] See above, pp. 70-72.
[912] Wilson, *Halfway to Paradise*, p. 207; Ingham, *Now We are Thirty*, p. 146.
[913] National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. 9
[914] For example, see, 'Resolutions passed at the Annual Conference of the National Council of Women of Great Britain, 15-18 October 1968', MRC, MSS 292.B/821/1; Vic Feather to all the General Secretaries of all Affiliated Organisations, Secretaries of Trade Unions and Certain Trade Councils, 19 May 1969, MRC, MSS 292B 119.91/1; Clapham Labour Party to the General Secretary of the TUC, 13 November 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/119/5. For more on Convention 111 see above, p. 71.
[915] Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. 3. Also, see above, pp. 91-2.
[916] See above, p. 86 for a discussion of these studies. The Labour Party Study Group on Discrimination Against Women opened its first meeting by stating that they sought to go beyond 'another survey giving facts and figures on women's position' as there was already considerable documentation of this evidence. See Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 23 November 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 882. See also their reference to studies by the Six Point Group, the Fabian Society, Business and Professional Women etc. in 'Study Group on Discrimination Against Women: Legislation for Equal Opportunity', November 1969, copy available from TNA LAB 43/577.
[917] For general discussion, see chapter one, pp. 72-4.
[918] For Labour's views see Prime Ministers Speech to Parliamentary Labour Party, 25 July 1968, Manchester, People's History Museum, Labour Party Acrchive [hereafter LPA], PLP Minutes. Although this speech portrayed the race relations legislation as a moral victory for Labour, wider attitudes were mixed. See Fielding, *Labour and*

discrimination rendered sex discrimination visible by dint of comparison.[919] For example, the Fabian pamphlet, *Equality for Women,* opened with the assertion that discrimination against women 'is essentially the same as other kinds…on grounds of colour or race.' By way of illustration it re-produced an excerpt from the *Radio Times* substituting 'woman' for Negro with consequential adjustments:

> On his arrival [in the Civil Service forty years ago] a senior officer had a thrombosis, so appalled was he at having to accommodate a negro. But more recently one of his Ministers gave him the ultimate accolade: 'He has the mind of a white'… [920]

Reformers advanced the view that women deserved the same recourse to justice as black people.[921] The Conservative MP, Patricia Hornsby Smith, described:

> a perfectly justifiable annoyance on the part of women that…whereas under the Race Relations Act a coloured woman can protest that she has been discriminated against unfairly because of her colour, a white woman has no machinery for protesting.' [922]

Reporting in 1968, however, the NLWAC observed, that 'sex is seldom mentioned in the same context as racial discrimination in employment although...the position of women is infinitely inferior to male immigrants.'[923]

Early Initiatives in the Labour and Conservative Parties

The more cerebral issues relating to Labour's first attempts to grapple with discrimination had been tackled by their Race Relations Working Party, which had argued that traditional Labour socialism was not – yet - fully adequate to the challenge:

> A basic premise of socialist thought and action is the right of every individual to full and equal opportunity in all spheres of economic, social and political life. In practice this has

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Cultural Change, pp. 141-51. For more on Conservative views, see below, pp. 168-9. For an account of the reception of Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, see Sandbrook, *White Heat,* pp. 639-45.

[919] For discussion on the USA see Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, p. 63; N. Lemann, 'How the Seventies Changed America', in W. Chaffe, H. Sitkoff, B. Bailey (eds), *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America* (New York, 2003), p. 360.

[920] Rendel et al., *Equality for Women,* p. 1.

[921] For example, in 1968 Joan Vickers decared 'Anti-feminism…just as serious a problem as racialism or any other prejudice', see *The Times*, 28 March 1968. See also, *Woman's View: News From the Status of Women Committee*, November 1969, p. 2, WomL, 7AMP/B/09/12; Report of Meeting held in the House of Commons on 22 October 1968 regarding Equal Rights for Women in Industry', MRC, MSS 292B/119/4.

[922] HC, 28 January 1972, c. 1829.

[923] National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women,* 1968, p. 9.

> meant securing for the working class the same rights and opportunities that have been available only to the privileged few…[A] new dimension has been added to the struggle for equal opportunity by the existence of colour prejudice and racial discrimination…[S]uch cannot be placed solely against the traditional backcloth of the class struggle; its effects have been shown to be more widespread. However, it is clear that we as socialists must show our abhorrence of this evil and direct our efforts to ensure its removal from society.[924]

Social injustices born of discrimination did not necessarily correspond to those born of class based inequalities. The corollary being that traditional Labour methods were not sufficient to meet the challenge posed by discrimination. For example, discrimination in employment did 'not always involve conflict between labour and management.'[925]

Labour's systematic investigations into discrimination against women began in 1967, prompted by two simultaneous developments: the initiation of a discussion amongst Labour Women, and the formation of Study Group. In June 1967, the NLWAC asked the Women's Sections to undertake 'a Special Study' for the 1968 Labour Women's Conference on the subject of the 'Elimination of Discrimination Against Women', as part of their Human Rights Year activities.[926] The Research Department prepared a discussion paper which outlined the measure of inequalities and key areas of discrimination in education, employment, social security, legal matters and public life. Reflecting the Labour suspicion of feminism as a middle-class preoccupation, it explained:

> This examination has not been from the standpoint of feminism; we are calling... for a more searching look at…what women have achieved in 50 years. We maintain…that the achievements have been inadequate and that a country that designates any group, class, or sex as second class citizens will in the long run suffer… Women, we maintain, can contribute more, and have a right to demand more in return.[927]

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[924] Report of the Labour Party Race Relations Working Party, June 1967, p. 2, LPA, RE 177.
[925] Minutes of the Race Relations Working Party, 3 May 1967, LPA, Records of the Home Policy Committee, May-Sept 1967.
[926] For initial discussion see, Minutes of the National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, 15 June 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 864. For subsequent developments, see Minutes of the National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, 12 Oct, 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 953; Labour Party, 'Discrimination Against Women: A Discussion Paper for Women's Sections', October 1967, MRC, MSS 292B 823/1. By the time this was circulated the Party had initiated 'a practical investigation of the whole problem' of discrimination against women and the NLWAC advised the Women's sections that their 'practical contribution' to this study was sought (see p. 1 of discussion paper). For more notes on the planned co-operation between the Study Group and NLWAC see Home Policy Committee, 'Study Group on Discrimination Against Women', November 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 886.
[927] Labour Party, 'Discrimination Against Women: A Discussion Paper for Women's Sections', October 1967, p.12, MRC, MSS 292B 823/1.

170 Sections replied to the questionnaire circulated with the paper.[928] The resultant special report was authored jointly by the NLWAC and the newly established Study Group.[929] It thus reveals something about the views of the older generation of Labour Women, who dominated the Sections, and something about the views of the NLWAC and the Study Group. Some of the views of the former were carried forward, but there were also differences of opinion. As we shall see, many of the positions and arguments outlined within the report came to increasing prominence within Labour circles and beyond over the following decade.

The report opened with a key question: "Discrimination or Protection? …how far do women need to be treated differently from men?' Protective legislation and the position of the housewife in the social security system were described as ways that society had tried to 'positively discriminate in favour of women', even if in 1968, both were widely criticised as 'unfair and discriminatory'. Other forms of discrimination were unequivocally negative and unfair. The report argued that although sex discrimination was not yet a political issue, it was a 'moral issue' behind which lied 'the facts of poverty and injustice.'[930]

The report's authors were struck by the Sections' 'reasonableness' and their lack of 'bitterness' about women's underrepresentation in political and public life.[931] Although they had reported numerous instances of male prejudice, and desired greater respect from men, less than one fifth of them blamed women's lack of political involvement primarily on male attitudes. Instead, they thought the greatest obstacles to women were practical; for example, much political activity took place in the evening when women tended to be with their families.[932] The report's authors, perhaps trying to sound reasonable themselves, concluded that 'there was no hint of apathy but rather a feeling for priorities – the home naturally came first.'[933] However, when the Sections highlighted women's own 'anti-feminism', observing, for example, how many women were glad to 'court male patronage' rather than competition, the report struck a more chiding note:

[928] Ibid. p. 5, MRC, MSS 292B 823/1.
[929] For references to the authorship of the report see 'Study Group on Discrimination Against Women', December 1968, B WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 953.
[930] National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women*, 1968, pp. 5-6.
[931] Ibid. pp. 2 and 17.
[932] Ibid. pp. 16-17. They suggested that the key to a woman venturing into political activity was the 'understanding and support' of her husband
[933] Ibid. p. 20.

> [M]any women would still prefer a certain level of protection and discrimination, to an insecure freedom… [A]ny future extensions of women's rights may well imply an extension of her duties.[934]

On the subject of employment, the report called for improved training and education for girls and women, and for action on equal pay. [935] Virtually all Sections had agreed that some re-appraisal of the work traditionally done by women - e.g. nursing, childcare, social-work – would be necessary to secure equal pay for work of equal value. [936] An assertion which can either be read as an old-fashioned adherence to the notion of 'equal-but-different', or as a sophisticated and far-sighted analysis of the challenges associated with claiming equality with men. Notably, the prospect of legislation to guarantee women 'protection against discrimination in employment' was deemed very unlikely and afforded barely any attention.[937]

Considerably more space was dedicated to the subject of tax and social security which was discussed within the context of family life because, as the report explained, a woman's status as a housewife and mother was the source of both her security and insecurity. [938] Significantly, this was essentially the same observation as had been made by Douglas Houghton, who sat on the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, and it points to his influence in developing the Group's approach to reform. His own review of social security policy review had highlighted the inadequacies of women's social security. A less celebrated section of the controversial pamphlet he had penned for the Institute of Economic Affairs in 1967, had been titled, 'Social Security is about Women':

> The more one goes into the figures and gains actual experience, the more one realises the social insecurity of women – all sorts and conditions of women...find that moral judgements are written into the rules of our Welfare State. The social security of married women particularly depends upon a faithful husband or the Supplementary Benefits Commission. This is a scandalous gap in our social security scheme which must be remedied. Every woman should have social security in her own right...[939]

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[934] Ibid. p. 5.
[935] Ibid. pp. 6-11.
[936] Ibid. p. 10. Rather ambitiously, the original discussion paper had asked, 'Do you believe that a national job evaluation programme or some other attempt should be made to assess the work traditionally performed by women…with a view to upgrading salaries to the equivalent level of men's job's?'
[937] Ibid. p. 9.
[938] Ibid. p. 11.
[939] D. Houghton, *Paying for the Social Services.* (London, 1968. First edition published 1967), pp. 19-21. Crossman's work on social security had also revealed a lack of knowledge around single mothers see above, p. 75.

In keeping with this view, the NLWAC/Study Group report signalled a departure from Beveridge. Women were presented as 'workers', albeit ones who still bore the primary responsibility for raising their children:

> The 'average' woman can expect two periods of dependency and potential insecurity in her life – the period of child rearing…[and] retirement. For the rest of the time she is in a position to work and earn her own living, even though she may in fact have a husband to support her. Given an 'average family' of 2.5 children…most women need devote no more than 7 to ten years to the full-time care of small children. They could therefore expect to enjoy at least 30 years of full-time work or a combination of full and part time work.[940]

The sentiment was repeated in the section on marriage, where it was asserted that Labour women did not 'wish to be treated as dependants when we are capable and willing to fend for ourselves.'[941] This raised important questions. If wives were to be relieved of dependence upon their husbands, what sort of social insurance could best cover these two normal periods of dependency in a women's lives? The Study Group, who was examining the problem, had sought the Sections' views on their outlined alternative.[942]

The discussion paper proposed that all working women (married or not) should pay full National Insurance contributions in return for full benefits. The Sections were 'sharply divided'. Seventy-five supported the proposal and thirty-two did so conditionally. Thirty-six wanted to retain the married women's opt-out, not because they approved of housewives' dependent status, but because they were concerned for their immediate welfare. Other Sections declined to give a simple answer on the grounds that the issues were too complex. Some argued that equal pay should precede expectations of fuller contributions, whilst others expressed concern for part-time workers. There were strong concerns that women, already economically disadvantaged, were ill equipped to meet additional demands on their income.[943] (As one feminist asked her sisters at Ruskin: 'Full insurance, who's going to pay full insurance? Shop girl, £5 a week or something

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For more background discussion to the controversy over Houghton's pamphlet, see Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp. 144-5.

[940] National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. 11.

[941] Ibid. p. 16.

[942] Ibid. p. 14.

[943] Ibid. pp. 14-15. Only seven Sections had disagreed with the proposition that husbands and wives be assessed for tax separately.

like that?'[944]) The report surmised that social security problems were essentially *'wage'* problems: 'women's sections wanted women to be independent but not independently poor.'[945] The report carefully distinguished a socialist concern for the needs of working-class women from middle-class feminism:

> [T]he agonies of choice between 'mother and career woman'…are posed mainly for the professional woman. For...working class women such psychological complexities are a luxury, she works usually because she has to, and is rewarded in most cases with less than half of the man's average wage…[T]here is still a need to crusade for the rights of the ordinary working woman, earning a pittance, depending utterly on her husband for social security and if deserted by him, thrown on to state support. For these women we demand the right to an equal wage, decent social security and a fair share of the family income and assets. [946]

Nevertheless, the report's authors were not insensitive to the wider feminist project: 'If these modest achievements cannot be accomplished within the next few years we may well wonder what cause there was to rejoice half a century ago.'[947]

The establishment of a group to 'study over the range the problems of women in society today' was first proposed by Edward Leadbitter MP at a PLP meeting in June 1967.[948] 'In many respects', Leadbitter believed, 'women are treated as second class citizens.' [949] The Home Policy Committee agreed to the establishment of a joint NEC and PLP committee and suggested the inclusion of representatives of interest groups and the academic community.[950] George Brown, probably hoping to avoid riling the TUC's antipathy, ensured their involvement from the outset.[951] The Group first met in November 1967.[952] It was headed by Houghton who, among other things, was a long-time supporter of equal pay.[953] The group also included Anthony Lester; Shirley Summerskill, daughter of Edith Summerskill; Betty Lockwood, recently

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[944] Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, p. 24, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1.
[945] National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. 15.
[946] Ibid. p. 20.
[947] Ibid.
[948] Minutes of a PLP Meeting, 15 June 1967, LPA, PLP Minutes.
[949] *Guardian*, 6 July 1967.
[950] Home Policy Committee, 'Study Group on Discrimination Against Women', November 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 886.
[951] Memo to D. Lea, 13 July 1967, MRC, MSS 292B. 823/1.
[952] Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 1 November 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 882.
[953] At that time Houghton was chair of the PLP. For more on his support for equal pay see HC, 16 May 1952, cc. 1782-3. See also 'Equal Pay: A note on a Bill introduced by Mr. Douglas Houghton in 1954', June 1968, TNA LAB 10/3310.

appointed as Labour's Chief Women's Officer and much applauded for her determined work in the field of women's rights; Margaretia Rendel, academic and experienced women's rights campaigner; Joyce Butler, Labour MP; and the TUC's Ethel Chipchase and Marie Patterson.[954] Their terms of reference were drawn 'as widely as possible':[955]

> Investigate the extent of discrimination against women in the U.K, particularly in the fields of education and training; employment opportunities; legal and commercial transactions; family and social security; and in all areas of public life. In light of its findings to recommend policies to further attainment by women of equal rights.

This was ambitious. The group agreed at first meeting, that they were concerned with 'the whole question of women's place in society.'[956]

Early discussions focused on tax and social security. Although this reflected Labour priorities, immediate impetus was provided by Richard Crossman's work on social security reform.[957] There were tensions between ensuring justice for women and concern for the low paid.[958] By the

[954] Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 1 November 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 882. Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. iii. For notes on Betty Lockwood, see McDonald, 'Women in the Labour Party Today', pp. 157-8. For notes on Lester, see above, p. 78. For notes on Summerskill, see above and below, p. 215.

[955] Home Policy Committee, 'Study Group on Discrimination Against Women', memo attached to letter, T.J. Pitt to L. Murray, 25 October 1967, MRC, MSS 292B 823/1.

[956] Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 23rd Novemeber 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 882. The minutes of this group are sparse and incomplete. Records are available for less than half of their meetings.

[957] *National Superannunation and Social Insurance: Proposals for Earnings Related Social Security*, Cmnd. 3883 (London, 1969), pp. 25-7. See also Report of 'Study Group on Discrimination Against Women: Social Security Recommendations, Meeting with Ministers', December 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 953; Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 2 January 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 905; Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 3 February 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 907; Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 20 February 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 907; Minutes of thce Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 29 April 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection,, Card 916.

[958] Disaggregation, for example, was a long-standing feminist demand. Summerskill argued for separate assessment but Peggy Herbison warned the group to 'consider very carefully what the effects of separate assessment would be in the lower paid worker.' Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 24 April 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 905. Interestingly, Summerskill made her argument, not on explicitly feminist grounds, but on the grounds of the 'disincentive effect' whereby the joint income of professional couples made them liable for surtax. Herbison approached the problem of National Insurance with similar caution. Whilst she 'felt that women could not expect to have full social security rights and to opt of contributions' she was also concerned that 'working class families' would not suffer from altering the National Insurance System. See also Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 12 March 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 913. For useful discussions of the history of the taxation of men, women, and married couples see, Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women*, pp. 25-7; Equal Opportunities Commission, *Income Tax & Sex Discrimination* , pp. 7-18.

end of 1968, the group had produced a series of outline social security recommendations.[959] Their approach was based on the belief that Beveridge's view of wives as dependents was becoming 'less and less valid'. Although most women would continue to have their working life interrupted by motherhood, there was a growing tendency (and expectation) for women to spend more of their lives in paid employment. However, the group had responded to the needs of a *changing* rather than *changed* society. Whilst they speculated about a future breakdown in the gender division of labour (for example, men might sometimes 'take over…child-rearing duties'), they believed that Beveridge was not 'totally irrelevant' in 1968. Their aim, as far as possible was to put men and women on an equal basis in social security, whilst ensuring adequate social security coverage for women during the periods of maternity and child bearing, regardless of marital status.'[960]

To this end, they proposed that men and women should make social security contributions on the same basis. Mothers caring for pre-school age children would retain their entitlements, and the needs of dependent mothers and children would be recognised by increased family allowances and single parent allowances where appropriate. Mothers would be expected to make full contributions again after their youngest child went to school. 'Presumably', the report said, 'if the husband wished his wife to stay at home he will be prepared to provide her with the necessary insurance contributions and this should be written into law if necessary.'[961] It was recognised that these reforms would require solid foundations of equal pay, full industrial training facilities, and much improved childcare provision.[962]

These recommendations became the focus of a 1968 Party-wide 'Participation Programme' involving 3000 people in 250 groups. According to the resultant report, there was broad agreement about the inadequacy of married women's provision, also that there should be no

[959] Labour Party Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 'The Social Security Recommendations of the Study Group', December 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 953. See also Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 3 February 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection 907.
[960] Labour Party Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 'Social Security Recommendations', WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection 953.
[961] Ibid.
[962] Ibid. Chipchase nonetheless worried that, in formulating this new approach, the Study Group had taken 'a misleadingly rosy view of the effect of equal pay.' See E. Chipchase to L. Murray, 9 December 1968, MRC, MSS 292B/119/4.

discrimination between married and unmarried mothers.[963] However, there were various disagreements about the meaning of 'dependency' which reflected different conceptions of marriage and family life. One fifth of groups took the traditional view that marriage automatically rendered women 'dependent'. At the other end of the spectrum, Chislehurst CLP thought women 'should never be classed as dependents.' A small number of groups thought that although marriage made one partner dependent, couples could choose whether it was husband or wife. Most participants agreed that women caring for small children should be regarded as dependent, but there was no consensus about the age which children ceased to need their mother's full-time care. Some groups pointed out that other responsibilities, such as care of elderly relatives, might also prevent women from seeking full-time employment.[964] Again, the most controversial recommendation was the abolition of the married women's opt-out. Nearly half the participants were opposed.[965] Were women to be forced out to work to pay for increased contributions?[966] Labour's research department succinctly concluded:

> There is obviously some difficulty in reconciling the consequences for women of the accepted definition of their role as housekeepers, nurses and child rearers with the desire to abolish the sense of dependence on men which women have under the present system.'[967]

When the Study Group moved on to the subject of employment, Lester took charge of the discussion.[968] Although his experience in the field of race relations policy work appear to have been highly influential, it is worth noting that Butler had already, and apparently independently, reached the conclusion that sex discrimination required a similar policy response to race discrimination.[969] The group accepted '*mutatis mutandis'* the justifications for anti-discrimination legislation as put by the Race Relations Board in 1967.[970] Spurred on by the prospect of equal pay they also called for equal pay for work of equal value, and argued that discrimination on grounds of sex in 'recruitment, training, dismissals, trade union membership

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[963] Labour Party Research Department, 'Participation '69: Women and Social Security Report', January 1970, p. 18, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 1006.
[964] Ibid. p. 20.
[965] This was to the quite specific suggestion that married women, with no children, and mothers with no –pre school children should contribute whether they worked or not. See Ibid. p. 21.
[966] Ibid. pp. 19-22.
[967] Ibid. p. 20.
[968] Minutes of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 22 April 1969, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 972. There are barely papers available for this group until the end of 1969 and all minutes and papers relating to this portion of the group's work are unavailable.
[969] For Joyce Butler's experience , see below, p. 176.
[970] For the arguments advanced by the Race Relations Board, see above, pp. 73-4.

and benefits, collective bargaining, and industrial action' be made unlawful. To this end, they unanimously advocated extending the Race Relations Act to cover discrimination on the grounds of sex and re-naming it the Equal Opportunity Act.[971] Some hoped this might also help deflate the sense of unfairness felt by those who believed that 'racial minorities were 'privileged' by access to a legal remedy unavailable 'to victims of other types of unfair discrimination' - a reference not just to feminist arguments but also to Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech.[972]

Labour's Home Policy Committee considered the proposal at the end of 1969. According to the TUC's representative, Mr Lea, the Committee was clearly inclining towards commending the document to the NEC with a view to it becoming Party policy. However, Lea protested, pointing out that the Study Group's recommendations were 'unanimous' only because of Chipchase's absence at that particular meeting.[973] The TUC, traditionally hostile to legislative interference in industrial relations, were opposed extending the Race Relations Act which they had always viewed as the thin end of a potentially 'very broad wedge.'[974] Lea also warned the TUC would 'need a lot of convincing' before agreeing 'that the proposed legislation should include trade union membership and benefits, collective bargaining and industrial action.' Following Lea's intervention, the Chair concluded that the Committee was unable to endorse the Study Group's recommendations.[975] Labour's earliest move to legislate to prevent discrimination against women had been stymied.

The following year, another early initiative was thwarted the following year, when Castle requested advice from her civil servants on the subject. The requested submission portrayed the idea as unnecessary, potentially ineffective, complicated, and as having the potential to open a can of worms. If women today, it asked, what about when people demanded the prohibition of

[971] Labour Party Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 'Anti-Discrimination Legislation', November 1969, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 1001.
[972] Labour Party Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 'Legislation for Equal Opportunity', TNA, LAB 43/577. Enoch Powell had argued that, 'all who are in this country as citizens should be equal before the law…this does not mean that the immigrant and his descendant should be elevated into a privileged or special class…' See Enoch Powell, Transcript of 'Rivers of Blood' speech given at Birmingham, 20 April 1968. Transcript available online at *The Telegraph* website, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html, accessed 09/02/2012.
[973] D. Lea to Mr Murray, 4 December 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/119/5.
[974] Ibid. For history of TUC opposition see Lester and Bindman, *Race and Law* , pp. 127-9. Fenner Brockway, who introduced the first Racial Discrimination Bills from 1956 onwards, omitted provisions on employment provision for this very reason. See pp. 108-9.
[975] D. Lea to Mr Murray, 4 December 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/119/5. They effectively kicked the issue into the long grass, sending the proposals to the Government and the TUC 'for comment.'

discrimination on the grounds of age?[976] Castle had never been keen on anti-discrimination legislation for women and the matter was again dropped.

Nevertheless, the Study Group went on to publish its work as an Opposition Green Paper in 1972.[977] *Discrimination Against Women* constituted a sophisticated and comprehensive response to women's inequality. It argued for men and women to be recognised equally as workers and to share the burden of unpaid domestic work. Despite these recognisably feminist objectives, the Study Group portrayed the matter primarily as one of human rights and social justice. The left's tendency towards structural explanations had guided the Group towards a far reaching analysis of sex inequalities, which they saw as entrenched and interrelated, at work, at home, in the tax and benefit systems, and in political and public life. The call for anti-discrimination legislation was reiterated, but as part of a very broad package which included recommendations on education and training, family planning, family allowances, maternity allowances, taxation, social security, matrimonial property and guardianship laws. Taken together the proposals were designed to '*provide maximum incentive for men and women to work wherever they are able'* coupled with maximum security against illness, unemployment, marital breakdown and death.[978] The Group hoped that their reform programme could institute a transformation in relationships between the sexes:

> Many wives are still in a subordinate position. Many carry an unfair burden of domestic responsibility. This prevents many wives from seriously contemplating a return to paid employment... It also means that they are unable to choose, as husbands may choose, to become involved in outside interests. We should aim to reach a position where husbands and wives may freely choose how to apportion responsibilities for the financial upkeep and running of the home in accordance with respective capacity and interests. [979]

Labour's 1972 Conference Report highlighted the growing for pressure reform, echoing the Study Groups claim that, 'women's rights have re-emerged as a distinct issue demanding an explicit response within the Party Programme.' On paper, women's rights issues were a natural complement to Labour's priorities. As a progressively inclined Party, Labour welcomed the

[976] DB Smith to Mr Pickford et al, 28 April 1970, TNA, LAB 43/577. Also see above for more on this episode in relation to equal pay, p. 131. The idea of anti-age-discrimination was, nonetheless, gaining currency. See, for example, Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report, 1973* (London, 1973), p. 331.
[977] Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women*.
[978] Ibid. p. 29. Emphasis added. They also acknowledged: 'the bias of our proposals is in favour of the working wife....That, we think, is right.'
[979] Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. 2.

Study Group's recommendations, which proposed 'a fundamental departure from the traditional view of women' as a challenge to 'the outdated prejudice of the narrow minded.'[980] The proposed social security reforms would be an 'an important step towards 'establishing a social policy which treats women fairly for the first time.'[981] Women's rights were also incorporated seamlessly into their broader civil liberties agenda. An opening statement of their 1970 manifesto used the classic formulation:

> All people are entitled to be treated as equals. We believe that women should have the same opportunities and rewards as men. We insist, too, that society should not discriminate against minorities on grounds of religion or race or colour: that all should have equal protection under the law and equal opportunity for advancement in and service to the community.[982]

Although attitudes within the Party and among its supporters remained ambivalent, a space was opening up for the articulation and championing of women's rights.

The Conservatives had also reassessed their position on women and women's issues in the late 1960s. This owed something to Edward Heath's leadership, which had heralded a partial change of mood, and his attempts to modernise the Party.[983] His biographer believes that his impetus to provide greater equality for women was born of his concern with fairness on the one hand and the national good on the other.[984] Heath's closest friend, Sara Morrison, described his views on women's issues as 'liberal' and 'in tune'.[985] So far as Heath had any feminist instincts, they were firmly grounded in a view of women as equal but different.[986] Heath persuaded Morrison to accept Party Vice-Chairmanship in 1971, a role which included responsibilities for the

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[980] Labour Party, *Labour's Programme for Britain: Annual Conference Report 1972* (London, 1972), p. 65. See also Labour, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. 2.
[981] Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1972*, p. 52.
[982] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970: Now Britain's Strong Let's Make it Great to Live In* (1970). See also Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1972*, p. 64. 'The greatest limitation on individual freedom is the social problem of active discrimination whether it be on economic, social, racial, or sex grounds.'
[983] For example, see exchange of letters regarding a speech in which Heath expressed a wish for more women to be selected as Parliamentary Candidates. John Stevens to Susan Walker, 2 August 1967, and Susan Walker to John Stevens, 3 August 1967, CPA, CCO 60/4/20.
[984] P. Zeigler, *Edward Heath: The Authorized Biography* (London, 2010), p. 461. According to his biographer, Heath was 'a champion of anyone whom he felt was being misused by society…if women were being treated unfairly, this must be put right.' He told Morrison: 'the time had come to maximize the value and the opportunity for…over fifty percent of the population. Interview with Sara Morrison, 10 May 2011.
[985] Ibid.
[986] Asked about the role of women in politics in 1966, he opined that they could make a worthwhile contribution, 'provided they are not just duplicating the male role.' When Vallance asked for clarification on this point, Heath 'felt unable to help.' See also Zeigler, *Edward Heath*, p. 461.

women's side of the Party. More committed to the women's cause than Heath, Morrison believed the need for change was as 'obvious as the air that we breathe'.[987] She was nonetheless wary of women's liberation, which she perceived as a middle-class movement for middle-class women.[988] Like most Conservative champions of women's rights, Morrison saw no conflict between her commitment to women's rights and her Conservative commitment to the family. She agreed with Beryl Cooper, that 'unless you have happy women, you will not have a happy family.'[989]

Divisions between the female Party rank-and-file, the Conservative WNAC, the Party leadership, and Conservative women voters had grown increasingly wide after the war. WNAC members were more progressive (even feminist) than most of their Conservative sisters – although there were signs that the younger generation were less traditionalist than their predecessors.[990] Although attempts to modernise the Conservative image had frequently found the Party leadership embarrassed by its more 'traditional' women members, there had been no corresponding attempt to embrace the cause of modern woman as espoused by the WNAC. [991] There were cross mutterings:

> The women in the Party Organisation are extremely loyal and hard-working but the fact that the Labour Party has given so much prominence and power to its women members in comparison with our own Party tends to rankle…[Conservative women] have been at pains for some considerable time not to embarrass the Party Leadership…although…the opportunities in the press have been both tempting and considerable.[992]

As this suggests, prejudice against women ran deep within the Party and its culture. After a meeting with Vickers in 1967, Heath had enquired about setting up machinery in the Research Department to assess 'the impact of legislation on women', and to generally 'advise the leadership on the women's point of view.' [993] The Head of Research, Brendon Sewill, advised against the initiative, claiming that such issues already received ample consideration. Under a

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[987] Interview with Sara Morrison.
[988] Ibid.
[989] Conservative Party, *Annual Conference Report 1969* (London, 1969), p. 114.
[990] Interview with Sara Morrisson. According to Morrison, the sort of 'moderate and cautious' feminism expressed by Joan Vickers was, according to Morrison, 'quite current in the undergrowth amongst the younger women.'
[991] Maguire, *Conservative Women*, pp. 148-50; Campbell, *Iron Ladies*, p. 109. For comments from the perspective of the Conservative Women's Organisations see, for example, Mrs C.J.A Doughty, Chairman of the WNAC, to The Right Hon. Edward du Cann, 6 July, 1965, CPA, CCO 4/9/469. The file as a whole suggests that polite complaints of this nature were a reoccurring event. See also Joan Varley to Miss Walker, 12 May 1966, CPA, CCO 170/5/91.
[992] No author, 'Notes on Women's Organisation', 16 May 1967, CPA, CCO 170/5/91.
[993] Letter to Jim Prior, 22 May 1967, CPA, CCO 170/5/91.

veneer of reasoned politeness, he simultaneously acknowledged, belittled, and dismissed women's claims. Sewill advised Heath that, unlike women like Dame Joan Vickers and Irene Ward, the 'new generation of working wives' did not want to feel 'part of a minority pressure group.'[994] In Sewill's view, they simply felt that they were 'faced with certain practical difficulties which the system does not take account of.'[995] He then proceeded to identify and dismiss the most potentially effective and relevant policy responses. Improved nursery school provision was too expensive. Sewill conceded that women should not find it so much more difficult than men to obtain mortgages and credit arrangements, but he perceived this as a cultural problem, born 'attitudes of mind' and beyond the reach of legislation. This might have constituted a reasoned ideological position had he not mocked the idea in a manner belying an unquestioning belief in the entitlement of male power and privilege:

> …it is rumoured that a group of Opposition members will press for the inclusion of sex discrimination in any future legislation against racial discrimination. This opens up interesting vistas for the Carlton Club, Balliol College, and Men and Women's Lavatories.[996]

Instead, Sewill pointed to the potential of a 'fairly impressive body of minor reforms', including things like adjustments to tax allowances and guardianship laws.[997] The line was clear: although the changing position of women was recognized, no significant allowances were to be made.

Heath sustained his interest in the subject, motivated partly by the desire to maintain some semblance of Conservative 'initiative' on the subject of women's issues in the face of Labour's Equal Pay policy.[998] In February 1968, with the WNAC's full support, he appointed a Research Committee of Enquiry headed by Anthony Cripps.[999] Its terms of reference stood in stark contrast to those of the Labour Study Group's. They were narrow and specifically defined:

> examine existing legislation…in order to determine what changes are desirable in the law and in administration in order to enable women to participate equally with men in the

[994] Ibid.
[995] Ibid.
[996] Letter to Jim Prior, 22 May 1967, CPA, CCO 170/5/91.
[997] Ibid.
[998] See, for example, M. Fraser to M. Shepherd and Unity Lister, 11 January 1968, CPA, CCO 20/36/6; J. MacGregor to J. Varley, 11 June 1968, CPA, CRD 3/38/4; J. Varley to J. MacGregor, 10 July 1968, CPA, CRD 3/38/4.
[999] Cripps Committee on Women's Rights, 'Report', February 1969, p. 1, CPA, CRD 3/38/4.

> political, economic and social life of the community; and what changes are desirable in the law relating to their rights and obligations within the family.'[1000]

Cripps' Committee recognised that confinement to 'lawyers law' precluded examination of those subjects which most affected the everyday life of women, such as education.

> There is no doubt that women are still…not enjoying equal access to educational opportunity. But we have combed the statute book in vain for any strictly legal provision that could account for this. Tradition, public opinion…is largely responsible. This is…one reason why girls still seem so keen to quit the grind of the classroom in favour of the delights of the typing pool…[1001]

The Committee also excluded Social Insurance from its investigations. Since the subject had profound financial implications, it was deemed best left to the 'experts' to study within the context of the Party's broader social and economic policy.[1002] Employment was also excluded from their investigations, despite being described as 'nearer to the boaderline'. However, they explained, unequal opportunity was bound up with unequal pay, which the next Conservative Government was pledged to discuss with employers and unions, and the 'real difficulties' were deemed to be 'economic rather than legal'.[1003]

Even within this narrowed remit, the Committee found considerable scope for change. They produced 34 recommendations including changes to tax laws; to voting laws; to guardianship laws; property laws; to jury selection criteria; and the removal of legal discrimination between prostitutes and their clients.[1004] Significantly, Cripps over-stepped its remit in one area. With reference to the areas of life outside the scope of existing law, where men and women were still treated inequitably, they suggested the next Conservative Government 'should perhaps consider enlarging the role of [the] Race Relations Board' merely to the extent of keeping 'the whole field of sex discrimination under review, to act as a clearing-house for complaints and to submit

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[1000] Ibid.
[1001] Ibid. pp. 4-5.
[1002] Ibid. It was also pointed out that the exercise may well prove to be essentially pointless if Crossman's proposals were enacted. Also, that it was 'irresponsible' to suggest extension of benefit without considering where the money might be found.
[1003] Ibid. p. 6.
[1004] Cripps Committee on Women's Rights, 'Report', pp. 8-63, esp. pp. 60-63, CPA CRD 3/38/4. Many were wholly or partly supported by a WNAC report, *Unhappy Families*, prepared as a submission to the Finer Committee. See 'The Position on Cripps and Finer Evidence' February 1971, Report attached to a memo from Joan Varley to Charles Bellairs, 8 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/2.

periodic reports to Parliament.'[1005] Cripps' Report was published under the unfortunate title *Fair Shares for the Fair Sex* (much to the regret of the WNAC who expressed dismay at their not being consulted on this point).[1006] Two Committee members, Beryl Cooper and Geoffrey Howe (a co-author of the Street Report on race discrimination policy) were inspired by the wealth of evidence the Committee had received from women and women's organizations, on matters beyond Cripps' remit, to write a second paper, *Opportunity for Women.* [1007] By way of a solution they proposed a more explicit embrace of women's two roles. They argued that recent developments had removed the conflict between marriage and work and Howe and Cooper believed that 'the vast majority of women will want and to be able to succeed in *both* - but to differing degrees at successive stages of their life'.[1008] To this end, their proposals included things like improved training provision and greater opportunities for part-time work.[1009] Notably, they suggested again giving 'some public authority the responsibility for keeping the whole field of sex discrimination under review' as a way of securing equal pay for women.[1010]

Even with its emphasis on negative freedoms, more in tune with a liberal Conservative mindset, *Fair Shares'* reception was unenthusiastic to the point of dismissive. The Advisory Committee on Policy agreed it would be discussed at the 1969 conference, despite their concerns about the potential costs of tax reform.[1011] Whilst Labour's aversion to the mention of feminism stemmed from a class bias, the Conservative's stemmed primarily from aversion to radicalism. *Fair Shares* was introduced to Conference as 'neither militant nor feminist'. Cooper reassured Conference that they simply wanted 'to put a number of matters right.' [1012] Winding up the debate, Thatcher effectively and humorously demolished the claims that the proposals would make women 'more equal than men'. [1013] She welcomed both reports as 'a very good contribution to enhancing the status and dignity of women.' [1014] Using the formula that would

[1005] Cripps Committee on Women's Rights, 'Report', p. 60, CPA CRD 3/38/4.
[1006] Minutes of a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Policy, 2 April 1969, CPA, ACP 2/3.
[1007] G. Howe and B. Cooper, *Opportunity For Women* (London, 1969). For notes on Howe's involvement on the Street Committee see Lester and Bindman, *Race and the Law*, p. 98. For more on the work of the Street Committee see above, p. 74.
[1008] Howe and Cooper, *Opportunity for Women*, p. 14.
[1009] Ibid. pp. 18-26.
[1010] Ibid. pp. 24-5.
[1011] Minutes of a Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Policy, 5 March 1969, CPA, ACP 2/3. See also Sewill's description of the meeting in Sewill to Douglas, 28 August 1969, CPA CRD 3/38/4.
[1012] Conservative Party, *Conference Report 1969*, pp. 112-13.
[1013] Ibid. p. 119.
[1014] Ibid.

come, increasingly, to form the basis of the Conservative response to calls for reforms on women's rights, Thatcher acknowledged women's claim to equality whilst paying careful respect to women in traditional roles:

> Many women will still make their main job in life the creation of a home. Others at some time in their life will go out to work and possibly seek a part-time job suitable to their special circumstances. Yet others…will carry out the same jobs with equal competence and under the same conditions as men. We must make provision for all of these circumstances, but let us recognize that perhaps the most important job of all is the creation of family and family life….[1015]

Conference agreed virtually unanimously to a very cautious motion welcoming *Fair Shares* 'as a constructive contribution to the study of inequalities under the law affecting women' and recommended 'that it should receive consideration in the formulation of Conservative policy.'[1016] For reasons unknown, however, the Cripps Committee had been established outside the normal policy formation machinery. Its recommendations, which had no real body of support in the Party beyond the WNAC, were not automatically integrated into party policy.[1017]

Prejudices and inertia aside, it is important to recognise the Conservatives' ideological limits to reform. Douglas James, of the CRD explained:

> many of the ways in which women are at a disadvantage and about which they feel most strongly – such as the points on pay and education made in *Opportunity for Women* – are not directly within the responsibility of the Government. [1018]

On the subject of anti-discrimination machinery particularly, a topic which held particular political relevance, since the Conservatives position was that Castle's Equal Pay Bill was a misguided attempt to address the symptoms rather the cause, the party was deeply resistant.[1019] Proposals to extend the Race Relations Act, however tentative, were bound to create controversy.[1020] Some Conservative (and Labour) politicians had shared Powell's concern about creating 'a privileged class of victims'. But many Conservatives also saw anti-discrimination legislation as antithetical to their political philosophy, an infringement of the freedom and liberty

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[1015] Ibid.
[1016] Ibid. pp. 112 & 119.
[1017] Mr Douglas to E. Heath and E. Maudling, 25 September 1969, CPA, CRD 3/38/4.
[1018] James Douglas, 'Policy for Women', 24 September 1969, CPA, CRD 3/38/4.
[1019] For more on this, see above, p. 133.
[1020] For some general background see Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 639

that was the proper right of every individual.[1021] In any case, practically speaking, legislation could not, as Dudley Smith put it, 'make people better in their hearts.'[1022] Even that Conservative champions of women's rights, Irene Ward, warned the National Council of Women that 'the changing of human nature is a matter which it is difficult to do, if not impossible, by Law.'[1023] Although Robert Carr's Working Committee had been prepared to recommend a requirement for employers not to discriminate in their terms and conditions of employment on grounds of sex, they rejected the possibility that legislation should cover 'non-discrimination in recruitment'.[1024] On this point, they expressed their firm 'opposition to intensified and expensive state enforcement and interference', unless it was 'clearly demonstrated to be necessary', which in this case it was not.[1025] They argued that 'real progress towards equal employment opportunity will come voluntarily and not by compulsion.'[1026]

Despite the Cripps initiative, the Conservatives had travelled virtually no distance in policy terms. James Douglas highlighted the eerie similarities between the draft 1970 manifesto and the 1949 manifesto, both of which promised to amend the law where it treated women as having inferior rights to men.[1027] He wryly remarked, 'for an Election twenty-one years later we might have to be rather more convincing and specific.'[1028] Douglas suggested concentrating on some of the Cripps proposals, particularly those on tax reform.[1029] Cripps had recommended complete

[1021] To remedy the first situation, Quinten Hogg had suggested extending (a weak) Bill to cover all forms of discrimination as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including religious and sex discrimination. His amendment was lost. See Lester and Bindman, *Race and the Law*, pp. 96-7 & 135-8.
[1022] Lester and Bindman, *Race and the Law*, p. 136.
[1023] Irene Ward to Dr. Cockcroft, 8 February 1972, London, London Metropolitan Archives [hereafter LMet], ACC 3613/4/25. Irene Ward was vigorous and energetic in her battle against discrimination against women. Once, having seen an advertisement in *The Times* for librarians for the House of Commons librarians stating that only men need apply, she tabled a question asking why women were barred from the job. When the relevant Minister replied that the library ladders were too heavy for women, Ward marched out of the chamber, went to the library, picked up a ladder, and returned with the ladder over her shoulder. She was denied entry to the chamber on the grounds that it was an 'offensive weapon' so stood in entrance shouting 'I have the ladder and it is not too heavy.' Women librarians were employed after that. See HC, 26 March 1975, c. 579.
See also Charles Bellairs comments in C. Bellairs to Jim Prior, 22 May 1967, CPA, CCO 170/5/91. Again, this is particularly significant since Bellairs was considered a Conservative champion of women's rights.
[1024] Conservative Research Department, 'Women, Wages and Work, p. 6. See also above, p. 132.
[1025] Ibid. p. 7.
[1026] Ibid. p. 6.
[1027] James Douglas, 'Policy for Women', CRD 3/38/4. The 1970 Manifesto said, 'women are treated, by the law, in some respects as having inferior rights to men, we will amend the law to remove this discrimination.' The 1949 manifesto said, ('In some cases the law has…ceased to correspond to the status of women… We will revise the law relating to domicile and institute an inquiry into out-of-date legislation…' See also Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970.*
[1028] James Douglas, 'Policy for Women', CPA, CRD 3/38/4.
[1029] Ibid.

disaggregation, but final manifesto commitment was limited to ending the 'tax nonsense which makes some married couples pay more tax on their joint earnings than they would if they were not married.' [1030] This commitment actually pre-dated Cripps, and reflected a promise Macleod had made to the 1967 Conservative Conference.[1031] The Conservative 1970 manifesto also promised women 'freedom under the law', though it made no specific commitments.[1032]

In Party election materials, the dominant image of women continued to be the housewife. Both parties addressed the housewife's presumed concerns by promising to keep prices down, whilst blaming rising prices on their opponents.[1033] In 1970, this became a central theme in the Conservative's 1970 General Election campaign. The focus fitted well with their broader attack on rising prices, threatened wage freezes and the spectre of the 'ten bob pound'.[1034] Labour were portrayed as the Party of the male worker. One election broadcast, dedicated to the '*WOMAN'S'* point of view, punned: 'If anyone else had been treated like the British housewife…during the last six years hard labour, someone would have started a society for the prevention of it.'[1035] The central character was Sylvia, a twenty-two year old working housewife with one child. She went out to work 'all the week', came home, cleaned the house, and was responsible for household budgeting. None of this troubled her as much as rising prices:

> [Men] never think about…a normal housewife's budget etc. They don't seem to understand, well, rents and things like that. I know my husband will vote Labour again. All he seems to worry about is if he can get his next rise, but I definitely wouldn't vote for Labour again.[1036]

Although Sylvia made an apparently vital contribution to the household budget she was defined by her domestic role where her primary concerns were understood to lie. As the above discussions show, issues like sex discrimination were largely perceived as belonging to a separate feminist or equal rights agenda. Conservatives made no attempt and, indeed, perceived no obligation to reconcile these two agendas – or parts of women's lives - beyond advocating variations of women's 'dual role'. Whilst the work of Labour's Study Group had explored how these interrelationships contributed towards women's inequalities, and pointed the way to an

[1030] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970.*
[1031] James Douglas, 'Policy for Women', 24 September 1969, CPA, CRD, 3/38/4.
[1032] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970.*
[1033] See for example, Labour Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 12 June 1970.
[1034] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 45. See also Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970.*
[1035] Conservative Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx. 11 June 1970.
[1036] Ibid.

eventual breakdown in the gender division of labour, the evidence suggests that Labour also found it difficult to reconcile these agendas in ways that spoke to their supporters and the wider electorate.[1037]

After his 1970 General Election victory, Heath's active interest in women's issues became submerged by more pressing concerns.[1038] He still told the 1971 Conservative Women's Conference that 'one of the most striking…policy initiatives during the years of opposition' had been 'in the field of women's rights'.[1039] Joan Varley, Morrison, Vickers, and other WNAC members continued to press the matter, especially as it became clear that the initiative was stalling.[1040] Morrison persuaded Patrick Cosgrove, in the Research Department, to adopt the 'women's brief'.[1041] As an early convert to the doctrine of economic liberalism, Cosgrove was politically well to the right of both herself and Heath, but Morrison found him to be very supportive.[1042]

Cosgrove developed an outline intellectual framework for how he believed Conservatives should approach the subject.[1043] His attempt encompassed two themes which re-emerged prominently in Conservative discourse on the subject of women's rights. The first was the necessity of avoiding extremes. The changing needs of modern women must be met with common-sense solutions, without recourse to anything that would endorse the claims of 'extremist feminists'.[1044] In a particular twist on this theme, Cosgrove argued that women's liberationists

[1037] For example, in the same *Labour Woman* as Bishop's article on 'Womancipation' there was an article, D. Bellerby, 'After all those Conservative Promises it's the Housewives bearing the brunt'… the housewives of this country have a right to demand the maintenance of a cheap food policy…' in *Labour Woman*, Vol. 61, No. 8 (September, 1971), p. 132.

[1038] For references to Heath's interest in the matter see D. Hurd to M. Fraser, 9 December 1969, CPA, CRD 3/38/4. For remarks about how the initiative slipped down the agenda as the Election approached see, P. Cosgrove to M. Carlise, 4 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3. Also, Interview with Sara Morrison.

[1039] Conservative Research Department, 'The Conservative Party: Women's Legislation', 18 January 1972, CPA, CRD 3/38/2

[1040] See, for example, Patrick Cosgrove to Mark Carlisle, 4 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3; Patrick Cosgrove to Douglas Hurd, 4 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3; Joan Varley to 'The Chairman', 10 February 1971, CPA CCO 20/36/6.

[1041] Patrick Cosgrove to Mark Carlisle, 4 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3.

[1042] Interview with Sara Morrison. For more on Cosgrove see Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 214. Cosgrove became an ardent Thatcher supporter, and editor of the *Spectator*. See also Ziegler, *Edward Heath*, p. 493.

[1043] Patrick Cosgrove to Mrs Morrison 11 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3. See also speech prepared by Patrick Cosgrove for Charles Morrison, attached to letter Charles Morrison to Patrick Cosgrove, 16 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3

[1044] Speech prepared by Patrick Cosgrove for Charles Morrison, attached to letter Charles Morrison to Patrick Cosgrove, 16 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3. Cosgrove referred to 'women's lib' and the 'bra-burning brigade.' Cooper and Howe similarly expressed hope of 'outflanking the militants…and thus arriving at an acceptable

had grown 'selfish' as 'they had let their problems get out of proportion in their own minds.'[1045] For example, Cosgrove understood that women might want to work outside the home but he described feminist demands for childcare as selfish because he did not believe that the necessary expenditure could not be justified.[1046] Cosgrove also criticised women's liberationists for being selfish for their (middle) class, as well as their sex, and for 'forgetting the real and considerable injustices being suffered by their sisters who are, perhaps, as they usually are, neither middle class nor articulate nor educated.'[1047] Implicitly, Cosrove's message was a direct reply to feminist claims of women's oppression (one which, from a feminist perspective, confirmed that claim). Women, he implied, should prioritise people's needs, and those of the community, over their own. Cosgrove's second theme was the limits of legislation. Certain inequalities could be removed from or by legislation, but the law could not eliminate the prejudices which caused so many inequalities.[1048] However, he did not perceive this as an excuse for total government inaction. There were unjustifiable inequalities that should be addressed. On the subject of guardianship law, for example, he argued:

> Whilst the main policies of the Women's Liberation Movement concentrate…on jobs and social equality, I am sure that the feeling that causes women to move in that direction often starts with the kind of humiliation that arises in the guardianship question [whereby fathers have the greater legal right]. It is not just that women are frustrated and discriminated against as workers or independent economic individuals – but that they are frustrated and humiliated in the very field – motherhood – which has always been thought to be peculiarly their own.[1049]

Urged on by the WNAC, who were anxious to prevent 'the Socialists stealing their clothes on Cripps', Cosgrove tried to push the initiative forward within the Party.[1050] He argued that the Conservatives were committed 'to a sufficient number of small changes to make a

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prescription.' See Cooper and Howe, *Opportunity for Women*, foreword. Morrison steered a course 'between the Scylla of Women's Lib and the Charybdis of Tory Matrons.' See Mrs Morrison to Mr Cosgrove, 25 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3.

[1045] Patrick Cosgrove to Mrs Morrison 11 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3. He argued that 'people who get their problems out of proportion in this way become tyrants.'

[1046] Patrick Cosgrove to Sarah Morrison, 11 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3. Interestingly, he made reference to Hannah Gavron's study of housebound mothers. See above, p. 87 for some discussion of Gavron's work.

[1047] Speech prepared by Patrick Cosgrove for Charles Morrison, attached to letter Charles Morrison to Patrick Cosgrove, 16 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3.

[1048] Ibid.

[1049] Patrick Cosgrove to Sarah Morrison, 11 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3.

[1050] Patrick Cosgrove to Mark Carlisle, 4 February 1971, CPA CRD 3/38/3; Patrick Cosgrove to Douglas Hurd, 4 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3. See also comments in Memo from Mrs Morrison to Mr Cosgrove, 25 March 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3. For clothes remarks see Report of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee Meeting, 16 February 1971, CPA, CCO 170/5/62.

'Miscellaneous Provisions Bill' worthwhile. This also had the presentational advantage of allowing the reforms to be 'marketed as a package.'[1051] However, the Home Office resisted the move and Ministers pleaded lack of Parliamentary time.[1052] Heath's Government met its most specific manifesto commitment on women's rights by way of a provision in the 1971 Budget which allowed married women to opt for individual income tax assessment. The practical implications of the removal of the so-called 'levy on morality', whereby it had been cheaper for some higher earning couples to 'live in sin', were limited and the income tax form continued to be signed by the husband alone. Moreover, it was a regressive reform since it was a worthwhile option only for couples with a joint income (earned or unearned) above the higher surtax threshold.[1053]

By March 1971, Morrison had given up hope, at least temporarily, of Government action on the remaining Cripps proposals. With other interested parties, she formed a 'small group of lawyer MPs' to get the proposals into Private Members legislation on the Conservative side, and to apply pressure on the Government.[1054] Although Varley believed Heath was fully sensible to the penalties of failing to take action and of ceding the women's rights issue to the Opposition, the evidence suggests that her assessment was over-optimistic.[1055] Without a strong lead on the issue, Government and Party reverted to normal tendencies whereby women and women's issues were deemed unimportant ('I think the ladies worry too much', wrote Lord Halisham.[1056]) When Vickers and George Sinclair MP managed to put forward Private Member's Bills, the Whip, Willie Whitelaw, refused to offer any Government time.[1057] A change of Government attitude can be detected in early 1972. This can be directly attributed to the group of campaigners which had begun to gather around Butler's anti-discrimination Bill.

[1051] Patrick Cosgrove to Mark Carlisle, 4 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3.
[1052] Mark Carlisle to Patrick Cosgrove, 19 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3; Mrs Charles Morrison to Patrick Cosgrove, 19 February 1971, CPA, CRD 3/38/3.
[1053] Conservative Research Department, 'The Conservative Party: Women's Legislation', CPA, CRD 3/38/2; Cripps Committee on Women's Rights, 'Report', pp. 49-50, CPA, CRD 3/38/4. See also Equal Opportunities Commission, *Income Tax and Sex Discrimination*, pp. 7 & 11.
[1054] Mrs Morrison to Mr Cosgrove, 25 March, 1971, CPA CRD 3/38/3.
[1055] No author [but probably Joan Varley] to Douglas Hurd, 14 January 1972, CPA, CCO 170/5/26.
[1056] Lord Halisham to Peter Thomas, 3 May 1971, CPA CCO 20/36/6. See also No author [but probably Joan Varley] to Douglas Hurd, 14 January 1972, CPA, CCO 170/5/26.
[1057] Willie Whitelaw to Peter Thomas, 4 January 1972, CPA, CCO 170/5/62.

The Anti-Discrimination Bills – First Initatives

By 1972, feminists and women's rights activists had forced the issue of sex discrimination on to the Parliamentary agenda by focusing their energies on an anti-sex-discrimination Bill. The earliest initiative had been taken by Joyce Butler who Nancy Seear described as 'a gentle, non-publicity seeking person' who never received enough credit for what became the Sex Discrimination Act.[1058] Carolyn Faulder, who interviewed Butler for *Nova*, is adamant that Butler did not see herself as a women's liberationist.[1059] Her concern for sex inequalities should be understood within the broader context of her concern with social injustice.[1060] As she explained to a Labour Conference:

> Many of us came into the Labour Movement in the '30s because we were appalled at the wastage of human life and the wastage of human talents under the capitalist system. In the many improvements we have made since then, too many women have been left out: the totally dependent housewife without economic rights; the miserably low paid workers in the so-called women's jobs; the women, the lone mothers struggling to maintain families on social security; the women who are opposed at every turn when they seek promotion and equal opportunities.[1061]

Butler drew her inspiration partly from her Quaker background, where men and women were 'completely equal', and partly from her experience in the Co-operative movement where women played 'a vital part'.[1062] After a career in council politics, Butler had entered Parliament in 1955.[1063] Although she employed au-pairs to help her manage the responsibilities of motherhood, she believed that her 'domestic involvement' was often seen as indicative of 'unprofessionalism.'[1064] Nevertheless, she was respected as a hard-working MP. According to Marcia Williams, Wilson would have liked to appoint her to the Cabinet; he held back, however, because 'he thought he had reached a point beyond which he would have been accused of 'overdoing it a bit' if he appointed yet another woman.[1065] Butler later said that the Queen's 1966 Christmas Broadcast was what first prompted her to call for government action to combat

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[1058] Transcript of Interview with Nancy Seear, WomL, 8NLS/04.
[1059] Interview with Carolyn Faulder, 11 June 2011.
[1060] She described Disraeli's *Sybil* as revelatory: until reading that book, she had 'assumed that women didn't go out to work', but 'here was the working class revealed.' Quoted in Phillips, *Divided House*, p. 62.
[1061] Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report, 1973* p. 333.
[1062] Quoted in Phillips, *Divided House*, p. 62. For Butler's becoming MP see pp. 69-70. For more on Butler's personal reflections on her personal and political background see HC, 28 October 1969, c. 168 for Butler's reflections on her background.
[1063] Phillips, *Divided House*, pp. 62 & 69-70.
[1064] Vallance, *Women in the House*, pp. 69 & 108.
[1065] Ibid. p. 81; Williams quoted in Phillips, *The Divided House*, p. 170.

sex discrimination.[1066] Having found the women's organisations unhelpful, Butler took matters into her own hands. In February 1967, with the support of a group of women MPs, she put down an early day motion:

> That this house welcomes the importance attached by her Majesty the Queen to the role of women in public and social life…and calls upon her Majesty's Government to ensure that women's remaining legal disabilities are removed…that Government social programs and policies are directed towards ending social discrimination against women, and that equal pay for women is ensured…[1067]

It prompted virtually no reaction, from either the Government or the women's movement. [1068]

If Fords sewing machinists deserve some credit for the Equal Pay Act, would-be women bus drivers deserve some for the Sex Discrimination Act. [1069] Despite a shortage of drivers, women were banned from driving buses. Resistance came, not from the bus companies who were looking to make up the shortage, but from unionised male bus drivers.[1070] The planned introduction of one-manned buses provide some explanation. Since the new busses would not require conductors, female 'clippies' stood to lose their jobs unless they retrained. However, if they retrained as drivers they would be competing for limited male jobs.[1071] Some women sympathised with this line of argument.[1072] Still, a high degree of male chauvinism was evident. 'Have you ever seen a woman reverse a car?' asked one male driver, 'She never knows where all of it is, does she? Think of what would happen if she tried it with a double-decker bus.' [1073] In Great Yarmouth, one conductresses passed her test but 'was so harassed by her male colleagues that she never actually got to taking a bus out with the public aboard.'[1074] In an otherwise staid and apparently neutral article in *The Times*, one reporter doubted that 'many women...would

[1066] See above, p. 93
[1067] HC, February 2 1967, c. 781. See also Minutes of a Meeting of the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations, 26 January 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Cards 853-4.
[1068] The government spokesman, Crossman, confined his response to the matter of equal pay see HC, February 2 1967, c. 781. A meeting of the NJCWWO responded to Mrs Baker's request for more information about the EDM without further comment or discussion. See Minutes of a Meeting of the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations, 26 January, 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Cards 853-4; Minutes of a Meeting of the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations, 20 April 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 862.
[1069] This provided the subject matter for the 1972 Box Office Hit, *On the Buses.* For some discussion of this film, see above, p. 53.
[1070] *The Times*, 20 November 1968.
[1071] No author, 'Women on the Buses', originally published in 'Women's Newpaper', no. 2, re-printed in M. Wandor (ed.), *The Body Politic*, pp. 72-4.
[1072] *The Times*, 6 June 1970. See above, p. 62.
[1073] *Guardian*, 21 November 1968.
[1074] *The Times*, 22 January 1969.

welcome the chance to guide a double-deck bus through the complexities of the rush-hour.'[1075] Many women gave as good as they got. One said, given the training, she would be able to drive a bus as well as any man *and* be able to avoid braking so that 'the people standing at the back went out through the front.'[1076] In London, a group of twenty-five conductresses 'invaded' an all-male meeting of TGWU delegates to protest at the refusal to hear their case.[1077] Many women were inspired.[1078] The Six Point Group sent a message of support to one Miss Armstrong, grimly noting in their minutes that the Union Branch Secretary who opposed her appointment had failed his own test.[1079] The winner of *Labour Woman's* 1969 essay competition drew comparisons between the conductresses' lowly paid work and her own caring duties at home:

> [G]ood luck to the 'clippies' who are fighting to sit in the driving seat, as well as just punching tickets and running up and downstairs helping young and old off the bus. Why shouldn't they sit in the front and gain more money. Too many women accept their existence – we must fight on with the true spirit of our first Labour Women![1080]

When Butler read that a bus conductress had been refused the job of inspector because one of the job requirements was being able to drive a bus she realised that 'women were being discriminated against purely on grounds of sex.'[1081] On the fiftieth anniversary of women's franchise she asked Wilson to 'take steps to appoint an anti-discrimination board.'[1082] She told the Commons that, 'women are fed up with being exploited as pretty birds when they are young and as 'silly moos' when they get older as a substitute for equal human rights now.'[1083] Wilson said he 'looked forward' to more detailed proposals and the Session moved on.[1084] Two months later, with the support of nine women MPs from both parties, Butler introduced her first Anti-Discrimination Bill under the ten minute rule. It proposed the establishment of 'an anti-discrimination board to examine and remove discrimination against women in employment,

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[1075] *The Times*, 20 November 1968.
[1076] *Guardian*, 21 November 1968.
[1077] *The Times*, 22 January 1969.
[1078] See, for example, Report of Meeting held in the House of Commons on 22 October 1968 regarding Equal Rights for Women in Industry', MRC, MSS 292B/119/4.; Shelia Rowbotham, *Black Dwarf*, 10 January 1969 quoted in Sandbrook, *White Heat*, p. 648; Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 9 September 1969.
[1079] Minutes of the Six Point Group, 2 July 1968, WomL, 5SPG/A/140.
[1080] Mrs S. Smedley, 'Equality – what's that?', in *Labour Woman*, v. 59. no. 4 (April, 1969), p. 74.
[1081] Interview with Joyce Butler, cited in Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 28. Butler also gave this explanation to the Commons. See HC 28 Jan 1972, cc. 1841-2.
[1082] HC, 7 March 1968, c. 649.
[1083] Ibid.
[1084] HC, 7 March 1968, cc. 649-50.

education, social and public life' and called for 'equal pay for work of equal value.'[1085] Butler explained that she envisaged something along similar lines to the Race Relations Board:

> There was, rightly, a great outcry recently when an immigrant transport worker was prevented from carrying on his job as an inspector by white people who objected, but women transport workers do not even have the opportunity to become inspectors.[1086]

The Bill attracted little interest and was lost almost immediately. One of the few expressions of support came from the normally apolitical Townswomen's Guild. Their historian, Mary Stott, described this as an act 'of the head rather than the heart' since Townswomen were 'not instinctively feminists.'[1087] As this suggests, this was, in many respects, a relatively moderate proposal. Its failure to attract widespread support at this time indicates the depth of resistance to the idea that discrimination against women was a serious enough problem to merit a solution.

Butler introduced two Bills in 1969.[1088] And another at the beginning of 1971. In 1971, three male MPs signed in support for the first time: Charles Pannell, Douglas Houghton, and Edward Bishop.[1089] Pannell embodied the contradictory attitudes engendered by a cultural and emotional attachment to a traditionally gender-divided society, coupled with the trade unionist's commitment to the 'rate for the job', and a belief in human rights. His long-time active support for equal pay had been based primarily on the grounds that 'any pool of cheap labour was bad for the workers.'[1090] He firmly believed that 'discrimination based on sex alone was as obscene as discrimination based on skin colour'. He also believed that women should concern themselves primarily with domestic and childcare duties, and spoke in 1970 of 'the terrible price which we pay in juvenile delinquency and all that sort of thing because some married women go into factories.'[1091] His support for the Bill demonstrates how it was possible for individuals to endorse equal rights for women without having to their challenge beliefs about gender roles. Houghton's implied earlier support for the idea of anti-discrimination legislation has been

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[1085] *Anti-Discrimination HC Bill* (1967-68) [140].
[1086] HC, 7 May 1968, cc. 215-8.
[1087] Circular letter from the National Secretary of the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds, 29 May 1968, MRC, MSS 292B. 823/1; Stott, *Organisation Women*, p. 214.
[1088] *Anti-Discrimination HC Bill* (1968-69) [92]; HC, 18 February 1969, c. 214; *Anti-Discrimination HC Bill* (1969-70) [51]; HC, 18 February 1969, c. 214.
[1089] *Anti-Discrimination HC Bill* (1970-71) [107]; HC, 9 February 1971.
[1090] HC, 16 May 1952, cc. 1765-80..
[1091] HC, 9 February 1970, cc. 944-5.

described above.[1092] Houghton would most likely have been aware the TUC had vetoed the Study Group's earlier attempt to extend the Race Relations Act, and he only leant his formal support to Butler's Bill after Labour had left office.[1093] In Ted Bishop, Butler gained the support of an experienced woman's rights activist.[1094] In contrast to Pannell, Bishop was concerned to challenge traditional gender assumptions and urged readers of *Labour Woman* (he was a regular contributor) to use 'every opportunity to challenge the systems that discriminate.'[1095]

The Bill was lost again. Even with a high degree of Parliamentary support, Private Members Bills are very unlikely to become law unless they are adopted by government. Successful ones usually require well organised support. Parliamentary groups can play a crucial role by providing strategy, organisation, and procedural knowledge. Extra-Parliamentary pressure groups can help create and educate public opinion.[1096] The two main options here are to get issues raised on the floor of the House and to get press coverage. As MacKenzie, Field, and others have argued, these 'campaigns are not so much concerned to create public opinion as to create an opinion about public opinion.'[1097] Although a resurgent feminist movement had pushed women's rights to the forefront of public consciousness, organised support for the anti-discrimination Bill did not emerge until 1971.

A Parliamentary 'All Party Equal Rights Group' was formed in early 1971 when members, who had successfully worked together to promote the Matrimonial Property Bill, opted to continue as a ginger group to push forward women's rights issues.[1098] About half the MPs were male, and their number included one Conservative MP. Other members included Butler, Shirley

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[1092] See above for more on this episode. p. 161.The incomplete nature of the records of the Study Group mean that it is not possible to confirm whether Houghton was sitting involved in the Group's discussions of equal opportunities for women in employment.
[1093] For more on the TUC's resistance to the Bill, see above, p. 161.
[1094] For more on Bishop's motivations see above, p. 90.
[1095] T. Bishop, 'Womancipation or the campaign goes on', in *Labour Woman,* Vol. 61, No. 8, (September, 1971), p. 124. As an example, he described how his wife listed herself as the head of the household on the census return. The wording on the form implied the man was automatically head of household. Bishop questioned the Home Secretary on the issue before his wife filled it in.
[1096] W. Grant, *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy in Britain* (Hemel Hempstead, 1989), pp. 74-6.
[1097] W.J.M. MacKenzie, 'Pressure Groups in British Government', *British Journal of Sociology,* 6 (June 1955), pp. 133-48, cited in F. Field, 'A Pressure Group for the Poor', in D. Bull, *Family Poverty,* p. 150. Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, Friday evening, p. 23, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1. It can be seen that reformers later used the idea that the public was on their side to add weight to their arguments. See, for example, Shirely Williams speaking in HC, 28 January 1972, c. 1826.
[1098] T. Bishop, 'What's the Good', in *Labour Woman,* Vol. 61, No. 4 (April, 1971), p. 70. See also Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 27. See also below, p. 257.

Summerskill, and Vickers.[1099] Bishop reported in *Labour Woman* that, although they did not 'look like Germaine Greer or male counterparts', they were 'a vital link between the shouters outside and those who can be the doers inside.'[1100] According to Willie Hamilton, Bishop was responsible for much of the 'hard work and slog…the magnificent lobbying and…response of women's organisations to the Bill.'[1101] The group asked all MPs, who won a place in the ballot if they were willing to take on Butler's Bill. When Hamilton accepted, the group re-drafted the Bill with the aid of Olive Stone, legal advisor to the Married Women's Association.[1102] This re-drafting transformed it from a Bill to prevent discrimination 'against women' into a Bill to prevent discrimination 'on the grounds of sex.'[1103]

Women's Lobby was one of the first groups to direct its energies towards agitating for anti-discrimination legislation. Ex-member, Anna Coote, describes the group as 'very feminist', comprising mostly 'very confident' Oxford graduates, 'alternative society types' and 'ex-hippies.' Although they saw themselves as part of women's liberation, Women's Lobby tended to eschew personal consciousness-raising activities in favour of efforts to achieve 'practical' change.[1104] Together with the Equal Rights Group they worked up a fair degree of publicity around what was now Hamilton's Bill.[1105] Press Conferences and meetings were held.[1106] All potentially interested parties were contacted and their support was invited. They were asked to write to their MPs, to spread the word, and to consider attending the Second Reading. Significantly, the Bill's equal treatment of the sexes was emphasised and it was portrayed as a matter of human rights rather than just a women's issue.[1107] In this way, the reformers built a

[1099] No Author, 'Members of the All-Party Parliamentary Equal Rights Group', February 1972, LMet, ACC 3612/4/25.
[1100] Bishop, 'What's the Good', in *Labour Woman*, p. 70.
[1101] HC, 28 January 1972, c. 1813.
[1102] Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 28.
[1103] *Anti-Discrimination HC Bill* (1971-72) [23].
[1104] Interview with Anna Coote.
[1105] The Women's Lobby, 'The Anti-Discrimination Bill', n.d. 13 Jan 1972, HHC, NCCL, DCL/810/12; *The Times*, 29 January 1972; Transcript of Interview with Nancy Seear, WomL, 8NLS/04. According to Seear, whereas Butler had 'never seemed...able to catch the headline', Hamilton had a flair for publicity. See Transcript of Interview with Nancy Seear, WomL, 8NLS/04.
[1106] Circular letter from Edward Bishop, 'Anti-Discrimination Bill', 29 November 1971, HHC, NCCL, DCL/810/12.
[1107] The Women's Lobby, 'The Anti-Discrimination Bill', HHC, NCCL, DCL/810/12.

broad base of support including women's organisations, political party members, church groups, human rights organisations, and individual men and women.[1108]

When Hamilton's Bill received its Second Reading on 28th January 1972, the Commons was unusually crowded for a Friday afternoon.[1109] *The Times* described 'unusual scenes as a large number of militant women crowded into the Strangers' Gallery, hissed and even clapped to show their feelings about what was being said.'[1110] Hamilton claimed that 95 per cent of the House supported his Bill. He also drew attention to the diversity of outside organisations who had expressed support, from the Women's Institute, to Norfolk Women's Liberation.[1111] Emphasising the matter's seriousness, he used a variation of the device whereby the proposed reform was proved reasonable by its not being 'extreme'. Remarking positively on the 'intelligence, courage, determination and courtesy' of the women's liberationists he had worked with, he commented that some others 'did no good to their cause'.[1112] Some women MPs opposed the Bill.[1113] Conservative MP, Hornsby-Smith, for example, supported the Bill's principle, but favoured a gradualist approach on 'prepared ground'. She feared 'a bonanza of publicity for the extrovert members of 'Women's Lib' who would use the opportunity to 'challenge all sorts of cock-eyed jobs in male professions' without widespread support from the unions or the general populace. In the context of what contemporaries saw as widespread unemployment, Hornsby-Smith also drew attention to 'a considerable backlash of womenfolk writing to their MPs stressing that breadwinner males should be employed instead of females.'[1114]

Richard Sharples, a Home Office Minister, had what *The Times* described as, 'the most unenviable job of the day.'[1115] He re-stated government policy: although they supported the removal of discrimination against women in every field, they did not believe that legislation was

[1108] Ibid; Edward Bishop to Tony Smythe, 25 November 1971, HHC, NCCL, DCL/810/12; Circular letter from W.W. Hamilton, 'The Anti-Discrimination Bill', n.d. HHC, NCCL, DCL/810/12l.
[1109] HC, 28 January 1972, c. 1844.
[1110] *The Times*, 29 January 1972.
[1111] HC, 28 January 1972, cc. 1813.
[1112] Ibid. cc. 1813-20. He added, 'I do not believe', he explained, 'that the throwing away of women's apparel, either below or above the belt, makes any contribution to their cause…'
[1113] *The Times*, 29 January 1972. Only 14 of the 26 women MPs were present. Some, particularly of the older generation, were generally keen to avoid too close an association with 'women's issues', lest it become all they were associated with. For more on this see Vallance, *Women in the House*, pp. 83-96.
[1114] HC, 28 January 1972, cc. 1828.
[1115] *The Times*, 29 January 1972.

the right way of bringing this about. He invoked the TUC's support, and also insisted that the Bill would necessitate the removal of restrictions on women's working hours.[1116] Beyond this, Sharples displayed a deep ignorance about the nature of sex discrimination. Although his views were fairly representative of his colleagues and contemporaries, the audience he addressed on that particular day were alert to all indications of sexism. His comments did not pass unremarked, as they would have been allowed to in the past. Sharples thought that the 'main theme of the debate' was that:

> there are areas in which men and women compete for jobs but those areas, proportionately, are not very large. There are jobs which by their very nature are always done by men. There are jobs which are far better done by women and which will always be done by women.[1117]

Based on this analysis, he claimed that 'discrimination does not arise in employment in the vast majority of cases'. He also cited survey findings showing most women were content in their jobs.[1118] Shirley Williams replied that he was, in effect, simply describing the state of discrimination as it existed. She likened his attitude to that of the Rhodesian Government's towards their black majority: 'They like being subsistence peasants, so they had better go on being in that position'.[1119] When Sharples insisted that most women worked in jobs which were 'an extension of their traditional domestic role' such as 'food, clothing, nursing...personnel and social services', he was met with cries of 'Oh'. Hisses came from both sides of the House and from the gallery.[1120] 'That is the trouble', Renee Short retorted, 'Another Neanderthalder'. Amid the uproar, one MP attempted to explain that this was 'because of the discrimination.'[1121] *The Times* reported that 'the roof finally fell in…when he mildly suggested that…some jobs were far better done by women'. He was met with cries of 'Housework?'[1122]

[1116] HC, 28 January 1972, cc. 824 & 826.
[1117] Ibid. c. 1824.
[1118] Ibid. c. 821 & 823
[1119] Ibid. cc. 1822 & 1826.
[1120] HC, 28 January 1972, cc. 1821-3; *The Times*, 29 January 1972.
[1121] HC, 28 January 1972, c. 1823.
[1122] *The Times*, 29 January 1972. Hamilton later described it as 'probably the most inept speech I have ever heard from a Minister of the Crown'. See HC, 2 February 1973, c. 1850. Sharples was 'removed from his ministerial post for political ineptitude.' He was made Governor General of Bermuda, a role in which he was assassinated. Information on Ministerial sacking obtained during an interview with an unnamed member of the then government. Cited in Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 66. See also HC, 2 February 1973, cc. 1850 & 862. It is doubtful, however, that Sharples was notably more 'inept' than other Ministers. He had the political misfortune to try and present what, in reality, were widely accepted views to an usually hostile audience. The response tells us more about the changing times than it does Sharple's competency.

Procedurally the Bill had been dead before the debate began, filibustered by the Conservative MP, Ronald Bell, who had a history of using this tactic against 'women's' Bills.[1123] Mary Stott was sitting in the Strangers' Gallery with 'row upon row of women, mostly quite young':

> For most of the girls…the way the debate was talked out meant bewildered frustration, but not for me. Seeing and hearing the explosion of anger on the floor of the House, the commitment to the cause by men as well as women, Conservative women as well as Socialist, I *knew* with startled joy, for the first time, that some day, after however much more boring trudging persistence, however many demos, lobbies and meetings, this Bill or something like it would become law; that this day was a turning point.[1124]

From a historical perspective Stott was correct. The episode marked a turning point. The activity and publicity generated helped alert women's organisations and activists to the cause.[1125] Although the TUC remained opposed, Labour had publicly declared their support for the measure.[1126] The response to Sharples' speech suggested that overtly prejudiced comments or assumptions could no longer pass unchallenged at the level of national political debate.[1127] In the face of growing pressure to defend its position, the Government repeatedly drew attention to Cripps, claiming that some of the measures were in the process of being implemented. [1128] Progress had, in fact, stalled, but the furore surrounding Hamilton's Bill prompted swift action. The Chief Whip, Francis Pym, agreed to an immediate Bill on a Cripps proposal to 'offset the bad smell left by last Friday's antics.'[1129]

[1123] HC, 28 January 1972, c. 1812. Bell had used this tactic to kill one of Vicker's Bills on Guardianship of Infants in 1969. See Joan Vickers to Janet Cockfroft, 9 February 1972, LMet, ACC 3613/4/25. In the debate, Hamilton revealed what he perceived as Bell's true motives. He recalled an incident from the previous week when Hamilton and Bell had recorded a television interview. During the interview, Bell had 'generally opposed' the Bill. After they had left the studio Bell told Hamilton and the interviewer, 'of course women are inferior. They are second-class citizens and ought to be treated as such.' See HC, 28 January 1972, c. 1812.

[1124] M. Stott, *Forgetting's No Excuse* (London, 1989), p. 130.

[1125] Lady Anglesey, of the Women's Institute, said: 'our interest, rather than stopping now, will go on.' See *The Times*, 29 January 1972. See also Edward Bishop's comments in Edward Bishop, 'The Anti-Discrimination Bill', 24 February 1972, LMet, ACC 3613/4/25.

[1126] HC, 28 January 1972, c. 1828. See also Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1972*, p. 65.

[1127] Much gendered commentary still passed as entirely acceptable however. See, for example, the report of the speech in *The Times*, 29 January 1972.

[1128] See, for example, Written Answer to Edward Bishop, HC, 18 March 1971; HC, 20 December 1971; Peggy E. Fenner to Mrs. J. Cockcroft, 8 February 1972, , LMet ACC 3613/4/25. See also draft standard letter prepared for Keith Joseph attached to memo from Conservative Research Department to Keith Joseph, 3 February 1972, CPA, CRD 3/38/2.

[1129] Sara Morrison to Francis Pym, 2 February 1972, CPA CCO 60/4/18. See also Micahel Woff's comments on the 'political attractiveness' of legislation regarding matrimonial property in M. Wolff to S. Morrison, 9 June 1972, CCO 60/4/18.

Numerous small reforms were overseen by Heath's government.[1130] In 1971, a Labour MP steered a Bill through the House, with Government support, using the words of the Cripps Report. It ended the practice whereby judges assessed widows' damages by gauging their chance of re-marriage. In 1972, an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill removed the bias against women inherent within the jury service property qualification. That same year, Vickers steered a Bill through which provided unmarried mothers with the same rights as married mothers to pursue maintenance. In 1973, the Government's Guardianship Act gave mothers equal rights with fathers regarding decisions about their children's upbringing.[1131] The Domicile Act removed what Judge Denning described as 'the last barbarous relic of a wife's servitude' and women became legal individuals for the purposes of Domicile.[1132] Heath's Government also oversaw, but rarely mentioned, Philip Whitehead's (Lab) Bill which allowed vasectomy operations on the NHS as part of family planning services.[1133] Taken together, these measures added substance to the Government's line on equal opportunities for women. In other areas, however, the Government was going backwards. In 1972, faced with wage inflation of nearly 20 per cent, the Government had reneged on its commitment to free collective bargaining.[1134] In order to meet Phase Two of their Incomes Policy, they had dropped the original requirement, brought in with the Equal Pay Act, that women should receive ninety percent of the male rate by the end of 1973.[1135] Their proposed pension reforms were also set to have a detrimental impact on women.[1136] In one key episode, discussed thoroughly in the next

[1130] In 1973, Conservative Central Office published a pamphlet, *A fairer deal for Women,* which showed how far the Cripps recommendations had been implemented. See Vallance, *Women in the House*, p. 136.
[1131] Conservative Research Department, 'The Conservative Party: Women's Legislation', January 1972; and Appendix I, August 1972; and Appendix II, 18 January 1973, CPA, CRD 3/38/2. See also Edward Heath to Dame Joan Vickers, 10 May 1973, WomL, 6WIM/F/06.
[1132] Judge Denning speaking on Gray v. Formosa (1963) quoted in T.C. Hartely & I.G.F Karsten, 'The Domicile and Matrimonial Proceedings Act', in *Modern Law Review* v. 37. No 2 (March 1974), 179. See also Conservative Research Department, 'The Conservative Party: Women's Legislation', Apendix I, August 1972; and Appendix II, CPA, CRD 3/38/2. It might also be suggested that the fact that there was no legal recognition of rape within marriage was at least as barbarous. This would not rectified for nearly two decades.
[1133] *Women's Report,*(November 1972 – January 1973; Leathard, *Fight for Family Planning*, pp. 190-91.
[1134] Sandbrook, *State of Emergencey*, p. 326.
[1135] *Women's Report* (September – October 1973). For more on phase two see Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 528.
[1136] *Women's Report* (January-March 1973); *Women's Report* (March-April 1973). There were no proposals to ban discrimination in private pension schemes - indeed, their proposed minimum requirements endorsed it. Similarly, since the new State pension scheme was designed to reflect the actuarial value of contributions made and benefits drawn, women, already at a disadvantage, were to be left worse off on account of their lower wages, earlier retirement, and longer life expectancy. For Heath's defence of the proposals see Edward Heath to Dame Joan Vickers, 10 May 1973, WomL, 6WIM/F/06. For Castle's remarks see *The Sunday Times*, 24 February 1974.

chapter, they also suggested that mothers might lose their right to collect the family allowance. The Research Department belatedly described the move as 'tactless'.[1137]

The Monday after Hamilton's Bill was lost, Seear, then President of the Fawcett Society, visited Hamilton.[1138] She believed it would be 'an awful pity' to let the Bill die, particularly in light of the publicity it had received and took it to the Lords where it received a Second Reading in March 1972. Seear believes that attempts to wreck the Bill failed there partly because of a belief, widespread among Peers, and probably encouraged by the recent raft of social legislation, that it was their duty to provide a proper hearing for exactly that kind of legislation.[1139] The Bill was aided by Labour support, marshaled by the leader of the Labour Peers, Eddie Shackleton. Conservative opposition was muted because, by chance, the debate clashed with a prayer meeting for Northern Ireland. Service goers, who included a disproportionately high number of Tory Peers, missed the vote because they were 'locked up' in Westminster Cathedral for 'security reasons'.[1140] To help the Bill progress, Shackleton suggested that a House of Lords Select Committee examine the issue. This is a prime example of the kind of procedural knowledge which can be so crucial to the fate of Private Members Bills. Unused since 1939, this procedure held two advantages: interested organisations were invited to submit evidence, and the press was invited in.[1141] Committee members included Seear, Edith Summerskill and Gerald Gardiner, a leading 1960s 'civilsing' reformer.[1142] The Committee's final reports, which incorporated wide-ranging evidence, provide a detailed record of the nature and extent of some of the main forms of discrimination against women in Britain at that time.[1143] They also offer insights into the views of people on all sides of the debate.

[1137] Conservative Research Department, 'Women's Rights. Conservative Targets.', 11 April 1973, CPA, CRD 3/38/2.
[1138] For potted biography see Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary,* p. 133.
[1139] Transcript of Interview with Nancy Seear, 8NLS/04; For further analysis and description of the Second Reading Debate in the Lords see Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', pp. 29-30. The important role of the Lords in assisting the passage of the civilizing or permissive reforms of the 1960s has been widely recognised. See Holden, 'Letting the Wolf through the Door', p. 324.
[1140] Account taken from Transcript of interview with Nancy Seear, 8NLS/04; For further analysis and description of the Second Reading Debate in the Lords see Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', pp. 29-30.
[1141] Transcript of interview with Nancy Seear, WomL, 8NLS/04. For general comment on the importance of procedural knowledge to Private Members Bills see Grant, *Pressure Groups, Politics and Democracy,* pp. 74-6.
[1142] For more on Gardiner see, Holden, 'Letting the Wolf Through the Door', p. 236.
[1143] House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72;* House of Lords Select Committee on the Bill, *Minutes of Evidence and Proceedings of the Anti-Discrimination Bill [H.L], Session 1972-3* (London, 1972).

The Select Committee on Sex Discrimination

Over half of the evidence submitted to the Committee was supplied by women or women's organisations.[1144] For many this was a campaign with a long history which had little, if anything, to do with women's liberation. Dr Cockcroft of the National Council of Women put this point strongly:

> …things are gradually improving. Why they are improving, of course, because we have kicked up a lot of dust about this, but this is the only way. People say, you are a lot of women's lib. All right, we say, the National Council was the original liberator, but we do not go about drawing attention to ourselves, we study matters and we speak from our researches.[1145]

The CBI were among those most firmly opposed to anti-discrimination legislation.[1146] They did not deny the existence of discrimination but they did dispute the idea that it was always unfair. They distinguished between discrimination based on 'unreasonable prejudice' and discrimination 'based on the logical appraisal of alternatives and rational selection between them.'[1147] They conceded that although full employment had eroded the first sort, it had not fully eradicated it. They maintained, nonetheless, that there were still many 'real disadvantages' associated with employing women.[1148] The problems they identified included, lower levels of educational attainment and skill, less physical strength, higher turnover and absenteeism rates, and 'overall…lower motivation in the work situation'. CBI representatives told the Select Committee that 'a women's education and up-bringing is not usually designed primarily to fit her for a lifetime of work as an employee.'[1149] The CBI did not believe that legislation could remove the conditions that created 'reasonable' discrimination. Ultimately, women would continue to leave the workforce to have children - a fact which discouraged employers from investing in them.[1150] The CBI also argued that attempts to force attitudinal change could prove

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[1144] Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 31.

[1145] Examination of Witnesses from the National Council of Women by House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72,* p. 134. See also, The National Council of Women, *But What Do you Do? An answer prepared to celebrate the 80th Birthday of the National Council of Women in International Women's Year* (London, 1975), LMet, ACC/3613/06/25. See also Memorandum Submitted by the British Federation of University Women, and Examination of Dr. M. Rendel (supported also by the Fawcett and Fabian Societies) to the House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1972-3,* pp. 71-112.

[1146] Memorandum submitted by the Confederation of British Industry, and Examination of Witness from the Confederation of British Industry by the House of Lords Select Committee, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, 1971-72,* pp. 147-159.

[1147] Ibid. p. 147.

[1148] Ibid.

[1149] Ibid. pp. 147-8

[1150] Ibid. p. 153.

counteractive by hardening attitudes and driving the problem 'underground.'[1151] Predictably they insisted that any anti-discrimination legislation must coincide with the removal of protective legislation. Less predictably, they also argued that any such legislation should be timed to coincide also with the removal of discriminatory practices in tax and social security.[1152]

Significantly, the TUC told the Select Committee that they now supported anti-discrimination legislation.[1153] When questioned, they conceded that they had been unable to dissuade trade unions from even their most blatant discriminatory practices.[1154] However, away from Conference grandstanding on the need for equal opportunities, even the WAC had proved unwilling to push the case for fear of interference with the 'contractual position between the employer and his worker.'[1155] This had begun to change in the early 1970s. Specifically, the WAC had approved of the re-drafting of Hamilton's Bill into ostensibly gender neutral terms and, despite remaining unconvinced, they had also recognised 'a growing body of support for legislation' and resolved to consider the most 'practicable' form that it might take.[1156] The Select Committee's request for evidence from the TUC accelerated this process. Initially, the request was referred to the WAC, along with an in-house TUC proposal stating a preference for avoiding new legislation 'except perhaps regarding the advertising of vacancies.' Prompted by their Chair, Marie Patterson, the WAC rejected this proposal.[1157] They acknowledged the TUC's long-standing resistance to anti-discrimination legislation. They also recognised that failure of the Race Relations Board to uphold the majority of complaints suggested difficulties with its enforcement. However, they pointed out, it was impossible to know how many cases of discrimination it had deterred. Some women also argued that anti-discrimination legislation was a necessary counterpart to the Equal pay Act. More broadly, the view was advanced that the State must 'accept responsibility' for changing attitudes since society as a whole had proved

[1151] Ibid. p. 150.
[1152] Ibid. p. 148.
[1153] Memorandum submitted by the T.U.C. Women's Advisory Committee and Examination of Witnesses by the House of Lords Select Committee, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72*, pp. 227 & 232.
[1154] See, for example, exchange of letters between Vic Feather and Woodrow Wyatt re-printed in House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72*, p. 237. The bus driver dispute provides another example.
[1155] Minutes of a meeting of the TUC Women's Advisory Committee, 5 August 1970, MRC, MSS 292B/119/6. For example, the 1968 TUC Conference had called Government to ratify the ILO convention on Equal Opportunities
[1156] Discussion recalled and recorded in the Minutes of a Meeting of the TUC WAC, 9 May 1972, MRC, MSS 292D/61,5/2.
[1157] Minutes of a Meeting of the TUC WAC, 5 July 1972, MRC, MSS 292D/61,5/2. Patterson had long supported anti-discrimination legislation. See D. Lea to Murray, 'Labour Party Home Policy Committee: Discrimination Against Women', 4 December 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/119/5.

unwilling. Though they divided over the related issue of protective legislation, the WAC recorded their unanimous support for 'the principle of legislation to remove discrimination against women' and directed the General Council's attention towards their 'strongly held views.'[1158]

The General Council accepted their recommendations.[1159] Patterson, who sat on the Council, would have argued their case strongly.[1160] Perhaps more persuasive was the growing sense of inevitability.[1161] The Select Committee's work had only increased that feeling, and the process was undoubtedly self-perpetuating. By the time the WAC came to prepare their submission in Autumn 1972, they observed that the Select Committee had received 'so many specific examples of discrimination…it was no longer necessary to quote particular cases. The question was what form the legislation should take.'[1162] The TUC recommendations stressed the importance of adequate enforcement, the inclusion of pensions within the scope of the Bill, and the continuance of protective legislation until equal pay and opportunities became a reality.[1163]

Discussions between the Select Committee and the Conservative WNAC are also worth highlighting here since they delineated and clarified some of the key debates between those who agreed about the necessity of challenging sex discrimination, but disagreed over the desirability and potential effectiveness of anti-discrimination legislation.[1164] Shelagh Roberts and Mrs Roy Smith spoke for the WNAC. They perceived little purpose in outlawing discrimination unless women were first given the opportunity to equip themselves to compete on equal terms.[1165] Edith Summerskill's response cut to the heart of the matter. She believed that the WNAC had the argument the wrong way round. In her view, lack of opportunity arose because women were

[1158] Ibid.
[1159] Minutes of a Meeting of the TUC General Council, 25 October 1972, MRC, MSS 292D/20/6. A certain degree of speculation on how they reached the decision is necessary since the Minutes record no discussion on the issue.
[1160] D. Lea to Murray, 'Labour Party Home Policy Committee: Discrimination Against Women', 4 December 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/119/5.
[1161] Minutes of a Meeting of the TUC WAC, 5 July 1972, MRC, MSS 292D/61,5/2.
[1162] Minutes of a Meeting of the TUC WAC, 13 October 1972, MRC, MSS 292D/61.5/2.
[1163] Memorandum submitted by the T.U.C. Women's Advisory Committee and Examination of Witnesses from the T.U.C. Women's Advisory Committee by the House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72*, pp. 226-40.
[1164] Memorandum submitted by the Women's National Advisory Committee of the Conservative and Unionist Party, and Examination of Witnesses by the House of Lords Select Committee, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1972-3*, pp. 197-205.
[1165] Ibid. p. 199.

'denied opportunity owing to discrimination.'[1166] Pressed to articulate their concerns, Roberts and Smith said they were worried about the potentially damaging effects of quotas. The Bill's supporters on the Committee reassured them that the Bill was 'anti-quota' but Roberts and Smith thought their point was being missed. They thought that the Bill might ultimately damage women's interests by addressing the symptoms rather than the cause of discrimination. They believed that lack of opportunity 'really starts at about the age of 15 or 16':

> [I]f girls do not get the opportunity at the outset of their education they will not be there in sufficient numbers competing for the appointments…I have great reservations about…a Bill that might only extend and perpetuate the position of the statutory woman.[1167]

The meeting also discussed the difficulties associated with using legislation to change attitudes. Gardiner highlighted the Bill's had educative potential, citing the example of a company Director who told his transport manager that it was 'against the law' to continue with the 'very noticeable' absence of black people in his department.[1168] On the subject of employment, the WNAC's own findings had led them to conclude that the 'present discrimination would lend itself to attention by an Act of Parliament.' Roberts and Smith also conceded the proposed Bill could improve things across a timescale of twenty years or more. However, they protested, they would like to see more immediate improvements brought about by the kinds of changes they were advocating: better opportunities for married women wanting to return to work, and better educational opportunities for girls. Summerskill rebuked them: 'if this has not come about during the last 50 years and we learn that the situation is moving backwards, how do you propose to change this?'[1169] Roberts remained unconvinced. If women received proper educational opportunities, and carried with them the self-belief born of meritorious success (from which the aid of anti-discrimination machinery would detract), she believed they would have the confidence to protest whenever unfair discrimination arose. It was a 'chicken/egg' argument which Seear attempted to resolve by saying that the Bill was a 'spearhead' rather than a complete solution.[1170] Whatever methods were used to bring about change, both Seear and Roberts could agree that 'the more women who make the grade the easier it becomes.'[1171]

[1166] Ibid. p. 200.
[1167] Ibid. p 203.
[1168] Ibid. p. 202.
[1169] Ibid. p. 204.
[1170] Ibid. As she explained to a later group of witnesses, herself and like-minded reformers had come to the conclusion that 'the key thing is to get education opportunity, training opportunity and jobs…because they are the things which have the deepest tentacles in society as a whole. See Ibid. p. 259.
[1171] Ibid. p. 204.

Though the Labour Study Group had submitted their whole Green Paper as evidence the Committee, naturally, focused on the recommendation to outlaw discrimination in employment, recruitment and training, membership of organisations, advertising, and the provision of goods and services. The Study Group had no illusions that an anti-discrimination law would, 'by itself remove discrimination and prejudice.' However, drawing on the accepted justifications for Race Relations policy, they held it to be 'the necessary pre-condition for an effective strategy to promote equality of opportunity, treatment, and status for women.'[1172] Lester spoke extensively, drawing upon his experience in race relations policy, and referring to the Race Relations Act and the Race Relations Board. He also made numerous positive references to American legislation. He also confirmed a point made by many other witnesses, that the only way to prohibit a marriage bar was to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of marital status too. In terms of the proposed enforcement body, Lester recommended that it be empowered to initiate investigations without complaints being raised.[1173] Many women's rights activists, often with first-hand experience of the difficulties associated with investigating and challenging instances of discrimination, made similar points about the need for a robust enforcement body.[1174]

The Select Committee published its final report on 18th April 1973. All members, half of whom had originally opposed the Bill, had been convinced of the existence of sex discrimination, and of the need for legislation which, they believed, would significantly improve the situation.[1175] They had been positively influenced by evidence on American and Canadian experiences and by the British experience of the Race Relations Act.[1176] The ready model of anti-race discrimination legislation had proved a persuasive precedent. The Committee concluded that justifications put forward for legislation on race discrimination were 'equally relevant' to the principle of legislation on sex discrimination.[1177] Although the final report recommended enlarging the Bill's scope to prevent discrimination on the grounds of marital status, the Committee had otherwise confined its task to provisions of the original Bill – employment,

[1172] Labour, *Discrimination Against Women*, p. 38.
[1173] Examination of Witnesses from the Labour Party Study Group by the House of Lords Select Committee on the Bill, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, 1972-3*, pp. 45-55
[1174] Examination of Edward Bishop by House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, 1971-72*, pp. 194-5. See also description of WIM's experiment with a 'prototypical anti-discrimination board' in 1973 in Tamar Karet to S. Summerskill, 5 July 1974, WomL, 6 WIM/C/04.
[1175] House of Lords, *Second Special Report on the Anti-Discrimination Bill [H.L], Session 1972-3* (London, 1973), pp. 3 & 21.
[1176] Ibid. p. 22.
[1177] Ibid. For the Race Relations Board's advancement of this argument see above, pp. 73-4.

education and training. Although they recognised that sex discrimination existed in numerous other areas of life, such as the provision of credit services, licensed premises, and social security provision, they thought it would have been 'optimistic' to expect the successful passage of more expansive Private Members legislation. They hoped, however, that removal of discrimination in these key areas might lead to improvements in others. [1178]

Their report highlighted the inadequacy of the Bill's enforcement provisions and recommended the creation of an enforcement board with powers to initiate investigations, and to request reports from Government and State bodies.[1179] On the subject of education, the report recommended exempting existing single-sex schools from the Bill on the grounds of 'long established legal rights and traditional customs'. But it recommended the prohibition of new ones.[1180] As a response to school timetabling practices which effectively prevented boys and girls from studying subjects considered the preserve of the opposite sex, they recommended an 'equality of the opportunity to learn' provision. [1181] The Committee had divided over protective legislation but had agreed to accept the TUC's suggestion that the bone fide achievement of equal pay would allow for a reassessment of the position.[1182] It is worth noting, that in spite of the assertion that sex discrimination was widespread, unfair to women, and potentially socially damaging, the Committee did not claim majority support for its conclusions:

> Some witnesses have expressed, or…implied, the view that the majority of British women do not feel that they are treated unfairly. Now and doubtless for many years to come, many women will be satisfied with a role that is mainly domestic and, to a large extent, dependent. Many will continue to accept what they regard as the natural order of things and the Committee accept this fact. But many is not all; and it is also true that there is an increasing number of women who do not accept the traditional role laid down for them by the assumptions of society, and who feel increasingly frustrated by the limitations which those assumptions set for them.[1183]

The Select Committee's work did not lead directly to reform but the thoroughgoing and open process had left no doubt as to the existence of discrimination. Prejudices which had long

[1178] Ibid. pp. 23-30.
[1179] Ibid. pp. 23-30.
[1180] Ibid. p. 26
[1181] Ibid.
[1182] Ibid. pp. 25-6.
[1183] Ibid. p. 21. On this point their views were shared by the majority of women's liberationists. See Liz Balfour and Pat Howe, 'National Campaign for Anti-Discrimination Law', 18 January 1973, FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1.

masqueraded as sensible justifications for a right-minded, culturally acceptable, common-sense sort of discrimination had been publicly dissected. The impact was felt well beyond Whitehall and Westminster. A confidential BBC management report (1973) noted:

> [A] suggested case of discrimination against female recruitment in the BBC has been referred to the Select Committee…In the Commons Willie Hamilton…referred to the small number of women in top jobs in the BBC…. These changes and pressures, and others, often more emotional, mean that the arguments justifying the non-employment or very limited employment of women…are now constantly and strongly challenged and need to be very much more compelling than in the past.[1184]

Butler and Seear thought that the most important outcome of the Select Committee's work had been the change in media attitudes. 'From being something where they were looking for a bit of a giggle', Seear recalled, 'they started reporting it straight.[1185] Labour's publication of *Discrimination Against Women*, as it was submitted to the Committee, had prompted *The Times* leader: 'A Great Social Evil':

> Like many other highly developed countries, Britain has still not come to terms with the rising expectations of women…[Women] have a great deal to contribute to the economy and the national life, and they need to make that contribution for their own personal fulfillment. The extent to which so many of them are denied this opportunity is one of the great social problems of our time. [1186]

The *Daily Mail* also described 'how women lose out', having 'little more rights today than they did in Dickensian times.'[1187]

Campaigning for the Sex Discrimination Bill

Campaigners and activists had been well aware of the dangers of letting the matter rest while the Select Committee had continued its work.[1188] Their continued efforts kept the subject on the political agenda. In the Commons, Hamilton drew another ballot.[1189] His Anti-Discrimination (No. 2) Bill received its first reading on 29 November 1972.[1190] By now, Women's Lobby were

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[1184] Director of Personnel, 'Women in the BBC', 1973, BBCw, R78/2, 257/1.
[1185] Interview with Nancy Seear, WomL, 8NLS/04; For Butler's remarks see HC, 2 February 1973, cc. 1878-9.
[1186] *The Times*, 15 November 1972.
[1187] *Daily Mail*, 16 November 1972.
[1188] House of Lords, *Special Report on the Anti-Discrimination (No. 2) Bill* [*H.L*] (London, 1972). They received a formal Second Reading in 1972 which allowed them to re-convene.
[1189] *Women's Report* (November 1972 – January 1973).
[1190] HC, 29 November 1972, c. 427. Simultaneous consideration of a Bill by the Lords and the Commons is very unusual.

less active in campaigning for the Bill, but other interested groups had emerged from the ferment of women's liberation. Although many women's liberationists were ideologically opposed to reformist politics, perceiving little potential benefit in engaging in what they saw as an irredeemably patriarchal and oppressive system, they nevertheless recognised that discriminatory practices, in employment, education, social security and so on, could be deeply damaging to women.[1191] At the 1970 Ruskin Conference, between motions on women's karate and alternative methods of communal living, Conference was asked to vote on the desirability of 'the sex relations act to set up a sex relations board similar to the present race relations act.[sic]' Dianne Miller spoke in support of the motion:

> I know that legislation can't end discrimination. But legislation can give us a framework within which we can fight it more easily and can also end it in certain areas.[1192]

Some women opposed it on the grounds that any campaign would be 'diversionary'. Others highlighted the failings of the Race Relation Board, and argued that there was little use in establishing a similar body to prevent sex discrimination. The motion was carried with a narrow margin.[1193] Although the vote was indicative of WLM sentiment, it did not formally commit the Movement or its members (many of whom would have been unaware of the vote, in any case). Women were free to decide what, if any, action to take.

Although Women's Lobby had been one of the first groups to actively support the Bill, they had morphed into a rather different kind of group by the end of 1972. With the aid of £100 grant from the Fawcett Society, they had launched a bi-monthly news magazine, *Women's Report.*[1194] Early editions provided detailed coverage and analysis of the Bill's fortunes - and those of other

[1191] Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, Saturday morning, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1.
[1192] Ibid. Sunday Afternoon.
[1193] Ibid.
[1194] Report of the Women in Media Conference, Bristol, July 1974, p. 18, FemL, Special Collection Two, Box 1. *Women's Report* was printed by a small off-set litho printing company in a basement in Peckham Rye which belonged to a local Labour Councilor, Anne Ward who was considered an 'honorary member' of the group. Interview with Gail Chester, 27 November 2008. The Fawcett Society perceived the project, among other things, as a 'bridge building' exercise between sections of the women's movement. One woman later reflected that the Fawcett Society was probably attracted to Women's Lobby because 'it didn't look like they were going to frighten the horses.' Interview with Gail Chester. See Virginia Novarra, 'The Next Five Years', p.13. WomL, 6WIM/F/02.

proposed reforms.[1195] Activists could now rely upon regular feminist reporting and scrutiny of political manoeuvrings around the Bill and other related issues.

The Women's Liberation Sex Discrimination Act Campaign was established in 1972 by Pat Howe, of Watford Women's Liberation after she received the unanimous, if somewhat unenthusiastic, support of the 1972 National Women's Liberation Conference which resolved: 'that campaign [sic] be taken up at a national level for a vigorously enforceable A.D. Law that women could feel they could use (in spite of the so-called Equal Pay Act).'[1196] Howe worked tirelessly on the campaign which, in many respects, more closely represented the ethos of women's liberation than the early Women's Lobby Group. Central to its rationale was the demand for a fully comprehensive law covering *all* issues, including tax and social security. The campaign was designed in two stages. The first would concentrate on gathering signatures for a mass petition. The second would maintain the pressure through tactics such as lobbying, letter writing, and local press coverage.[1197] The 'informative' and 'persuasive' approach was consistently emphasised. The belief that women themselves, not just activists, should 'take part in bringing about…changes', reflected a prevalent tendency in the WLM, which in turn drew upon the political left influences which had helped to nurture it.[1198] Campaign members gave talks to meetings and school groups.[1199] Speakers were frequently requested by groups like the National Housewives Register and local Party organisations.[1200] Parts of the Co-operative Women's Guilds and the Six Point Group espoused their support, one branch of the latter agreeing that it was 'valuable propaganda in getting people to *think* about discrimination.'[1201]

[1195] *Women's Report* (November 1972 – January 1973); (January-March 1973); (May-June 1973); and (July-August 1973).

[1196] Liz Balfour and Pat Howe, 'National Campaign for Anti-Discrimination Law', 18 January 1973, FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1; Interview with Gail Chester.

[1197] Balfour and Howe, 'National Campaign for Anti-Discrimination Law', 1FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1; The Sex Discrimination Campaign (Women's Liberation Movement), 'The Nature of the Campaign', n.d., FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 2. Emphasis in original.

[1198] The Sex Discrimination Campaign 'The Nature of the Campaign', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 2; For example, petitioning was valued for the process as much as for end results. It was consciousness-raising for the masses. Betty Underwood, Communist Party Member and Women's Liberationist articulated this point clearly: 'Wen women or men sign a petition they are aligning themselves with a movement…they are making a statement of where they stand and they are doing something more than grumbling. When women collect signatures for a petition they are doing something they haven't done before… You are no longer passively accepting, you will never be quite the same person again.' See Betty Underwood, 'Consciousness-Raising and Campaigning', (c. 1973 n.d.), FemL, Special Collection 1, Box 1.

[1199] The Sex Discrimination Campaign, 'The Nature of the Campaign', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 2.

[1200] Howe, 'Anti-Discrimination Campaign', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1.

[1201] Quoted in P. Howe, 'Anti-Discrimination Campaign', n.d. c. 1973, FemL, Special Collection Four, Box 1. Emphasis in original.

Howe quoted one woman who had said: 'I hadn't used to think that women *should* get equal pay and equal opportunities; men, after all, being the breadwinners. But *now* I think *why shouldn't we?'*[1202] Although there was an acceptance that people may choose to support them without identifying as women's liberationists, Howe, as a staunch women's liberationist, always insisted that the words 'women's liberation' should be included in the group's campaign materials, even at the cost of potential help.[1203]

Within the WLM itself, however, Howe's campaign attracted little interest. Many women viewed it as irrelevant, or considered its chances of success to be unlikely.[1204] Defending the campaign against charges of being 'reformist', 'revisionary', 'reactionary', 'rightist', 'diversionary', 'elitist' and 'bourgeois', Howe attacked those 'whose first concern is to remain purists even at the expense of never actually doing anything.' She maintained that the campaign was 'comprehensible' with 'attainable objectives' and that a 'thorough-going' anti-discrimination Act would have 'revolutionary' implications'.[1205] Unfortunately, the campaign failed to achieve widespread recognition. Much of this can be attributed to a lack of experience, resources, and connections in the political or media classes.[1206] Comparisons between Howe's analysis, and that of more seasoned campaigners', suggests that the gap between them owed less to differences about the diagnosis of the problem and ultimate objectives, than it did to tactical approaches to the politics of reform.[1207] Much of the Parliamentary reformers' apparent moderation and conservatism was born of what they saw as a realistic assessment of the politics of the possible.[1208] Seear described the Select Committee's approach:

[1202] Pat Howe and Caryl Eldridge, 'Anti-Discrimination Act Campaign = A Woman's Independence (Equal Opportunities)', n.d., FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 2.
[1203] Howe, 'Anti-Discrimination Campaign', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1.
[1204] Interview with Gail Chester. More broadly, this observation has been made based on extensive study of wide-ranging primary sources from the Women's Liberation Movement, and from talking to many of the women involved in different areas of the movement. For example, in the *Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter* it barely registers as a concern. It is also clear from a study of eight years worth of Women's Liberation Conference Papers that the issue attracted scant attention. Nor is the issue commonly mentioned by women who were involved in the WLM. All archival sources mentioned are based at FemL.
[1205] The Sex Discrimination Campaign, 'The Nature of the Campaign', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 2.
[1206] Despite submitting evidence, they were not even called before the Select Committee. See Balfour and Howe, 'National Campaign for Anti-Discrimination Law', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1.
[1207] Even some of the Bill's most conservative supporters, such as the Conservative MP Sally Oppenheim, were explicit that it would not provide anything close to comprehensive equality of opportunity. See HC, 14 February 1973, c. 1400.
[1208] See, for example, Bishop's comments in House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72*, pp. 195-7. See also Edith Summerskill's comments on p. 197.

> A number of us are of the opinion...that the important thing is to get something on the Statute Book as fast as possible, and that the wider you make it the more areas of opposition you stir up…If you focus on…the essential things and win…it is much easier to bring the others into line… [I]f you attempt an all-embracing approach…you arouse different types of opposition from different quarters and the chance of combined opposition defeating the Bill becomes that much greater.[1209]

By contrast, Howe had maintained that anything less than a fully comprehensive law would comprise the ultimate aim since it would 'allow MPs and liberal thinkers to…continue to chase each other round in circles over each and every issue which appears to have, or…does have a sex discriminatory element.'[1210] The frustrations caused by lack of connections are also evident. Howe railed at the response generated by Labour's Green Paper. Why had *The Times* – and numerous other newspapers, television and radio stations – ignored Howe's efforts to alert them to her campaign? Much to her chagrin, one radio program introduced the Green Paper as 'the most radical paper to come out about discrimination – even more radical than anything to come out from W.Lib [sic]'. [1211] Although it is possible that the campaign's consciousness-raising efforts had some impact on wider opinion, its direct influence on policy makers must be regarded as negligible. Nevertheless, Howe certainly deserves some credit for the Bill's ultimate success since her campaign was assisted (or taken over, depending upon the perspective) by Women in Media (WIM) who proved to be a highly effective extra-Parliamentary pressure group.[1212]

WIM's founder members came mainly from Fleet Street and broadcasting. The group soon expanded to include women from all levels of journalism, publishing, education, films, theatre, and public relations. They aimed 'to use their professional skills to work for an improved

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[1209] House of Lords Select Committee on the Bill, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1972-3*, p. 259.
[1210] Balfour and Howe, 'National Campaign for Anti-Discrimination Law', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1
[1211] Howe, 'Anti-Discrimination Campaign', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1. Howe's protests were met with the galling response: 'Very sorry, didn't intend anything. But the [campaign's materials] have been handed over to our girls so it's over to them.'
[1212] For more on this controversy see papers in the Women in Media Files, WomL, 6 WIM/C/02. For the impact of Women in Media see Rendel, 'Legislating for Equal Pay and Opportunity for Women in Britain', 900 & 900n. Members' own assessments (Rendel herself was involved) tend to be positive to the point of self-congratulatory. Shirley Conran and Tamar Karet later claimed that the WIM's actions were one of the key influences behind the final decision to legislate. See Tamar Karet, 'Note to Future Researchers', 17 May 1996, WomL, 6 WIM A/02; Shirley Conran, 'Personal Recollections of the Equal Rights Bill Campaign', 16 December 1988, WomL, 6 WIM/C/01. See also notes in contemporaneous progress reports, e.g. Minutes of a Meeting of Women in Media, 26 February 1973, WomL, 6 WIM A/01/02; Women in Media, Progress Report, November 1974, WomL, 6 WIM A/01/03.

situation for all women'.[1213] WIM's relationship with the WLM was ambiguous, troubled, and often cool. Despite significant crossover, many women's liberationists perceived WIM as 'elitist', self-congratulatory, 'frothy', and concerned primarily with furthering their own careers.[1214] A deeply saddened Mary (a naturally inclined bridge builder and believer in sisterhood) thought some of these antagonisms stemmed from WIM's 'easy command of words'.[1215] However, the typical women's liberationist was hardly inarticulate. The differences ran deeper. Though 'fully sympathetic to the broader aims of Women's Lib', WIM focused their 'reformist activities' towards their own particular aims.[1216] In contrast to those women's liberation groups who centralised their commitment to group consciousness-raising activities and non-hierarchical ultra democratic group structures, WIM were more brisk; many members believed it was wrong-headed to prioritise those elements of activism if it impeded getting things done.[1217] Whereas the wider WLM generally preferred to avoid the media, WIM were as aware of the media's potential positive power as they were suspicious of its tendencies to ignore, marginalise, dilute and distort. Crucially, they also had the professional relationships and experience which enabled them to use the media effectively to agitate for reform.[1218]

WIM were relative late-comers to the campaign for the Bill. They had responded to the Select Committee's call for evidence by providing an effective presentation on the extent of sex discrimination in the media, and followed this up by arranging some airtime for one of their

[1213] No author, 'Women in Media', 1976, WomL, 6 WIM A/02; Tamar Karet, 'Note to Future Researchers', WomL, 6 WIM A/02.

[1214] See Report of the Women in Media Conference, July 1974, FemL, Special Collection Two, Box 1. For references to negative comments see, Stott, *Before I Go,* p. 42; *Women's Report (*November – December 1976); Interview with Anna Coote.

[1215] Stott, *Before I Go,* p. 42

[1216] Balfour and Howe, 'National Campaign for Anti-Discrimination Law', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1.

[1217] 'Condenseation of Shirley Conran's Speech to WIM Meeting on behalf of Anne Sharply, Mary Stott, Rene Goddard, Rosie Boycott, Celia Brayfield, Marsha Rowe, Angela Phillips, Sandra Brown, Pat Barr, Sue Puddefoot, Nikki Henriques, Reva Landau', 27 November 1972, WomL, 6 WIM A 01/01. This attitude persisted. A progress report two years later noted the group's achievements adding that, in this context, 'any discussion on the future activities of WIM should try to avoid the besetting sin of the Women's Movement of substituting the temptations of self-analysis.' See Women in Media, 'Progress Report', November 1974, WomL, 6WIM/A/01/03. WIM's dynamism also distinguished them from older feminist groups. They were surprised and frustrated to discover that they might have to sometimes wait up to six months to formally ascertain their support, whilst they went through the necessary processes of official meetings, debates, and votes. See Conran, 'Personal Recollections', WomL, 6 WIM/C/01.

[1218] The journalist Mary Holland told the first WLM Conference: 'I think you've got to realize that its very unlikely that you will get sympathetic press coverage…the kind of press coverage you get is part of the thing that your [sic] fighting against. An ability of males to demote it into a kind of jokey thing which they dismiss as not being important so they can laugh at it.' Opinions about how to tackle the press were, nonetheless, mixed. See Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, p. 8, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1.

members.[1219] They do not appear to have considered further action until Howe wrote to WIM in September 1972.[1220] Shirley Conran was tasked with leading WIM's campaign on the Bill. Having observed that 'schoolgirls love to collect signatures' (such remarks no doubt led some women's liberationists to doubt the seriousness of WIM's feminism), WIM contacted the head girl of St. Paul's School. They persuaded her to enlist the help of nine hundred other head girls, asking them to get the whole of their school to sign the petition. WIM embargoed this particular piece of information and Conran later reflected that, 'luckily no journalist ever discovered the key role that ten-year old girls played in the campaign for women's rights.'[1221] By the end of January 1973, WIM's Anti-Discrimination Sub-Group had sent out another 1000 letters, including copies of the petition, to all the women's organisations they had contact details for. They wrote to every MP, adhering an attention-grabbing red felt heart to each letter, requesting details about their 'personal attitudes…towards discrimination against women' and towards the Bill. WIM told the MPs that the survey results would be published the *Sunday Times, Guardian*, and *Observer*. Although many MPs objected to what they perceived as bullying tactics, and many women's liberationists disparaged the fluffy red heart device, the tactic must be judged as successful based on the volume of replies it generated. WIM also arranged public events – and, more importantly, media coverage of them. They worked with Women's Lobby to arrange a 'National Lobby Day' three days before the Bill was due to be read; and a rally at Caxton Hall, the old suffragette venue, to coincide with the Bill's second reading.[1222]

WIM strove to render the campaign newsworthy without providing the sort of sensationalist coverage that would invite misrepresentation. This could prove challenging. When Conran requested some publicity for a wreath laying ceremony in honour of the suffragettes, the women's editor of the *Daily Mirror* responded:

[1219] Memorandum submitted by the Women in Media Group and Examination of Witnesses from Women in Media by the House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72*, pp. 107-114, esp. p. 110. Women in Media, 'Progress Report', December 1972, WomL, 6 WIM A 01/01.

[1220] Letter referred to in Eileen de Cp Vielvoye to Women in Media, 20 December 1972, WomL, 6WIM/C/02.

[1221] Report on the Watford Women's Anti-Discrimination Petition Project on Behalf of Reva Landau, Shirley Conran, Nikki Henriues', n.d (c. November 1972), WomL, 6 WIM/C/02; Conran, 'Personal Recollections', WomL, 6WIM/C/01

[1222] For lists of activities see, Minutes of Monthly Meeting of Women in Media, 29 January 1973, WomL, 6 WIM A/01/02. For copy of letter sent to MPs see, Circular letter to all MPs from Shirley Conran to Reva Landau, 'Anti-Discrimination Bill: 2nd Reading, 2nd Feb 1973', 14 December 1972, WomL, 6 WIM/C/01. Replies are held in the same file. See also Shirley Conran, 'Personal Recollections', WomL, 6WIM/C/01. Remarks on red heart made by Anna Coote and others.

> …you know the rules… If you want publicity from me, you won't get it with Dame Majorie waving a little Union Jack from a wheelchair. You'll get it if you produce a woman in chains and flesh coloured bikini on the back of a white horse, riding towards Downing Street… Then I promise you a page one photo. [1223]

WIM managed to find other ways of generating publicity whilst maintaining the appearance of moderation and respectability. When the Conservative MP, Sally Oppenheim, favourably distinguished them from '*extreme* elements of women's liberation', WIM protested.[1224] But WIM were, and helped to present, the acceptable face of modern feminism. Howe's campaign had sought to raise public consciousness to develop grass roots support for a fully comprehensive Bill, but WIM's approach was closer to those Parliamentary activists who focused on getting *something* through – indeed, the two groups worked closely together.[1225] Howe became enraged at the 'undemocratic takeover' of her campaign and the deletion of 'Women's Liberation' from campaign materials. She argued that 'arranging' for signatures to be collected en-masse signalled a failure to appreciate the 'long-term educative plan of the campaign.'[1226] From WIM's point of view, it had been necessary to exploit the opportunities as they became available. Action was order of the day and discussion and analysis were postponed until the critical moment had passed.[1227] As we shall see, WIM's actions did help to force a reluctant Government to take action. Yet, in light of the shallow and unsatisfactory nature of the resultant proposals, the limits of the tactics of headline publicity must be acknowledged.

[1223] Conran herself was probably tempted; more than most of her WIM sisters, she focused on ends rather than means. She recalled later that 'this sexist frivolous approach w as 'unacceptable to WIM (the word 'sexist' was added to the typescript as an afterthought). Conran also recalled how she sometimes pushed the bounds to the point where she invited WIM's disapproval. For example, she always dressed in a very feminine fashion for interviews ('Laura Ashley dresses of sprigged muslin'). See Conran, 'Personal Recollections', WomL, 6WIM/C/01..

[1224] Sally Oppenheim to M. Stott, 20 February 1973, WomL, 6 WIM C/01.

[1225] See Ted Bishop to Mary Stott, 20 January 1973, WomL, 6 WIM/C/04; Joan Vickers to Shirley Conran, 7 February 1973, WomL, 6 WIM C/04. Also, interview with Anna Coote. Although Coote did not mean this as a compliment.

[1226] Balfour and Howe, 'National Campaign for Anti-Discrimination Law', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1. Some of Howe's Watford Group (the less vocal group members) appeared to welcome the support.

[1227] For reference to 'conflicting ideas and feeling about discrimination…which had emerged during the preceding weeks', see Notes of the Monthly Meeting of Women in Media, 26 February 1973, WomL, 6 WIM A/01/02. The only other reference to conflicting ideas are in relation to Conran's own references to presentational tactics. WIM never wholeheartedly adopted working-class politics or rigorous Marxist or feminist structural analyses. Nevertheless, their experience of the campaign for anti-discrimination legislation led many WIM members to understand the nature of and reasons for discrimination in a much wider sense than they had at the outset. See, for example, the very wide-ranging recommendations they made to Lord Coleville on subjects from social security benefits to home responsibility allowances. 'Brief Note of a Meeting between Women in Media and Lord Colville', 25 July 1973, WomL, 6 WIM/C/04.

One other group which engaged closely with the reform process was the NCCL. Their commitment to the cause had foundered after the 1966 publication of *Women*, their civil rights agenda dominated by concerns about racism.[1228] However, following a resolution at their 1973 Conference, calling upon the Executive Committee to give women's rights a higher priority, an all-female Women's Rights Committee was immediately established. They were charged to research areas such as equal pay, nursery provision and abortion provision and to provide fact sheets. They also agreed become involved with the campaign for an Anti-Discrimination Law. Members included Anna Coote, and Patricia Hewitt.[1229] In contrast to WIM, the group had a firm commitment to working-class politics.[1230] Their commitment to exploring and challenging the 'economic basis of women's oppression' highlights shared ideological ground with the WLM, but NCCL feminism represented a particular strand of women's liberation, one planted firmly in socialist feminism. In contrast to those women's liberationists who were cynical about the patriarchal nature of the trade union movement, the NCCL saw it as a potentially powerful reforming organisation (even as they agitated to reform it). There was also a good deal of legal expertise in the group, reflecting the fact that the NCCL was an experienced lobby group and provider of legal services.[1231]

Hamilton's Bill was scheduled to receive its Second Reading in the Commons on 2 February 1973. It was widely known that Bell planned another filibuster, and activists had ensured the occasion would be well publicized.[1232] According to the BBC, women had 'more or less taken over' the House of Commons.[1233] Significantly, the Government made no attempt to question or deny the existence of sex discrimination. The Select Committee's work had rendered that argument obsolete.[1234] The Government spokesman, Mark Carlisle reiterated the Government's desire to 'do away with unfair discrimination wherever it exists'. However, he explained, 'what

[1228] For notes regarding the NCCL's apparent lack of concern about women's rights see Minutes of Executive Committee of Six Point Group, 2 May 1967 and 2 July 1968, WomL, 5SPG/A/140. For an example of the prominence of race related concerns see the NCCL mission Statement attached to Minutes of a Meeting of Executive Committee, 6 April 1967, LSE, HCA NCCL 2/2.
[1229] Minutes of NCCL Women's Committee, 3 July 1973, and 'Women's Right: What the Groups Can Do', Winter 1973, HHC, NCCL, DCL 650/1.
[1230] Interview with Anna Coote.
[1231] For reference to this proposal see Minutes of NCCL Women's Committee, 3 July 1973, HHC, NCCL, DCL 650/1. Interview with Anna Coote.
[1232] Barbara Castle to Willie Hamilton, 29 January 1973, WomL, 6 WIM/C/01; Phillip Whitehead to Shirley Conran, 27 December 1972, WomL, 6 WIM/C/01.
[1233] BBC2 Television News: 7:30pm, Tx. 2 February 1973, transcript available from BBCw, Transcripts Room.
[1234] HC, 2 Februay 1973, c 1859.

part the law had to play in achieving that end was a much more difficult problem.' [1235] Carlisle presented a list of concerns about the Bill. He said that caution was necessary when addressing 'a controversial social matter'.[1236] He expressed concern about the impact on the education system; suggested that the enforcement machinery would be complex and difficult; and wondered if it was right, as the Bill implied, to have male midwives.[1237] Carlisle argued that the Lords Select Committee should have more time to complete its investigations.[1238] This was a delaying tactic. By refusing to allow time and facilities for the Bill, the Government were able to rely upon what Shirley Williams described as 'a minority light brigade' to thwart the Bill.[1239] Owing to Bell's filibuster, the Speaker moved to kill Hamilton's Bill after one and three quarters hours of debate. [1240] According to one report: 'only the uproar on the crowded opposition benches and the massive support of British women (as manifested by the unabashed claps and jeers in the packed gallery)' prevented him. When Carlisle declined Williams request to find Government time for the Bill, Labour's Chief Whip offered three hours of Opposition time. The Speaker assured the House that the matter would be discussed. [1241]

Crowds of women then filed out to join the Rally at Caxton Hall. Under pre-1914 suffragette banners reading 'Dare to be free', they listened to speeches from Vickers, Edith Summerskill, Hamilton, and May Hobbs of the Night Cleaners Union. Creche facilities were available. There followed a torch-lit procession to Downing Street, carefully orchestrated by WIM, who had even gone to the trouble of importing wax torches from Denmark. They had arranged the timing of the march with photo coverage in mind – it was dark enough for the torches to be seen but light enough to take photographs.[1242] It received front-page coverage in most national newspapers. *The Times'* headlined a photograph of the torchlight parade with 'Women's Lib march on No 10.' Although the article was broadly sympathetic, it well illustrated the insidious nature of sex discrimination by reporting how policeman manning the No. 10 barricade had felt that this 'was

[1235] Ibid. cc. 1856 & 1858. See also other similar comments by MPs, c. 1874. See also cc. 1877-8.
[1236] Ibid. cc. 1862 & 1863-4.
[1237] Ibid. c. 1860-61
[1238] Ibid. c. 1862
[1239] Ibid. c. 1864. During the debate, Willie Hamilton cited a letter sent from the Conservative leader of the House, dated the previous day, during which he had clearly stated that the government was not prepared to find time for the Bill. See. c. 1886.
[1240] HC, 2 February 1973, c. 1883.
[1241] Ibid. cc. 1883-6; *Women's Report* (March-April 1973).
[1242] This account complied from Leaflet for Women's Rally – Caxton Hall, n.d. c. January 1973, WomL, 6 WIM/C/04; Conran, 'Personal Recollections', WomL, 6 WIM/C/01; *Women's Report* (March – April 1973).

no time to impede women in an angry mood.'[1243] BBC and ITN news had covered the march and the rally and the BBC *Nationwide* program had carried a special report from the latter.[1244] The evening news coverage concluded with an interview with Hamilton. Asked if there was 'time for this complicated piece of legislation', he replied the 'how' was 'up to the Government'. 'We've put our pressure on and now public opinion will do the rest.'[1245]

Heath's Government and *Equal Opportunities for Men and Women*

Heath's Government were in a difficult position. Conservative sentiment remained generally - although not entirely – opposed to anti-discrimination legislation.[1246] Prejudices aside, much of this was underpinned by a Conservative belief in family and freedom.[1247] However, the arguments of Thatcher and Powell, whose ideas increasingly came to dominate Conservative thinking, were subtly different. Their opposition to anti-sex discrimination legislation encompassed the liberal belief that the state should not legislate to change attitudes, and a positive recognition of traditional family values.[1248] Yet, unlike Conservative traditionalists, they did not resist change per se; indeed, their pronouncements suggest a positive embrace of women's changing role and status.[1249]

Thatcher's biography demonstrates that she was no simple anti-feminist. Yet, her overcoming of the odds, in a science career and then a political career, probably led her to underestimate the extent and nature of sex discrimination even as she recognised its existence. She appears to have concluded that if women tried hard enough, they could overcome.[1250] In Thatcher's view, the

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[1243] *The Times*, 3 February 1973.
[1244] 'Notes of the Monthly Meeting of Women in Media, 26 February 1973', WomL, 6 WIM A/01/02.
[1245] BBC2 Television News: 7:30pm, Tx. 2 February 1973, transcript available from BBCw, Scripts Room. The tactic well represents a successful attempt to generate an opinion about public opinion.
[1246] Open Door Council, 'Brief Report on General Election Candidates, Replies to our Sex Equality Questionnaire', 28 February 1974, attached to a circular letter from Amy Jordan, n.d., CPA, CCO 60/4/12. See also Elsie Tongue to Shelia Roberts, 15 June 1974, CPA, CCO 60/4/12, for commentary on this survey. For assessment of views of the high echelons of the Party see Conservative Research Department, 'Women's Rights. Conservative Targets.', 11 April 1973, CPA, CRD 3/38/2.
[1247] See for example, exchange in a debate, HC, 26 March 1976, cc. 827-8. See above, p. 161, and below, p. 205.
[1248] Thatcher's opposition to the Sex Discrimination Bill was low level but on record. See HC, 26 March 1975, c. 573. She was absent from the crucial debate and vote on the Sex Discrimination Bill.
[1249] In this sense, their views can be seen as compatible with was later described as Thatcherism. As Lowe puts it, the market, not the State, was seen as the 'best long-term guarantor of economic efficiency, social justice, and political freedom. Lowe, *Welfare State*, p. 30.
[1250] See, for example, *Special Report from the Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination (No. 2) Bill, Session 1972-3* (333-I) (London, 1973), p. 44. As Renee Short (left wing Labour MP and the Women's Sections representative on the NEC) said, Thatcher was 'a firm believer that merit alone is sufficient to enable people to get

forces of supply and demand would overcome many of the obstacles preventing women's progress. Observing that attitudes had already changed, Thatcher argued that continuing changes would drive further transformations. However, these developments could not and should not be wrought by legislation. For example, Thatcher thought that there was a degree of 'common sense' in most girls doing some domestic science subjects since it would most likely prove relevant in their later lives. But she also highlighted the increasing numbers of girls taking scientific subjects. 'As the taste developed', she argued, 'so the facilities have been provided, and the girls have taken advantage of them.'[1251]

Powell put the case even more clearly. He had supported measures to remove legal discrimination (as per Cripps). Powell's central objection to the Sex Discrimination Bill, which was entirely consistent with his opposition to the Race Relations Act, was that it was a nonsensical piece of fashionable stupidity. He declared the concept 'a defiance of reality.' 'Gradations and differentiations' were naturally – and rightly – matched by differential opportunities and rewards.[1252] This did not mean that change could not or should not occur. On the contrary, Powell citied the Finer Report: 'longer life, a sex-ratio near unity, more and younger marriages and small, consciously-planned families, with fertility compressed into a narrow band of years, have resulted…in *revolutionary* alterations in women's lives as wives, as mothers and as workers.' He went on:

> Legislation of this kind can do nothing but interfere with the realisation of that continuing process, because it is only the adaptations of society and of the economy to the new potentialities thrown up by these changes and by others like them which we cannot foresee

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on'. She failed to acknowledge that, 'all too often the dice are loaded against women with merit.' See HC, 26 March 1975, c. 573. David Owen recounts a story about Thatcher's concern for the teenage son of one of her constituents. She was so concerned that she arranged to meet his doctor yet, according to Owen, 'it soon became apparent that she neither accepted nor wanted to understand that any adolescent could be depressed…it was all due to a lack of personal drive, effort and will.' See D. Owen, 'An irresistible ascent', in *New Statesman*, 3-9 May 2013, p. 41. Elspeth Howe described her as suffering from 'Queen Bee Syndrome – "I made it. Others can jolly well do the same." See C. Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorised Biography, Volume I: Not for Turning* (London, 2014), p. 353. Interestingly, Castle was guilty of the same thing to some degree. Despite a socialist's concern for the underdog (for women, and especially working-class women) but dismissed her own Party's women's organisations until later in her career. She thought they prevented women from being taken seriously. Later on, Castle concluded that she had been wrong and was guilty of a kind of 'elitism'. She had had a 'launching pad in a highly intellectualized political background.' Not all women had that. See Phillips, *The Divided House*, p. 163.

[1251] *Special Report from the Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination (No. 2) Bill*, p. 38.

[1252] HC, 26 March 1975, cc. 539-40. He told a meeting of the Illford Chamber of Trade and Commerce that 'any proposal to ban discrimination should be 'greeted with a heavy gust of incredulous laughter from one end of the kingdom to another…Yet so conditioned have we become to fatuity…that the whole thing has been as if it were serious and not as a whimsical joke or unaccountable aberration.' Quoted in *Women's Report* (November '73 – January '74).

> which brings about that kind of revolution. If we attempt to do it by law and compulsion we shall destroy where we intend to create.[1253]

As he had long maintained, 'the market economy…is the most effective enemy of discrimination between individuals, classes, and races.'[1254]

Overall however, Conservative distaste for the Bill was becoming increasingly difficult to express without giving the appearance (rightly or wrongly) of endorsing the view that women were the inferior sex, undeserving of equal opportunities. The reformers were now able to ensure that Parliamentary debates on the Bill received media publicity. Moreover, as Hamilton's comments suggest, the campaigners had successfully created 'an opinion about public opinion.'[1255] The Cabinet agreed that the Bill was 'highly unsatisfactory as it stood' and possibly '[in]capable of amendment'. But they also agreed that 'the strength of feeling in the House and among women's organisations in the country at large' had made it 'impossible for the Leader of the House [James Prior] to adopt a wholly negative attitude.' Since they believed that declining the Opposition's offer of half a Supply Day would generate 'a repetition of the situation which arose when the closure motion was refused', Heath concluded that 'there seemed to be no practical alternative to ensuring that Parliamentary time was made available for the Bill's Second Reading.' The Bill would have to be 'suitably amended' or, 'if that proved impossible, blocked at a later stage.'[1256] Their hand had been forced.

The Bill received its re-scheduled second reading two weeks later.[1257] Again, there is evidence to suggest that many politicians had been convinced of the need to be seen to be sympathetic. Certainly, some expressed support was based on a superficial or partial understanding of sex discrimination. For example, Mr Rees-Davies supported the Bill, despite his concern about creating a position whereby:

> [W]e cannot advertise for an au pair girl or a daily woman without being guilty of discrimination…We do not want to be in a position in which we cannot discriminate with regard to housekeepers, cooks, daily woman and the like.[1258]

[1253] HC, 26 March 1975, cc. 543-4.
[1254] M. Foot, *The Rise of Enoch Powell* (1969) quoted in Bagihole, *Equal Opportunities and Social Policy*, p. 56.
[1255] For reference to this pressure group tactic, see above, p. 178.
[1256] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 8 February 1973, TNA CAB 128/51/6.
[1257] HC, 14 February 1973, c. 1399.
[1258] Ibid. c. 1379.

The Bill's supporters were more concerned about its limitations. They were aware that the attitudes they sought to challenge were deeply engrained, instilled almost from birth. Labour women, especially, argued that women would need additional support, such as improved nursery provision and flexible working hours of equality of opportunity were to be rendered meaningful.[1259] The importance of addressing other forms of discrimination in their respective fields of legislation was also highlighted.[1260] Nevertheless, the Bill's supporters hoped that it would go some way to helping the plight of lone mothers and their families, since part of their poverty was attributable to low wages and lack of opportunity for women. Similar arguments applied to single daughters and women with elderly or sick parents or other dependents to care for.[1261] Shirely Summerskill, who tended to reject her mother's feminism in favour of a broader concern with social justice, described the Bill as a contribution to 'total human progress.'[1262] Joan Lestor was one of the very few speakers to express a hope that men might take advantage of the Bill, for example, to move into traditional female areas such as early years schooling.[1263] Conservative reformers took a less radical approach, emphasising the now common Conservative theme of choice (this applied always to women; there was no mention that men might want to choose between fatherhood and career). Oppenhiem gave a speech which embodied this theme. It deeply offended many feminists, but probably reassured more moderate supporters: [1264]

> It is inevitable…that the Bill should have become associated…with the more extreme elements of the women's liberation movement…As a supporter and sponsor of the Bill, and as a woman, I wish to dissociate myself from the protagonists of that movement…The Bill is not about liberating women. It is about giving women a fair chance…I particularly deplore the way in which…extreme exponents of the women's liberation movement denigrate those women who are fulfilled and happy in the role of housewife and mother, for I believe that to be a good housewife and mother is, possibly, the highest aspiration of womanhood and the hardest to achieve. But that those women who want to use their talents and abilities should be given a completely equal opportunity to do so is, I believe, their unquestionable right.[1265]

[1259] Ibid. cc. 1374-8.
[1260] Ibid. c. 1410.
[1261] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 425; HC, 14 February 1973, c. 1400.
[1262] HC, 14 February 1973, c. 1397.
[1263] Ibid. cc. 1382-5.
[1264] Sally Oppenheim to Mary Stott, 20 February 1973, WomL, 6 WIM/C/01.
[1265] HC, 14 February 1973, cc. 1397-8. See also AED Chamier to S. Brown, 22 August 1973, WomL, 6WIM/C/04.

Conservative opponents of the Bill acknowledged that ideas about the differences between men and women were deeply entrenched. Yet, as conservatives, they did not perceive this as a problem. In a particularly thoughtful speech, Martin Madden damned the Bill as irrelevant, saying it was 'like trying to use a tin-opener to extract oil from the North Sea'. It failed to address the heart of the matter which was that most women got married and had children; this was the source of women's practical difficulties in pursuing a career, and of employers' discrimination against childless women. These 'genuine difficulties' could not be removed by a quick stroke of the parliamentary pen.' In contrast to the more radical reformers, however, Madden's perceived this as a justification for re-inforcing rather than challenging the status quo. He did not wish to see men and women be made 'interchangeable'. More attention should be given to the 'honour of motherhood' and 'raising the status of the female role' since children needed 'the loving care of their mother'.[1266] The Government's position remained the same. The Solicitor General endorsed the Bill's sentiment and highlighted numerous its potential complications and drawbacks.[1267] Despite numerous protests against 'excuses' and delaying tactics, the Bill received its Second Reading and was sent to a newly established Commons Select Committee. [1268]

The Government remained in an uncomfortable position. They knew that the Lords Select Committee was preparing to re-introduce the original amended Hamilton Bill to the Lords, and that the newly established Commons Select Committee was unlikely to depart far from its recommendations. They did not like the Hamilton Bill but judged it politically unsafe to be seen to oppose it. In their analysis of the problem, the CRD argued that Conservative resistance to change must be overcome for the good of the Party. Social change was making the adherence to a traditional view of women increasingly difficult. They warned of falling 'out of tune of women's own appraisal of what their position could and should be.' Mindful of the Conservatism of women voters, especially working-class women, the CRD warned that failure to take the initiative on anti-discrimination measures might lead to the erosion of that support. [1269] Nonetheless, the CRDs attitude towards the actual Bill was cool; they cleaved closely to the

[1266] Ibid. cc. 1367 – 1374. These views were very similar to those expressed by Brandon Rhys Williams and others in the debates about family allowances. For example, see below, p. 335n.
[1267] HC, 14 February 1973, cc. 1385-92.
[1268] Ibid. cc. 1390, 1396 & 1401 & 1412. For Haver's final remarks see c. 1415.
[1269] Conservative Research Department, 'Women's Rights. Conservative Targets', 11 April 1973, CPA, CRD 3/38/2.

views of the WNAC.[1270] On the subject of job opportunities – the subject 'at the heart' of the Bill – they observed that 'Conservative attitude remains to be decided'. They suggested two policy alternatives. First was to 'leave the Bill alone to pass with Government support' and concentrate on bringing in more piecemeal reforms, such as those recommended by Cripps. Other ideas included things like improving release provision, or exploring the possibility of asking larger firms to provide childcare facilities. The second alternative was to 'take over' the Bill. The CRD acknowledged that this had the 'presentational disadvantage of leaving the Conservatives appearing to 'be climbing on a band-wagon which several of [their] followers once tried to immobilise'. But, they claimed, it would allow 'an all-out Government assault on the problem in the form of a Composite Bill.'[1271] The Conservative Home and Social Affairs Committee, led by Carr, opted to kill the Seear/Hamilton Bill by denying it Government facilities. They accepted the view that this could be only made 'politically possible' by the Government undertaking to introduce its own anti-discrimination legislation in the following Session. [1272] The Cabinet agreed.[1273]

The House of Lords Select Committee published its final report on 18th April 1973. The Lords returned Hamilton's Bill the following month.[1274] At this point, as planned, the Home Office announced the Government would produce a consultative document as a basis for its own enquiries as a prelude to Government legislation. The revised Hamilton/Seear Bill was criticised for 'confusing' the state of protective legislation, for being based on 'insufficient evidence from educationalists', and for prohibiting the establishment of single-sex schools. In the Commons, Carr implied that the Government wished to leave education alone altogether – a remarkable position given the repeated Conservative assertion that education was a root cause of discrimination but which probably had something to do not only with the educational background of so many Parliamentarians but also with the fear of the potential backlash from Catholic and independent schools.[1275] So far as the proposed Sex Discrimination Board went, all

[1270] For discussion of the WNAC's views, see above, pp. 187-8.
[1271] Conservative Research Department, 'Women's Rights. Conservative Targets.', CPA, CRD 3/38/2.
[1272] Robert Carr, 'Discrimination Against Women', 30 April 1973, TNA, CAB 129/169/18.
[1273] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 3 May 1973, TNA, CAB 128/52/3.
[1274] *Women's Report* (May – June 1973).
[1275] HC, 14 February 1973, c. 1482.

indications were, as *Women's Report* observed, that they were 'thinking in terms of a toothless talking shop.'[1276]

In a slightly farcical episode, Carr, Thatcher, and Maurice Macmillan were called before the Commons Select Committee to give evidence on a Bill their Government had deemed as unsatisfactory and incapable of amendment. They nevertheless assured the Committee that the Government planned to allow 'sufficient time' to give 'proper weight' to their report before producing their own Green Paper. The Committee took the unusual course of confining their recommendations to a Special Report and Reporting the Bill without amendment.[1277] On the increasingly controversial question of educational provision, probably partly for strategic reasons and partly because of lack of time, they explicitly opted not to recommend the prohibition of new single-sex schools. Although they asserted that 'there remains a widespread feeling that discrimination between boys and girls exists in the educational field however difficult it may be to identify'. Thatcher's Department of Education and Science was accused of complacency.[1278] Feelings were running high.

Hamilton suggested that the Government's actions could be 'interpreted as a deliberate attempt…to thwart the will of Parliament.[1279] The Labour Women's Conference passed an emergency resolution condemning the government's delaying tactics.[1280] WIM went on the offensive. They wrote to every member of the Lords. They arranged for representatives of 37 women's organisations to join a 'protest' day during which letters were presented at the door of the House of Commons every five minutes. The St Paul's head girl delivered a letter to the Queen. Well-known speakers, such as Glenda Jackson, addressed the attendant rally and Selina Scott made a 'protest flight' past the House of Commons. There was an all-night vigil outside Downing Street. Again, WIM's actions made the front pages. The Government agreed that representatives could meet with the Home Office 'to discuss the formulation of the legislation'.[1281] In the notes of the meeting, produced by the Home Office, disagreements were downplayed; it is clear that many of WIM's suggestions were ultimately disregarded by the

[1276] *Women's Report* (May – June 1973).
[1277] *Special Report from the Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination (No. 2) Bill*, pp. iii-iv & 35-9.
[1278] Ibid. p. v.
[1279] Draft Special Report of the Select Committee, quoted in Callendar, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 41.
[1280] Betty Lockwood to MPs and Women's Organisations, July 1973, WomL, 6 WIM/C/04.
[1281] Women in Media, 'Short Summary of Completed Work in the Last Year', 1 October 1973, WomL, 6 WIM A/01/02, Women in Media Minutes, 1973; Conran, 'Personal Recollections', WomL, 6WIM/C/01.

authors of the Government's consultative document. Nevertheless, the concession suggests that the Government was wary of WIMs power and influence.[1282]

The Conservative Government published its consultative document, *Equal Opportunities for Men & Women*, in September 1973.[1283] It opened with the now standard two-fold reasoning for expanding women's opportunities. Sex discrimination was 'unfair' to women, and 'wasteful' of the nation's resources.[1284] The document clearly articulated the Conservative position:

> The government is not suggesting…that the majority of women wish to see their roles as wives, mothers and guardians of family life radically and basically altered. These roles are fundamental to the order and stability or our national life and their inherent value is too little recognised or acknowledged in the public debate on sex equality… The law itself will not secure a society where men and women enjoy equal opportunities in condition of fair competition. There are deeply-rooted and restrictive attitudes about the role of women.[1285]

The 'most promising way forward' was deemed to be by 'inquiry, publicity and persuasion', led by the Equal Opportunities Commission which would be a 'catalyst for change.' [1286] The reformers' fears were confirmed. Education would be essentially excluded from the legislation (although, as suggested by the CRD, the system of student awards to married women would be examined).[1287] The section relating to employment was weak.[1288] Protective legislation would be repealed.[1289] The proposed EOC was to be gifted with barely more powers than Harold Wilson's Women's Commission and enforcement would be left primarily in the hands of Industrial tribunals which would have the power to transfer 'appropriate cases' to the discredited National Industrial Relations Court.[1290]

At Labour's National Conference, the following month, a composite resolution was passed condemning the Government for 'preventing legislation to be enacted in this Parliament' and

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[1282] 'Brief Note of a Meeting', 25 July 1973, WomL, 6WIM/C/04.
[1283] Department of Employment, Department of Education and Science, Home Office, *Equal Opportunities for Men & Women: Government Proposals for Legislation* (London, 1973).
[1284] Ibid. p. 5.
[1285] Ibid. p. 9.
[1286] Ibid.
[1287] Ibid. p. 22. Conservative Research Department, 'Women's Rights. Conservative Targets.', CPA, CRD 3/38/2.
[1288] Ibid. pp. 10-20. The document highlighted considerable potential cross-over with the Equal Pay Act.
[1289] Ibid. p. 7.
[1290] Ibid. pp. 24-6. Most unions refused to even recognise the NIRC court, holding it in as much contempt as they did the legislation that established it.

recommending that the proposals in the Study Group's Green Paper be accepted in full. It also called for a 'campaign inside the Labour movement to help bring about a positive attitude against sex discrimination.'[1291] In contrast to many Conservative pronouncements on the subject, many speakers at the Labour Conference were clear that they wanted to to challenge assumptions about men and women, at work, in politics, and at home. Tina Holliday of Deptford CLP stated the case strongly:

> Why is it that men with socialist ideals can go home after a hard day's bargaining and sit, helpless, being waited on hand and foot by a wife who has probably been working (applause) just as hard in a job often more boring, with worse pay and conditions, as well as looking after the home?[1292]

Although sex discrimination was understood to be a problem within the labour movement itself , it was also made clear that the fight for equality between the sexes must be seen within the context – and as a necessary part of – the fight against broader inequalities. *Equality for Men and Women* was condemned as a 'middle-class Bill.'[1293]

Critics of the Government's proposal tried to make their views heard by submitting evidence, lobbying, and by other means.[1294] In November 1973, the Women's Liberation Sex Discrimination Campaign presented their petition to the House of Commons.[1295] Two Labour MPs sat through the night to get places that would allow them to introduce Private Members Bills to fill some of the gaps in the proposed legislation, including credit facilities and education and training.[1296] The NCCL attacked the proposal's class-bias, arguing that while middle-class women would be more likely to bring complaints against employers, lower paid women - who would still be expected to 'look after the children and do the housework' - would be more likely to be effected by the removal of protective legislation.[1297] Manchester Women's Liberation Group perceived the proposals as inadequate at best. As feminists, and women's liberationists in

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[1291] Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1973,* pp. 329 & 337.
[1292] Ibid. p. 331
[1293] Ibid. p. 332.
[1294] See, for example, Women in Media, 'Comments of the Government Green Paper: 'Equal Opportunities for Men and Women', 22 November 1973, 6WIM/C/04; Pamela Anderson (of Fawcett Society) to Robert Carr, 28 November 1973, HHC, NCCL DCL 427/2; Circular Letter from Edward Bishop, Comments of the Parliamentary All-Party Equal Rights Group, 3 December 1973, WomL, 6 WIM/C/04; NCCL, *Women's Rights: Comments on the Government's proposals for an Anti-Discrimination law,* November 1973, HHC, DCL/798/5.
[1295] The Sex Discrimination Act Campaign, 'The Nature of the Campaign', FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 2.
[1296] M. Hignett to 'Goils', 17 December 1973, WomL, 6 WIM/C/04.
[1297] Quoted in *Women's Report* (November 1973 – January 1974).

particular, they asserted that discrimination derived from 'a particular organisation of the family' and the assumptions associated with it. Since the Government had explicitly endorsed those beliefs, their claims to be dealing with discrimination were essentially meaningless. The Manchester Group did not attribute this to 'blindness or unintelligence'. Housewives' largely unrewarded work in raising children, caring for other workers, and maintaining the home was 'essential to the productive and economic life of society', and they believed that the Government was seeking to better utilise the skills of educated and trained women whilst also avoiding raising the question of additional public expenditure.[1298] The impact of the campaigners' efforts was minimal. On education in particular, the Government appeared immovable. WIM described the Minister for Education as: 'difficult and inaccessible…quite fixed in her ideas.'[1299]

Even some Conservative women were losing faith in their Government's commitment to the cause. One faithful supporter, Beatrice Forbes, wrote to ask why state pensions were so discriminatory against women. The Central Office and Research Department admitted to themselves that they could not produce an 'intelligent answer'. After nearly five weeks they sent an evasive reply.[1300] Elsie Tongue, active Conservative supporter and feminist (member of the North Western Branch of the Six Point Group and in touch with Manchester Women's Liberation), concluded by mid-1974 that her Party was only willing to pay 'lip-service to the cause of women's rights.' Her attendance at the Conservative Women's Conference had left her with the impression that delegates were deemed to be capable only of being 'talked at' by politicians. Highlighting the rapid expansion of Manchester Women's Liberation (and their anti-capitalist and anti-establishment views), she argued that the Conservatives were 'losing out in no uncertain way' by sticking to their extreme right-wing views'. In her view, they could be gaining votes and recruiting members 'with a more forward thinking policy and not necessarily an extremist one.'[1301] As we will see below, such assessments tended to overestimate the importance which women placed on the subject.

[1298] Manchester Women's Liberation Group, 'Comments of the Government's Green Paper: Equal Opportunities for Men and Women', 29 November 1973, HHC, NCCL DCL 427/2.
[1299] Minutes of a meeting of Women in Media, 28 August 1973, WomL, 6 WIM A/01/02.
[1300] Beatrice Forbes to Mrs R. Bridges, 12 & 16 April 1974; R. Bridges to Charles Bellairs, 14 May 1974; Morrison to Forbes, 20 May 1974; Morrison to Bridges, 20 May 1974, all in CPA, CCO 60/4/12. In particular, no reasonable explanation could be found as to why a single woman's contributions should be effectively disregarded (and not refunded) when she married.
[1301] Elsie Tongue to Shelia Roberts, 15 June 1974, CPA, CCO 60/4/12.

When they published their proposals on anti-discrimination legislation, the Conservatives had envisaged that they would be in Government for at least one more year. Within the month, the 'oil shock' had quadrupled oil prices. Inflation accelerated so that by the end of 1974, there had been a 19 per cent year-on-year rise in prices. A 50 mph speed limit was imposed and there was talk of petrol rationing. The miners, who were then pursuing a pay claim which would have breached the Government's anti-inflation incomes policy, believed that their position had been strengthened and started industrial action. In response, the government declared crisis measures. From mid-November, a 10:30pm curfew was imposed on television broadcasts as an energy saving measure. The three-day week was announced in mid-December.[1302] By the end of 1973, the Sex Discrimination Bill had been rendered an almost total non-issue.

The 1974 General Elections and *Equality for Women*

The February 1974 General Election was cast as a question: 'Who Governs?' [1303] In the context of the political and economic crisis seemingly engulfing the country, women's issues received scant attention. Nevertheless, this was the first General Election since the emergence of women's liberation and there were attempts to broach the subject, however superficially. Most newspapers carried something on the issue in their election coverage.[1304] More importantly, both main Parties had defined – and clearly diverging - policies on key issues. The *Sunday Times* offered readers the chance to compare and contrast the approaches as explained by Party spokeswomen. Thatcher confirmed that Heath's Conservatives were committed to 'equal rights for the training and employment of women'. However, she did not think the topic would be an 'election issue' because all parties supported this stance. She thought it was:

> a mistake to think that women are only interested in things like women's rights, the shopping basket and welfare subjects. We are also affected by education, by international affairs, by town and country planning by industrial and commercial problems.[1305]

The Conservatives manifesto highlighted the steps they had taken to remove discrimination against women in law, in the section headed, 'Protecting the Rights of the Individual' against 'the power of the State' and 'other large and powerful bodies'. It also (as per *Equal*

[1302] Narrative of events taken from D. Butler, and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of February 1974* (London, 1974), pp. 27-44. Inflation figures from, Cook and Stevenson, *Britain Since 1945*, pp. 170-71
[1303] Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of February 1974*, pp. 139 & 148.
[1304] Ibid. p. 195.
[1305] *The Sunday Times*, 24 February 1974.

Opportunities) promised 'major new legislation to end discrimination against women at work, and an Equal Opportunities Commission to investigate other aspects of discrimination against women and to recommend further action.'[1306] By contrast, Castle's implied that women did care about 'women's issues'. She claimed as the 'woman's party', Castle highlighting their record on equal pay; and claiming that the Conservative's commitment to anti-discrimination legislation was a response to Labour pressure. She also described Labour as the 'defenders of the social services so vital to the working Mother'.[1307] Labour's manifesto suggested far reaching action, along the lines of the recommendations laid out in the Green Paper and accepted by Conference. Under the heading of 'Social Progress' it stated:

> Women and Girls must have an equal status in education, training, employment, social security, national insurance, taxation, property ownership, matrimonial and family law. Women at work, whether wives or mothers or those otherwise caring for dependent relatives, must receive more consideration from the community. We shall create the powerful legal machinery necessary to enforce our anti-discrimination laws.[1308]

The General Elections of 1974 highlighted the powerful influence that women's votes could have over election outcomes. They also suggested that women were largely politically uninterested in 'women's issues' in so far as they related to equal rights. In a *Sunday Times* opinion poll, conducted fourteen months before election, 80 per cent of respondents agreed that 'women are not the inferior sex' and that men and women were 'equal in intelligence'. Even more agreed that 'men and women should get equal pay for the same job.' However, egalitarian attitudes did not extend into the home: 70 per cent believed cooking was 'the woman's job' and more than half believed that women should be responsible for other household chores.[1309] Again, these findings support the idea that endorsement of the principle of equal pay might well have represented little more than support for the 'the rate for job'. Interestingly, however, a post-election Marplan survey, which elicited an even higher level of support for equal pay, revealed a significant gender difference in attitudes towards women's domestic roles. Over a third of men (34 per cent) thought that 'a woman's place is in the home' compared to just under one fifth of women (18 per cent). The difference amplified on the specific subject of washing-

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[1306] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto February 1974: Firm action for a fair Britain* (1974).
[1307] Ibid.
[1308] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto February 1974: Let us work together – Labour's way out of the crisis* (1974).
[1309] Sunday Times Opinion Poll, published in *The Sunday Times*, 10 December, 1972. Cited in *Women's Report,* January-March 1973, p. 7. 925 people participated in the survey.

up: whereas 36 per cent of men thought it should be done by women, only 14 per cent of women agreed.[1310]

Women's liberation had been founded on the claim that the personal is political but most women seemed disinclined to articulate these issues as 'problems' or to suppose that they might have a political dimension. In the summer of 1974, another Conservative commissioned survey showed that 'a clear majority of women believe that the present [Heath] Government does not understand the problems faced by the average woman' - although Labour were not perceived as offering a 'a better deal'.[1311] Seven out of ten were unable to recall anything the Conservative Government had done to help women.[1312] Yet, when asked about specific problems facing women or themselves personally as a '*housewife* or *mother* or *wage-earner'* around one third were unable to think of anything. One in seven mentioned equal pay, but only as an abstraction effecting women generally rather than themselves personally. There was barely any mention of issues such as nursery or maternity provision. In 1973, rising prices were women's greatest perceived problem. Indeed, the cost of living had overtaken unemployment as *the* main issue for all voters.[1313] As shown above, this issue had a particular gendered dimension since housewives were deemed to be responsible for the shopping.[1314]

In the February 1974 General Election, Labour focused closely on housewives' concerns with rising prices.[1315] One broadcast even hectored them for their gullibility: 'You know how he [Heath] got in, don't you, kidded the women last time...Prices would all be kept down.'[1316] Significantly, post-election polling suggests this approach helped Labour to victory. Compared to 38 per cent of voters overall, 52 per cent of working-class women identified 'rising prices' as

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[1310] John Clems, 'The Role of Women in Politics', n.d. c. July 1974, FemL, Article Cabinet.
[1311] Opinion Research Centre, 'Survey of Phase 2, Economic Priorities, Women's Issues, Worker Participation', 1973, p. 5, CPA, CCO 180/9/3/9. Survey conduced in June and July of 1973.
[1312] Ibid. pp. 4 and 15.
[1313] Ibid. p. 15. Against a backdrop of industrial unrest and soaring prices, inflation was the issue that attracted the most attention during the General Election campaign. See Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of February 1974*, pp. 139 & 148.
[1314] When Thatcher ran for Conservative leadership later in 1974, sections of the press carried stories of her 'hoarding' food. As she said, the story was used to portray her as 'mean, selfish and above all 'borgeois'. The story was based on an interview in which she had said that, in a time of rising prices, it made sense for people 'try to make ends meet' to stock up on tinned food. See M. Thatcher, *Path to Power* (London, 1995), p. 268.
[1315] See, for example, Wilson's Foreword to the Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto, February 1974.* He listed 'rocketing' prices as the first of the 'interlocking crises' facing the country and said: 'The housewife has been in the firing line ever since Heath was elected.'
[1316] Labour Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx. 12 February 1974.

the most important issue. Towards the end of the campaign, Labour stepped up its focus on the issue. A week before polling day, the Conservatives had a 7.5 per cent lead over Labour. In the next seven days, nearly a fifth of the electorate changed their minds. Two-thirds of them were women, and nearly half of them working-class. The Marplan president concluded: 'it was the working class women who…in the final week of the election, unseated Mr Heath'.[1317]

Wilson's failure to win the General Election with a governing majority meant that another Election was on the cards.[1318] Electoral uncertainties and close margins made otherwise apparently low priority issues appear as potential election winners. While this partially helps to explain the attention which Labour gave to women's rights after February 1974, it should also be recognised that, in Roy Jenkins, the Labour Party had a champion of anti-discrimination legislation at Cabinet level whose concern stretched beyond garnering votes. Jenkins was no dyed-in-the-wool feminist. In fact, there is no real suggestion of any specific engagement with women's issues on his part. Jenkins' motivations were grounded in his liberalism and his commitment to human rights. In the context of the mid-1970s, he defined this partly in opposition to what he perceived as the country's 'subservience' to the overbearing power of the trade unions.[1319] He believed that the rights of individuals should be defined and enshrined within the law and that people, as individuals, should have recourse to defend those rights. He also believed that the collectivist arrangements and procedures of trade unions, who sought to advance their members rights as a group, could conflict with this ideal. In one particular episode, when the TUC tried to defend the principle of the closed shop by agreeing to help establish 'voluntary procedures' to monitor them, Jenkins took the unusual step of identifying his name with an intervention in the Cabinet Minutes:

> A threat to deprive a man of his livelihood involved a fundamental question of human rights. The government could not justify reliance on voluntary procedures to deal with these cases any more than with cases of discrimination on grounds of sex or race.[1320]

[1317] John Clems, 'The Role of Women in Politics', FemL, Article Cabinet.
[1318] Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of February 1974,* pp. 264-6.
[1319] See, for example, Jenkins, Life at the Centre, pp.364, 370. See also B. Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary: With Harold Wilson* (London, 2005), 9 July 1974. The divisions between Jenkins, the Labour Party and Government, would eventually become manifest in the Social Democratic Party.
[1320] Cabinet Conclusions, 11 November 1974, TNA CAB 128/55 quoted in K.O. Morgan, *Michael Foot: A Life* (London, 2007), p. 307. In Leeds, the 'Ferrybridge Six', a group of power-station workers had been dismissed by the Electricity Board for failing to join a specified union under a closed shop agreement. Theoretically, it was even possible to deny these men unemployment benefit.

In his autobiography, Jenkins described his legislation on the rights of individuals - the Sex and Race Discrimination Acts - as 'in no way incompatible' with his hostility to the 'prevalent Cabinet outlook', that 'what the Trades Union Congress wanted was becoming more important that upholding the rule of law.'[1321]

Jenkins was appointed to the Home Office after the February Election, where he remained until 1976. Having been impressed by a Runnymeade Trust critique of *Equal Opportunities*, he asked its author, Katya Lester, to become Labour's adviser on legislation for sex discrimination. Katya was unable to accept because she was seven months pregnant. Her husband, Anthony, who would probably have been hired as Jenkins' special adviser in any case, accepted instead. [1322] According to Jenkins, Lester was by now 'perhaps the most eminent human-rights QC' and Jenkins employed him to 'encourage and give direction' to his 'human rights commitment'.[1323] Over the summer of 1974, Lester and Shirley Williams produced the White Paper, *Equality for Women.* [1324] Summerskill's views were in accord in Jenkins'; she had consistently defined her commitment to the women's cause within the framework of her commitment to human rights.[1325] According to Jenkins however, Lester wrote the paper 'almost single-handed', although Summerskill's active Ministerial support was vital to overcoming what Jenkins described as 'more departmental opposition at upper-middle level than I had ever previously encountered.'[1326]

In essence, *Equality for Women* represented the policy outcome which Lester and the Labour Party Study Group had recommend in 1968.[1327] Modelled on earlier Race Relations legislation, with modifications designed to address its weaknesses, *Equality for Women* was, in turn, intended as a model for improving the race relations machinery. The ultimate aim was to harmonise powers and procedures. Jenkins told the Cabinet that it would have been possible, and perhaps more appropriate, to draft the Bills on different terms since there was a risk that the

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[1321] Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, pp. 376 & 425.
[1322] Interview with Anthony Lester, 15 February 1979, (interviewed by t), cited in Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 44. The paper is K. Lester, 'Equal Opportunity for Men and Women – Government Proposals for Legislation: Observations on the Consultative Document, Paper for the Runnymeade Trust', November 1973, Copy available from HHC, NCCL DCL 427/2. For Jenkins recollection on hiring Lester see Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, pp. 375-7.
[1323] Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, pp. 375 & 376.
[1324] Ibid . p. 376.
[1325] Ibid. p. 371. Williams had described the Sex Discrimination Bill as a contribution to 'total human progress'. HC, 14 February 1973, c. 1397.
[1326] Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, p. 376.
[1327] For discussion of this episode, see above, pp. 160-161.

necessary exceptions in the Sex Discrimination Bill (there is no reason to treat people differently on account of skin colour but different treatment can be both justified and desirable in some cases between males and females) would open it up to ridicule. However, he advised against the approach because 'it would be difficult to explain why the Government were adopting a more restrictive approach' for sex discrimination than for race discrimination.[1328] His colleagues appear to have been largely uninterested.[1329]

The White Paper opened with a description of the changing role of women which drew heavily upon the Finer Report. Acknowledging the debt owed to women by the affluent society, the report noted how, paradoxically, women's advances had resulted in more being demanded of them.[1330] Drafted in tandem, the scope of the Sex and Race Relations Bills were broadly similar. Discrimination would be outlawed in employment, training, education, housing, and the provision of public goods, facilities and services. It would also be prohibited on the grounds of marriage.[1331] Social security, taxation, nationality, and matrimonial and family law were excluded from the proposals on the grounds that these areas were 'governed by separate legislation and will be so dealt with in the future.'[1332] The law would grant equality on the basis of individual rights.[1333] As the White Paper explained, 'what the Bill will require, in general, is *equality of opportunity on the basis of individual merit,* without regard to a person's sex or the fact that he or she may be married.'[1334]

As Jenkins had predicted, the tandem drafting approach had created some difficulties. Whereas racial segregation on 'separate but equal' grounds was always wrong, there were numerous situations in which separate provision for males and females was highly desirable - the most obvious example being 'sanitary accommodation.'[1335] The paper's stated objective was 'to

[1328] Roy Jenkins, 'Sex Discrimination Bill: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home Department', 12 July 1974, TNA CAB 129/177/20; Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting 16 July 1974, TNA CAB 128/55/1; *Equality for Women.* Cmnd. 5724, pp. 1, 4 & 8-9.
[1329] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting 16 July 1974, TNA CAB 128/55/1; B. Castle, *Castle Diaries, 1974-76* (London, 1980), 16 July 1974. T. Benn, *Against the Tide: Diaries, 1973-76* (London, 1989), 16 July 1974. There is no indication of real debate or even acknowledgement, in the case of Benn.
[1330] *Equality for Women.* Cmnd. 5724, p. 1.
[1331] Ibid. p. 17.
[1332] Ibid.
[1333] For a very helpful analysis see Luise and Dipak Nandy, 'Towards true equality for women', in *New Society,* 30 January 1975, p. 246.
[1334] *Equality for Women.* Cmnd. 5724, p. 8.
[1335] Ibid pp. 8-9.

encourage a change in public attitudes without offending 'common sense', or creating 'absurdities'.[1336] Therein lies the key challenge for those who seek challenge public attitudes with legislation. Change, by definition, must challenge the norm. However, the law can never run too far ahead of public opinion.[1337] The list of exceptions remained extensive, covering employment in private households, clergy and religious orders, charitable bodies, and the armed services. They also allowed for discrimination in employment in certain cases e.g. where authenticity was a key issue (acting and modelling, for example). Single sex schools would be allowed on the grounds of 'freedom of choice'. Labour had also decided to retain protective legislation.[1338] From a pragmatist's point of view, this represented the achievable. From a feminist's point of view, many of these 'exceptions' were concessions to bastions of male power and privilege.[1339]

Jenkins claimed that the proposals, pushed through in time to ensure inclusion in the 'shop window', were a 'sensible and popular' addition to the Government's October 1974 manifesto.[1340] Despite the continued normal appeals to housewives on the subject of prices, there is clear evidence to suggest that both main parties thought some votes could be won on the issue of equal rights for women. [1341] Labour's 'Charter for Women', laid out in the manifesto, was clearer restatement of the commitments made previously. It promised a 'new deal for women', including increased nursery provision, maternity leave, equality of treatment in social security, and 'a comprehensive free family planning service.'[1342] Jenkins dedicated a significant proportion of one of his Party Political broadcasts to argue that a Sex Discrimination Act, coupled with the Equal Pay Act, would start to tackle the fact that 'many women have a raw deal

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[1336] Ibid.

[1337] Holden found that one of the key factors enabling reformers to persuade politicians of the need for various 'permissive reforms' was their ability to suggest that 'abortion, homosexuality or 'liberated Sundays were not as controversial as politicians feared.' See Holden, 'Letting the Wolf Through the Door', pp. 321-2.

[1338] *Equality for Women.* Cmnd. 5724. For a particularly cogent explanation of the exemptions as they relate to employment law and related test cases see J. Nairns, *Employment Law for Business Students* (London, 2011), pp. 56-9.

[1339] Olive M. Stone, 'Sex Discrimination Bill', 3 April 1975, WomL, 6 WIM/C/04. The NCCL, for example, believed that exceptions should be very limited. They believed there should be none for the clause covering the provision of goods, facilities, and services; certainly none for charities and single-sex schools. See NCCL, *Model Bill*. It is helpful to compare this model Bill to Home Office, *Sex Discrimination: A guide to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975* (London, 1975).

[1340] Jenkins, *Life at the Centre*, p. 376. See also Donoughue, *With Harold Wilson,* 17 July & 11 September 1974.

[1341] For examples of appeals to housewives see Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto October 1974;* Labour Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 27 September 1974.

[1342] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto October 1974: Britain Will Win with Labour* (1974). .

at work and often in the rest of the lives as well.'[1343] Labour attempted a direct appeal the feminist vote with a full page advertisement in the feminist magazine, *Spare Rib,* declaring: 'Women will Win with Labour'.[1344] Whilst an enthusiastic Marie Patterson proclaimed that 'Women's Lab' had become a reality, some commentators detected cynical motivations.[1345] Writing in the *New Statesman,* Mary Holland detected a widespread belief that the anti-discrimination proposals were nothing more than a 'vote-catching exercise, designed to meet the rising mood of revolt among women.'[1346] Heath told his advisors that he was very anxious to 'outflank' Jenkins on the 'woman question'. He thought that there were some 'things left, particularly in the field of taxation and social services' and charged Morrison with co-ordinating the work.[1347] Although the Conservative October 1974 manifesto contained no significant new radical proposals relating to women's rights, there were signs of increased priority. Nearly a whole page was dedicated to 'Women – at home and at work'.[1348]

Despite this increased emphasis, women's issues were not a 'live' Election campaign topic.[1349] In an episode which, perhaps more than any other, highlights the differences between the more traditional liberal feminism of WIM and other similar groups, and the philosophies of women's liberation, WIM persuaded Dr Kroll, GP, deaconess and experienced campaigner for the ordination of women, to stand for Parliament as a women's rights candidate.[1350] The wider WLM was not supportive; by 1974, even those of a more reformist bent had become disillusioned with mainstream politics. The *Women's Report* front page coverage of the February 1974 Election coverage captured the mood: 'And Now For Something Completely Similar…Back to the House of Co-Option.'[1351] In any case, the idea of a women's party had

[1343] Labour Party Television Election Broadcast, Tx 27 September 1974.
[1344] *Spare Rib*, 28 October 1974.
[1345] *Express*, 2 October 1974.
[1346] Mary Holland, 'Oldest Breach of Promise' in *New Statesman,* 13 September 1974, p. 337.
[1347] Loudon to Waldergrave, 30/07/1974 and Waldergrave to Loudon, 31/07/1974, CPA CCO 20/8/18; Ziegler, *Edward Heath,* p. 461; Interview with Sara Morrison. Morrison's work on the project foundered shortly after Thatcher became leader and Morrison resigned her position.
[1348] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto October 1974: Putting Britain First* (1974).
[1349] Conservative campaigners seeking to draw attention to the issue were reduced to writing letters to newspapers. M.F. Wyatt to Sara Morrison, 3 October 1974, and Sara Morrison to M.F. Wyatt, 7 October 1974, both in CPA CCO 60/4/10.
[1350] Karet, 'Note to Future Researchers', WomL, 6 WIM A/02; Stott, *Before I Go,* pp. 27-8.
[1351] *Women's Report* (March-April 1974). This was a reference to Monty Python sketches. The women who had formed the magazine had become increasingly radicalized and split from the Fawcett Society at the end of 1973. 'Report of the Women in Media Conference, Bristol, July 1974', p. 18, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1. The first edition of the magazine to be published without an acknowledgement to the contribution of the Fawcett Society was the Jan-Feb 1974 edition. The March-April 1974 edition was published as the work of the Women's Report

never held much appeal for women's liberationists who tended to view the idea that women should lead and represent all sections of society as 'ludicrous', or a tactical mistake which would only 'hive off' the women's vote.[1352] Despite her supporters' best efforts, Kroll received just 300 votes. A disappointed Jackie Mackenzie, reflected that the 'platform was a waste of time...women on the whole just don't give a damn about it.'[1353] In an open letter to her sisters, Kroll expressed her dismay. 'Perhaps elections are a load of rubbish', she wrote, but it might be worth expending the effort to try to change 'the way things were.' Reflecting the heartfelt disappointment of herself, Mary Stott, and others she wrote: 'I have marched with you from the beginning, when we were few. You gather power as you work, march and suffer together; if we had waited for the power first we should never have started.'[1354] Although a Woman's Party was never a possibility, the Government remained wary of WIM. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the Minister for Home Affairs announced the publication of *Equality for Women* just one hour before WIM's press conference to announce Kroll's candidacy.[1355] The General Election returned a Labour Government with a narrow majority. *Equality for Women* was set to become law.

Over the course of the summer, a number of women's groups including the National Council of Women, the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds, Howe's Sex Discrimination Campaign, the Fawcett Society and the British Women's Pilots Association had formed an Inter-Organisational Committee on Sex Discrimination Legislation with a view to ensuring that effective legislation was swiftly introduced.[1356] The NCCL even published a model Bill.[1357] There is no indication that their efforts had any significant influence. When Lester later said that 'no group was particularly helpful with new ideas', what he meant was that the women's groups

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Collective. Many thanks to Gail Chester, a member of the Women's Report Collective, who took a great deal of time and trouble to discuss the history of the journal with me.

[1352] Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, Saturaday Morning and Sunday afternoon, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1. For comments on hiving off the women's vote see *Women's Report* (November-December 1974).

[1353] Minutes of a Women in Media Meeting, 25 November 1974, and Circular letter from Dr. Una Kroll, Carlyn Faulder et al, n.d. c. November 1974, WomL, 6WIM/A/01/03.

[1354] Letter printed in *Women's Report* (March-April 1975). See also Stott, *Before I Go*, p. 28; Interview with Carolyn Faulder.

[1355] Karet, 'Note to Future Researchers', WomL, 6 WIM A/02. WIM found out only the day before.

[1356] Minutes of the Meeting of the Meeting held on 31 July 1974 at Fawcett House of the Ad-Hoc Committee Elected by the Organisations which Attended the Meeting at LSE on 9 July, WomL, 6 WIM/F/02.

[1357] NCCL, *A Model Bill: To Prevent Discrimination On Grounds of Sex together with an explanatory memorandum* (London, 1974), copy available from HHC, NCCL, DCL 427/1.

had no more ideas acceptable to policy makers.[1358] Claire Callender, who analysed the Bill through its legislative stages, attributed the outstanding alteration made to the proposals in *Equality for Women* – the recognition of indirect discrimination – primarily to the 'second thoughts' of Jenkins and Lester. Prior to the Bill's publication, they visited the USA and discussed their proposals with senior American judges. The Supreme Court's rulings on the Civil Rights Act had found that, even in cases where there was no intention to discriminate, nominally neutral rules could disadvantage one group. The solution, Jenkins and Lester were told, was to focus on 'effects rather than motives.' [1359] The Bill's subsequent recognition of 'indirect', as well as 'direct', discrimination meant that it would be necessary to demonstrate that apparently gender neutral requirements such as height restrictions, were justifiable.[1360] Lester and Jenkins also took advice to include 'victimisation' (of a person who has, or intends to assert their legal rights) in the Bill.[1361]

Throughout the Committee Stages, WIM and the NCCL worked tirelessly to provide Labour women MPs – Maureen Colquhoun, Betty Boothroyd, Millie Miller, Jo Richardson, and Renee Short – with amendments designed to tighten up and strengthen the Bill. One, for example, suggested prohibiting discrimination between people with and without children, on the grounds that this was a common cause of discrimination against women.[1362] Their influence was very limited.[1363] Only two amendments were accepted: the exemption of organisations with parallel organisations for men and women, and political parties.[1364] Colquhoun, a self-defined women's liberationist, was dismayed. Labour women MPs, she thought, were 'prepared to fight and fight again, for other women', but were 'not prepared to do so in a non-conformist way.' Once defeated in Committee, they 'mouthed support' for their Government's legislation. In her view

[1358] For Lester's remarks see Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 50.
[1359] Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 53. The crucial case was Giggs v. Dukes (1971). For more on this and other cases see Banton, *Discrimination* , pp. 45
[1360] Home Office, G*uide to the Sex Discrimination Act,* pp. 3-5.
[1361] Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 53; Home Office, G*uide to the Sex Discrimination Act,* p. 6. For a more up to date discussion of this concept see Nairns, *Employment Law,* pp. 37-8.
[1362] M. Colqhoun, *A Woman in the House* (Shoreham by Sea, 1980), p. 60; Interview with Carolyn Faulder. See also the file, 'Amendments to SDA Bill', WomL, 6 WIM/C/08. See also Women in Media/Women's Rights Campaign, 'General Summary of Proposed Amendments in Committee, Sex Discrimination Bill', n.d. HHC, NCCL Archives, DCL 427/1.
[1363] See Stott's remarks quoted in Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 52. See also Colqhoun, *A Woman in the House,* p. 60.
[1364] Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 55. Both of these were subsequently watered down, adding weight to Stott's assessment of the situation. For the final provisions see Home Office, *Guide to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975,* pp. 25 & 35-6

they failed to recognise their complicity in upholding the patriarchal structure, partly because 'many of them hadn't heard of it!'[1365] Ultimately, she gave up trying to amend the Bill and attempted to wreck it, saying that it might as well be taken 'down to the Terrace of the House' and burnt for 'that is as much good as it will be for women outside if it goes through as it is now.'[1366] It was a principled, if naïve, stand and won no influential support.

Callendar identified some other areas where women's groups and activists had some minor impact on the final legislation. Where the Bill placed the burden of proof on the complainant, the NCCL and other women's groups had pressed to get this reversed. The Act made a limited concession by omitting certain cases of indirect discrimination and permitting the Equal Opportunities Commission to assist the claimant.[1367] Although the final Act also prohibited the reverse or positive discrimination desired by many feminists (e.g. recruiting or promoting women on the grounds that they suffered past adverse discrimination and should be allowed to 'catch up') it did make provision for 'positive action' by training bodies, for people who had need for it after a break from regular employment to raise a family.[1368] Jenkins publicly acknowledged that they had been 'persuaded' to go further on each principle because of the 'validity of the criticisms of the White Paper made in these respects by many women's and other organisations.'[1369]

Many women's liberationists detested the association of their Movement with the Sex Discrimination Act. Some of the fiercest critics were those who had been most willing to engage with the political system in the hope of achieving meaningful reform.[1370] The *Women's Report* collective condemned the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts as 'products of a liberal democracy that can afford to enact political remedies which will not seriously disrupt its functioning as a capitalist state.'[1371] The 1975 National Women's Liberation Conference passed a motion protesting against the term 'Sex Discrimination Bill' being used for what is only a limited Equal Opportunities Bill' and drawing attention to the 'fundamental omissions'

[1365] Colqhoun, *A Woman in the House,* p. 11.
[1366] Standing Committee B, 13 May 1975, c. 343, quoted in Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 56.
[1367] Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 51. For the appropriate sections of the final Act see Home Office, *Guide to the Sex Discrimination Act,* pp. 3-4, 38-9, 43 & 53.
[1368] Callender, 'Sex Discrimination Act', p. 51; Home Office, *Guide to the Sex Discrimination Act,* pp. 34-5.
[1369] HC, 26 March 1975, c. 514.
[1370] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge,* pp. 119 – 121; Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* p. 111.
[1371] *Women's Report,* (November-December 1975).

regarding social security, pensions and taxation. They demanded a 'Comprehensive Sex Discrimination Bill so that women are no longer defined as Dependents ; and a Bill that provides for no less than genuine equality of treatment for both sexes.'[1372] A National Day of Action was declared for Saturday 19th April 1975, prior to the Bill's final reading. The Women's Liberation Workshop prepared posters and suggested forms of protest:

> withdraw your labour and your energy from your house, your work, your shopping etc… How about speak outs, sit ins,…Burn the Bill. Chain yourself to railings. Paint the town. Dance in the streets. Do not tolerate obstructions. Deface all you find offensive.[1373]

Early on Saturday morning, bricks were thrown through the windows of various public buildings. Later in the day, four women including Howe, chained themselves to the railings outside of Parliament.[1374] The protest passed virtually unnoted. The Bill received Royal Assent in November 1975.

In isolation, the Act, by seeking to provide 'equality of opportunity on the basis of individual merit, without regard to a person's sex or the fact that he or she may be married', provided the sort of equality that was simultaneously mocked and welcomed by so much crude anti-feminist as well as feminist sentiment.[1375] In an open letter to Jenkins, Howe criticised the Bill for dealing with the 'easy to deal with' forms of discrimination, 'without attacking the cause – that is treating women as dependents in nearly all other fields, taxation, social security and so on. She thought that 'such an approach could well result from an obsession with race relations legislation, which in reality provides no kind of model for application in the field of sex discrimination.'[1376] In *New Society*, Luise and Dipak Nandy made a similar argument. They observed that 'conditions of quite startling inequality' could be compatible with the 'absence of unlawful discrimination.' The individual rights basis of the legislation, and the implied equivalence between race and sex discrimination, had rendered such an outcome inevitable. Sex

[1372] No Author, 'Women Are Still Angry', n.d. c. April 1975, FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1.
[1373] No Author, 'National Day of Action Against the Sex Discrimination Bill 19 April 1975', n.d. 1975, FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 1.
[1374] *Women's Report* (May-June 1975).
[1375] *Equality for Women.* Cmnd. 5724, pp. 8-9. For example of how this sort of equality could be used against women, the anti-feminist science fiction writer Edmund Cooper, declared himself 'in favour of equal competition' because: '[T]hey'll see that they can't make it. We have had free education in this country for a great many years, but where are the good female mathematicians?…scientists?…female Beethovens? They've gone back home to wash the dishes and produce children.' Quoted in Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 414.
[1376] The Sex Discrimination Campaign (Women's Liberation Movement) to Roy Jenkins, n.d. 1975, FemL, Special Collection 4, Box 2.

and race discrimination could sometimes be similar – i.e when it arose from straight forward prejudice against blacks or against women. Yet the 'social facts' of inequality, which had provided the initial impetus for legislation, arose from a form of discrimination which was unique to the inequalities between men and women – that was the 'continuing and unequal demands' made on men and women, specifically the burdens of women's dual role. Such inequalities could only be overcome, the Nandys argued, by 'special provisions' commensurate with demand.[1377]

The policy makers who had drafted the Sex Discrimination Act had been fully sensible to its limitations. *Equality for Women* explained:

> An anti-discrimination law is relevant only to the extent that economic and social conditions enable people to develop their individual potential and to compete for opportunities on more or less equal terms. A woman will obtain little benefit from equal employment opportunity if she is denied adequate education and training because economic necessity or social pressures have induced her to enter the labour market at an early age. Some mothers will derive as little benefit if there is inadequate provision for part-time work or flexible working hours, of for day nurseries….*Legislation is a necessary pre-condition for an effective equal opportunity policy but it is not a sufficient condition. A wide range of administrative and voluntary measures will be needed to translate the ideal of equal opportunity into practical reality.*[1378]

Jenkins was largely uninterested in the matter of sex inequality beyond the Act's remit and argued that it would be 'misconceived to criticise the Bill for failing to deal with a whole range of problems which are to some extent inherent in our society.'[1379] As he also acknowledged, although the Sex Discrimination Act was 'an important Bill', it was not 'a money spending Bill.'[1380] As this implies, the additional reforms, understood to be necessary to translate equality for women into a practical reality, were heavily dependent on a wide range of other factors, many of which had implications far beyond the narrowly conceived field of women's rights.

Conclusion

The Sex Discrimination Act, like the Equal Pay Act, was actively won by women's rights activists. Given the deep-seated resistance among some groups of politicians and much of the

[1377] Luise and Dipak Nandy, 'Towards true equality for women', in *New Society*, 30 January 1975, p. 246.
[1378] *Equality for Women.* Cmnd. 5724, p. 5.
[1379] HC, 26 March 1975, c. 513.
[1380] Ibid. c. 516.

civil service, this represented a remarkable achievement. The earliest initiatives pre-dated women's liberation. Some older feminists, such as Edith Summerskill, perceived the 1960s and 1970s battles against sex discrimination as a continuance of a campaign with pre-war roots. Other key players, like Butler, or Shirley Summerskill, drew not upon an explicitly feminist philosophy, but broader notions of social justice which again, had their historical roots in earlier decades and different struggles.

The first response of governments, of both Parties, was to deny or ignore the existence of sex discrimination. The work of the Lords Select Committee, established after much effort on the part of activists, and aided by many of those who gave evidence, rendered that argument obsolete. Two viable counter-arguments remained. First was that it was not possible or desirable to legislate against discrimination, however unjust it may be. This argument had been essentially lost, although it was not perhaps immediately clear, with the Race Relations Act. The remaining argument rested on the assumption that was that sex discrimination was a right and proper and part of the natural and socially determined order of things in a society which remained largely wedded to a gender division of labour. To the extent that it had been politically possible to publicly and explicitly assert that case at the beginning of the decade, it was not by the mid-1970s. Each of the main parties came to accept, albeit to limited degrees, that it had become necessary to respond to the very same social and economic changes which had, provided such fertile conditions for a feminist resurgence. Each attempt to kick the issue into the long grass – the only realistic course of action left open - was met with resolute and noisy resistance from the Bill's champions. Despite any public perceptions to the contrary, Howe's devotion to the cause was hardly typical of the WLM, which remained ambivalent towards the issue. Although the WLM had very little direct impact on the reform process, their visible existence, the (mis)portrayals of them as an extremist and even threatening movement, helped reformers to present the Sex Discrimination Bill as a moderate and sensible proposal. WIM's efforts were crucial in forcing a reluctant Government to consent the argument in principle if not in fact. But again, WIM were hardly typical women's liberationists. Their position was closer to that of those Parliamentary reformers who concentrated their energies on winning the most likely concessions.

While the existence of the Sex Discrimination Act can be attributed almost entirely to women's rights campaigners, its content was founded, not on ideas that grew directly out of the women's movement, but that had been developed in response to the problem of race discrimination. The relationship between sex and race discrimination, as manifested in the assertion that all individuals should have the same rights, had helped drive forward the feminist cause for reform even as it had constrained it. In this respect, it is worth emphasising the contrast between the narrow scope of the Sex Discrimination Act, and the wide ranging nature of the earliest discussions about the nature and causes of sex discrimination.

Within the Conservative party, some women had long pushed for a greater role for women in society. That initiative was taken up by Heath when and so far as it dovetailed with the Party's modernising agenda which embodied a recognition that the Party should respond pragmatically to social change. After various deliberations and debates, the Conservatives concluded, on the whole, that they were perhaps comfortable to provide women with a greater negative freedom (e.g. by the removal of certain legal discriminations as advocated by Cripps). They remained philosophically uncomfortable about advocating any bolder moves.[1381] For Conservatives, the crux of the argument between modernists and the traditionalists was not about whether they should actively question institutions such as the family, but about how far they should go to actively defend them in the face of social changes which threatened their existence.[1382] Conservative opposition to the Sex Discrimination Act sprang from two main sources. One was the desire to preserve the 'natural order' of gender roles within the family, and the family itself. Even Conservative advocates of reform were clear that they had no wish to threaten the family. Opposition also sprang from a more libertarian impulse to avoid impinging on the freedom of individual. Legislation, in this view, should not and could not alter personal attitudes. Discrimination – and differentiation, the critics might add - in so far as it existed, was simply the reflection of those attitudes. This was not to say that attitudes should not change, but to argue against state coercion.

[1381] For some discussion of 'negative' and 'positive' freedom see Hickson, 'Inequality', p. 190. For a helpful contemporary debate on the concept of freedom of liberty see the House of Commons debate on Personal Liberty, HC, 26 March 1976, cc769-856.

[1382] B. Pilbean, 'Social Morality', in K. Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 170-73.

The Labour Party Study Group developed a very wide ranging analysis and understanding of the phenomenon of sex discrimination, one which encompassed and centralised a critique of the male breadwinner model and related assumption of female dependency. Legislation to prohibit discrimination in employment and education had formed only a part of the Study Group's comprehensive package of recommendations. Economic independence – not an anti-discrimination law - was seen as a basic pre-requisite for sexual equality, as Rennee Short explained to Conference:

> If women are to be genuinely equal they must surely have equal treatment when it comes to pensions, social security and taxation. Until women can earn enough to keep themselves and their children, or receive enough from social security if they have to manage alone, they can never really be free, and until women have this freedom they do not have real equality.[1383]

Unlike their Conservative counterparts, Labour reformers challenged assumptions about men and women, and this extended to challenging the gender division of labour inside the family. Their overarching strategy was underpinned by a belief that there should be a shift from viewing women as dependents (housewives) to viewing women as *workers.* This is the visible beginning, in policy terms, of the ideological shift away from the male breadwinner model to that which Lewis and others have described as a 'citizen-worker model'. The acknowledged corollary was that housewives without dependent children or sick, infirm, or elderly relatives to care were underemployed - a luxury to be afforded on a personal level. Of course, the Equal Pay Act had also been theoretically premised upon this same assumption but, unsurprisingly perhaps for a Party so deeply and historically committed to the defence of the male family wage, this point was frequently – and perhaps deliberately – lost in debates. According to Castle, however, the view had been gaining currency at the top of the Party, not least because of the growing recognition of the difficulties experienced by one-parent families and the influence of social reformers such as Brian Abel-Smith. 'Marriage', she wrote, 'could no longer be regarded as a meal ticket.' Not only had women become independent breadwinners, they had often become the sole breadwinners.[1384] The next chapter shows how the debates over family allowances brought these issues much closer to the fore.

[1383] Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report, 1973* (London, 1973), p. 336.
[1384] Castle, 'No Kitchen Cabinet', in Maitland, p. 55.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE FAMILY
FAMILY ALLOWANCES, FAMILY INCOME SUPPLEMENT, TAX CREDITS, AND CHILD BENEFITS

Introduction

The 1975 Child Benefit Act has been described by Lowe as 'one of the most radical acts of the 1974-6 Labour Government'.[1385] It removed the child tax allowances, usually paid via men's pay packets, to help fund an increase in the value of family allowances, a universal benefit paid directly to women, and their extension to the first child. Many observers believed that, for good or ill, the women's movement influenced this policy decision. In 1976, for example, Conservative politician Kenneth Clarke recalled how Heath's Government had been unable to resist 'feminist anger'.[1386] Four years later, Geoffrey Howe, spoke of a 'feminist coup'.[1387] On the other side of the ideological divide, feminist activist chroniclers, Coote and Campbell described child benefit as 'a real advance for women' and 'perhaps the greatest success of campaigners in the women's movement and the poverty lobby.'[1388] Similarly, in 2001, the historian, Harold Smith referred to 'one of the most successful 1970s feminist campaigns'. However, he did not discuss the matter and, overall, the episode has attracted scant attention from historians.[1389] In a more recent paper, Thane suggested that child benefit 'owed more to campaigns in the field of social policy than to the Women's Liberation Movement' partly, she implied, because the movement as a whole was disinclined to 'lobbying and patient negotiation to achieve gender equality through change in the law'.[1390] This chapter shows how groups like the CPAG played a vital role in the campaign for child benefit and also how the women's movement ensured its payment to women. It also explains why so many feminists became increasingly reluctant to engage with the issue, despite its immediate relevance to women's lives.

[1385] Jones and Lowe (eds), *Beveridge toBlair*, p. 69.

[1386] Kenneth Clarke, 'Child Benefit Bill', 22 June 1976, LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/4/7. He was speaking, specifically of 'irresistible' anger generated by the Tax Credit policy, and the resistance of Heath Government to the implied 'pay packet to handbag' transfer.

[1387] B. Rhys Williams to G. Howe, 2 April, 1980, LSE, LSE RHYS WILLIAMS B/4/2.

[1388] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 92. See also Bruley, *Women in Britain*, p. 64.

[1389] Smith, 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship', p. 282. Land and Meehan also remarked on its success. See H. Land, 'The Child Benefit Fiasco', in K. Jones (ed.), *The Yearbook on Social Policy* (London, 1976), p. 123; and Meehan, 'British Feminism', p. 198. However, one of the key feminist players in the campaign has complained that complained 'women's protest' was 'being written out of accounts'. See Fleming, 'Eleanor Rathbone', p. 95. My earlier MA dissertation took some limited steps towards attempting to correct this by exploring how the women's liberation Wages for Housework Campaign developed through a feminist campaign to protect the payment of family allowances to mothers. See Homans, 'Wages for Housework', esp. pp. 41-54.

[1390] Thane, 'Response to Lynne Segal: Jam Today'.

Child benefits evolved from the old family allowance scheme, through the development and eventual abandonment of a tax credit scheme. Family Income Supplement (FIS), which introduced means-tested cash benefits to wage earners for the first time since the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, was developed and implemented alongside these proposals. Numerous groups and individuals with varied and often competing concerns relating to issues such as child welfare, family poverty, tax and benefit reform, control of inflation, and the maintenance of work incentives, had an interest in these reforms. Their views on gender roles, family, and marriage, explicit or implied, often conflicted with one another. They were frequently contradictory and sometimes distinctly anti-feminist sounding. The related debates surrounding child and married women's tax allowances reveal much about contemporary attitudes, not just towards the gender division of labour, but also about attitudes and expectations surrounding equal pay and opportunities for women.

The Unpopularity of Family Allowances

In 1970, slightly more than one quarter of the electorate (or their spouse) received family allowances, a universal benefit paid for each child after the first.[1391] Historically, they had been a central concern for reformers seeking fair treatment for women at home and at work. They had also been seen as a potential method of alleviating poverty through progressive redistribution.[1392] Despite policy makers' active disregard for feminist concerns, and their meager size, family allowances held important advantages for women. They were the only social security benefit paid irrespective of parents' employment or marital status, and the only benefit paid directly to mothers regardless of the absence or presence of a father, husband or partner. For mothers on supplementary benefit, family allowances held the distinct advantage of being paid despite any other problems relating to administrative errors or accusations of co-habitation. They were collected, in cash, over the Post Office counter every Tuesday (between pay days). For many women with two or more children, family allowances were their sole independent income. [1393]

[1391] Opinion Research Centre, 'A Survey on the Cost of Living and Family Allowances carried out for Conservative Central Office', March 1970. p. 4, CPA CCO 180/9/5/1.
[1392] For discussion of these debates, see above, pp. 19-23.
[1393] Land and Parker, 'Family Policies in Britain', p. 14. Since family allowances were taken into account when calculating benefits meaning that they did not always represent an *additional* income.

However, family allowances were not electorally popular. After their introduction in 1946, they had been left to decline in real value.[1394] The only general increase, prior to 1967, had been granted in 1952, specifically to counteract the abolition of the bread subsidy.[1395] A valuable, if partial, insight into the reasons for this dislike is provided by a 1970 Conservative commissioned survey on the topic.[1396] When people were asked what they thought the purpose of family allowances might be, nobody gave a very precise reply.[1397] This reflected the ambiguity that had always surrounded family allowances.[1398] The majority thought they were 'to help people, particularly poorer people, to provide for their children'.[1399] The 'most widespread criticism' of family allowances was their 'non-selective nature.'[1400] One third (34 per cent) of all respondents agreed that 'family allowances are a waste of money and should be stopped'. Three quarters (74 per cent) agreed that 'family allowances should only go to those who really need them' and more than half (59 per cent) agreed that 'they should only go to the very poor.'[1401] Unsurprisingly, the researchers noted, the 'target groups' – those most likely to be impacted by any change, the under-35s and the C2s - were far less likely to support selectivity than the rest of the electorate.[1402] Some people, also 'revealed their hostility to the general idea of family allowances, and a small minority thought that [they] were intended to encourage people to have more children.'[1403] On this point, the researchers drew attention to the 'very-spread feeling in Britain about overcrowding.'[1404] Another Conservative commissioned survey, two and a half years later, found that 38 per cent of respondents agreed 'very' or 'fairly' strongly with the proposition that 'family allowances encourage too large families' (the number was markedly lower among parents with school age children).[1405]

[1394] Houghton told a CPAG teach in that they were 'the most unpopular social benefit to a large number of people.' Quoted in McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, p. 48. See also, Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 21 March 1968, TNA CAB 128/43. For notes on their declining value see McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, p. 25.
[1395] There had also been a 25 per cent increase made to allowances for the third and subsequent children because of a growing concern about nutritional deficiencies in large families. See Walley, 'Children's Allowances', p. 110.
[1396] Opinion Research Centre, 'A Survey on the Cost of Living and Family Allowances carried out for the Conservative Central Office', March 1970, CPA CCO 180/9/51.
[1397] Ibid, pp. 14 and 4.
[1398] See above, pp. ?? There was probably other benefit whose purpose was surrounded by such ambiguity.
[1399] Opinion Research Centre, 'Cost of Living and Family Allowances', p. 4, CPA CCO 180/9/51, p. 4.
[1400] Ibid.
[1401] Ibid, Table 20.
[1402] Ibid, p. 4.
[1403] Ibid.
[1404] Ibid.
[1405] Opinion Research Centre, 'A Survey on Family Allowances and the Tax Credit Scheme carried out for Conservative Central Office', November/December 1972, CPA, CRD 4/7/2. Women with two or more children of school age were least likely to disagree with the proposition that 'family allowances encourage too large families'.

The evidence suggests that much overt hostility to family allowances drew upon notions of the 'feckless' and 'undeserving' poor, a discourse which emphasised individualistic and behavioural explanations of poverty.[1406] In relation to family allowances specifically, this could relate to ideas about the 'problem family', a concept which, despite sustained academic and professional criticism, was given renewed prominence and respectability through Keith Joseph's 1972 'cycle of deprivation' speech. Despite, or because of, a real compassion for the 'genteel' or deserving poor, Joseph maintained that some family poverty was attributable, not to low income, but to behavioural and temperamental difficulties.[1407] These groups, who suffered from what Joseph perceived as self-inflicted wounds, were 'characterised by families of low income and low intelligence, with more than the average number of children.'[1408] They blighted the lives of their children and, by transmitting their problems to the next generation, created a 'cycle of deprivation''[1409] These ideas, or crude echoes of them, had a purchase on popular opinion.[1410]

John Walley, the civil servant responsible for the 1946 National Insurance Act, believed that Winston Churchill's expressed 'alarm' about a 'dwindling birthrate' and his desire to encourage 'our people…by every means to have large families' to explain the importance of family allowances had encouraged:

> …a widespread belief that family allowances promote births and, by an easy transition (perhaps prompted by the association with social security), more births to irresponsible parents.'[1411]

These perceptions also played to racial prejudices since immigrant groups were popularly presumed to have larger families.[1412] There were widely voiced suspicions in the 1960s and 1970s that some parents squandered the family allowance money on things like 'fags and

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Only 24 per cent of this group agreed 'very' or 'fairly' strongly with the proposition as opposed to 38 per cent overall. Male respondents in the parental age group were also more likely to disagree with the proposition.

[1406] J. Welshman, *Underclass: A History of the excluded since 1880, 2nd edn* (London, 2013), pp. 5, 8, & 229. As Welshman notes, this discourse is effectively 'timeless.'

[1407] J. Welshman, *From Transmitted Deprivation to Social Exclusion: Policy, Poverty, and Parenting* (Bristol, 2007), pp. 25-74, esp. pp. 55-8.

[1408] Ibid. pp. 56-7.

[1409] Ibid. p. 37.

[1410] The 1970 Conservative manifesto replied directly to these concerns among the electorate promising 'firm action to deal with the abuse of the social security system…by the shirkers and the scroungers.' See Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970.*

[1411] Winston Churchill's War Speech, 'A Four Years Plan', 21 March 1943, quoted in Walley, 'Children's Allowances', p. 110. For potted biography of Walley see 'Notes on Contributors' in the same volume, p. 179.

[1412] Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State,* p. 77.

bingo.'[1413] More broadly, many people took the view that nobody should have children unless they were willing and able to support them themselves.[1414] As an inter-departmental group on family support explained, the question of 'what constitutes equity' between families at different income levels and with different responsibilities involves weighing 'the personal satisfactions which lead parents to choose to have children, against the benefit to the whole community of another generation.' The 'whole community' perspective argued for a 'community contribution' towards the cost of raising children. By contrast, the 'personal satisfaction' argument, which appeared to weigh most heavily with the British public, argued for the cost to be borne by individuals.[1415] Walley also observed that the inclusion of family allowances in the social security budget had produced an additional presentational difficulty by creating an apparent conflict between the needs of the young (family allowances) and the needs of the old (pensions).[1416] Certainly, it was widely inferred by members of the public that it was only possible to increase family allowances at the expense of pensions, and it was widely suggested that the old were a more deserving group. [1417]

In the context of the long history of family allowances, the lack of contemporary references to the inter-relationships between family allowances, equal pay, and the family wage is striking. Logically, a commitment to equal pay and the family wage are incompatible. Historically, children's allowances or family endowment had been seen as a necessary and integral part of the overhaul of the wages system implied by equal pay, since they would negate the need for the

[1413] Remarks about fags and bingo repeatedly made to petition signature collector in 1972/3. There were also negative remarks about the 'population question.' See Betty Underwood, 'Consciousness-Raising and Campaigning', (c. 1973 n.d.), FemL, Special Collection 1, Box 1. See also J. Taylor et al. to Mr Woodcock n.d. c. 1967-70, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2 ('Family allowances should be abolished to help decrease the population… Many, many parents drink, gamble, and squander this money away.'). For a graphic illustration of how these ideas could be translated into popular discourse see the Mac cartoon in the *Daily Mail*, 21 July 1973. An obviously working-class woman leaves her countless children at home whilst she goes to collect the family allowances in a Securicor van.

[1414] See, for example, H.J. Hatton to the TUC, 1 July 1970; Mrs. MU Straman[?] to Mr Woodcock, 26 October 1967; M.M. Abbs to the Editor of the *News of the World*, 19 March 1968, all in MRC, MSS 292B/118/2. Mrs Abbs, a self-described 'woman worker of this country', expressed this sentiment in a particularly crude fashion by complaining about the 'Lice and Bloodsuckers' whose income was 'Social Security.' Abbs saw family allowances as a government 'incentive' to these groups 'to stay in bed and breed more of their kind.'

[1415] Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 'Family Support', 4 July 1977, TNA CAB 129/197/2.

[1416] Walley, 'Children's Allowances', pp. 112-3.

[1417] TUC's calls for increased family allowances prompted some particularly impassioned and vitriolic responses along these lines. See, for example, A.S Weeks to G. Woodcock, 25 October 1967; Mrs H Gray, n.d. c. 1967; Mr Watson to Mr Wookcock, 29 October [?1967], all in MRC, MSS 292B/118/2. Mr Watson hoped that 'some of the (old)'uns might have a go at Bingo etc.'

family wage whilst ensuring that the needs it pertained to would be adequately met.[1418] In this vein, a 1966 article in the *Economist* had argued that equal pay was probably not in women's best interests since it would only add to inflation and push more women towards temporary and unskilled work. A more valuable reform, it argued, would be to better enable women to acquire skills. Since one 'element of underpayment of women' arose from 'employers feeling that 'family men' need more money', the *Economist* additionally proposed that family allowances 'play a greater part in our social security system'.[1419] The civil service had never entirely lost sight of the issue. The 1965 Working Party on Equal Pay had thought that the introduction of equal pay, by creating a decline in the relative position of a married man with dependents, might create 'pressure for at least part of the balance to be restored, e.g. by increased family allowances or tax rebates.'[1420] Interestingly, however, they also noted that no experience to date that afforded any evidence for this supposition.[1421] Even so, it is clear that not everybody overlooked the importance of the topic. Mary Tyler, a Labour Party activist, became deeply concerned about the growing income gap between families with two earners, and families where the mother was prevented from earning an income because of her responsibilities to her young children (or to a handicapped or chronically sick person in the family).[1422] To alleviate the problem, Tyler argued for additional cash support to mothers of children under five:

> A special payment and substantial family allowances are the necessary corollary to Equal Pay, if equal pay is to be effective. The principle of the rate for the job is not compatible with the basic rate being sufficient for the *adequate* support of a man and his family.[1423]

The CPAG was also alert to the implications of equal pay. Yet when they wrote to the TUC in 1967, to suggest that the time was right for a 'serious reappraisal of the role of family allowances…in particular, to the question of equal pay for women', the TUC refused to engage with the CPAG on the subject.[1424] Letters in the TUC's files also suggest that some members of the public had been pondering the subject. Mr Eley, from Dover, was particularly articulate.

[1418] See above, pp, 19-23.
[1419] *Economist*, 23 April 1966, article quoted and described in the Minutes of the Status of Women Committee, 12 July 1966, WomL, 7 AMP/B/01/4.
[1420] 'Report of Working Party on Equal Pay', p. 21, TNA LAB 10/2529. It was noted that this would be 'expensive'.
[1421] 'Draft Report of Working Party on Equal Pay', para 40c, TNA LAB 10/2529.
[1422] M. Tyler, 'Memorandum to the Members of the NEC Social Services Sub-Committee on Composite Resolution 3, Annual Conference 1971', January 1972, MRC, MSS 292D/118/1.
[1423] Ibid. Emphasis in original.
[1424] Tony Lynes (CPAG) to Lord Collison, General Secretary of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, 19 July 1968, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2; Assistant General Secretary of the TUC Social Insurance Group to Tony Lynes, 25 July 1968, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2.

Having always subscribed to the view that men were paid more on account of their being breadwinners, he wrote to his MP to ask if changes were to be made to children's allowances to correspond with the introduction of equal pay. After establishing that this would not be the case, he wrote to the TUC to express his anxiety about the plight of 'those families where the wife and mother stays at home.' 'Will not these families be relatively very poorly off?' he asked:

> Is it felt that all women now-a-days normally work throughout their whole lives, and that when they bear children, a mere 13 weeks off work is all that is necessary to bear them and bring them up? Do you not anticipate a situation…in which two men will compare their circumstances. A, married but childless will have two wage packets in his household whereas B whose wife is at home looking after three children will have but one… The home and family unit is the basis of our English life. The grant of equal pay I feel seriously undermines the security of the family. Is this really what everybody wants?[1425]

The Secretary of the TUC's Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) was tasked with replying. She told Mr Eley that men were not paid more on account of their responsibilities. Women were paid less because 'traditionally they have been exploited as cheaper labour than men.' (A view entirely consistent with the 'there will be no losers from equal pay' argument outlined in Chapter Two).[1426] Mr Eley was informed that 'the strongly-held view of the trade union Movement' was that the rate of pay should be determined by the value of the job – 'the skill, effort and responsibility' that it required, not the sex of the worker. The problem that concerned Mr Eley 'should be dealt with by way of family or Income Tax allowances.'[1427] Although the letter did not state so explicitly, the implication was that the TUC had abandoned any attachment to the family wage. As Barrett and McIntosh observed, by the time of the Equal Pay Act 'the conventional wisdom on all sides took 'for granted that discussions should be couched in terms of the wage form 'equal pay for work of equal value', or similar.[1428] Yet despite this apparent shift, and despite voicing their support for the principle of equal pay, the Labour Movement remained firmly committed to the family wage. [1429]

[1425] E.L. Ely to General Secretary of the TUC, 25 April 1970, MRC, MSS 292B/119/6. Mr Eley also wondered if it would 'lead to demands for family allowances to be incorporated into wages.' See also J, Waltham to Vic Feather, 3 September 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/119/4.

[1426] For more on this, see above, pp. 118-9.

[1427] Secretary of the Women's Advisory Committee to Mr Ely, 5 May 1970, MRC, MSS 292B/119/6.

[1428] Barrett and McIntosh, 'The 'family wage', p. 72.

[1429] B. Campbell and V. Charlton, 'Work to Rule', in *Red Rag,* 1978, p. 32. This much was obvious to contemporary feminist observers. In 1974 Jack Jones called for a 'minimum wage of £30 a week for *heads of families.'* If both partners were working who, asked Mary Holland, was he referring to? See Mary Holland, 'Oldest Breach of Promise' in *New Statesman,* 13 September 1974, p. 337.

The Need for Reform

Until the introduction of FIS in 1971, family allowances comprised one of the two components of state family (or child) support. The other, child tax allowances, had been introduced in 1909 as part of Lloyd George's graduated income tax system. Since married women were not recognised as independent tax payers, fathers normally received the direct benefit of this allowance on their paypacket or via their income.[1430] Under this system of two-pronged support, the poorest (whose income fell below tax thresholds for child tax credit), received least since they were unable to benefit fully from tax allowances.[1431] This anomaly became more accentuated as family allowances decreased in relative value. It is possible that the regressive effects of fiscal welfare had dampened potential protest at declining family allowances.[1432] Yet it is also true that family support overall became less generous throughout the 1960s. This trend was exacerbated by the differential effects of inflation which had a more pronounced effect on families with children because they generally dedicated a higher proportion of their disposable income to necessities whose cost increased faster than general prices.[1433]

[1430] Land, 'Rathbone and the Economy of the Family', p. 121n. Income tax and a system of graduated allowances were first pioneered by William Pit in 1804. The scheme died with Pitt two years later. He also tried, but failed, to introduce a comprehensive system of children's allowances. See Walley, 'Children's Allowances', p. 105.

[1431] This table demonstrates how families with higher incomes benefited most from this combination of family support and also how the support was distributed between mother and father. Figures are for 1973 and show the effect of clawback but it is still instructive. Data taken from Pratt, 'Labour Party and Family Income Support Policy', p. 347.

Above Tax Threshold			
	First Child	Second Child	Additional Children
Family Allowance	NIL	63p	70p
Tax Allowance	£1.16	84p	84p
Combined Benefit	**£1.16**	**£1.47**	**£1.54**
Paid to Wife	NIL	90p	£1.00
Deducted from Husbands Tax	£1.16	57p	54p
Below Tax Threshold			
Most families in this position would be eligible for some Family Income Supplement			
	First Child	Second Child	Additional Children
Family Allowance	NIL	90p	£1.00
Tax Allowance	NIL	NIL	NIL
Combined Benefit	**NIL**	**90p**	**£1.00**
Paid to Wife	NIL	90p	£1.00
Deducted from Husbands Tax	NIL	NIL	NIL

[1432] Lowe, *Welfare State*, p. 299. For some discussion on the regressive effects of 'fiscal welfare' see pp. 198-9.

[1433] F. Field, *Poverty and Politics: The Inside Story of the CPAG Campaigns in the 1970s* (London, 1982), pp. 82-4. See also M. Phillips, 'Family policy: the long years of neglect', in *New Society*, 8 June 1978, p. 532.

Relatively high levels of unemployment in the winter of 1963 drew attention to the 'wage-stop ruling' which embodied the old Poor Law principle of 'less eligibility' by preventing unemployed claimants from receiving more in benefits than they had earned in their previous employment – even if that amount fell below the statutory national minimum used by the National Assistance Board. This revealed that many families, particularly large ones, lived in poverty even when the father was in full-time work.[1434] According to 1963 figures, 100,000 children in 25,000 families had their benefits significantly reduced under the wage-stop ruling.[1435] The TUC publicly criticised the government for failing to increase family allowances to meet the needs of low income families. They would continue to do so for a number of years.[1436]

The 're-discovery of poverty' in the mid-1960s, and the establishment of the CPAG, helped to push the subject of family support back on to the political agenda. [1437] The CPAG placed family allowances at the centre of their reform programme since they met their 'core insistence' - that it was 'necessary to find a way to increase the income of the poorer families with dependent children, both when the head of the household was employed and unemployed.'[1438] They called for family allowances be increased, made tax free, and extended to all children including the first. They claimed that that these measures could be funded by abolishing tax reliefs so that poorer families would gain whilst only families in the (higher) surtax bracket would lose.[1439] Banks has described the CPAG as a latter day equivalent of the Family Endowment Society.[1440] Yet, although they filled the vacuum left in welfare politics by the Society's demise, there was no feminist impetus behind the CPAG's formation.[1441] As we shall see below, when they did

[1434] McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor,* pp. 32 & 174-5. Pratt, 'Labour Party and Family Income Support Policy', pp. 2-34.
[1435] HC, 4 March 1963, cc. 19-20 cited in Pratt, 'Labour Party and Income Support Policy', pp. 4-5. Castle argued that children were being penalised for living in families headed by unskilled, low paid, workers, Thatcher, however, argued that benefits levels had 'overtaken some minimum wage rates'.
[1436] Letter from the TUC Social Insurance Department, 17 February 1967, and enclosed background briefing, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2.
[1437] Paper of the Labour Party Home Policy Sub-Committee, 'Socio-Economic Strategy: The Immediate Issues', September 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 876. See also above, p. 68, for more on the re-discovery of poverty.
[1438] P. Townsend, 'Foreword', in Bull and Townsend (eds), *Family Poverty*, p. 5; Meyer-Kelly, 'The Child Poverty Action Group', pp. 26-31; Field, 'A Pressure Group for the Poor', p. 145.
[1439] Child Poverty Action Group, 'Press Release', 15 February 1967, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2. Public requests were made repeatedly. See McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor,* p. 55.
[1440] Banks, *Politics of British Feminism,* p. 23.
[1441] McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor,* pp. v & 3. Mindful of (male) work incentives, they suggested, for example, that any new family allowance type benefit should be paid 'into the wage packet of working fathers.'

reach out to the women's movement in the early 1970s, they did so in the hope that the alliance might help them to fulfill their primary objective.[1442] Moreover, although the significance of the distinction would not be fully understood until the latter half of the 1970s, it is important to note that the CPAG was a 'pressure group for the poor', concerned primarily with the plight of poor families, as opposed to families with dependent children in general.[1443] This becomes clear when their proposals are compared to those of Margaret Wynn and Della Nevitt.

In the 1960s Wynn and Nevitt began exploring the relative living standards of families. They developed their ideas independently of the poverty lobby in general and the CPAG in particular.[1444] In *Family Policy* (1970), Wynn recast arguments first advanced by social reformers such as Joseph Rowntree to show how and why families' incomes reduced at the time their needs increased. The birth of a child increased a family's need and simultaneously made it more difficult for the mother to earn an income. Although child tax allowances and family allowances had a 'tempering effect' on this 'trough' in living standards in a family's life-cycle, Wynn showed that nearly all families with dependent children were 'poorer than childless couples.'[1445] Large families were likely to be poor, but as Audrey Smith observed, 'most poor families are not large.'[1446] This 'trough' deepened throughout the 1960s as families were squeezed by the decreasing value of family allowances and by a taxation policy with a 'heavy discrimination in favour of non-parents.'[1447] The eligibility criteria for means-tested benefits also tended to discriminate against families with children.[1448] In consequence, Wynn concluded, families with dependent children, had not received 'their fair share, or often any share at all, of

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Field, 'A Pressure Group for the Poor', pp. 156-7. See also Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 157. Frank Field continued to maintain that, 'in one sense', the Conservatives had been 'right to think of paying the [child tax] credits to the fathers'. After all, the original idea had been that the credits would be offset against tax liabilities and the reality was that more fathers than mothers were in work. Field, *Poverty and Politics,* p. 80.

[1442] See below, p. 248.

[1443] McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor,* p. v.

[1444] Field, *Poverty and Politics,* p. 78.

[1445] Wynn, *Family Policy,* pp. 193-5 & 327. The book was first published in 1970. It was re-issued by Penguin two years later with a new postscript. Melaine Phillips described *Family Policy* as a 'seminal book' which 'challenged, for the first time, accepted ideas about the costs of rearing children.' See M. Phillips, 'Family policy: the long years of neglect', in *New Society,* 8 June 1978, p, 531.

[1446] A. Smith, 'The Role of Family Planning', in Bull (ed.) *Family Poverty,* p. 84. She drew upon the Survey Commissioned by Peggy Herbison, *The Circumstances of Families* (1967).

[1447] Wynn, *Family Policy,* pp. 314-5 & 318. Using 1970 figures, Wynn showed that this trend had continued to the point that where 'families with resources well below all recognised poverty levels were paying income tax on their marginal income at the full standard rate'. (Single people and childless couples 'were not required to pay tax at the full rate until their standard of living was above any poverty level.') See p. 315.

[1448] F. Field, 'A lobby for all children', in *New Society,* 29 September 1977.

the increase in national income during those years.'[1449] *Family Policy* concluded with a series of proposals - including improved child care services for working mothers; the abolition of means-testing for benefits such as school meals; and reform of the tax allowance system – which amounted to a comprehensive reform programme.[1450] This approach stemmed from Wynn's core argument that, in the absence of an explicit family policy, economic and social forces tended to militate against the interests of all families with dependent children.[1451] By contrast, her programme for family policy proposed 'the redistribution of national wealth and income in favour of children and…the transfer of resources to investment in future generations.'[1452]

Wynn maintained that it was unlikely to be possible to introduce a minimum wage sufficient to eliminate the poverty of large families.[1453] It was widely argued, although impossible to prove, that the relative hardship of the 'family man' had an inflationary effect on the economy by driving up wages because the 'hardship argument', upon which most wage claims were founded, was based on the 'hardship of the family man and his family'. (Single women on low wages and single parents suffered hardship too, but they had scarce influence over wage negotiations).[1454] Like Beveridge, therefore, Wynn concluded that family allowances offered the only 'satisfactory' means of supplementing the income of poor families with children.[1455] She went further:

> …if the objective of social policy is restricted to the elimination of poverty it is unlikely to succeed, because it must isolate the poor and fail to win the support of the majority of families…Family allowances are an essential means not only of eliminating child poverty but of enabling families to achieve standards of living comparable with that of non-parents with similar incomes.[1456]

[1449] Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 317.
[1450] Ibid. pp. 285-6
[1451] Ibid. p. 281. The trends Wynn mapped and described to not constitute evidence of a coherent anti-family policy. Jeff Rooker attributed it 'lethargy theory': 'governments do not take action unless they perceive a pressing political need to do so.' He acknowledged that the 'Treasury consistently stole from the family' but, he added, 'when you speak to senior people there you realise they just haven't got a clue what their policies mean for families struggling to make ends meet.' Quoted in Quoted in M. Phillips, 'Family policy: the long years of neglect', in *New Society*, 8 June 1978, p. 531.
[1452] Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 281.
[1453] Ibid. p. 287.
[1454] Wynn, *Family Policy*, pp. 314-7. See also Tyler, 'Memorandum to the Members of the NEC Social Services Sub-Committee on Composite Resolution 3', MRC, MSS 292D/118/1. See also above for historiographcial arguments regarding inflation and family allowances, see above, p. 25.
[1455] Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 287.
[1456] Ibid.

Neither the CPAG, nor feminists as a whole, picked up on these ideas until much later in the decade.[1457] As shown above, Wynn's ideas also diverged markedly from public opinion which appeared to cleave closer to the view that individual parents, rather than society as a whole, should accept financial responsibility for their children.

The TUC continued to call for improved family allowances, arguing that it was irrational to provide subsistence to the sick and unemployed but not to a working man.[1458] Though broadly supportive of the minimum wage demands advanced in the 1960s, the TUC thought that a minimum wage alone would not 'deal specifically with this problem of child dependency.'[1459] Yet there were clear limits to the TUC's radicalism. When the GMWU concluded that 'generous family allowances' were one of the 'best ways' of helping low paid workers and suggested that this could be funded by abolishing child tax allowances, the TUC did not follow suite.[1460] Indeed, the TUC were notably careful to avoid calling for the abolition of tax reliefs. When asked directly about consolidating child tax allowances with family allowances and 'giving all such allowances direct to the mother in cash', the TUC had shied delicately away from the question observing that it would 'raise rather complex issues.'[1461] Despite some shared objectives, the relationship between the TUC and CPAG was often troubled.[1462] In 1967, the trade union movement rejected the CPAG's request for financial assistance, being reluctant to become too involved in matters beyond their traditional sphere (family poverty was seen primarily as a political matter and properly the concern of the state).[1463] Frank Cousins tried to smooth things over by writing in *Poverty*, the CPAG's journal, that the work of the trade unions and the CPAG was complementary, not competitive.[1464]

[1457] For example, see below, pp. 277 and 351.
[1458] *The Times*, 28 March 1966 quoted in McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, p. 174.
[1459] Secretary of the TUC Social Insurance Department to Mr Likyard, Secretary of Luton and District Trades Council, 11 April 1967, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2.
[1460] 'Low Pay: Statement to be presented to the Annual Congress of the National Union of General and Municipal Woerks, 53rd Congress', 20-23rd May, 1968. Bodleian Lib., MS Wilson, 805.
[1461] Mr T Thomas, Assistant General Secretary of the Clerical and Administrative Workers Union to Mr. G. Woodcock, General Secretary of the TUC, 7 March 1967; and reply, G. Woodcock to T. Thomas, 17 March 1967, both in MRC, MSS 292B/118/2
[1462] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', pp. 210-11.
[1463] McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, pp. 177-8.
[1464] *Poverty*, Issue 3, Summer 1967, quoted in Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 262.

Concern about the issue increased within the Labour Party.[1465] In Wilson's Government, Margaret Herbison, Minister for Health and Pensions, made family allowances her personal priority. In 1966 she proposed a 'give and take scheme', a diluted version of the CPAG's proposals which would raise family allowances whilst reducing child tax allowances for the standard rate tax payer by the same amount. The effective result would be a targeted increase in family allowances. Those with the lowest incomes would gain most, up to the full value of the family allowance increase, but nobody would lose. Several members of Wilson's government supported the scheme, including Houghton, Castle, Crossman, and Thomas Balogh, Wilson's trusted adviser.[1466] The Department of Economic Affairs supported the idea, viewing it as a means of legitimizing a strict incomes policy by helping to negate the need for wage increases.[1467] The Chancellor, James Callaghan, and the Treasury, were resolutely opposed.[1468] Practically, they were concerned about cost implications. Backed by the Treasury, Callaghan argued for an alternative, means-tested scheme as a more efficient way of directing money to the needy. Politically, he knew that family allowances were unpopular among large sections of Labour supporters and he feared the consequences of increasing wives' family allowances at the expense of men's take-home pay.[1469]

The TUC were unequivocally opposed to Callaghan's scheme. They repeatedly warned against means-testing benefits for families of full-time workers, pointing out that to do so would be to breach an important principle in British politics. The means-test line would, unavoidably, create serious difficulties in the differentials of families just above and below the threshold, wherever it was applied, effectively reducing work incentives.[1470] Nevertheless, the TUC shared Callaghan's sensibilities about increasing the tax burden on the better-off.[1471] In Cabinet,

[1465] Paper of the Labour Party Home Policy Sub-Committee, 'Socio-Economic Strategy: The Immediate Issues', September 1967, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 876.
[1466] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', pp. 134-40. See also Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 23 February 1967.
[1467] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 138.
[1468] Ibid. pp. 134-40. Callaghan was very well known for his opposition to this. See, for example, Douglas Houghton to Victor Feather, 23 January 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2.
[1469] McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, pp. 72-3. See also Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 23 February 1967 and Pratt, 'Labour Party and Family Income Support Policy', pp. 205-6 & 218.
[1470] TUC brief on 'Family Allowances', 17 February 1967 attached to letter from the Secretary of the Social Insurance Department, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2.
[1471] 'Note of a deputation brought by the T.U.C to the Minister of Social Security', 20 February 1967, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2. They had been wary of the CPAG's scheme for this same reason. They observed it was opposed by the CBI and open to the criticism that 'better off families with children were being made to pay for improved provision for the less well off.'

Anthony Crosland and Roy Jenkins supported Callaghan.[1472] Herbison finally prevailed with the active support of the TUC and the CPAG.[1473] The consequential general increase in family allowances in October 1967 and 1968, returned them to the 1946 value. 'Claw-back', the related changes in tax allowances, was introduced simultaneously.[1474] Jenkins described the scheme as a 'civilised and acceptable form of selectivity'.[1475] However, its implementation was badly handled. Some families thought they had received a significant increase in family allowances only later to discover that they would be losing some of their tax reliefs (sometimes at a rate that exceeded the gain).[1476]

In Parliament, several Labour MPs publicly acknowledged the unpopularity of the family allowance increases.[1477] Herbison, however, regretted that they had not gone far enough and resigned from Government in 1967 citing the paltry rate of family allowances.[1478] The CPAG attacked the rise as 'derisory'.[1479] They were perturbed by what they took to be the 'the misapprehensions regarding the purposes and effects of family allowances.'[1480] Frustrated by the Government's refusal to take more radical action, the CPAG launched their 'Poor Get Poor Under Labour' Campaign in 1970.[1481] The headline claim was never properly substantiated but Meyer-Kelly believes that 'Labour appeared guilty because it could not prove itself innocent.'[1482] In this context, family allowances became an election issue when the Shadow Chancellor, Iain Macleod took the opportunity to exploit the moment for political gain by pledging that the next Conservative government would raise family allowances. He was unaware that further use of the claw-back mechanism was no longer feasible.[1483]

[1472] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 23 February 1967. See also 17 November 1966.
[1473] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', pp. 136-41.
[1474] Walley, 'Children's Allowances', p. 110. See also Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 134.
[1475] Quoted in Pratt, 'Labour Party and Family Income Support Policy', p. 237.
[1476] McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor,* p. 80. See also Field, 'A Pressure Group for the Poor', p. 151.
[1477] Pratt, 'Labour Party and Family Income Support Policy', pp. 243-4. Some even claimed they had negatively impacted Labour's electoral fortunes in recent by-elections.
[1478] See Castle, *Castle Diaries,* 20 July 1967 notes.
[1479] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 141.
[1480] Tony Lynes (CPAG) to Lord Collison, General Secretary of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, 19 July 1968, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2. The letter does not expand on this point but it does suggest a gap in understanding between the CPAG and public opinion.
[1481] Meyer-Kelly, 'The Child Poverty Action Group', pp. 147-52.
[1482] Ibid. p. 149.
[1483] Ibid. pp. 153 & 155. For further explanation of what was a very technical issue see T. Lynes, 'Clawback', in D. Bull (ed.), *Family Poverty,* p. 128.

Heath's Government introduce FIS, and propose a Tax Credit Scheme.

Macleod's pledge represented a reversal of his own and his Party's position. At the pre-election 1970 Shadow Cabinet Meeting at Selsdon, he had argued for replacing universal family allowances with means-tested allowances administered through the man's PAYE.[1484] There was much to recommend this to his colleagues who were well aware that family allowances were expensive, unpopular, and too small to make a real difference to those families most in need.[1485] Although the gender dynamic was not normally at the forefront of discussions on family support at this time, the Selsdon records reveal that the Conservative leadership were acutely aware (no less so than the TUC or Callaghan) of the politics of household or 'wallet/purse' economics.[1486] This dynamic made the Conservative Shadow Cabinet wary of Macleod's proposal. Referring to the electorate's apparent desire to concentrate help on the most needy, Geoffrey Rippon 'wondered how many of the mothers answering the poll questions thought that they would be included among those to be deprived of allowances.'[1487] Joseph Godber also warned that the proposed scheme would remove a cash benefit from their 'target voters – the woman.'[1488] He pointed out that Conservative policies on VAT and agriculture would impose 'extra burdens on the *housewife* by putting up food prices' and, unless their husband's passed over the extra money as cash, this group would not benefit from the proposed compensatory tax reductions.[1489]

Welfare concerns were also raised. Anthony Barber, soon to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, did not 'think the ordinary middle-class person would mind very much losing family allowances, because they are an unpopular form of allowance.'[1490] But he thought that if help were to be directed to 'people in need' then 'payment should go to the wife.'[1491] Rippon explained that there were objections to paying the money to the man because 'the money is meant to go to the children and in the problem family it never does.'[1492] Referring to the 'views of women voters' Thatcher remarked that if family allowance were shifted from the wife to the husband, it would

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[1484] 'Selsdon Park Weekend Meeting Transcript', 31 January, Morning Session, pp. 1 & 7-9, CPA, CRD 3/9/93. Available to download at http://margaretthatcher.org/document/109512, accessed 10th July 2012.
[1485] Ibid. pp, 1,6 & 8.
[1486] Ibid. p. 1. This aspect of the scheme was flagged as one of the key points to address during the meeting's discussion on the topic.
[1487] Ibid, p. 4.
[1488] Ibid. p. 5.
[1489] Ibid. p. 2. Emphasis in original. Their 1970 manifesto referred to 'housewives struggling to make ends meet'. See Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970.*
[1490] 'Selsdon Park Weekend', p. 8, CPA, CRD 3/9/93.
[1491] Ibid. p. 7.
[1492] Ibid. p. 2.

'cease to be a *family* allowance.'[1493] She also warned against stigmatising poorer mothers with means-testing.[1494] Keith Joseph, who was to become Secretary of State for Social Services in Heath's government, expressed his strong concern for poor families. Pointing out that a degree of family poverty was attributable to low pay, he repeatedly and forcefully reminded his colleagues of the need to help these families, telling them, for example, 'there are so many employments in which these people, cannot with the best will in the world, earn more; many are people who are working very hard.'[1495] No firm conclusions were reached at Selsdon and the meeting resolved to continue working on the problem.[1496] Heath was unsurprised. As he observed, the problem of relieving poverty whilst retaining incentives had 'lasted for centuries'.[1497]

Despite lacking a clear policy, ideologically and politically the Conservatives tended towards selectivity and were able to express a clear preference for tax reliefs over benefits. As the Research Department explained: 'tax relief implies choice, cash benefit means so much taken away and some is paid in benefit.'[1498] In this spirit, their 1970 election manifesto promised to 'tackle the problem of family poverty and ensure that adequate family allowances go to those…that need them.'[1499] While avoiding detailed commitment, the manifesto further remarked that a 'scheme based on negative income tax' would allow benefits to be related to need, while also allowing other families to benefit from reduced taxation. It claimed that such a scheme would increase incentives for those in work whilst simultaneously tackling child poverty.[1500]

As these claims suggest, Negative Income Tax or Minimum Income Guarantee schemes, in their various guises, were 'the Holy Grail' of social policy in the 1960s and 1970s.[1501] Although it

[1493] Ibid. p. 4. Emphasis in original. The transcript is in incomplete note form and many remarks, including this, retain a degree of cryptic mystery.
[1494] Ibid. p. 2.
[1495] Joseph had a long-standing association with the CPAG and was one of its early benefactors. See Lowe, 'Social Policy of the Heath Government', p. 200. For Joseph's remarks see 'Selsdon Park Weekend', p. 4, CPA, CRD 3/9/93, p. 4. He also told his colleagues, 'Many of those who need help are unskilled workers with bad employers.' (See p. 6). He later stressed again the 'need to find how to relive poverty of those in work.' (see p. 10).
[1496] 'Selsdon Park Weekend', pp. 11-12, CPA, CRD 3/9/93.
[1497] Ibid. p. 10.
[1498] 'Note from Report on Briefing Conference', 23 November 1967, CPA CCO 4/10/314. See also Mr Douglas to Mr Maudling, 30 October 1969, CPA ACP 1/20.
[1499] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970.*
[1500] Ibid.
[1501] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 24.

had largely been forgotten, the earliest incarnation of any such scheme had been explicitly feminist. Juliet Rhys Williams, a writer and campaigner for maternity services and family allowances in the 1930s and 40s, had criticised Beveridge's proposals for failing to provide an income for wives. 'Nobody', she asserted, 'should be dependent on another for 'the means of existence'.[1502] She proposed that each citizen, man woman and child, should be entitled to an allowance funded through taxation. Her proposed 'social contract' would oblige men to be available for work and unmarried women, and women without dependents, to provide service to the community, perhaps by helping other women with their childcare and housework. '[N]o woman would be…an unpaid drudge beholden to some relative for her living and entirely without pocket money of her own as millions of women have been in the past.'[1503] Later, in the 1960s, schemes were developed on the political right, notably by Milton Friedman in the USA and in Britain by Conservative selectivists.[1504] On the left, there were attempts to develop proposals within the Labour Party, notably by Houghton, and also by the early CPAG.[1505] The ultimate aim was a merger of the tax and benefits systems. Selective without the stigma of means-testing, the disincentive effects were generally held to be less extreme than other alternatives. However, the allure of simplicity and efficiency belied the extent of the administrative and cost challenges.[1506] As Macleod observed in 1970, 'everyone comes to the conclusion that NIT [Negative Income Tax] is a splendid idea but virtually impossible administratively.'[1507] Nevertheless, the search continued. The 1970 Conservative manifesto accused the Labour Government of 'exaggerating the administrative problems involved' and promised a 'real effort to find a practical solution.' [1508]

[1502] Juliet Rhys Williams, *Something to Look Forward To: A New Social Contract* (1943) quoted in The Open University, Open Learn, 'The Beveridge Vision'. Available online at http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php.?id=189876, accessed 15/05/2010. Some modern feminists maintain that a universal basic income scheme would provide positive benefits for women. See Briar, *Working for Women*, pp. 194-5 & 205n. Nevertheless, the issue is a divisive one for feminists. See also Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 53 and 83. The debate continues among feminist activists today and has recently been given new life among British feminists in the context of welfare cuts.

[1503] Rhys Williams, *Something to Look Forward To,* quoted in Open Universtiy Resources, 'The Beveridge Vision'.

[1504] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 23; Lowe, 'Social Policy of the Heath Government', p. 201. See also Edward Heath to John Nott, 25 October 1968, LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS/5/8

[1505] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', pp. 23-4. Labour's 1966 Manifesto had promised to 'seek ways of integrating more fully the two quite different systems of social payment – tax allowances and cash benefits paid under National Insurance. See Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto*, 1966.

[1506] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', pp. 23-4. There are echoes of this in the current coalitions attempt to introduce a Universal Credit System.

[1507] 'Selsdon Park Weekend', p. 10, CPA, CRD 3/9/93, p. 10.

[1508] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1970.*

In the meantime, in 1971, Heath's Government implemented the same Treasury plans for a means-tested Family Income Supplement (FIS) that Callaghan had unsuccessfully championed.[1509] FIS could be claimed by families, with at least one dependent child, where the 'head of the household' worked at least 30 hours a week. Single mothers could claim in their own right but women who lived with men could not, even if they were the main breadwinner.[1510] Although the scheme attracted robust criticisms, Joseph maintained that it was an effective way of directing resources quickly to those most in need.[1511] FIS breached an important principle in British politics: it was given to wage earners. As Castle explained, 'it supplemented low wages on a mean-test.'[1512] Many Labour politicians attacked it for holding down wages like its eighteenth century Speenhamland predecessor.[1513] Powell also warned that 'relief in aid of wages' marked a radical departure.[1514] He believed, presciently, FIS would mark the 'beginning' rather than the end and warned his colleagues, 'many of those who vote for it or let it go through will live to regret what we have done.[1515] One immediate consequence of FIS was the creation of a poverty trap which some claimants needed a fifty percent pay rise to escape.[1516] Some contemporaries feared that FIS encouraged people, including large numbers of single mothers, to stay in low-paid employment.[1517]

Although the TUC were vocally opposed to FIS, they remained reluctant to step into the political arena of welfare debate. Their publicly articulated views, that the tax and benefits system must account for the needs of families and dependents in ways that the wages system could not, were

[1509] Meyer-Kelly, 'The Child Poverty Action Group', p. 155. For reference to FIS as a stop-gap measure see Mr Douglas to Mr Maudling, 30 October 1969, CPA ACP 1/20.
[1510] Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* p. 111.
[1511] At Selson Barber asked him, 'Am I not right in thinking that if we want to save the Exchequer and help those most in need, it must mean means-testing those in work?' Joseph had replied that he was correct. 'Increased family allowances to the lowest paid is the quickest way of helping'. See 'Selsdon Park Weekend', pp. 6 & 8, CPA, CRD 3/9/93, pp. 6 & 8.) Despite FIS's theoretical meeting of need it was, in reality, claimed by about 60 per cent of those eligible. See Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* p. 110.
[1512] Castle, *Castle Diaries,* 23 February 1967.
[1513] Meyer-Kelly, 'The Child Poverty Action Group', p. 155. This reflected without opposition, wages would tend towards a basic subsistence level. If employers thought that the state was subsidizing their low wages, they could not be encouraged to raise them. See HC, 10 November 1970, cc. 217-339 for the debate. Pratt also highlights the skilled working-class base of the Party who were very opposed to disincentive effects. See Pratt, 'The Labour Party and Family Income', pp. 260-264.
[1514] HC, 10 November 1970, c. 262.
[1515] Ibid. cc. 264-5. Frederick Mulley, speaking afterwards, mad e the prescient point that they were in the unusual situation of debating a 'tiny Bill' while being concerned with a 'great principle'.
[1516] Frank Field and David Piachaud, 'The Poverty Trap' (1971), reproduced in Field, *Poverty and Politics,* pp. 104-7. See also Lowe, *Welfare State,* pp. 296. For a contemporary and balanced critique of FIS see D. Barker, 'The Family Income Supplement', in D. Bull (ed.), *Family Poverty,* pp. 70-82
[1517] For a contemporary feminist critique seeCoote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* pp. 110-113.

in line with those of the CPAG.[1518] However, when Frank Field and his colleague, David Piachuad, suggested that trade unions include benefits in their negotiations as part of a strategy for addressing the needs of low paid worker, they were met with a frosty reception, Jack Jones suggested that Field and Piachuad had betrayed their 'ignorance' of collective bargaining: union negotiators negotiate with employers, not the government.[1519]

Family allowances became widely recognised as a 'women's issue' again with the publication of the Conservative's Green Paper, *Proposals for a Tax Credit System*, in October 1972. The paper acknowledged the impracticality of completely merging the tax and social security systems and focused on areas of perceived greatest administrative inefficiency and human. The relevant groups were identified as pensioners and families with children. For the latter, it proposed that tax allowances and family allowances be replaced by a single rate child tax credit. For illustrative purposes, the paper proposed rates of £4 for single persons, £6 for married men (and their wives), and £2 for children. Lone parents would be entitled to a full married person's credit. Some groups, which included a disproportionate number of women, would be excluded from the scheme: people on supplementary benefits, strikers, those with very low incomes, and the self-employed.[1520] Leaving this matter aside, two issues were of particular relevance to those concerned with women's rights. Cabinet was told, prior to publication, that each would be decided 'in the light of public reaction.'[1521] First was the question of married women's earnings. Should married couples be treated as separate individuals for tax purposes? [1522] As we will see below, this question sat at the heart of the debate on women's rights. The second key issue for women – and the one that generated the greatest immediate controversy – was who should receive the child tax credits? [1523]

[1518] Press Release, 4 November 1970, quoted in Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', pp. 264-5; *Poverty* No. 16/17, 1971, p. 29, quoted in Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 318.
[1519] Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 265. Although the social contract, in many respects, did embody such an approach. See below, pp. 298-9.
[1520] *Proposals for a Tax-Credit System.* Cmnd 5116 (London, 1972), esp. pp. 1-6 & 22.
[1521] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 27 June, 1972, TNA CAB 128/50/33.
[1522] *Proposals for a Tax-Credit System*, p. 17.
[1523] Ibid. p. 19.

The Campaign to Defend Family Allowances

The Green paper categorically stated that the Government regarded this question as 'entirely open', adding that the Select Committee's advice 'would be of very great importance'. [1524] However, for illustrative purposes it assumed that the child tax credits would be administered by employers and that the father – or breadwinner - would receive the child credits in full. This was the simplest and cheapest option and carried the additional advantage of ensuring no loss in take-home pay. The other two options were to split the credits between mother and father, roughly replicating the status quo, or paying the full child credit to the mother.[1525] As Molly Meacher observed, 'in the absence of any public protest', there seemed 'no reason to believe the text of the proposals would be re-written on the assumption that child tax credits would in fact be payable to the mother through the post-office.'[1526]

Publicly, the government denied this bias. Privately Anthony Barber, appointed Chancellor after Macleod's death, admitted the paper argued for 'payment normally to the father', though it reserved the right to reverse the decision.[1527] The Conservatives had reason to hope this scheme might prove popular. Eighteen months earlier, when their researchers had asked interview subjects if they would willingly relinquish family allowances in return for a tax cut, 70 per cent had said 'yes'. Even when it was made clear that the husband would benefit from reduced taxes 'by not paying family allowances to the wife' 60 per cent still said yes.[1528] These results roughly corresponded to a 1968 DHSS survey of family allowance payees and their spouses in which 60 per cent of women and 70 per cent of men said it would make no difference if the allowance was added to the husband's pay.[1529] Some Conservatives believed wives would not gain or lose much either way. At Selsdon, Barry Hayhoe had claimed that, when women's disposable income had increased as a result of the rise in family allowances, 'those men adjusted the amount given in housekeeping allowance.'[1530] Nevertheless, in light of other views expressed at Selsdon, the decision to present the scheme in this way still appears surprising. On the most

[1524] Ibid. p. 19.
[1525] Ibid. pp. 19-20.
[1526] Molly Meacher to Mrs Morrison, 9 February 1973, CPA, CCO 170/5/6/1. Emphasis added.
[1527] Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 27 June, 1972, TNA CAB 128/50/33.
[1528] Opinion Research Centre, 'Cost of Living and Family Allowances' p. 4, CPA CCO 180/9/51. These findings were to those those present at Selsdon and were mentioned in the meeting. See 'Selsdon Park Weekend', 31 January, Morning Session, CPA, CRD 3/9/93, p. 5.
[1529] Appendices to the Memorandum submitted by the Department of Heath and Social Security to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Appendices to Minutes of Evidence and Index, Volume III, Session 1972-2* (London, 1973), p. 46.
[1530] 'Selsdon Park Weekend', p. 4, CPA, CRD 3/9/93.

pessimistic reading, it represents the Government's cavalier disregard of the near unanimous views of women in their own Party, and of the interests of women more generally.

Prior to the Green Paper's publication, all women present at a meeting of the Conservative Advisory Committee on Policy had expressed the 'strong view' that women should continue to receive cash payments. They said, in many families, the woman did not know what the husband earned. Direct payment of family allowances to mothers was the surest way of ensuring that the money would be spent on the children for whom it was intended.[1531] When the women's warnings of a negative political impact were repeated in Cabinet, they were overridden.[1532] Sara Morrison also privately warned, four months prior to publication, of 'a potential political minus of measurable proportions'.[1533] Again her warnings were ignored. When the Green Paper was published, Shelagh Roberts, chairman of the Conservative WNAC Committee, publicly declared that 'the government risked signalling a failure to understand how the average family rubbed along' and a failure to recognise 'the troubles, anxieties and domestic crises that were commonplace in many homes.'[1534] In a recent interview, Morison reflected that the attitude was:

> just stupid…it was going to cost less, it was going to be simpler…blah blah blah…it went into one pocket… The small point that the family allowance was, for many women, their only independent income, was not considered to be worth the saving.[1535]

According to Castle, there was some 'surprise' in official circles, at what she later described as 'the uproar…created by the mere hint that the…new child credit might be payable through the father's paypacket.'[1536] The reaction extended well beyond feminist and women's

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[1531] Minutes of a Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Policy, 17 May 1972, CPA, ACP 2/3; James Douglas to Mr Hurd, 7 June 1972, CPA ACP 1/22.

[1532] Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 27 June, 1972, TNA CAB 128/50/33. When Joseph later went to speak to the Advisory Committee on Policy, he was again warned again by the women there that the public had the impression that women were to lose their family allowances. If, they said, the government was to decide against that course of action, it would appear to be the result of Labour Party pressure. See Minutes of a Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Policy, 8 November 1972, CPA, ACP 2/3.

[1533] Sara Morrison to Francis Pym, 17 July 1972, CPA, CCO 170/5/61. As a defensive measure, she advised the Whip to ensure that some Conservative members of the Select Committee were 'of the variety who would be inclined to inform themselves about the implications for women'.

[1534] *The Times*, 14 October 1972

[1535] Interview with Sara Morrison.

[1536] Quoted in Land, 'Child Benefit Fiasco', p. 123. See also B. Castle, 'The Death of Child Benefit', *New Statesman*, 4 June 1976.

organisations.[1537] Feminists and women's groups across the generations and political spectrum united in opposition to what Mary Stott described as an 'attack on a victory already won.[1538]. In the autumn of 1972, Betty Jerman, founder of the National Housewives Register, warned every woman's organisation and 'every woman capable of writing to an MP' to watch out for the Green Paper.[1539] Groups as diverse as the Townswomen's Guild, the WLM, the Conservative Women's Association, Labour Women, the Fawcett society, the International Union of Family Organisations and the Married Women's Association registered their protest. Petitions were circulated. Meetings were held. Evidence was gathered and collated. Letters were written and submissions made. Many activists went into shopping centres and markets, some set up stalls. Some went door-to-door, to post-offices, and to places where women worked, to talk to women and collect signatures.[1540] The CPAG became heavily involved. In 1970 Walley, a prominent member, had urged them to 'tackle the women's organisations to gain support for its work.'[1541] The threat to family allowances provided the perfect opportunity. Primarily in the person of Molly Meacher, the CPAG encouraged women and women's groups to write to them, or the Government, with their views. They helped to circulate and publicise petitions (in particular, one that had been drawn up by the Married Women's Association) and spoke at women's meetings. They used their relationships, experience and expertise to gain media publicity and to lobby government.[1542]

Numerous campaigners expressed their surprise at the strong response from the 'woman on the street'.[1543] This was no doubt partly a response to the threatened removal of a cash benefit. But

[1537] For example, a Report on a Conservative Party Discussion Programme reported that the question of whether child tax credits should be paid in the same way as family allowances or through the father's pay packet 'obviously caused quite a lot controversy between the sexes in some discussion groups.' See, 'Three Way Contact: Political Contact Programme, Tax Credit Versus Poverty', April 1973, CPA CCO 170/5/61.

[1538] *Guardian,* 18 October 1972. For the history of the women's campaign family allowances, see above, pp. 25-6.

[1539] *Guardian,* 28 September 1972.

[1540] Much of this has been detailed in Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 42-54. For some contemporary reports of activities see, *Women's Report* 1 (November 1972 – January 1973); *Women's Report* 2 (January-March 1973); *Guardian,* 29 January 1973; *Guardian,* 19 January 1973; *The Times,* 13 November 1972; *Guardian,* 8 March 1973 *The Times,* 29 June 1973. For more on the involvement of women's liberation specifically see Suzie Fleming, *Family Allowance Under Attack,* 2nd edn (Bristol, 1973), esp. p. 5; Betty Underwood, 'Consciousness-Raising and Campaigning', FemL, Special Collection 1, Box 1.

[1541] Report of the AGM of the CPAG, 18 April 1970, cited in Meyer-Kelly, 'Child Poverty Action Group', p. 264.

[1542] For more on the support offered by the CPAG in terms of publicising and circulating the petition across their national networks, raising media awareness and liaising with Women's Groups, See Molly Meacher, 'Tax Credit Proposals – Some Issues Arising from the Green Paper and Suggested Action', n.d. c. November 1972, HHC, NCCL, DCL 468/2. See also *Guardian,* 19 January 1973.

[1543] Betty Underwood, who has done a lot of petitioning in her time, described it as 'a piece of cake'…one of the easiest petitions to get people to sign.' Interview with Betty Underwood, 18 August 2008. CPAG researchers

this was also a campaign which allowed women to assert needs and their worth without challenging more their more traditional values or beliefs. A righteous indignation pervaded much of women's commentary on the topic.[1544] Katherine Whitehorn captured the mood:

> The next year should settle it…either women have got some political power or the whole thing's been a charade. For once we have an issue with nearly all the women ganging up on one side; if we don't win this one, I reckon, Women's Lib is right and we've been duped…[1545]

Whereas national debates about equal pay and discrimination had brought the subject of women in the workplace towards the foreground of public discourse, the views and experiences of women as they related to their traditional domestic and caring roles had remained largely unsought, hidden from view. By contrast, the threat to family allowances shone a light into household economics and provided a glimpse of women's everyday domestic experiences. Select Committee members, campaigners, and other interested parties focused closely on the distribution of income within families. From a practical welfare perspective, it had a direct bearing on the question of who should receive the child tax credits. Yet the episode also offered insights into what feminists describe as the personal politics of financial dependence.[1546] Houghton, who served on the Select Committee, confessed to being 'very fascinated' by the evidence about economic relationships between spouses. On the basis of some, he felt forced to conclude that they were 'profoundly unsatisfactory'.[1547]

CPAG research indicated that more than nine-tenths of family allowance recipients spent the money directly on their children or merged it with the housekeeping money for general household expenditure. The lower the family income, the more likely family allowances were to

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reported the same phenomenon. See 'Summary of the Results of a survey of 1196 women carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group in the Summer of 1972', HHC, NCCL Archives, DCL 468/2. See also Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 51-4. Yet this point should not be overstated. It proved difficult to convert this into sustained and organised popular protest. At least two women recalled 'disappointing' experiences where a lot effort was expended in organising public meetings to which very few turned up. See Homans, 'Wages for Housework', p. 52.

[1544] Dame Margery Corbett, Fawcett Society member since 1898, believed that 'the proposal to pay family allowances to the father…has united us, by lowering the status of every married woman from that of a partner to a dependent.' *The Times*, 29 June 1973. Shelagh Roberts, in a similar tone, publicly announced, 'the housewife and mother would never…give up her right to collect the family allowances'. See *The Times*, 14 October 1972. Marge Proops asserted that women 'won't be a silent majority for long' if their family allowances are taken away. See *Sunday Mirror*, 28 January 1973.

[1545] *Observer*, 19 November 1972. Whitehorn could personally recall the 1946 campaign.

[1546] L. Comer, *Wedlocked Women*, (Leeds, 1974), pp. 124-6.

[1547] Examination of Witness from the CPAG by the Select Committee on Tax Credit, *Evidence, Volume II* (London, 1973), p. 341.

be spent entirely on food (58 percent of mothers on supplementary benefit, compared with 40 and 26 per cent of working-class and middle-class mothers respectively). The next most common expenditure was children's clothing.[1548] A small-scale 1972 survey conducted by Hemel Hempstead Women's Equal Rights Group found the majority of family allowance recipients doubted whether the money would be passed on to them if it were paid to the husband.[1549] A larger CPAG survey, conducted later that year, reported similar findings. About two thirds (64 per cent) of middle-class women thought some of the money would be passed on. Only half (52 per cent) of working-class mothers and one third (35 per cent) of mothers on supplementary benefit shared their confidence.[1550]

Judging by other available evidence, their fears were not unfounded. In Gavron's small scale study, conducted in 1960-61, virtually all the middle-class wives knew their husbands' income, but only 45 per cent shared the money without dividing it into allowances. 38 per cent of working-class wives knew what their husbands earned, but although most claimed to share financial decisions, 77 per cent kept to a strict housekeeping allowance.[1551] In her 1969 survey of large families in London, Hilary Land found families with very low incomes were more likely to adopt the 'whole wage system' whereby the breadwinner handed his whole pay packet to his wife to manage and she would then return him an amount of spending money. Yet, only about one quarter of her sample used this system.[1552] Turning to the other end of the income scale, Frank Field claimed that 'the 'higher the [husband's] income the more kudos there is in it not being known.'[1553] According to a CPAG survey, husbands who earned over £5000 per annum were 'as likely to fail to tell their wives how much they get as working-class men.'[1554] Betty Jerman took it as a statement of fact that husbands simply viewed their pay packet as 'theirs', to 'apportion as they pleased.'[1555]

[1548] Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, pp. 318-9.
[1549] *Women's Report* 1 (November 1972 – January 1973).
[1550] 'Summary of the Results of a survey of 1196 women carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group in the Summer of 1972', HHC, NCCL Archives, DCL 468/2. This was reported in Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 319.
[1551] Gavron, *Captive Wife*, pp. 140-41.
[1552] H. Land, 'Large Families in London' cited in the Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 318.
[1553] *Guardian*, 9 October 1972.
[1554] *Guardian*, 11 October 1972
[1555] *Guardian*, 28 September 1972.

Much evidence also suggests that housekeeping allowances failed to keep pace with price and wage increases. Between 1971 and 1972, average earnings increased by 12 per cent; retail prices increased by 8 per cent.[1556] Yet a 1972 Gallup poll found this was not reflected in the housekeeping allowances husbands gave to their wives. One third (34 per cent) of women surveyed reported having received no increase at all. Among the 16 to 34 age group, where young children were most likely to be present in the family, this rose to 41 per cent.[1557] The following year, the increase in average earnings again outstripped the increase in retail prices: 14 per cent against 9 per cent. Between 1973 and 1974, the increase in average earnings outstripped the increase in retail price rises by 2 percentage points.[1558] However two more surveys, conducted in 1975, indicated that, on average, husbands only passed over half of any pay increase for housekeeping. One fifth of mothers surveyed reported no increase at all in the previous twelve months, a figure rising to one third among lower paid and larger families.[1559] The CPAG received letters from women who had not received an increase 'since we got married', or 'for ten years'.[1560] Taken together, this evidence suggests that, in sole (male) breadwinner families, there was a growing and accelerating gap between husband's and wivess levels of disposable income, even against a backdrop of an overall rise in living standards. This much was implied by the Conservative's October 1974 General Election manifesto which identified 'mothers... whose house-keeping money often fails to keep pace with the higher prices in the shops' as being 'among those worst hit by the ravages of inflation.'[1561]

Nevertheless, conversations about the uneven distribution of income within families remained a delicate matter since they pried into private arrangements. This perhaps helps to explain the observable tendency to speak as if the problems described above were limited to 'problem families' or 'bad' husbands.[1562] The TUC's session before the Select Committee illustrates how an attempt at objective discussion could so easily touch on individual sensibilities. Near the

[1556] Figures extrapolated from Prices and Disposable Incomes table printed in Cook and Stevenson (eds), *Britain Since 1945*, p. 179.
[1557] Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 318. A 1973 poll conducted by the *Mirror* showed similar findings. Referred to in HC, 2 Feb 1973, c. 1864.
[1558] Cook and Stevenson (eds), *Britain Since 1945*, p. 179.
[1559] Surveys for National Consumer Council and *Women's Own* , reported in *Women's Own,* October 1975, cited in Land, 'Child Benefit Fiasco', p. 123.
[1560] Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 318. See also *The Times*, 8 January 1973.
[1561] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto October 1974.*
[1562] For example, see group discussions in Three Way Contact, 'Political Contact Programme, Tax Credit Versus Poverty', April 1973, p. 4, CPA CCO 170/5/61. See also above p. 241.

beginning of the session Vic Feather volunteered that 'in the sort of home I came from and I belong to the wage packet comes home and is opened at home.'[1563] Although he knew there was 'some secret' about it in other homes, he did not necessarily think this was a problem. Highlighting the wide variety of possible domestic financial arrangements (although he made it clear it was not the trade union movement's business to reach that far into marital relationships) he opined that 'in general, in the sort of homes there are in this country, there is fair play goes on with the man and wife.[1564] Asked to comment on the Gallup findings, Feather expressed scepticism about researchers' abilities to uncover the truth about personal finances.[1565] David Price MP agreed that 'most of us as male wage earners…do play fair-dos by our own family', and he worried that the Select Committee risked 'getting a biased view and coming away with the view that all of *us* men do play unfairly.'[1566] The atmosphere was such that Mrs Kellnet Brown MP decided to preface her next question with the assurance, 'I am sure all the gentleman here are model husbands but…'[1567]

There are various explanations for men's apparently parsimonious attitudes towards their wives. In a minority of families, relationship breakdown or addictive behaviours such as alcoholism would have severely impacted economic relations. A more universal problem, the CPAG thought, was fathers' relative ignorance of the cost of living, and the increasing costs of feeding and clothing growing children.[1568] Given the normal gender division of labour, this was a reasonable supposition. Feminists might have pointed to what Rathbone once famously identified as the 'Turk complex', the desire of men to maintain domination over their wives and children.[1569] As J.K. Galbraith later claimed, 'the household in the established economics is essentially a disguise for the exercise of male authority.'[1570] From this point of view, feminist scholar Michaela Nava explained, men derived their power and authority from women's

[1563] Examination of Witnesses from the TUC by the Select Committee on Tax Credits, *Evidence*, p. 267.
[1564] Ibid. p. 270.
[1565] Ibid. p. 271. He suggested that most men, if asked, would deny or not admit to having had a pay rise in the previous year. He also suggested that 'women at home – housewives – have got ways of answering questions on the doorstep that leave the questioner completely bewildered.'
[1566] Ibid. p. 270. Emphasis added. This well illustrates Land's observation that men often make policy 'as men'. See above, p. 45n.
[1567] Examination of Witnesses from the TUC by the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, pp. 267-71.
[1568] Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 319.
[1569] Rathbone, *The Disinherited Family*, p. 341.
[1570] J.K. Galbraith, *Public Policy and Public Purpose* (Harmondswoth, 1974), p. 52, cited in Land and Parker, 'Family Policies in Britain', p. 14.

economic dependency. This entailed women's 'compromise, submission and lack of self-respect', and rendered some, particularly those with children, 'prisoners' of their situation.[1571]

It does appear that men and women had different attitudes towards family income. Substantial amounts of evidence gathered in the late 1960s and mid-1970s suggest that 'the majority of women regarded their wages as part of the housekeeping' and, compared to their husbands, they kept back a smaller proportion for personal expenditure.[1572] Moreover, full-time salaried workers – largely men - often enjoyed additional expense-based perks, such as meals, which were not shared by their families. A significant proportion of waged workers' pay comprised bonus payments, shift allowances, overtime and so on. This is important because evidence suggests these were widely perceived as 'additions' to personal spending money instead of a supplement to the common pool of family income.[1573] Feminists tended to treat claims about sharing money and decision making with caution. Lee Comer, who would once have 'lain [her] hand on heart' and sworn that she and her husband shared the money equally, later reflected on the politics of financial dependence. 'Loyalty and self-negation', she wrote, 'are powerful agents of economic oppression.'[1574] She described the 'I-don't-need-any-money-for-myself' syndrome in housewives as 'a profound response' to their dependence, a 'telling indication of the depth of [their] humiliation. She says she doesn't need the money for herself because *she hasn't any money.* '[1575]

However, the 'Turk's' attitude towards earned income need not be seen as innately male. It can be understood as a function of the social, economic and cultural constructions of the meanings of 'work', and the expectations surrounding gender roles within marriage. Actual and potential

[1571] M. Nava, 'The Family: A critique of Certain Features' in M. Wandor (ed.), *The Body Politic: Women's Liberation in Britain, 1969-1972* (London, 1972), p. 39. For some discussion of the nineteenth century critique of marriage see Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, pp. 41-6. For a classic second wave account, see Comer, *Wedlocked Women.*

[1572] A. Hunt, *A Survey of Women's Employment,* HMSO, 1968, and Survey by National Consumer Council and *Women's Own,* reported in *Women's Own,* 1975 cited in Land, 'Social Security and the Division of Unpaid Work in the Home and Paid Employment', 50.

[1573] Mays, 'Growing Up in a City', cited in cited in the Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 318.

[1574] Comer, *Wedlcoked Women,* p. 124.

[1575] Ibid. p. 128. Emphasis in original.

earnings power had a profound influence on the power dynamics within relationships. Certainly, this is how Shirley Williams perceived it.[1576] She told the Commons:

> Members on both sides of the House will recognise the truth contained in the poll...showing that increases in incomes to men in the last year were in no way reflected by any increases in housekeeping allowances. That is part of human nature, but it reflects a considerable burden against which many women have to operate.[1577]

Personal accounts vividly illustrate this. One woman, who became her family's breadwinner after her husband lost her job described her 'insight on the different sex roles in marriage'. She felt quite 'mean' if he wanted to spend 'her' money and if he wanted 'luxuries' like beer or cigarettes she had to restrain herself from acting 'like some heavy Victorian father.'[1578] Another female breadwinner, with an unemployed husband, similarly recounted her experience:

> I think, 'It's me going out to work. I've had to take it off you (husband) when you was working and I was at home so now you can take it from me…I'm the gaffer in the house.' And to me I think I am, cos as I say there's only my wage coming in and everything's got to rely on me…to me when a man's working he's the man of the house, but when he's unemployed and then the wife goes out to work it changes it.[1579]

During the three-day-week, many male dominated industrial workplaces were cut back while female dominated workplaces, such as offices and shops, which were less affected by power restrictions, tended to stay open. The result was that men were at home more and wives' earnings rose relative to their husbands. In his recent history of 1970s Britain, Beckett remarked on a 'temporary but suggestive shift in the gender balance' of many households.[1580]

Explanations aside, the evidence was clear. Mothers were the surest vehicle for conveying cash benefits to children. Paying child tax credits to fathers would be more likely to decrease the money available for housekeeping upon which their families' living standards depended.[1581] The

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[1576] Discussing her mother's views' – her mother was Vera Brittan – she remarked, 'I'm not a feminist either, but that's a matter of generations, I think, don't you?' Quoted in Pugh, *Women and Women's Movement,* p. 285.
[1577] HC, 2 February 1973, c. 1864.
[1578] *Guardian*, 22 January 1976.
[1579] Charles, 'Women and Trade Unions', 7-8. Charles provided other illustrations of this phenomenon.
[1580] Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, p. 141.
[1581] There was additional evidence too. For example, based on findings from a survey of low income families in London, Virginia Bottomley noted that, 'both factual and verbal evidence suggests that in a significant number of families interviewed, control by the mother of a substantial proportion of the money is as important to the family's

likelihood of this increased further down the income scale where need was greatest. This was the crux of what may be described as the 'welfarist' claim to the mother's right to collect the family allowance. In this spirit, the Married Women's Petition ('*Mother's* Family Allowance in Jeopardy') had warned of 'grave hardship...if Family Allowances were to be paid other than directly to the mother'.[1582] Similarly, when Proops asserted mothers' 'RIGHT' to family allowances, she declared that '*this family life-line must stay in mothers safe hands*.'[1583]

It was partially for this reason the TUC told the Select Committee that they favoured paying all the credits directly to the wife. Though they would have been alert to the fact that credits paid on the breadwinner's pay packet would have been administered by employers, they justified their decision on the grounds of social justice and welfare: 'mothers have the major responsibility for the family budget, the large majority either have no independent income other than family allowances or earn considerably less than their husband.' Direct payment to mothers would also make it much easier to extend the child tax credit to all children – including the most socially needy groups who were most likely to be excluded from the scheme as proposed.[1584] When the Select Committee queried the implications of a 'wallet to purse' transfer with the TUC, Feather conceded there had been 'a big division' in the TUC General Council and the decision had been taken 'on balance'.[1585] Although he thought it might yet present 'difficulty' in the trade union movement, he assured the Committee that the leadership would fight the 'progressive' cause against a potentially 'reactionary' shop floor.[1586] He added some caveats: the TUC would accept 'their share', not full responsibility for the consequential impact on workers. It would be absolutely necessary to publicise the social objectives of the scheme, and there should be a phasing in period.[1587]

For many women, this was not simply a welfare issue. CPAG researchers had been unsurprised to find women 'with low and insecure incomes deeply concerned about the proposed abolition of

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standard of living as the total income a family received.' See CPAG, 'Tax Credits – A Home Responsibility Credit', n.d. 1972/3, HHC, NCCL Archives, DCL 468/2.

[1582] Petition quoted in *Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter* 111, 10 December 1972. See also the photo of Barbara Castle and the group of women preparing to present the mass petition in *The Times*, 4 April 1973.

[1583] *Mirror*, 28 January 1973. Emphases in original (italics were emboldened as secondary headline).

[1584] Memorandum by the Trades Union Congress to the Select Committee on Tax Credit, *Evidence*, pp. 258-9.

[1585] Examination of Witness from the TUC by the Select Committee on Tax Credits, *Evidence*, p. 266. Most groups agreed that the child credit should be universal on these grounds. See, for example, Examination of Witnessess representing the Women's National Commission to the Select Committee on Tax Credits, *Evidence*, p. 182.

[1586] Ibid. p. 270.

[1587] Ibid. p. 269.

the family allowance book.' They were surprised feelings were equally strong among middle-class women. 'It is clear', they thought, 'that many women felt that there was a principle- at stake in that the Family Allowance money is the mother's money – often the only money she can regard as her own.'[1588] Numerous women and their representatives reported, independently, how family allowance recipients described it as 'the only money I can call my own.' The message was relayed and repeated by groups as diverse as the Women's Liberation Family Allowance Campaign and the Women's Advisory Committee of the Dulwich Conservative Association.[1589] Although this partially reflected welfare concerns, there was another dimension to this sentiment which stemmed from the personal politics of financial dependency. The CPAG was 'flooded' by letters from middle-class mothers responding to a *Times* article.[1590] 'I hate to have to *beg* for money if I need a new pair of tights,' explained one woman whose husband earned a salary. Another wrote, 'It is so humiliating always having to *ask* for money every time a coat needs cleaning or the children need a new pair of shoes.'[1591] The CPAG reported to the Select Committee:

> we should…bear in mind the psychological importance of some independent income for mothers who spend a number of years working at home with young children. How many men would be satisfied with virtually no financial recognition of their work and almost complete dependence on the whim of another human being for their livelihood?[1592]

As this suggests, women's claim to family allowances often embodied the idea that they constituted some formal recognition of their work as mothers. If some women were reticent about asking their husbands for money, it did not necessarily follow that they also held themselves to be undeserving of reward. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some women perceived family allowances as a form of financial recompense, albeit paltry, of their work in the

[1588] 'Summary of the results of a survey of 1196 women carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group in the Summer of 1972', HHC, NCCL Archives, DCL 468/2.
[1589] 'Family Allowances', *Red Rag* 3, n.d. (c. February 1973); G.M. Fuller to S. Morrison, 28 January 1973, CPA, CCO 170/5/61. Interview with Selma James and Prisca Allen, 1 April 2008.
[1590] 'Summary of the results of a survey of 1196 women carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group in the Summer of 1972', HHC, NCCL Archives, DCL 468/2.
[1591] Letters quoted in *The Times*, 8 January 1973. The newspaper article quotes letters submitted with the CPAGs evidence to the Select Committee but left unpublished with the report. Interestingly, it seems that Lady Jellicoe and Mrs Hogg, both married to top ranking Conservative politicians, both went to the trouble of collecting their family allowance from the Post Office. See Selsdon Park Weekend', p. 2, CPA, CRD 3/9/93. Thatcher, who was a high earner in her own right did not do so since there was no benefit.
[1592] Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 321.

home raising and caring for their family.[1593] The subject of women's unpaid work attracted growing attention in the 1970s. Days after the Equal Pay Act had been passed, the Matrimonial Property and Proceedings Act recognised in law, for the first time, that women's domestic work had financial value by decreeing that the courts must take into account 'any contribution made by looking after the home or caring for the family' when settling the terms of a divorce. The reform was widely seen as a necessary corollary to the Divorce Reform Act which, some feminists feared, risked amounting to a 'Casonovas' Charter' by encouraging middle-aged men to abandon their wives for younger women.[1594] Feminist historian, Lewenhawk, hailed it, rather optimistically, as an Act of 'far greater significance' than the Equal Pay Act since it embodied a 'concept of equality' which took 'into account motherhood and women's work in the home.'[1595] Investigations conducted by the National Council of Women (NCW) showed that in homes containing a child under five, women spent an average of 85 hours a week on childcare and domestic duties. This fell to about 40 hours without children. In total, they estimated, women's 'homemaking' (which they took to include all childcare and domestic duties) was worth the equivalent of about one third of GNP. They called upon the government to revise the GNP calculations to recognise this contribution.[1596] Other studies conducted around the same time, including one in the USA by Chase Manhattan Bank, produced remarkably similar figures.[1597]

Some of the women involved with the very active women's liberation arm of the family allowance campaign believed it had been 'the first practical expression of a new idea in the movement – let's get paid for the work we are already doing.'[1598] Their campaigning experiences led them to perceive that a desire to be paid for housework was not strange to

[1593] Fleming, 'Money of Our Own', *Red Rag* 4 (July, 1973), pp. 16-17; S. James, 'The Family Allowance Campaign' FemL, Special Collection 1, Box 1. Interview with 'Cassie' (who had no knowledge of the feminist campaign but who had been a mother of four at this time and suggested the idea unprompted), 25 August 2008.
[1594] Holden, 'Letting the Wolf through the Door', pp. 523-5. For example, see National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women,* 1968, pp. 5-6.
[1595] Lewenhawk, *Women and Trade Unions,* pp. 290-91.
[1596] Betty Young and Mary Wickham, 'Woman Power', in *New Society,* 10 May 1973, p. 307.
[1597] In the USA there had been attempts since the 1920s to develop a form of cash measure for housework. In 1958 Colin Clark argued that it was 'absurd' that housewives work was not deemed to contribute towards National Income. If a couple divorced and the husband hired his ex-wife as a housekeeper, the National Income would increase. He put the value of housework at about half of National Income. Colin Clark, 'The Econoimcs of Housework', in *Bulletin of the Oxford Institute of Statistics* (May, 1958), cited in Young and Wilmott, *Symmetrical Family,* pp. 109-10.
[1598] Fleming, 'Money of Our Own' in *RR* 4 (July 1973), pp. 16-17. See also Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 51 & 55.

working-class women.[1599] It was a short step to demanding 'Wages for Housework', a demand which, advocates believed, had the potential to create a popular women's movement.[1600] The Wages for Housework Campaign increasingly dominated the Women's Liberation arm of the Family Allowance Campaign, generating deeply divisive disagreements within the WLM, which was already asking itself questions about its involvement in a broader national campaign and the ways in which it had dealt with a national demand. The result was that many women's liberationists became wary of the whole issue.[1601]

The socialist feminist Red Rag Collective, for example, acknowledged the family allowance campaign had responded to the 'real economic demands and necessities of women'. However, they argued, it was also important to work on the 'ideological level of these problems.' Calling for increased *children's* allowances, instead of demanding money for women, would have acknowledged and extended demands for the state's responsibility to children and challenged the notion that the family must be treated as an economic unit.[1602] Generally, feminist critics of Wages for Housework focused on two main issues. First, they argued, it was important not to confuse childcare and housework. Whereas housework could be fitted round paid employment, childcare could not. Second, and more importantly, critics believed that wages for housework would institutionalise women in the home. Even the fiercest critics of Wages for Housework conceded that the idea was usually well received by women outside of the movement.[1603] Yet since feminists sought to challenge, rather than entrench, the gender division of labour, they argued that housework, childcare, and paid work should be the shared responsibility of men and women.[1604] For this reason, Rowbotham had thought that the important thing was to stress that family allowances should be paid to 'whoever was mainly responsible for the child.'[1605] (On this

[1599] Ibid.
[1600] Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 51-4.
[1601] Again, much of this is detailed in Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 46, 53 and 55-96. For contemporary sources regarding the split and in the Women's Liberation Family Allowance campaign and its consequences see, for example, *Spare Rib,* 13 July 1973. See also 'Thoughts on the Family Allowance Campaign', in *RR,* nd. c. 1973, p. 19.
[1602] Red Rag Collective, 'Notes Towards a Discussion of the Family Allowance Campaign', FemL, Special Collection 2, Conference Papers, Box 1, folder on Women's Liberation and Socialism Conference Papers, Birmingham, March 17-18, 1973.
[1603] Homans, 'Wages for Housework', p. 82. Some women also argued that housework (keeping a home clean and tidy) was antithetical to providing good childcare.
[1604] For discussion of this see Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 48-54 & 95. For a compelling and engaging exploration of the issues, see Zoe Fairbairns, *Benefits* (Nottingham, 1998. Originally published 1979). The novel was inspired by the 'row' over child benefits and the Wages for Housework Campaign.
[1605] Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us,* p. 45.

point she and her fellow women's liberationists were, possibly unknowingly, in agreement with the Fawcett Society who told the Select Committee that 'the Family Allowance Act of 1945 was a recognition of the responsibility of society through the taxpayers to the welfare of the children of our society.'[1606]) Many women's liberationists had been wary of welfarist arguments proclaiming the mother's right to family allowance for similar reasons. Howe argued this position forcefully:

> To say that women have to have children's money placed in their hands by the State, because their men would not…is contradictory to the basic tenet of women's liberation. That is, that men and women should come to realise that children are the product (and responsibility) of both sexes; and so go on to organise society accordingly…why should we encourage such a division by perpetuating the myth that children are the special responsibility of women?[1607]

Most media comment on Wages for Housework dismissed the idea as patently unreasonable and ridiculous. One journalist described a 'horrified and confused' reaction. Wages for housework, she argued, was a misguided attempt to 'put a financial value on a relationship based on something stronger than money.'[1608] Economic objections were frequently raised. Paying housewives wages would be too expensive, ran the argument. It would place an intolerable burden on the tax payer.[1609] There were various attempts to belittle the idea using sarcasm. The *Mirror* suggested husbands might like to 'Give the Wife a Big Valentines Day Smacker…as she's saving you thousands of them.'[1610] The *Daily Mail* speculated on the negotiating tactics of NUDE (National Union of Domestic Engineers): 'at first sight it should be simple to agree on a flat-rate for ironing but a moment's thought shows that there would also have to be a higher,

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[1606] Memorandum by the Fawcett Society to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Appendices*, p. 75. In their submission to the Select Committee, they urged the wording that payment of child tax credits should be '*directly to the parent responsible for the care of the child.'* Emphasis added.

[1607] *Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter,* 10 December 1972 (The assumption that this 'Pat' is Pat Howe is based on the fact that both Pat's lived in Watford, were very vocal, and expressed compatible views).

[1608] *Guardian*, 9 August 1975. See also *Daily Mail*, 26 September 1977. The notion that housewives worked for love essentially derives from the notion of 'separate spheres'. Even if the reality can be historically contested, the ideal of a private sphere, separate from the world of business, politics and economics and unsullied by its more worldly morals, remained potent. For a short description of the notion of separate spheres in historiography see Downs, 'From Women's History to Gender History', pp. 270-72. The feminist reply to such arguments is, as Lee Comer retorted: 'If the women's work and the value attached to it were held in equal esteem as her husband's, there would be no need to place her on a pedestal.' Comer, *Wedlocked Women*, p. 121.

[1609] Homans, 'Wages for Housework', p. 90.

[1610] *Daily Mirror*, 14 February 1978. See also the *Mirror* interview with Selma James, leader of Wages for Housework. Commenting on her 'unkempt flat' the reporter wondered if 'Ms James had gone on strike?' 'If I were Mr. James, I wouldn't rush home.' See *Mirror*, 1 August 1975.

pleated rate.'[1611] A *Telegraph* cartoonist similarly contrasted trade union demands with housewife's good common sense and willingness to get on without complaint.[1612] Some of the most thoughtful comment came from financial journalists who suggested that readers should consider 'housewife policies' to cover the cost of hiring domestic help should a wife die or be struck down by chronic illness.[1613]

Housewives and Housework. The Question of Dependency and Married Women's Earnings

The subject of women's unpaid work had a direct bearing on the other key question raised by the Conservative's tax credit proposals, namely the treatment of married women for tax purposes.[1614] Traditionally, the implication of the 'family wage' (however short the ideal fell from reality) was that housewives would depend on it as a means of financial support whilst they dedicated their energies to home and family. The growing participation of wives and mothers in the labour market challenged that ideal. The Green Paper proposed to treat married couples with non-earning wives much as before. Non-earning wives would be viewed as their husband's dependents, and a lower tax allowance would be granted to married couples than to two single people (hence the differentials in the proposed tax credit rates). The uncertainty centred on married women's earnings.[1615] Since 1920, married women had been allowed to claim wife's earned income relief which had been designed to ensure that, where husband and wife both worked, their tax liability was no greater than if they were unmarried. Over time, this concession had tipped increasingly in favour of the married couple with two earners. During the war, partly to incentivise working, the wife's earned income allowance had been set at the rate of a single person's allowance and her earnings taxed at a lower rate. Since none of this affected the married man's tax allowance, the overall effect was that the tax allowances granted to a married couple with two earners became greater that the combined tax relief of two single

[1611] *Daily Mail*, 26 July 1975.
[1612] *Sunday Telegraph, 1972.* Cartoon available to view at the British Cartoon Archive Online. In the cartoon a housewife, dishcloth in hand, stands watching the television whilst her pipe-smoking husband reads the newspaper in his arm chair. The television presenter's announcement, 'wives are worth £75 per week', is juxta-posed with the newspaper headline, 'Unions seeking £20 minimum for lower-paid workers.' The wife says to her husband, 'If we did get money like that - I dread to think of all the differential disputes.' This was similar to the idea expressed in *Carry On at Your Convienience*. See above, p. 59.
[1613] Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 89-90.
[1614] *Proposals for a Tax-Credit System*, p. 17.
[1615] Ibid.

people.[1616] There were good reasons to continue with an approximation of these arrangements. First, was a desire to avoid disturbing existing relativities too much. Second, it was acknowledged that dual earner couples incurred greater expenses 'on duties otherwise undertaken by the wife.' Finally, there was the incentive effect. As the Green Paper explained, 'the needs of the economy require the continued employment of large numbers of married women and the system must be such that they feel it is worth their while going to work.' (What it did not say was the concession amounted to a state subsidy to compensate for women's low pay.)[1617] Nevertheless, the Green Paper recognised a strong case for saying the balance had tipped too far in favour of working wives. The more generous their tax arrangements became, the greater the burden left to other tax payers – including married couples where the wife was at home. The 1971 Finance Act had already partially accepted the principle of disaggregation – the idea that people should not be treated differently simply on account of their marriage status. However, if all wives were treated the same as single women, many working wives (and their husbands) would be left worse off while the position of a married couple were the wife was at home would show a large relative gain.[1618] The Green Paper ultimately concluded by proposing to maintain a version of the status quo and invited views on the subject.[1619]

Among those groups which gave evidence to the Select Committee, the TUC was unusual in regarding proposals to treat husbands' and wives' earnings differently as 'broadly fair.'[1620] They explicitly endorsed the principle that the family, rather than the individual, should be the 'unit for income tax purposes' and that the 'the level of personal allowances (reflecting supposed taxable capacity) of a married couple should be less than twice the level for a single person.[1621] Class concerns weighed heavier than any attachment to a women's rights agenda.[1622] The TUC viewed the 1971 Finance Act, which had breached the principle of family taxation by allowing the disaggregation of husbands', wives', and children's incomes, as 'socially inequitable' because the principal beneficiaries had been surtax payers and those with investment

[1616] *Proposals for a Tax-Credit System*, p. 17. See also helpful summary in,'Women in Employment: Implications of Possible Tax Changes', attached to a letter, Inland Revenue to Mrs J Bridgeman, 24 November 1978, TNA T 366/398.
[1617] *Proposals for a Tax-Credit System*, p. 18.
[1618] Ibid. pp. 17-18.
[1619] *Proposals for a Tax-Credit System*, pp. 17-19. See also Conservative Party, 'Tax Credit Versus Poverty: Contact Brief, Conservative Contact Programme', February 1973, Oxford, CPA, CCO 170/5/61.
[1620] Select Committee on Tax Credit, *Report and Proceedings of the Committee* (London, 1973), p. 30.
[1621] Memorandum from the TUC to the Select Committee on Tax Credits, *Evidence*, p. 259.
[1622] For some contemporary discussion of relationship between tax and equal pay see Memorandum by the Women's National Commission, to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 173.

incomes.[1623] Houghton told Feather that, although the Government were not in favour of disaggregation, plenty of women's organisations were. He went on, 'here we have the General Council trundling along with this old idea about the relationships of husbands and wives.' 'Do you really mean this?'[1624] Feather replied:

> What you are describing, Mr Houghton, is essentially a middle class system where everybody has their different chinks and things of that kind. We are talking about the general average working man and woman – the ordinary householder.[1625]

Evidence presented by the Conservative WNAC gives credence to the TUC's concerns regarding the regressive effects of disaggregation. The WNAC criticised their Government's tax credit proposals for discriminating against married women and for running contrary to the Cripps recommendations.[1626] They urged that married women with earnings over a certain threshold (25 per cent of industrial average earnings) should be treated in the same way as married men, and an additional tax credit could be granted to the 'head of the household'.[1627] The WNAC also argued that husband's and wives' investment income, provided it was above a certain level, should be taxed separately. They acknowledged this might create a 'loophole' whereby husbands could avoid their 'proper responsibilities' by reducing their tax bill, but they did not see this should be used as a justification for 'not doing something which is right.'[1628] However, since the scheme had been designed to cover people in employment or in receipt of National Insurance Benefits, the WNAC accepted that non-earning wives should be treated as her husband's dependent, and that such married couples should only be entitled to £6 tax credit.[1629]

The wider Conservative Party was more divided. Shortly after the Green Paper's publication, a 'Political Contact Programme' was dedicated to the subject. 4057 Party members participated in

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[1623] Memorandum from the TUC to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 259.
[1624] Examination of Witnesses from the TUC by the Select Committee on Tax Credits, *Evidence*, p. 273.
[1625] Ibid.
[1626] Memorandum by the Parliamentary Sub-Committee of the Women's National Advisory Committee of the Conservative Party to the Select Committee on Tax-Credits, *Evidence*, p. 185.
[1627] Ibid. p. 186; Examination of Witness from the Sub-Committee of the Women's National Advisory Committee of the Conservative Party to the Select Committee on Tax-Credits, *Evidence*, p. 189.
[1628] Examination of Witness from the Sub-Committee of the Women's National Advisory Committee of the Conservative Party to the Select Committee on Tax-Credits, *Evidence*, p. 190.
[1629] Ibid. pp. 187-88. Even today, when all other tax affairs are entirely disaggregated, families and households in receipt of means-tested benefits – in work or out of work - are means-tested on the basis of their household or family income.

475 group discussions.[1630] Regarding the taxation of married women, a substantial minority favoured the maintenance of the status quo, not least because any changes might well have made working wives and their husbands poorer, resulting in lost Conservative votes. A few of these groups specifically endorsed the incentive effect of generous tax allowances for working wives on the grounds that they were necessary to the economy.[1631] Overall though, in contrast to the WNAC, the groups came down two-to-one in favour of making a married credit double that of a single person's credit, and of not making any distinction between married women who stayed at home or went out to work. The main reason for this, according to the report, was that 'in an age of high unemployment and 'latch-key' children, women should be encouraged to be housewives and to consider this a worthwhile job.' [1632] A few of these groups also suggested that women should work for 'realistic wages' rather than tax allowances. There was also some disagreement about whether the wife should receive the benefit of the tax credit directly, in cash where applicable (i.e. in the case of low earning or non-earning wives) or whether the credit should be paid to the husband.[1633] Some worried about the consequential loss in husbands' take-home pay; others believed that direct payment to stay-at-home wives would raise their status.[1634] The CRD picked up this idea, suggesting it might be possible to appeal to target women voters by promising the eventual introduction of 'a separate tax credit to the wife who runs the home.' As they put it, 'all women work, some women earn.'[1635]

Interestingly, this was very close to the proposals that had been advanced by Juliet Rhys Williams in the 1940s, and later by her son, Brandon Rhys Williams (Conservative MP, 1968-88). In this context, Brandon's motivations demonstrate how policies beneficial to women could be born of deeply conservative and family orientated agendas. (This might also be read as a vindication of critiques of 'new' or 'difference' feminism.) Rhys Williams saw himself as a one-nation Conservative, committed to a competitive market economy and, as an active CPAG

[1630] 'Contact Brief: Tax Credit Versus Poverty', February 1973, CPA, CCO 170/5/61; Conservative Central Office, Report of Three-Way Political Contact Programme on Tax Credit Versus Poverty', April 1973,p. 5, CPA, CCO 170/5/61.
[1631] Conservative Central Office, Report of Three-Way Political Contact Programme on Tax Credit Versus Poverty', April 1973, p. 3. CPA, CCO 170/5/61.
[1632] Ibid.
[1633] Ibid.
[1634] Ibid.
[1635] Conservative Research Department, 'Women's Rights. Conservative Targets', 11 April 1973, CPA CRD/3/38/2.

member, deeply concerned about the plight of the poor.[1636] He was sensitive to the project of women's emancipation, describing it as 'one of the three major influences on British social life and institutions in the twentieth century.' [1637] Aware of the injustices of the 'family wage', he argued that the social changes accompanying the emancipation of women had rendered it an 'unacceptable device.' Wages in a competitive market economy, he maintained, should not be determined by the needs of a worker's dependents.[1638] Though sympathetic to the needs of working wives, Rhys Williams was committed to supporting the traditional family:

> The achievement of equal pay makes it necessary to re-consider the status of women as taxpayers and in particular to redress the balance in favour of justice for the married woman whose principal contribution is in her family's home. [1639]

Rhys Williams believed his modified version of his mother's scheme, as set out in *The New Social Contract* (1967), would go a long way towards realising Winston Churchill's hope of providing a 'level…below which no one should fall but above which each man should be free to rise as high as he could.' [1640] Since it was based on single universal rate, he also claimed it could rid the system of the 'blot' of progressive taxation which 'deliberately victimises the most energetic, enterprising and successful.'[1641] He nonetheless maintained that the scheme would go some way towards realising the socialist inspired ideal, 'to each according to his need, from each according to his capacity.'[1642] Rhys Williams was influential in encouraging the Conservatives to pursue and adopt a Negative Income Tax policy.[1643] Although *Proposals for a Tax Credit*

[1636] B. Rhys Williams, 'One Modern Nation', n.d. c. September 1971, attached to a letter, Rhys Williams to P. Jenkin, 8 November 1972, LSE RHYS WILLIAMS B/5/9. Rhys Williams belonged to the One Nation Group. Seawirght reminds us however, there was a high degree of ideological divergence in the group. See, D. Seawright, 'One Nation', in K. Hickson (ed.), *The Political Thought of the Conservative Party since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 69-90.

[1637] Rhys Williams, 'One Modern Nation', attached to a letter, Rhys Williams to P. Jenkin, 8 November 1972, LSE RHYS WILLIAMS B/5/9. He listed universal suffrage and class warfare as the other two.

[1638] Ibid.

[1639] He suggested, for example, that any money saved from the abolition of the married women's tax allowance should be redirected towards services that would benefit this group such as such as nursery and pre-school facilities. Memorandum by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, pp. 199-200. He continued to develop this argument. See below, pp. 335n.

[1640] B. Rhys Williams, *The New Social Contract* (London, 1967), p. 4. Published by the Conservative Political Centre. Copy available from LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/5/9.

[1641] Ibid. p. 7.

[1642] Ibid. p. 5.

[1643] 'Selsdon Park Weekend', p. 10, CPA, CRD 3/9/93, p. 10. See also handwritten note on cover of Green Paper, *Proposals for a Tax-Credit System,* 'Tony' Barber to 'Brandon' Rhys Williams, 1972, LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS/5/12. See also 'Minutes of a Meeting by the Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee set up to study the possibility of adoption of a scheme along the lines of that of Sir Brandon Rhys Williams', 29 July 1969, LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS/5/8.

Scheme fell far short of his ideal, he saw the policy as a desirable step in the right direction and continued to argue the case for amending the scheme along the lines he proposed.[1644] Brandon explicitly maintained his mother's principle, that married women should have at least a 'modicum of financial independence.'[1645] For this reason, he favoured universal positive cash benefits over the proposed 'negative tax' offset against liabilities.[1646] This universal tax credit, or 'citizenship payment', which ideally would provide a 'minimum income to live on', would provide a 'personal income for wives.'[1647] Rhys Williams opposed family 'aggregation' for tax purposes but agreed that provision should be made for 'householders' in recognition of the cost of running a household. Each man, woman and child should be treated individually, on the same basis.[1648] In his words, Rhys Williams sought a 'unisex relationship between each citizen and the state which can neglect any question of domestic status.'[1649]

For those who shared Rhys Williams' views, policies like increased family allowances and cash benefits for housewives, represented a means of helping to preserve traditional gender roles within the family in the face of the erosion of the family wage. Feminists could advocate the same proposals for different ends. For example, the Fawcett Society argued for individual assessment and for a married couple's credit to be twice that of a single person's.[1650] Like Rhys Williams, they also proposed that housewives not in gainful employment should be entitled to a direct cash tax credit as a move towards recognising a wife's contribution in the home. They acknowledged that disaggregation would reduce many men's take-home pay, but welcomed this on the grounds that it might remove one of the main obstacles to wives going out to work - namely their husbands' unwillingness. In this way, they hoped, disaggregration would pave the

[1644] Examination of Sir Brandon Rhys Williams by the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 204. Notably, Rhys Williams had opposed FIS. See M. Phillips, 'Family Policy: the Long Years of Neglect', in *New Society*, 8 June 1978, p. 532.
[1645] Rhys Williams, *New Social Contract*, p. 9; Memorandum Submitted by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 198.
[1646] Memorandum Submitted by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, pp. 196-7.
[1647] Ibid. p. 198; Examination of Sir Brandon Rhys Williams by the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 204.
[1648] Memorandum Submitted by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, pp. 198-9. He observed that it was this 'concealed' provision which helped to explain the discrimination against married women in terms of their lower allowances.
[1649] Memorandum Submitted by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 199.
[1650] Memorandum by the Fawcett Society to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Appendices*, p. 75.

way for more 'interchangeable roles between married couples.'[1651] The Women's Family Allowance Campaign, then in the process of morphing into Wages for Housework, also wanted women to be treated as individual workers and given their own tax credit.[1652] They conceded, that they had found the question of women 'not in gainful employment' a 'very difficult problem.'[1653] They agreed mothers staying at home to look after small children (or indeed any adults caring for young, frail or sick relatives) should receive some additional credit in recognition of their work, and this should be removed from the question of marital status.[1654] They were more hesitant to assert that non-earning wives, those without dependents who could choose to stay at home because they were supported by wealthy husbands, should receive an individual credit. However, they explained, whereas men who stayed at home were regarded as 'unemployed', wives were more likely to be seen as 'lazy'. The core of their argument was that men and women should be 'treated in the same way.'[1655]

Whilst these endorsements of interchangeable roles sounded distinctly in tune with the aims of modern feminism, the Fawcett Society's views on 'the wife's contribution in the home' were beginning to sound distinctly old fashioned, and the Wages for Housework line was deeply controversial within the WLM. Nearly all interested parties and commentators agreed, in principle if not in fact, that caring for dependents - young children, the sick or elderly – merited exemption from the obligation to engage in or seek paid employment. Whether 'homemaking' alone did was a much more contested question.

The Women's National Commission, representative of a wide range of women's organisations, was divided on the issue.[1656] Their attitude towards wives who worked outside the home was clear. The Conservative's 'proposals to treat married women differently and disadvantageously

[1651] Memorandum by the Fawcett Society to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Appendices*, p. 76. They also noted that legislative 'inroads into this concept had already been made' in the form of the 1971 Finance Act and the 1970 Matrimonial Property and Proceedings Act. Both of these Acts are described above, ee pp. 170, 173 and 257.
[1652] Examination of Witnesses from the Women's Family Allowance Campaign by the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 388.
[1653] Ibid. p. 388.
[1654] Ibid. p. 389.
[1655] Examination of Witnesses from the Women's Family Allowance Campaign by the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 390.
[1656] For the history of this body see above, pp. 79-80. On balance, they had welcomed the tax credit proposals but had unanimously recorded their regret 'over the treatment of married women, who were treated throughout as dependents as long as they lived with their husbands. They noted that the same level of credit was to be allowed for a wife as for a child. See Memorandum by the Women's National Commission to the Select Committee on Tax Credits, *Evidence*, p. 172.

[were] contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Charter of Human Rights, and the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to all the principles of which the United Kingdom subscribes.' They also noted that differential tax rates would effect the equal pay structures.[1657] However, despite formally recommending direct payment of an equal tax credit to non-earning wives, this was not unanimous recommendation.[1658] Supporters belived it would go way towards recognizing the 'substantial' economic contribution that women's work in the home made to the economy.[1659] Other Commission members disagreed. One spokeswoman opined, 'it was a normal principle of life…if you are staying at home you do not expect to be paid, and if you go out to work you expect to be paid for a day's job.' From this point view, there were greater priorities than 'helping a woman who is at home out of her own free choice' (they used the example of a 'young girl' married to an earning husband).[1660] It is important to note, however, that there was unanimous agreement that married women with children were a 'completely different' matter.[1661]

During his 1962 Reith Lecture, George Carstairs had claimed that that society had 'not yet abandoned the Victorian ideal of the fully domesticated mother and wife.' He noted how, twenty years previously, a high prevalence of 'suburban neurosis' had been observed among active women whose children were growing up and whose household duties were no longer demanding', and argued that society had 'failed to provide a constructive role for these mothers.'[1662] Yet the reality, even in 1962, was that women were becoming an increasingly important part of the labour force. Most people would have conceded that husbands generally failed to do their share of housework but the sentiment behind Betty Freidan's famous dictum, 'housework expands to fill the time available', percolated into public consciousness. Housewifery was less respected as a worthwhile full-time occupation.[1663] Abel Smith told the Select Committee: 'not only have conventions about women at work changed considerably but it

[1657] Ibid. p. 173.
[1658] Ibid. p. 181.
[1659] Ibid. p. 179.
[1660] Ibid. pp. 179-80.
[1661] Ibid. p. 180.
[1662] Carstairs, 'Reith Lectures, 1962: This Island Now: The Changing Role of Women'.
[1663] In 1976 Delia Smith wondered about the psychological and economic repercussions of 'bored (if liberated) housewives' whose burden had been supposedly relived by gadgets and labour saving devices. (See D. Smith, *Frugal Food* (London, 2008. Originally published 1976), p. 4. B y the 1980s, housewife was increasingly recognised as a derogatory term. See Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, particularly the personal interviews, pp. 109-203, esp. pp. 130-32, 152, 164, 201.

is now easier for women without children to run a home and go to work, particularly if it enables them to afford refrigerators, washing machines, convenience foods and gas and electric heating.' He believed that society should bear the costs of parenthood, but not of marriage.[1664]

The divergence between these points of views was clearly articulated in a conversation between Betty Lockwood, then speaking on behalf of the Labour Study Group on Discrimination, and Edith Summerskill in her role on the Select Committee on Sex Discrimination. Summerskill had long championed the rights of non-earning wives.[1665] She suggested that Labour's Study Group had not gone far enough on the question of 'Rights in Marriage.' Noting the worth of housewives' work had been estimated at £50 a week, she believed wives should be entitled to half the savings from the whole family income so they could have 'a fair return for their work.' Lockwood responded:

> We think this is a very difficult area to legislate for and it is a question of establishing the fact that marriage is a partnership and if it is decided that the wife remains at home and works within the home, then it is done as a definite decision between husband and wife and not that this is just something which is expected of the married woman.[1666]

For some of the older generation of feminists this view, which drew upon notions of modern equal marriage, represented something of a departure.[1667] However, it was gaining increasing traction. A stay-at-home-wife without dependents to care for was increasingly regarded as an anachronistic luxury.[1668] The NJCWWO, for example, in line with their long standing representations on the subject, sought to establish the principle that 'all workers, irrespective of sex or marital status, should be treated in the same way.' [1669] To do otherwise would be 'contrary to current opinion which [was] moving towards the establishment of individual rights for women.[1670] They argued that provision should be made for women who were prevented from

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[1664] 'Equity and Dependence, Memorandum by Professor Brian Abel-Smith, London School of Economics' to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence,* p. 353.
[1665] Her efforts in championing the Married Women's Property Act (1963) had won wives the entitlement to half the savings they made out of the housekeeping money.
[1666] Examination of Witnesses from the Labour Party Study Group by the House of Lords Select Committee on the Bill, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, 1972-3,* p. 53-4. In Summerskilll's view, 'no man in [the Labour] Party' would have supported the Study Group's endeavours had they included such a proposal.
[1667] For more on the modern marriage see above, pp. 62-4.
[1668] As the husband's earnings rose, wives were less likely to go out to work. See *Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. Report no. 6. Lower incomes.* Cmnd. 7175 (London, 1978), p. 50.
[1669] Examination of Witnesses from the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations by the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence,* p. 374
[1670] Memorandum by the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence,* p. 372.

going out to work by their caring for small children, and who were sacrificing their future career prospects by staying at home, through payment of family allowances and perhaps an additional allowance for the mother.[1671] However, on the subject of non-earning wives without caring responsibilities, the NJCWWO were unequivocal: they should not receive any individual tax credit. Lockwood, this time as spokeswoman for the NJCWWO explained to the Select Committee on Tax Credits:

> If a husband and wife together choose not to go out to work and that in effect she should support her husband in the job he is doing, then between them they should be able to maintain themselves.[1672]

This was the view that had been expressed by Labour's Study Group.[1673] It was perhaps most clearly evinced in calls for introduction of a Home Responsibility Payment (along the lines of that advocated by Tyler).[1674] The CPAG's submission to the Select Committee maintained that 'wives with no dependents are probably the most underemployed section of society today'.[1675] They believed that the £750 million worth of tax concessions granted to that section of society should be redirected to 'households with special home responsibilities' in the name of horizontal and vertical equity.[1676] These were defined as 'women with children under 5', and 'women caring for elderly or disabled relatives.' In the case of the former the CPAG hoped to 'remove some of the financial pressure from the mothers of very young children' and enable women to chose whether to go out to work. In the case of the latter, they highlighted the contrast between the human and financial costs of keeping people in hospitals and homes, and suggested that the 'pertinent question' was actually whether the state should pay a 'nursing wage' to any person caring for a bedridden elderly or disabled person.[1677] In the Commons, Michael Meacher argued that the social security system had failed to adjust to 'the profound changes which have taken place in our society in the role and place of women':

[1671] Ibid.; Examination of Witnesses from the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations by the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 374. See also Study Group on Discrimination Against Women, 'The Social Security Recommendations of the Study Group', December 1968, p. 8, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card, 953.
[1672] Ibid.
[1673] See above, p. 162.
[1674] See above, p. 232.
[1675] 'A Home Responsibility Credit: Further Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group' to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 326.
[1676] Ibid.
[1677] 'A Home Responsibility Credit: Further Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group' to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 326.

> It is now becoming not merely common but usual for women to work. The wife's wage has increasingly become an essential element in total family income without which many families would sink back into poverty... The clear indication of this changing situation is that women are now seen to have and themselves expect to have the right either to work or, in forgoing work, to be rewarded for the essential economic and social function of rearing children or caring for elderly or disabled relatives at home…What equity now clearly and loudly demands is the award of a home responsibility payment.[1678]

The CPAG was adamant that they were not suggesting that 'mothers *should* remain at home'. They wanted to allow women greater choice.[1679] Nevertheless, many feminists thought home responsibility payments sounded suspiciously like paying women to stay at home. They were alert to the fact that some of the main advocates of these sorts of schemes were people like the Director of the National Children's Bureau, Mia Kellmer Pringle. Pringle adhered to the ideas expressed in the 'cycle of deprivation' theory and correspondingly placed a heavy emphasis on the parenthood (motherhood specifically), whilst refusing to confront the wider social and economic implications of her arguments.[1680] Tyler had also cleaved closer to the view that young children were best cared for nearly exclusively by their mothers. Yet she had also hoped that childcare standards might be pushed up if mothers were given more money to spend on childcare.[1681] This reflected widespread concern about the low standards of care apparently provided by many child-minders.[1682] Even so, women's liberationists maintained, any such scheme would probably reinforce gender roles.[1683] Far better, they argued, to demand free childcare, better maternity and paternity leave, flexible working hours, and the sharing of home responsibilities. Until the later 1970s it was left largely to Wages for Housework campaigners,

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[1678] HC, 30 April 1973, cc. 851-2.
[1679] 'A Home Responsibility Credit: Further Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group' to the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 328 Emphasis in original.
[1680] Pringle's remarks quoted in *The Times*, 14 January 1976 quoted in Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State*, p. 94. Wilson criticised her ideas as being essentially a recycled version of Edith Summerskill's 1945 ideas. She had advocated the 'emancipation' of women inside the home as means of supporting family life by raising its status and prestige. See Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State*, pp. 93-6 & 141-2.
[1681] Tyler, 'Memorandum to the Members of the NEC Social Services Sub-Committee on Composite Resolution 3', MRC, MSS 292D/118/1.
[1682] *Observer*, 22 April 1973. See also below, pp. 323-4.
[1683] Opponents fears were not ungrounded. Research carried out in Hungary, where a generous child care grant had been available since 1967 to enable mothers to stay at home to care for their child for the first three years of its life, indicated that 'the increased opportunity for the wife to fulfil the mother's function turns into an obligation to play the housewife role in full'. Employers had become wary about recruiting young women for responsible jobs, and mothers claiming the grant reported that their husband's did less housework than before. (Others pointed out that the grant had not be available to men in Hungary). See Z. Ferge, 'The Relation between Paid and Unpaid Working Women', *Labour and Society*, cited in Land, 'Who Cares for the Family?', pp. 273-4. See also *Women's Report* (Feb-March 1979).

who represented a minority view in women's liberation, to openly wonder how much liberation women would find in badly paid 'second jobs.'[1684]

At the level of national policy debate, some of these arguments began to crystalise around the wife's opt-out clause in social security provision. In 1973, three quarters of all married women at work chose to opt-out of paying their own full national insurance contributions and relied upon their husband's record instead.[1685] Significantly, Heath's Government explicitly decided to retain the opt-out clause as part of their pension reforms. Defending the decision, Joseph told the Commons that the 'infinite variety of changing conditions during the lives of married women', made it 'very civilised that the decision about how to contribute to social security benefits should rest with the individual married woman herself.'[1686] By contrast, as we have seen, some Labour policy makers had been moving towards a view which argued for the necessity of explicitly recognising *all* women as independent earners. This view had formed the basis of the output of Labour's Study Group on Discrimination. At Ministerial level, it was perhaps Castle who did most to begin translating this view into policy.

Castle had long been concerned about women's unequal treatment in occupational pension schemes and had pushed, unsuccessfully, to include them within the Equal Pay Bill.[1687] Whether the broader implied conclusions were reached in retrospect is unclear, but by 1973 Castle believed that the Equal Pay Act had 'breached the principle of dependency'. She told the Commons:

> It has taken us ever since the TUC first broached the principle of equal pay back in 1880 – 90 years of argument to get across to people that our wages should not be a family cover system… [The Equal Pay Act] says that people should be studied as individuals, treated on their merits and given their individual rights. Once we have that clear, we can adapt the rest of our social security provision round it. [1688]

[1684] Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 50, 60, 84 & 86-7.
[1685] Conservative Party, 'Contact Brief, Women's Rights', November 1973, CPA, PUB 175/14.
[1686] HC, 8 May 1973, c. 405.
[1687] Minute from C.A. Larsen to D.B Sinth, 13 January 1970, TNA LAB 111/11.
[1688] HC, 8 May 1973, c. 403. Castle sought to clarify this argument in her discussion with representative from the NJCWWO. See Examination of Witnesses from the National Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations by the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Evidence*, p. 375.

To this end, Labour MPs attempted to introduce an amendment to the Conservative's 1973 Social Security Bill to phase out the married women's opt-out.[1689] Castle expressed her dismay that such an important issue was being discussed at one o' clock in the morning with a predominantly male audience.[1690] Introducing the amendment, Meacher explained that, to the extent that the dependency concept had served a useful purpose in the past, social change was rendering it increasingly anachronistic.[1691] Referring to the Women's National Commission, Meacher observed that this feeling had 'taken root' beyond those groups of women who could be dismissed as a 'hysterical fringe.' [1692] He and Castle argued that women were demanding their independence - increased rights for increased responsibilities. Referring to her experience on the Tax Credit Select Committee, Castle claimed that she had been surprised at the depth of feeling behind what she described as, simple and emphatic demand, made by women and their organisations, 'that women should be treated as separate individual entities and no longer purely as the dependents of a masculine brain.'[1693] She accused those who defended the concept of dependency on the grounds that it recognised social reality (that husbands would mostly be breadwinners and married women would spend at least part of their lives at home raising children) of 'ignoring the new facts of life.' Women's wages were not mere pin money.[1694] Married women and mothers made up a significant part of the workforce and the 'realities of working-class life' were that women's wages were 'a vital contribution to domestic solvency.'[1695]

Speaking for the Government, Joseph acknowledged there had been far reaching economic and social change. But, he said, the Opposition were equally guilty of refusing to face reality.[1696] Although there were a large number of two-earner families, it did not necessarily follow that all families should be treated the same way.[1697]

> …the Opposition have to face that there are at the moment very large numbers of married women who choose not to go out to paid work, and as far as one can see ahead there will

[1689] HC, 8 May 1973, cc. 390-413.
[1690] Ibid. cc. 396-7.
[1691] Ibid. c. 394.
[1692] Ibid. c. 396.
[1693] Ibid. cc. 398-9.
[1694] Ibid. c. 399.
[1695] Ibid. cc. 399-400.
[1696] Ibid. c. 405.
[1697] Ibid.

> be such married women. How are they to be treated? …if the benefit she is now entitled to on her husband's contribution is abolished, what option is left for the married woman who chooses to stay at home and not to go to work outside?[1698]

Labour's amendment was lost.[1699] However, the ideas expressed by Castle and Meacher - and by the women's groups and campaigners, and by Labour's Study Group – would be carried forward by the Wilson Government after 1974.

The Limited Success of the Family Allowance Campaign

The family allowance campaign peaked in the Spring of 1973. It was a central theme of the International Women's Day March.[1700] In April, Castle presented a petition to Parliament, with 300,000 signatures, urging the Government to 'retain family allowances paid to mothers.'[1701] In Birmingham, the local Women's Liberation group collected 20,000 signatures for their petition in the space of two months.[1702] The Select Committee reported that they, and the Tax Credit Study Group, had 'received a substantial number of letters and petitions as well as full memoranda…the very large part…relat[ing] to the issue' of 'who is to receive the child credits?' They also received an additional 44 petitions, containing 50,000 signatures, all of which favoured paying some or all of the child tax credit to the mother. Furthermore, the Committee received 500 letters from organisations and individuals, and 500 of the 1750 letters received by the Tax Credit Study Group were about the issue.[1703] A 1972 Gallup poll, commissioned by the CPAG, painted a very different picture to previous polls. 77 per cent of husbands and 88 per cent of wives favoured the payment of family allowances to the mother.[1704] It remains unclear whether there had been a shift in public mood, a change in polling methods, or whether the electorate was simply less inclined to act favourably to concrete, rather than hypothesised, proposals.

[1698] Ibid. cc. 405-6.
[1699] Ibid. cc. 412-3.
[1700] 'General Strike: Family Allowance: the Woman's Money', in Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming (eds), *All Work and No Pay* (Bristol, 1975), p. 89; *Women's Report* (March-April 1973).
[1701] *The Times*, 4 April 1973. This was the petition of the Married Women's Association and the CPAG.
[1702] *Spare Rib*, 13 July 1973. They presented it to their MP, Paul Dean, on 18 April 1973.
[1703] Select Committee on Tax Credit, *Report and Proceedings*, p. 20. These were additional to the mass petition presented by Castle to Parliament.
[1704] Memorandum by the Child Poverty Action Group, submitted to Select Committee on Tax Credit, *Evidence*, p. 321. Some respondents were unsure. Only 7 per cent of men and three per cent of women favoured payment to the husband. Historically, there was 'no real public sentiment' against payment to the mother. See Pedersen, *Origins of the Welfare State*, p. 347.

By January, it was clear that the point would have to be conceded.[1705] The Chancellor took the opportunity provided by the March Budget to announce that the Government would 'not adopt any arrangement which leaves mothers being paid less than they are at present.'[1706] Patrick Jenkin, at the Treasury, believed this 'reassured a great many women' and stressed that the message 'must be repeated loudly and clearly at regular intervals.[1707] The Select Committee, which reported in June 1973, went further. They had split broadly along party lines over the scheme as a whole, with Labour tending towards the view that the scheme was socially unjust and regressive. They nevertheless unanimously recommended that all child credits should be paid, as a universal benefit, to the mother through the post office. As Castle observed, this new 'child endowment policy' could be seen as entirely distinct from the rest of the scheme.[1708] Mothers stood to gain substantially, not least because the Committee's proposals would effectively extend family allowance to the first child.

Significantly, the proposed levels of child tax credits remained far below subsistence level, and the Committee had decided against recommending an additional home responsibility payment.[1709] Here lie the limits of reform. As many reformers – feminist, socialist, liberal and Conservative – argued, there could be no real solution to either sex or economic inequality without adequate family support.[1710] The Select Committee acknowledged that 'a policy of comprehensive support specifically for children could have wide implications for a revision of the wage structure of the country'. They also observed that no British Government had ever endorsed the idea that the minimum needs of a family should be met through any combination of family allowances and tax allowances.[1711]

Although the issue of married women's taxation was equally germane, it had not provoked a similarly vocal response. The Select Committee's final report observed:

[1705] M. Wolff to S. Morrison & Mr. Sewill, 25 January 1973, CPA CCO 170/5/61.
[1706] HC, 6 March 1973, c.242.
[1707] Patrick Jenkin to Diana Elles, 4 April 1973, CPA, CCO 170/5/91.
[1708] Select Committee on Tax Credit, *Report and Proceedings*, pp. 24-6 & 83-103.
[1709] Ibid. p. 26.
[1710] See Edward Bishops Comments, House of Lords, *Anti-Discrimination Bill, Session 1971-72,* pp. 195-7. See also Castles' below, p. 308.
[1711] Select Committee on Tax Credit, *Report and Proceedings*, p. 26. .

> Most of our contributors were arguing for 'equal' or 'more equal' treatment as between married couples and two single people… But no consensus emerged of what would constitute more equal treatment.[1712]

They explicitly drew back from offering their own opinions:

> Among all these conflicting suggestions we have no wish to offer a definition of equality between men and women, or even of equity… As long as one spouse in fact has greater opportunities to earn than the other, differences of treatment are likely to arise in the field of social security and many other fields as well. [1713]

They had tried to recommend a system sufficiently flexible to provide any treatment 'that governments and society in the future consider fair and equitable.'[1714] For the present, having weighed the evidence, the Select Committee accepted differentiated married and single tax credit rates. They nevertheless proposed that married women in regular employment should be included in the scheme and become eligible for tax credits in their own right.[1715]

The Cabinet gave a guarded welcome to the Committee's proposal on the taxation of married women's earnings (which actually represented a potential saving) and agreed to avoid welcoming it too explicitly.[1716] The proposal to tax husbands and wives separately (except in those cases where the couple stood to gain financially) had not attracted widespread support in their own Party. Many married women, and married couples, would have been left worse off. Cabinet acknowledged that the recommendation to pay the full child tax credit to the mother would 'be particularly welcomed by women's interests among the Government's supporters and more widely.' [1717] Yet they had some reservations. Practically, it was felt that both individual male wage earners, and the unions who negotiated on behalf of them, might resist the consequential reduction in net pay, resulting in higher wage demands. [1718] Ideologically, although Cabinet Ministers respected that the proposal had been designed to 'protect the interests of the wife and children', they thought the policy might appear to depart from a political philosophy which sought 'to promote a greater sense of responsibility on the part of the

[1712] Ibid. p. 30.
[1713] Ibid. p 32.
[1714] Ibid. p. 32.
[1715] Ibid. pp. 29-32.
[1716] Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 17 July 1973, TNA CAB 128/52/15.
[1717] Ibid.
[1718] Ibid.

individual wage earner.'[1719] As we will see in the final chapter, this last point would increasingly dominated Conservative thinking in the latter 1970s. In 1973 however, the Cabinet minutes recorded:

> public opinion was increasingly disposed to support women's rights; and, in view of the reaction which the alternative…had provoked, it might well be expedient to proceed [with payment to the mother]…[T]he Opposition would undoubtedly…exploit any apparent hesitation on the part of the Government in endorsing the proposals in favour of women.[1720]

Two days later Anthony Barber informed the House of Commons that the Government planned to go ahead with the tax credit scheme. All child tax credits would be paid directly to mothers, in cash, at the post office. The Government would consider 'the implications of the proposal to pay a credit to the wife in regular employment.'[1721] Women's protests had proved decisive.

Once this key point had been conceded, the popular family allowance campaign diminished. Concerned to keep up the pressure, a study group convened by Rhys Williams and the British Union of Family Organisations, which included representatives from the CPAG, the National Council for One Parent Families, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the National Council for Social Services and the Mother's Union, formed an Action Committee in May 1974.[1722] The resultant Family Allowance Movement described itself as 'representative of family organizations and political parties committed to the non-party political campaign for the 7,000,000 mothers who get no allowance for their first child.' Their central complaint was that 'no Government has accepted the urgency for direct action to help families during a period of rapid increases in the cost of living.'[1723] Active in direct lobbying and successful in gaining press coverage, McCarthy nonetheless described the group as ineffectual.[1724] Despite having identified and highlighted one of the key issues that would shape politics in the latter part of the decade – the plight of families in a time of steeply rising costs - the group failed to generate the energy or grass roots support of the earlier campaign. A large part of the reason is that the

[1719] Ibid. See below, p. 329 for the later development of this theme.
[1720] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 17 July 1973, TNA CAB 128/52/15.
[1721] HC, 19 July 1973, c. 181w.
[1722] Report on a meeting convened to discuss the question of Family Allowances, 3 May 1974, LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/4/5. See also McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, p. 260.
[1723] 'Family Allowance Movement: Information Sheet', 20 August 1974, LSE RHYS WILLIAMS B/4/5.
[1724] McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, p. 260.

immediate threat to family allowances had dissipated. Frank Field, who had joined the staff of the CPAG in 1969, reflected:

> …[P]owerful emotions and economic realities are tied up with the payment of children's allowances to mothers, although sadly the political impact of this feeling has so far been felt only in a negative way, against the loss of family allowance payments to the mother, and not in a positive way that might help forge a family lobby.[1725]

He noted, with some regret, that the poverty lobby had focused attention on poor families as a sub-group while powerful forces, including a shifting burden of taxation, the differential effects of inflation, and declining levels of child support, had worked to disadvantage all families.[1726] He also acknowledged how the focus on poor families made it difficult to utilise the ideas about vertical distribution (rather than horizontal distribution between richer and poorer families with children) and re-distribution across the course of a life-span which had flowed from Wynn's pioneering work in *Family Policy*.[1727] On a more tactical note, Field believed that the focus on poor children, instead of all children, had effectively 'ignored...the benefits which the sharp elbows of the middle class could bring in getting the needs of families to the top of the political agenda.'[1728] He was optimistic, however, that child benefit would act as a catalyst for the emergence of an effective family lobby. The implementation of the policy, and the associated abolition of child tax allowances, would mean that the only way of maintaining a 'fair distribution of the tax burden' between childless tax payers and those with children, whatever their level of income, could be through increases in child benefit.[1729] In Field's view, the child benefit scheme, which emphasised 'the needs of all families', had 'completed a circle began by the Family Endowment Society and Eleanor Rathbone.[1730]

[1725] Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 80.
[1726] F. Field, 'A Lobby for all Children', in *New Society*, 29 September 1977. See also Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 80.
[1727] Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 78.
[1728] F. Field, 'A Lobby for all Children', in *New Society*, 29 September 1977. Conservatives and others had frequently pointed out that the CPAGs proposals ignored the needs of better of families with children. See, for example, D. Houghton to V. Feather, 23 January 1969, MRC, MSS 292B/118/2; Walley, 'Children's Allowances', p. 112.
[1729] Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 80. See also F. Field, *Inequality in Britain: Freedom, Welfare and the State* (London, 1981), pp. 180-185 in which Field argued that a major increase in child benefit must be 'a prerequisite of all the other welfare reforms'.
[1730] F. Field, 'A lobby for all children', in *New Society*, 29 September 1977.

However, 1970s feminists, and women's liberationists in particular, were not a natural complement to a nascent family lobby.[1731] Their movement, particularly in the early days, had been characterised by a rejection of women's traditional roles as women had focused on asserting their rights as individuals, independent of their families.[1732] Ann Oakley, author of the seminal work *Housewife*, argued that there were three preconditions to any real change for women: 'The Housewife role must be abolished. The family must be abolished. Gender roles must be abolished.'[1733] Representatives of lone mothers also resisted the shift towards a family lobby, fearing that poor families – and therefore single-parent families - would be de-prioritised. Paul Lewis, Deputy Director of the National Council for One-Parent Families observed that the 'problems of one-parent families are essentially the problems of women in a society geared to the male breadwinner.'[1734]

The Reforms of the Wilson Government

The Heath Government did not implement the tax credit scheme. Even at the outset, they had envisioned it would take 'about five years to get working'.[1735] Lowe argues that it would, in any case, have been ultimately defeated by unwieldiness and cost - since the Conservatives had determined there should be no losers - and by its failure to satisfactorily address tensions between assurance of minimum standards and the maintenance of incentive.[1736] Labour had been divided over the merits of the scheme. Many had viewed it as regressive, despite the help it appeared to offer low-paid workers.[1737] Nevertheless, both main parties committed to child or family endowment in the form proposed by the Select Committee: a universal, tax free allowance for each child including the first, automatically paid to the mother, in cash, at the Post Office, every week. The February 1974 Conservative manifesto promised the new child credits

[1731] The issue continued to divide feminists. See for example the transcript of a discussion on Campbell's paper, B. Campbell, 'Women's Employment', in *m/f* 10 (1985), printed immediately after paper, pp. 94-95.
[1732] Transcript of the first National Women's Liberation Conference at Ruskin, Oxford, 1970, pp. 63 & 80, FemL, Special Collection 2, Box 1.
[1733] A. Oakley, *Housewife* (1974), quoted in Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 208.
[1734] Paul Lewis quoted in B. Campbell, 'Work to Rule', *Red Rag* (1978), p. 35.
[1735] *Proposals for a Tax-Credit System*, p. iii.
[1736] Lowe, 'Social Policy of the Heath Government', p. 203. In October 1974 however, the Conservatives were still trailing the scheme as 'the most advanced anti-poverty programme set in hand by any western country.' See Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto October 1974.*
[1737] See Castle's minority report on the Select Committee on Tax-Credit, *Report and Proceedings*, pp. 82-3. See also Conservative Research Department, 'Tax Credit Scheme: Question and Answer Brief', 23 July 1973, CPA, CCO 170/5/61 for a useful summary of Labour reactions. On the wider political left there was a fear that the tax credit scheme might be 'part of a policy which is trying to replace the welfare state…with minimal guaranteed incomes whilst at the same time reducing direct and indirect taxation on the rich.' See Alison Fell and Angela Weir, 'The State the Family is in', *Red Rag* 4 (July, 1973), pp. 13-15.

as the first step towards the tax credit scheme, and that they would be worth more 'than the existing income child tax allowances and family allowances which they will replace'.[1738] Labour promised 'help for the low paid and other families in poverty' in the form of 'child cash allowances for every child, including the first, payable to the mothers.'[1739]

When Wilson came to power in February 1974, at the head of a minority Government, he appointed Castle Secretary of State for Social Services. In this role, she oversaw two major reforms which would have a lasting impact on British women's lives. One was the introduction of child benefits, the other was pension reform. In both cases, the impetus for reform was driven forward partly by the Social Contract, which had emerged from lengthy negotiations with the TUC in 1972-3.[1740] Although Castle's request for the relevant increase in spending was met with the usual resistance from the Treasury, there was no significant opposition to the Child Benefit Bill.[1741] Bernard Donoghuhue, Wilson's Special Adviser and founder of the No. 10 Policy Unit, was a particularly firm advocate of the scheme. A 'one-parent child' with little sympathy for benefits that 'subsidised the idle', he viewed family allowances as an equitable and efficient way of protecting families from inflation and pay restraint.[1742]

The Child Benefit Bill went through the House in 1975 with cross-party support. Back-benchers' efforts to include a start date for the scheme were overruled, but it was envisioned that the scheme would begin operation in 1976.[1743] Castle later reflected that there were 'two time-bombs ticking away under the Bill.' One was the widely discussed 'wallet to purse' switch. The other, which was at least as equally significant but rarely discussed, was that cash payments (i.e.

[1738] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto, February 1974.*

[1739] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto, February 1974.* These promises were repeated in October. See Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto, October 1974,* and Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto, October 1974.*

[1740] For more discussion on the Social Contract, see below, pp. 298-9. Although it is clear that family allowances were not a top priority for the TUC, the TUCs active endorsement of the scheme helped Castle drive the reform forward. They listed Labour's failure to increase family allowances as a point of concern during one of their first Government consultations about the operation of the Social Contract. See Donoughue, *With Harold Wilson,* 27 March 1974. Yet, in the autumn of 1974, the CPAG felt the need to remind them of the need to extend the Social Contract to 'help to poor families' and protect them against inflation. M. Johnson to L. Murray, 17 October 1974, MRC, MSS 292D/118/1; D.E. Lea to M. Johnson, 1 November 1974, MRC, MSS 292D/118/1.

[1741] Castle, *Castle Diaires,* 9 July 1974. See also 12 September 1974.

[1742] B. Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary, Volume Two: With James Callaghan in Number 10* (London, 2008), 12 October 1977, 18 May 1977; Donoughue, *With Harold Wilson,* 25 June 1975; B. Donoughue to H. Wilson, 22 March, 1974, Cambridge, Churchill College Archives [Hereafter CCam], DNGH 1/1/1.

[1743] Castle, *Castle Diaries,* 22 April 1975. See also entries for 7 July 1975, 4 August 1975. See also Field, *Poverty and Politics,* p. 43.

child benefit) counted as public expenditure whereas loss of revenue (i.e. arising from child tax reliefs or effective tax cuts) did not.[1744] In 1975 however, the Bill was widely and warmly welcomed. Introducing the Bill to the Commons, Castle announced: 'it may be premature to talk of giving the wife and mother her own wage, but she certainly needs control of her own budget if the family is to be fed and clothed.'[1745]

As this suggests, although child benefit represented a victory for women in some respects, it did not relieve women of their assumed responsibility for family welfare. In Opposition, Castle had expressed interest in the idea of a Home Responsibility Payment.[1746] In reality, the possibility of implementation had always been exceedingly remote.[1747] Though intellectually consistent (to the point of being necessary) with a view which sought to establish workers on an equal footing by abolishing the principle of dependency, the scheme would have undoubtedly been very costly. For that reason alone, it is unlikely to have been introduced in the deteriorating economic climate of the latter 1970s.

Although both main parties were generally agreed on the merits of child benefit, the married women's opt-out illustrated more clearly the divergence of opinions on the subject of married women's dependence. It can be seen clearly in approaches to pension policy. Pensions were a top priority for the new Labour Government, partly because they formed an important part of the Social Contract.[1748] Early on, Castle took the decision to drop the Conservative's planned pension reforms, which had been bitterly opposed by Labour.[1749] Under Castle's guidance, a new National Superannuation Scheme was drawn up. Labour's White Paper, *Equality for Women* (the basis of the Sex Discrimination Act), had committed the Government to review

[1744] Castle, *Castle Diaries*, 22 April 1975, 28 April 1975 (and notes), 7 July 1975, 4 August 1975.
[1745] Quoted in Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 154..
[1746] HC, 8 May 1973, cc. 412-3.
[1747] Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report, 1973*, pp. 231 & 549. At the 1973 Annual Labour Party Conference, Castle asked the mover of resolution calling upon the next Labour Government to introduce a 'home responsibility allowance payable to women and single parents with children under five years and to people caring for disabled or elderly relatives' to withdraw the motion because 'we have not yet thought through' a home responsibility payment.
[1748] John Hunt, 'Draft White Paper on Inflation', 9 July 1975, p. 19, TNA CAB 129/184/2; Castle, *Castle Diaries*, March 6 1974n. Unlike child benefit, pensions were a top priority for the TUC.
[1749] 'Long Term Pensions', May 1974, Oxford, Bodelian Lib., MS Castle 304.

provision for women in its new pension proposals. In that spirit, equality of status for women in state and occupational pensions was one of the guiding principles of the new plan.[1750]

As we saw in the previous chapter, Labour's Study Group on Discrimination Against Women had developed Houghton's ideas, and the ideas expressed by the NJCWWO and Labour's NWAC, to argue that the surest way to solve the problem of women's unequal treatment within the social security systems was to abolish the married women's opt-out. However, as they recognised, women and men's working lives tended to follow different patterns. Most women still took a break from work to have and raise children, creating a 'contribution gap'. The Study Group had believed that society had a 'duty' to mothers: 'she should feel that she can stay at home and look after her children without any sacrifice of security in old age.' Therefore, they proposed, during such periods of dependency, women should be credited with flat-rate national insurance contributions. This would remedy the contribution gap and allow women to retain their independent status within the social security system.[1751] This is what happened under Labour's new pension scheme. The team that worked on the project included Abel-Smith, who, as we saw above, had fully accepted the rationale for such change, and Tony Lynes, the ex-CPAG Secretary.[1752] The married women's option would be phased out and, on the basis that working women were often compelled to spend time away from paid employment to raise children, the new scheme would automatically encompass any person 'at home looking after children, or who in specified circumstances has to stay at home to care for an adult.'[1753] The *Guardian* hailed it as:

> a landmark in the development of social security in this country. For the first time the work a woman does in creating a home for her children is being recognised as of equal value to work in an office or factory for building up an entitlement to a state pension. Not

[1750] *Better Pensions, Fully Protected Against Inflation: Proposals for a New Pensions Scheme,* Cmnd. 5713 (London, 1974), p. iii; *Equality for Women.* Cmnd. 5724, p. 17; Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 30 July 1974, TNA CAB 128/55/5

[1751] Discrimination Against Women Study Group, 'Summary of questions raised and recommendations made', February 1968, LPA, Re. 239; Minutes of the third meeting of the Study Group on Discrimination Against Women', 15 February 1968, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 907; National Labour Women's Advisory Committee, *Discrimination Against Women,* p. 14; Study Group on Discrimination against Women, 'The Social Security Recommendations of the Study Group', December 1968, p. 10, WISCA, NEC Minutes Microfilm Collection, Card 953; Labour Party, *Discrimination Against Women,* p. 23.

[1752] Castle, *Castle Diaries,* 26 March 1974. For more on Abel-Smith's views, see above, pp. 226.

[1753] *Better Pensions.* Cmnd. 5713, p. 12.

quite as progressive as payment of wages or salary for housework but a step towards that objective.'[1754]

The Conservative's October 1974 manifesto promised to reverse these plans, so that married women in employment would retain their 'right not to pay the full contribution to the State basic scheme.'[1755] They lost the Election and Castle's pension reforms, introduced in April 1978, brought significant and lasting change. The reform was not universally popular at the time and Castle was forced to defend it. As she explained to one caller on a radio phone-in programme, the married women's option had 'trapped' women; the apparently kind concession enticed them into dependency on their husbands.[1756]

The early Social Contract also ushered in another key reform for women: statutory paid maternity leave. Maternity provision, or lack of, could have a profound and lasting effect on a woman's working life.[1757] Many women in the labour movement also regarded maternity leave as a class issue.[1758] The reform had long been advocated by women there, and also by some women in Conservative ranks. After the defeat of the 1963 Balniel Bill, described in Chapter One, the TUC Women's Advisory Committee had continued their investigations into the matter.[1759] A proposal for maternity leave provision had also been included in Labour's opposition Green Paper on Discrimination Against Women.[1760] In 1972, the TUC's Women's Advisory Committee composed a 'statement of best practise' for trade unions to use as a basis for negotiations. For many members, particularly men, maternity leave was not a priority. The TUC General Council supported unions who attempted to negotiate maternity provision, but proved equally willing to let trade unions 'off the hook' for failing to do so.[1761] As Boston

[1754] *Guardian*, 25 March 1978. The Social Security Act also abolished the lower rates of sickness and unemployment benefit to women. See Oakley, 'The failure of the movement for women's equality', in *New Society*, 23 August 1979.
[1755] Conservative Party, *Manifesto for the General Election October 1974.*
[1756] Barbara Castle, Interviewed on You and Yours, BBC Radio, 4 Feb, 1976, transcript Available from Oxford, Bodelian Lib., MS Castle, 295.
[1757] Tony Benn described an incident on a visit to the Conference of the Textile Factory Worker's association in April 1972. He had been 'very struck by a woman trade unionist who demanded maternity leave for textile workers', who automatically lost their job if they had children and had to start from the bottom if they returned to work. 'She put it so toughly and the men looked so shifty' Benn recorded, 'that all of a sudden it focused my mind on what the things are that change society.' Quoted in Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 395.
[1758] For more on this, see above p. 83.
[1759] For more on this episode see above, pp. 83-4.
[1760] Labour, *Discrimination Against Women* , p. 18.
[1761] Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, p. 301.

observed, in an echo of the equal pay episode, the TUC were forced 'to take a jump forward' by the prospect of legislation.[1762]

Maternity leave was ushered in as part of a much wider ranging legislative reform which effectively extended to wage-earners many of the protections enjoyed by salaried workers.[1763] In Opposition, Labour had agreed with the TUC that the next Labour Government would prioritise the repeal and replacement of the Conservative's Industrial Relations Act, and would also introduce new laws to extend and protect the rights of workers and trade unions. This second part of the promised reform package became the Employment Protection Act.[1764] It was overseen by Michael Foot.[1765] His wife, Jill Craigie, would have warmly approved of the new maternity protections but it is far from clear that she had any significant influence on Foot's decision to include maternity rights in the Bill, despite Foots suggestion to the contrary.[1766] Under the Employment Protection Act of 1975, women became entitled to a minimum level of statutory maternity leave, provided that certain conditions were met.[1767] It was agreed that it would be illegal to sack women because they were pregnant; that women should retain their right to reinstatement (with no interruption to continuity of service); and a period of paid maternity leave should be provided.[1768] The NCCL described the measures as a 'basic minimum' but acknowledged that the provisions would be a step towards tackling discrimination against women at work.[1769]

There was another legislative landmark for women in 1976 when the Domestic Violence Act was passed. Pressure had been mounting since the early part of the decade when women's campaigners had forced the problem of domestic violence into the public consciousness.

[1762] Ibid.
[1763] Morgan, *Michael Foot*, p. 305.
[1764] The repeal and replacement of the Industrial Relations Act was done by way of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act (TULRA) which, among other things, gave birth to ACAS. It was initially hoped that a third piece of legislation would include provisions for extending industrial democracy. TUC, 'New Industrial Legislation', 22 January 1973, MRC, MSS 292D/4D/2LP/3; Minutes of the TUC F&GPC Committee, 25 June 1973, MRC, MSS 292D/40/2LP/3. See also, Benn, *Diaries 1973-6*, 25 September 1973.
[1765] Morgan, *Micahel Foot*, pp. 303-8.
[1766] Foot did claim that she had had some influence. However, the context of the remarks was a teasing rebuke to Jill's assertion that he was not a feminist. See C. Rollyson, *To be a Woman: The Life of Jill Craigie* (London, 2005), p. 248.
[1767] J. Coussins, *Maternity Rights for Working Women* (London, 1975). Its provisions were agreed by a Liaison Committee comprising TUC, NEC and PLP representatives.
[1768] TUC, 'The Employment Protection Bill', 22 October 1973, MRC, MSS 292d/4D/2LP/4.
[1769] Coussins, *Maternity Rights*, p. 2.

Introduced as a Private Members Bill by Jo Richardson, the Act made it possible to obtain a court injunction to restrain a violent husband or cohabite. Violence in marriage was no longer officially accepted as a private affair beyond the reach of law.[1770] Feminists welcomed the Act but many were disappointed to note that there was no 'attempt to connect violence with the pressures on men to compete and be aggressive, and the contempt of women which underlines society's attitudes.' No link was made 'between the ideal of the nuclear family and violence.' Indeed, as *Women's Report* observed, the belief that 'something should be done' about domestic violence arose, it appeared, as a defence of marriage, by addressing a phenomenon which appeared to discredit the institution.'[1771]

Conclusion

The mid 1970s represented the high water mark of feminist achievement in 1970s Britain in terms of legislative reform. Much criticism could be, and has been, levelled at Governments during this period for failing to do more to address gender inequality. There was scant acknowledgement, for example, of the *permanent* effect that children tended to have on women's employment prospects. The issue of childcare provision for working mothers was largely ignored, and left for mothers to deal with. Whereas the Sex Discrimination Act and, to a much lesser degree, the Equal Pay Act had been designed to challenge socially and culturally embedded behaviours and attitudes over the long and short term, the reforms described in this chapter arguably reflected, or could be seen to reflect, an acceptance of the gender division of labour. Lewis notes, for example, that these policies did little or nothing to promote greater 'sharing' patterns between partners.[1772] In this view, child benefit, pension reform, and maternity leave, made what amounted to token gestures towards recognising the substantial and disproportionate amounts of unpaid domestic and caring work that women undertook, and were expected to undertake without challenging the assumptions that underpinned that state of affairs.

Valid though these criticisms are, they should be balanced against certain other considerations. In so far as the onus on role sharing and flexibility goes, a high degree of the necessary initiative lies beyond the reach of government within private homes, and with private employers. Although it was rarely noted, child benefit could be paid to a parent or guardian of either sex.

[1770] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, pp. 36-7.
[1771] *Women's Report,* (November-December 1975).
[1772] J. Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945* (London, 1992), p. 99.

On this reading, the reforms discussed here - child benefit, maternity pay, and pension reform – can be seen as the tentative outlines of a system of 'special provisions' that would support the form of gender equality implied by the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts. Taken together, this package of reforms can be seen to represent the beginnings of a new approach to women. Women were to be formally re-cast as 'workers' on an equal footing with men. Married women would no longer be treated as dependents. They would carry the same responsibilities as men, and be entitled to the same rewards, opportunities, and security. If, in daily life, women continued to carry the main responsibility for raising children, these reforms made some moves towards recognising that these responsibilities should not necessarily entail a woman's loss of financial independence or her status as a worker.

Crucial though these issues were, the feminist movement had, albeit for understandable reasons, drawn back from full engagement with an issue which was central to women's equality. The call for equal pay for equal work or the 'rate for the job' would ring hollow for as long as the wage system was assumed to be all or partly responsible for meeting 'family needs'. In the feminist ferment of the 1970s, family or child allowances were the dog that didn't bark. Historically, feminist campaigners had perceived that family allowances could serve two purposes. First, they could provide housewives with financial independence by recognising and remunerating women's unpaid work in the home. Second, they could pave the way for equal pay by negating the need, and the justification, for the family wage. By and large, feminists in the 1970s shied away from the first option, having no wish to draw the connections between women and home any tighter than they already were. In their commitment to understand *why* women didn't have equal pay, women's liberationists focused instead on challenging the unequal division of paid and unpaid labour inside and outside of the home.[1773] The movement's only formal concession to motherhood was the demand for free childcare. In so far as the early movement had an attitude towards motherhood, Campbell caricatured it, only slightly unfairly, as 'first and foremost, avoid it…motherhood is a disability of paraplegic proportions.'[1774] She observed:

> [N]owhere…do we [the WLM] express a clear view of the family. We won't be rescued by the simple accretion of demands…which deal with financial and legal independence,

[1773] For example, the 'statement' of the Women's Liberation Workshop reads: 'We are economically oppressed; in jobs we do full work for half pay, in the home we unpaid work full time.' See 'Women's Liberation Workshop Statement', in Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist,* p. 240.
[1774] B. Campbell and V. Charlton, 'Work to Rule', *Red Rag* 1978, p. 30.

> sexuality and sexual violence against women. The increment of discrete demands on 'personal life' doesn't effectively give a liberationist tone to our previously equal rights type demands, because in the end it is the equal rights demands that must be modified.[1775]

As the family theme came to dominate national and political discourse in the latter part of the decade, many feminists reflected on their failure to engage more positively with issues surrounding motherhood or family.[1776] As the next chapter shows, this omission would ultimately help to provide the opportunity for more conservative and even anti-feminist voices to dominate the family debate, and to dictate it terms. As for family allowances, the moment had passed. The actions of the women's movement undoubtedly helped to cement the mother's right to collect child benefit. Yet, after the burst of protest sparked by the threat to withdraw women's right to collect the family allowance had died down, it was left primarily to poverty campaigners and the emerging family lobby to make the case for children's and mother's allowances. Where attention focused on poor families the potential for stigmatisation would be ever-present. Any means-tested system, such as FIS, would carry a potential implication: children were something that only the better-off could responsibly afford. The family lobby, on the other hand, despite advocating measures which may well have been beneficial to women, tended towards a traditional view of the family which many feminists felt unable to support or engage with.

[1775] Ibid. p. 35.
[1776] See below, p. 349.

THE FEMINIST RETREAT, 1976-9
THE DEATH OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT AND THE RISE OF FAMILY POLICY

Although there appeared to be much to celebrate in International Women's Year, 1975, many in the women's movement were disappointed by the lack of substantive change. This chapter shows how the second half of the decade saw the retreat of the movement, and the momentum it had helped to drive, as a combination of economic and political factors threw the limits of the reforms, discussed in preceding chapters, into sharp relief.[1777] Rising unemployment and economic restructuring militated against the effectiveness of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts. The ultimate death of the Social Contract – the final abandonment of incomes policy with its relationship to the 'social wage' – also had important repercussions for the future of gender equality.[1778] So did the re-emergence of the family as a political theme. Despite increased feminist engagement with the subject towards the end of the decade, the dominant political discourse on the subject implied that recent social and cultural changes were to be challenged, if not reversed, as women were re-cast in their traditional roles at the centre of the family as a conservative institution.[1779] The final section of this chapter shows how this apparent consensus helped to mask a debate between those who sought to actively support the family in the face of social change, and those who counselled a policy of non-intervention. This latter course was championed most predominantly by the liberal Conservative right, who were ultimately most successful in capturing the family territory. Their approach to family policy, which in important respects amounted to a refusal to acknowledge the changes that were happening, marked a significant setback for the women's cause.

The Early Impact of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Act

When the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts came into full force at the end of 1975, the Government hosted an official party to celebrate.[1780] A dozen members of the Women's Liberation Workshop attended. Despite enjoying the caviar and gin, they found little to celebrate. When they asked Castle how women in traditional women's jobs were going to achieve parity, and who they should attempt to achieve parity with, Castle 'cleverly evaded' their

[1777] Most feminists adopted a skeptical attitude to 'International Women's Year'. See, for example, cover of *Women's Report* (July-August 1975).
[1778] See A. Coote and T. Gill, *Women's Rights: A Practical Guide,* 2nd edn (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 18.
[1779] J. Cousins and A. Coote, *The Family in the Firing Line* (London, 1981) p. 3.
[1780] *London Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter,* 21 December 1975, FemL. Hilariously, from their perspective, the 'Director of the Workshop' had been invited. Since the Workshop was non-hierarchical an open invite was printed in their newsletter: 'Rally round DIRECTORS of the women's movement.'

questions. By contrast, they reported, Michael Foot agreed with all their criticism of the Equal Pay Act.[1781] In *The Times*, one writer wondered if 'anyone else concerned with the feminine condition was as depressed as they were':

> …as International Women's Year petered into nothingness, the Sex Discrimination Act was ushered in, predictably, to gales of giggles – well, women have always been good for a joke, and what better to cheer up a bleak economic New Year than a really good red-herring which is going to make buying a drink in a bar the same sort of useful smoke screen as the pyre of brassieres was made to obscure the real ends of the Liberation movement.[1782]

There were serious difficulties with enforcing the new laws.[1783] As predicted, the spirit of the Equal Pay Act was widely evaded.[1784] Evidence soon emerged to show how some companies were using job evaluation techniques to segregate the workforce in order to justify women's lower rates of pay.[1785] Between 1970 and 1977, women's average hourly earnings increased from 63.1 to 75.5 per cent of men's.[1786] Most of the change occurred between 1974 and 1976.[1787] As we will see below, this probably owed a great deal to pay policy, but at least some of this improvment can be associated with the Equal Pay legislation.[1788] After 1977, however, progress trailed off. By European standards, the pay gap remained high.[1789] Researchers thought there were probably very few women left working in roles covered by the Act.[1790] In 1979, two feminist researchers explored the skill distinctions between 'unskilled' female workers producing paper boxes on a hand fed machine and male 'semi-skilled' workers producing cartons under a more automated process which required less concentration. They concluded that

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[1781] *London Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter,* January 1976, Feminist Library.
[1782] *The Times*, 6 January 1976. For more on initial reaction to the Sex Discrimination Act see Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 220.
[1783] On the week ending 13th September 1977, the NCCL reported that only 147 out of the 435 decisions under the Equal Pay Act had been in favour of the applicant, and only 25 of the 141 claimants under the Sex Discrimination Act had been successful. See *Women's Report* (December 1977 – January 1978).
[1784] See above, p. 130.
[1785] House of Lords, *Second Special Report from the Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Bill*, pp. 11-12. See also A. Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 141. See also *Women's Report* (January –February 1976).
[1786] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 92. Weekly earnings rates were even less impressive. In 1977 women's weekly earnings were, on average, 62 per cent of male workers. See *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes,* p.65.
[1787] *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes,* p.65.
[1788] This was the conclusion reached by the *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes*, pp. 65-66 & 72.
[1789] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 92. At the end of 1978 the EOC reported that women's gross hourly earnings had fallen to 73.9 per cent of men's earnings. Quoted in *Women's Report,* (February – March 1979). For comments on European comparison see *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. Report Number 8*, p. 231.
[1790] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* p. 92.

the differences could 'only be understood as historical associations between typically 'male' work and 'skill'.[1791]

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) created by the Sex Discrimination Act was, in its early years, weak and ineffectual. The decision to base it in Manchester disappointed many. As *The Times* writer remarked, this was a 'real gift, because now there can be lots more jokes about the place without mentioning the rain.'[1792] Significant numbers of people clearly expected, and sought, change but their early hopes were disappointed.[1793] Any radical or assertive impulses within the EOC were effectively constrained by its structure. Designed to be independent of government, it had been established on standard tri-partite lines. The TUC and the CBI were allotted three places each. In the interests of political balance, the Chairmanship was given to Betty Lockwood, and the Vice-Chairmanship to Elspeth Howe.[1794] Thatcher was very displeased to hear of Elspeth's appointment, fearing that it might compromise Conservative positions on the subject. Geoffrey Howe, about to become Shadow Chancellor, was forced to defend his wife's appointment.[1795] The EOC's first intake of staff was made up largely of highly educated women with a firm commitment to the cause of women's rights. Many left after a relatively short time, frustrated and disillusioned by the dearth of policy decisions and by the reluctance of the essentially non-feminist Commissioners to reach out to women's rights organisations.[1796]

In areas where there was no political disagreement, such as the need for non-discriminatory job adverts, and the general provision of goods, facilities and services, the EOC had a solid record of

[1791] A. Phillips and B. Taylor, 'Sex and Skill: Notes towards a Feminist Economics', in *Feminist Review* 6 (1980), 80. There are numerous similar examples. Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan visited a shoe factory. She asked if the men and women, who were using the same machine to put an equal number of nails in shoes, received equal pay. 'Oh No!', the manager replied. 'Heavens no! These men are putting heels on *male* shoes. These women are putting heels on *women's* shoes. It's not the same work.' Quoted in Smith Wilson, 'Gender, Change and Continuity', p. 254.

[1792] *The Times*, 6 January 1976.

[1793] J. Lovenduski and V, Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics: Women and Power in Britain* (Oxford, 1993), p. 183. The EOC received three thousand enquiries in its first five weeks, ten thousand in its first year.

[1794] A. Coote, 'Equality and the Curse of the Quango', in *New Statesman*, 1 December 1978, p. 735. Elspeth Howe tended to attract derision from committed feminists. It was claimed that she told a journalist that she did not 'really believe in equality.' Yet it is worth noting that Thatcher apparently had very uneasy relations with Elspeth, viewing her as 'too bluestocking, too much on the left.' Elspeth, in turn, reported that Thatcher was 'positively not interested in women's issues.' See Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorised Biography*, p. 353.

[1795] Moore, *Margaret Thatcher*, p. 353.

[1796] A. Coote, 'Equality and the Curse of the Quango', in *New Statesman*, 1 December 1978, p. 735; *Women's Report* (July-August 1974); Lovenduski and Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics*, pp. 184-91.

achievement, even if its critics accused it of a preference for persuasion over enforcement.[1797] Small victories carried important long-term implications. For example, in 1978, Ms Somer applied for a postgraduate course at the London School of Economics (LSE). She was suitably qualified and experienced and she was six months pregnant. Mrs Somer explained that her husband would be sharing the responsibility for childcare. When the LSE invited Ms Somer to 'postpone' her studies, she contacted the EOC, who then wrote to the university highlighting the relevant provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act. They re-considered their position and offered Mrs Somer a place.[1798] Even in the area of paid employment there were some successes. In the late 1970s, there were some successful claims for unfair dismissal due to pregnancy under both the Sex Discrimination Act and the Employment Protection Act.[1799] The 1976 case of Linda Price marked a particularly important decision. Price, a 35-year-old-mother, had been barred for applying for a job as an Executive Officer. She successfully brought a case against the civil service, under the Sex Discrimination, by claiming that the applicant age limit (17-28) indirectly discriminated against women because family responsibilities prevented disproportionate numbers of women from applying within the age limits.[1800] The EOC used the case to highlight their view that 'the position of the 'mature returner' is central to any fundamental reorganisation of the role of women in British society.[1801] The deterrent effect of the Sex Discrimination Act must also be acknowledged, although it is impossible to quantify.[1802]

Many feminists remained determinedly optimistic about the potential for change. The 1978 *Women's Directory of Social Change*, a manual for activists, acknowledged that the Sex Discrimination Act was 'far from perfect' but argued that 'it won't be any use at all unless we make use of it to fight for our rights in as many ways as possible.' For those feeling daunted by the prospect, the publication suggested useful sources of help and information. The article was accompanied by an upbeat cartoon of two women. One was sharpening an axe labelled 'Sex Discrimination Act' on the wheel of 'law'. 'It gets sharper as you use it', she tells her

[1797] A. Coote, 'Equality and the Curse of the Quango', in *New Statesman*, 1 December 1978, p. 736.
[1798] *Women's Report* (August-September 1978).
[1799] *Women's Report* (June-July 1979). Thatcher's governments would soon curtail the maternity rights. See Cousins and Coote, *Family in the Firing Line*, p. 26.
[1800] M. Snell, 'The Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts: Their Impact in the Workplace', in *Feminist Review* **1** (March 1979), 37-57; *Women's Report* (July-August 1976), p. 14. It was not an easily won case. Price had to appeal against an initial ruling. She was supported by women's organisations.
[1801] *Women's Report* (July-August 1976).
[1802] Minutes of a Meeting of the TUC WAC, 5 July 1972, MRC, MSS 292D/61,5/2. As one TUC member reflected some years earlier, one could never know how many cases of discrimination had not occurred. The comments were made in relation to race discrimination.

companion.[1803] Arguably, the law's apparent weakness was one of its strengths. It is possible that a more forceful approach could have provoked and entrenched resistance to change.[1804] For example, in one case taken by women in the herring industry, the women were unable to prove their work was 'broadly similar' to the men's. Nevertheless, the Tribunal Chairman opined, their jobs were 'every bit as important and skilled (if not more so)'[1805] This kind of legitimised public criticism often had an educative effect, and longer term cultural impacts, upon employers, individuals, and organisations such as trade unions.[1806] More broadly, the change in the law helped to signal a cultural shift. The early 'person' jokes that had greeted the Sex Discrimination Act had undeniably attempted to belittle and invalidate women's claims to equal treatment. Yet jokes have a wide audience. Underneath the sniggers there was a message: the status quo was being challenged. Within five years the jokes had largely disappeared.[1807]

Crucially, the most deeply rooted impediments to women's equality in the workplace – those which stemmed from the gender division of labour - remained largely beyond the reach of the new laws. On the one hand, the changes discussed in Chapter One, whereby 'good mothers' came increasingly to be defined as working mothers, continued throughout the 1970s and beyond.[1808] Women's entry, specifically married women's entry, into the labour force had helped to create the affluent society. It had simultaneously helped to depress wages, especially in female dominated industries. As family living standards came increasingly to rely upon two wage packets, more women were motivated to seek paid work. The process became self-perpetuating.[1809] Many contemporaries blamed this state of affairs on inflation, which was not

[1803] Collins, Friedman, Pivot, *Directory of Social Change*, p. 203.
[1804] Banton, *Discrimination*, p. 58.
[1805] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 68. See also pp. 57-69 and 141.
[1806] Banton, *Discrimination*, p. 58. For more on the broader impact on trade unions and organised women see Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work,* pp. 96-7; Lovenduski and Randall, *Contemporary Feminist Politics*, pp. 208-218.
[1807] Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 220.
[1808] Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us*, p. 50. For similar arguments see Holdsworth, *Out of the Doll's House,* p. 129; Bruley, *Women in Britain*, pp. 174 & 178.
[1809] This argument draws upon an adapation of the Marxist reserve army of labour thesis. See I. Bruegel, 'Women as a reserve army of labour: a note on recent British experience', in E. Whitelegg et al (eds), *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford, 1982), p. 106. She noted that similar arguments had been made in relation to the USA's experience. See also J. Gardiner, 'Women's Employment since the sixties', in *Spare Rib* 27 (September 1974), p. 19; V. Beechey, 'What's so special about women's employment? A review of some recent studies of women's paid work', in *Feminist Review* 15 (November 1983), 32-4. See also Wolf, *XX Factor*, pp. 34-5. Notably, this is almost the mirror image of the situation which, Humphries argued, created the working-class demand for the 'family wage' and the removal of women, on their restriction, from the labour market. Jane Humprhies, 'Class Struggle and the Persistence of the Working Class Family', in A. Amsden (ed.), *The Economics of Women's Work*

mutually exclusive.[1810] Significantly, however, most women remained secondary earners, with a secondary worker status.

The evidence suggests the related shifts in women's identities were accordingly partial and fluid. Attitude surveys show that working wives increasingly viewed themselves as working women, albeit ones who also ran homes (rather than as housewives who also worked).[1811] Numerous equal pay strikes in the latter 1970s also pointed to a growing assertiveness among at least some groups of women workers.[1812] However, the difficulties associated with the notoriously problematic task of measuring women's unemployment, show how an interplay of institutional or practical, and attitudinal or cultural factors, still worked together to suggest that women were not 'proper' workers. A 1976 survey of five thousand *Women's Own* readers showed found less than one third of the women looking for work had registered as unemployed. [1813] Women who lived with men, who had taken the married women's opt-out, or who were seeking part-time work, were ineligible for unemployment benefits. Some reported that they wanted to work, but would probably be unable to accept any job offer on account of their responsibility for young children.[1814] In some cases, the obstacles to finding suitable work – e.g. flexible hours, proximity to home, childcare etc. – were so great women did not even consider themselves 'unemployed'.[1815]

These difficulties were compounded by the fact men's conversion to egalitarian attitudes seemed to lag behind women's.[1816] In the home, despite some increase in male involvement in routine household work from the mid-1970s, particularly in households where both partners worked, women continued to carry the main responsibilities.[1817] In the workplace, men often proved

(1980) cited in I. Bruegel, 'Women's Employment, Legislation, and the Labour Market', in J. Lewis (ed.), *Women's Welfare, Women's Rights* (Beckenham, 1983), p.161.

[1810] Mary Goldring, for example, thought that inflation had 'a lot to answer for. Western countries are approaching the point where family budgets simply will not balance unless there are two fulltime incomes coming in.' See Mary Goldring, 'Women's Work', in *The Listener,* 28 August 1977, article re-printed in Married Women's Association Bulletin, November/December 1977, LSE, MCINTOSH 4/3.

[1811] Meehan, *Women's Rights at Work*, pp. 96-7.

[1812] For examples see *Women's Report* (March-April 1977).

[1813] *Women's Report* (May-June 1976).

[1814] Ibid.

[1815] Bruegel, 'Women as a reserve army of Labour', p. 110.

[1816] Homans, 'Wages for Housework', p. 93.

[1817] Ibid.

reluctant to fight for equal pay alongside their female colleagues.[1818] Male unemployment did little to encourage gender role reversal. Indeed, wives of unemployed men were less likely to work, particularly where the unemployment was of a long duration, a phenomenon for which both social and cultural explanations can be advanced.[1819] By international standards, the proportion of British female workers who worked part-time was very high. The Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS) could not decide 'how far the British pattern reflects the arrangements that married women find most convenient, and how far part-time jobs are all they can find or cope with given their other responsibilities.'[1820] In the context of the circumstances described above, the distinction was almost meaningless. Part-time employment for women, within a labour market which viewed full-time hours as standard, signalled implicit acceptance of the traditional gender division of labour, thereby reinforcing it.[1821] The effect of this mutual reinforcement between home and work life on attitudes and expectations was examined by Nicola Charles at the end of the 1970s. Among the trade union representatives and workers she interviewed, she found a strong attachment to male breadwinner and familial ideals. Although women inclined more towards egalitarian views, they too, regardless of family situation, were more likely to advocate higher wages for male breadwinners.[1822] Charles was careful to argue these views did not reflect 'simple prejudice' or 'false consciousness'. Despite support for egalitarian principles, her interviewees lived by the beliefs reflected in their daily material lived realities. They experienced firm, mutually reinforcing, gender divisions at work and home, a pattern further reinforced by factors such as the dearth of childcare.[1823] Charles observed how 'the contradiction between the notion of equal pay for equal work, and the different needs of men and women which arise from the very real division of labour within the family, was brought out again and again.'[1824] Many of her subjects believed that, 'if women wanted 'equality' at work, they should 'behave like men'.[1825]

[1818] See, M. Rowe, 'What Happened at Heywood?' in *Spare Rib* (January 1975), pp. 12-16. See also, *Women's Report* (Sept-Oct 1976).
[1819] *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes*, p. 50; Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, p. 13, TNA CAB 184/516. See also Morris, *Dangerous Classes*, pp. 123-9. Both economic and cultural explanations can be advanced for this phenomenon.
[1820] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, p. 12, TNA CAB 184/516.
[1821] See Charles, 'Women and Trade Unions', 3-21. See also Briar *Working for Women*, pp. 142 & 170.
[1822] Charles, 'Women and Trade Unions', 11.
[1823] Ibid. esp 10-11.
[1824] Ibid. 11.
[1825] Ibid. 19.

Women's position in the labour market was further weakened by economic and structural changes. Unemployment had crept above 3 per cent in 1971 and 1972 before falling back again. But, after 1974 it did not fall below 4 per cent. In 1977, it reached a new postwar peak of 6.2 per cent.[1826] Unemployment rose by a full 124 per cent under the 1974-9 Labour Government.[1827] The structural changes, described in Chapter One, accelerated and intensified, as the service sector grew and the industrial sector shrank. In 1971, 53.1 per cent of jobs were in services and 43.8 per cent in industry. By 1981, the respective figures were 61.5 and 35.8 per cent.[1828] This had important implications for gender patterns of employment. Of the nearly three million jobs lost in production between 1966 and 1979, three quarters were lost by men. Total male employment decreased by five per cent.[1829] Male unemployment, previously concentrated among the young and the old, now began to rise among those age groups where family responsibilities were likely to be the heaviest.[1830] Notably, this trend was confined largely to the semi-skilled and unskilled classes.[1831] Unemployment also increased among single women suggesting that these changes did not reflect the sex of the worker so much as the type of employment.[1832] In the service sector, women's employment increased by one third between 1966 and 1979 (the comparable figure for men was three per cent).[1833] This increase largely comprised married women working part-time.[1834] The overall picture was of a decline in full-time (predominantly male) industrial jobs and a rise in part-time (predominantly female) service sector jobs. Since these numbers cancelled each other out, the overall size of the labour force remained constant.[1835]

[1826] H. Pemberton, 'The Transformation of the Economy', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2005), p. 192. See also the table produced in D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *British General Election of 1979* (London 1980), pp. 24-5.

[1827] Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979*, p. 24.

[1828] Daniels, 'Geography of Economic Change', p. 213.

[1829] T. Martin, "End of an Era?": Class Politics, Memory, & Britain's Winter of Discontent', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester (2008), p. 16.

[1830] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, p. 13, TNA CAB 184/516.

[1831] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes*, p. 49. See also Taylor, 'Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes', p. 380.

[1832] *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth*: *Lower Incomes*, pp. 48 & 69; Bruegel, 'Women as a reserve army of Labour', p. 109.

[1833] Martin, "End of an Era?", pp. 16-17

[1834] *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes*, pp. 48 & 69

[1835] Martin, "End of an Era?", p. 16. This trend continued. In 1975, 81 per cent of men and 62 per cent of women aged 16 to 64 were economically active. In 1996 the respective figures were both 70 per cent. See Lewis, 'Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model', 155. See also *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Low Incomes*, pp. 48 & 69.

It is important to stress that women were not insulated from the effects of recession and rising unemployment by these trends. In most industries, women's employment fell faster than men's.[1836] Between 1974 and 1977, the increase in female job-seekers outstripped the increase in female jobs.[1837] The jobs women gained in the expanding service sector tended to be low paid.[1838] Within these contexts, neither the Equal Pay or Sex Discrimination Acts could be very effective in advancing the cause of women workers. Most obviously, part-time work had not been included within the scope of the Equal Pay Act, a decision upheld by the Employment Appeals Tribunal in three cases in 1978 and 1979, where it was found that part-time working 'constituted a material difference that justified lower hourly rates'.[1839] This effectively excluded many of the lowest paid women from its protections. The Sex Discrimination Act could not provide redress here, as was demonstrated in 1976. Mrs Meeks, a clerical worker, claimed it was indirect discrimination to pay part-time workers a lower hourly rate than full-time workers because the overwhelming majority of part-timers were women with family responsibilities. Mrs Meeks lost her case. The Sex Discrimination Act did not cover pay and, under the Equal Pay Act, Meeks could not compare herself with a relevant man.[1840] Overall, part-time status generally amounted to lower pay, less job security, less holiday entitlement, and reduced access to benefits such as pensions, expenses, and bonuses. It also excluded workers from the new maternity leave provisions.[1841] Therefore, on an individual level, women were more vulnerable to redundancy than men, although afterwards, they were re-absorbed more quickly into the labour force.[1842] To the extent that women's jobs were protected, that protection was based on cheapness and flexibility (easy disposability) of women's labour.[1843]

It had nevertheless been hoped that the Sex Discrimination Act would enhance the efficacy of the Equal Pay legislation more broadly, by allowing women access to male dominated roles. In

[1836] In manufacturing, for example, male employment fell by 5 per cent and women's by 9. Figures from 1974 to 1977. See Bruegel, 'Women as a reserve army of Labour', p. 109. Rowbotham believed that one effect of the economic crisis and re-structuring of the 1970s was to reduce women's already limited access to creative and fulfilling employment options. Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us*, p. 107
[1837] Bruegel, 'Women as a reserve army of Labour', p. 111.
[1838] Ibid. p. 114.
[1839] Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* pp. 148-9 & 156.
[1840] Ibid. pp. 144-5.
[1841] Summary of the EOC Report, *Women and Low Incomes* (1977) in Married Women's Association Bulletin, November/December 1977, LSE, MCINTOSH 4/3.
[1842] Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State*, p. 163.
[1843] Bruegel, 'Women as a reserve army of Labour', p. 114; J. Gardiner, 'Women and Unemployment', *RR*, 1975, quoted in Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State*, pp. 163-4. See also Campbell, *Iron Ladies*, pp. 217-8.

the late 1970s, there was some evidence to suggest this was happening at the upper end of the labour market.[1844] However, the Sex Discrimination Act did not encourage men to access low-paid female dominated roles, even if economic necessity did. It did not improve the status of lowly work.[1845] Relatively early on, evidence began to emerge that part of the progress towards equal pay was made in the context of widening differentials between the highest and lowest paid male workers.[1846] In other words, although the Sex Discrimination Act gave women an increased opportunity to enter better paid jobs, traditionally considered the preserve of men, it did nothing to challenge the conditions of low pay which, traditionally, were more closely associated with women's jobs. As Tomlinson observed, 'women's job's could be done by men, and 'men's job's' could be done by women:

> gender per se does not create a commonality of interest between women in the labour market, rather gender is one element of a complex of labour market practices which play upon definitions of women's work and other definitions to create occupation ghettos.[1847]

In this context, the battle over protective legislation ultimately proved something of a red herring, since the Factory Acts did not apply to the service sector.[1848] Yet in ideological terms, the conclusion to this particular chapter in the history of women's rights demonstrated how the banner of sex equality came to be used to defend policies which, in all reality, worked to the detriment of working-class and poor women. The Government had committed to review the provisions of the Factory Act as they applied to women during the passage of the Sex Discrimination Bill. The newly formed EOC was tasked with the job.[1849] After considering a wide range of evidence, including a specially commissioned survey of attitudes, they concluded

[1844] EOC research cited in Carter, *Politics of Women's Rights,* p. 142. See also, Bruegel, 'Women's Employment', p. 153; For longer term statistics on female entry into professions see Wolf, *XX Factor*, pp. 20-21.
[1845] Bruegel, 'Women as a reserve army of Labour', p. 114. Some men did move into low paid 'women's' work. In 1983 one researcher found young men working alongside women at a motorway service station. The jobs were 'clearly regarded as women's work and were paid accordingly.' The shop steward told the researcher that, 'this sort of work is no good to a man…the wages aren't up to standard…When I was in the mines…I used to have nearly as much as that pocket money.' See Charles, 'Women and Trade Unions', 5.
[1846] *Guardian*, 16 October 1973.
[1847] Tomlison,'Incomes Policies and Women's Wages', 53. See also, Summary of the EOC Report, *Women and Low Incomes* (1977) in Married Women's Association Bulletin, November/December 1977, LSE, MCINTOSH 4/3. The Women's Report collective took the opportunity to reiterate the view that, 'the struggle for better remuneration for women must be linked with the whole problem of the low paid worker.' See *Women's Report* (November 1973 – January 1974). For more on the overlaps between women workers and other low status groups, see below, p. 314.
[1848] For the history of debates on this issue see above, pp. 133-42. In 1976, only 17 per cent of the female workforce was covered by the Act's provisions. Of those, one quarter of were part-timers and unlikely to be affected by the restrictions on hours, and one third of the full-time workers were formally exempted from Act's provisions (the use of Exemption Orders was widespread). See Equal Opportunities Commission, *Should we distinguish?*, pp. 24-5.
[1849] EOC, *Should We Distinguish?,* p. 7

that 'the hours of work legislation constitutes a barrier – often an artificial one – to equal pay and job opportunities for women.'[1850] The EOC did not evade the issues raised by women's dual role.[1851] They maintained that unless adequate childcare facilities were made available, 'mothers in particular will not have equal opportunities in employment with men.'[1852] They also argued that, if women were to be asked to work during unsocial hours, it would be necessary to provide childcare facilities on the same financial basis as day care so as not to discriminate against shift workers.[1853] Despite these caveats, they recommended repeal of the Factory Acts on the basis that they 'disadvantaged women'.[1854]

The NCCL, always careful to look to the needs of working-class women, responded robustly. They accused the EOC of making their recommendations 'in the context of a false concept of equal opportunity between the sexes', and of failing to consider the relative impact of the law on men and women.[1855] Despite the polemical tone, the essence of the NCCL's argument was correct. The EOC must have been well aware that the 'cost-free' relaxation of employment law they recommended was always more likely than the expensive expansion of childcare provision. The NCCL also contested the EOCs interpretation of their survey data.[1856] In particular, they criticised the EOC's failure to interrogate the clear disconnect between what the EOC described as 'the community's level of approval, attitudes towards changing the law, and the intended behaviour of members of the community with respect to shift work'.[1857] In other words, the EOC had not distinguished between women's *desire* to work shifts and their *willingness* to do so (i.e. women did not want to work shifts but were willing to because they needed to). For example, the EOC report had extrapolated from its survey findings to argue that, 'the proportion of women, with young children, who are willing to work at night is even higher than that of women as a group.'[1858] The NCCL re-interpreted the same data:

[1850] Ibid. p. 92.
[1851] Ibid. p. 57.
[1852] Ibid. p. 58.
[1853] Ibid.
[1854] Ibid. p. 92.
[1855] Cousins, *Shift Work Swindle*, p. 9.
[1856] Ibid. p. 10.
[1857] EOC, *Should We Distinguish?*, p. 58. For full survey results and EOC conclusions see pp. 50-67.
[1858] Ibid. p. 58.

> Women with young children are even more likely than other women to be forced into night work because during the day they have to care for their children, yet families could not survive unless the women were earning something as well.[1859]

In the event, the Factory Act's provisions as they related to women were not repealed until 1986, when a reluctant Conservative Government was forced by a European Court ruling to amend the Sex Discrimination Act. In was in this context that the restrictions of women's working hours were removed. In 'Equality or Employment Deregulation?' Hazel Carty argued that the Government framed the Amended 1986 Act , with its stated aim of eliminating sex discrimination, 'in a manner consistent with the…aim of minimising the imposition of 'inappropriate legislative burdens' which might 'impede economic efficiency and competitiveness."[1860] As the preceding chapters have shown, this development was entirely in keeping with the past. The nature of the 'equality' that women were granted had long been subject to the national interest, or to economic, financial, or business concerns.

Women and the Social Contract.

For a time in the mid-to-late-1970s, even as the women's movement was forced on to the defensive, it is arguable that women's interests were being advanced by the Social Contract.[1861] Broadly, this comprised two aspects: incomes policy (in the form of voluntary restraint or government imposed pay limits) and the social wage. Labour's 1974 manifesto described the Social Contract as 'the agreed basis upon which the Labour Party and the trade unions define their common purpose'. [1862] Although trade unions owed their first loyalty to their membership, the Social Contract embodied their 'free acknowledgement that they have other loyalties - to the members of other unions too, to pensioners, to the lower-paid, to invalids, to the community as a whole.' [1863] Under the terms of the Social Contract, a Labour Government would, among other things, institute price controls and food subsidies, increase pensions, and implement a plan for growth and stimulate manufacturing to create jobs. The unions would respond to this 'climate'

[1859] Cousins, *Shift Work Swindle*, p. 11.
[1860] H. Carty, 'The Sex Discrimination Act 1986: Equality or Employment Deregulation?', in *The Journal of Social Welfare Law*, 9, (3) (1987), abstract. See also J. Conaghan, 'Feminism and Labour Laws: Contesting the Terrain', in A. Morris and T. O'Donnell (eds), *Feminist Perspectives on Employment Law* (London, 1999), p. 30.
[1861] Bruley, *Women in Britain Since 1900*, pp. 159-60; Campbell, *Iron Ladies*, p. 104.
[1862] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto October 1974.* Castle, described by Healy as one of the self-appointed 'custodians of the Social Contract', described it as 'the cornerstone of Labour policy'. See Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, Introduction, p. 189. For Healey's remarks see Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 148.
[1863] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto October 1974.*

by moderating their wage claims.[1864] Practically, this was an attempt to tackle inflation without the imposition of a statutory incomes policy - anathema to the trade union movement which had bought down Heath's government (as well as to liberal economists). Philosophically, for those who were so minded, the social contract embodied a much broader political sentiment.[1865] Its champions understood it to be a collectivist alternative to the 'whip' of unemployment.[1866] Universalists and reformers, like Wynn, hoped the social wage would come to be understood as 'a whole and necessary part of the distribution of wealth in a more prosperous society'.[1867] In reality, the Social Contract became an evolving set of agreements and promises which neither side could necessarily deliver. It came under increasing pressure in the mid-1970s and had been all but abandoned by the middle of 1977. The 1978-9 Winter of Discontent signalled the apparent impossibility of reviving it. [1868]

The degree to which women were, or should be, particular beneficiaries of the Social Contract generated some debate among those concerned with women's rights.[1869] Many feminists recognised that women tended to benefit from the social wage in ways that were not always so directly relevant to men and, correspondingly, were more vulnerable to cuts in public spending.[1870] On the subject of wage restraint, women were widely believed to place a lower priority on high cash wages, preferring instead to balance income considerations against factors such as working conditions, working hours, and personal relationships. [1871] Some people thought these differences should be understood in a positive light, as the potential foundation for a progressive alternative to a society based on the 'male' emphasis on money. Audrey Wise, for example, argued that men's willingness to sell their lives encouraged them to negotiate conditions they never should have accepted. Men saw themselves primarily as 'cogs in a

[1864] Castle, *Castle Diaries 1974-76*, Introduction, p. 10; Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, pp, 330, 346, 376 & 415
[1865] Vernon Bogdanor has described it as 'a final *reassemblent* around the idea of the postwar settlement.' See V. Bogdanor, 'The Fall of Heath and the end of the Postwar Settlement', in S. Ball and A. Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government 1970-1974: A Reappraisal* (London, 1996), p. 378. For discussion on economic liberal views see Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, esp. p. 204.
[1866] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, pp. 125-7.
[1867] Wynn, *Family Policy*, p. 338. For more on the debate around universalism, see above, p. 39.
[1868] The history of this era has been deeply politicized and mytholoised. At the time of writing new material is being published constantly. An early revisionist account of the 1970s is Tiratsoo, "You've Never Had it So Bad?', pp. 163-190. For a particularly nuanced account of motivations and reflections see Martin, 'End of an Era?'.
[1869] The tension here always related to how far the gender division of labour should be challenged rather than recognised and rewarded (and thus, arguably but by no means conclusively) institutionalised.
[1870] For example, see *Women's Report* (April-May, 1979), p. 6; Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* 2nd edn, p. 18.
[1871] Campbell showed how the negotiations in the in the 1978 Fords strike provided evidence of these different priorities. See Campbell, 'Women's Employment', 83-4. For more on the strike see Martin, 'End of an Era', pp. 104-119.

machine'. By contrast, women were 'trying to stay human.'[1872] Any programme based on these alternative values was always likely to be resisted by business and government, both of whom were reluctant to cede time concessions to their 'proper' workers (i.e. those who did not belong to that pool of low status, low paid, part-time employees), lest productivity suffer. [1873]

Another strong current of feminist opinion remained wary of any arguments that flowed from an acknowledgement of men and women's different interests. They did not want to endorse the status quo, or be seen to be appearing to do so. They worried that policies which catered to gender differences would entrench them further. For example, an emphasis on men and women's divergent priorities could be seen as inconsistent with equal pay demands.[1874] Feminist activists and scholars, Angela Weir and Mary McIntosh, were particularly sharp critics of a gendered understanding of the Social Contract, and they contested the idea that men were interested in cash wages, women in the social wage. Arguing that the tendency to equate men's interests with money and women's with time was oversimplified, they maintained there was considerable overlap between men and women's goals.[1875] In any case, they warned, in the context of a capitalist society, it was highly unlikely that state services would develop to the point where they catered adequately for the basic requirements of life.[1876] Society's privileging of the economic and moral virtuosity of the cash wage meant that people who relied upon state benefits could only exist at the periphery. This would make it very easy for their interests to be marginalised.[1877] As Weir and McIntosh noted, many state benefits were either unavailable to women, or were means-tested. [1878]

Valid though these critiques were, they looked to the future as much as the present, and reflected feminist aspiration as much as women's lived realities. To the extent women formed the

[1872] A. Wise, 'Trying to Stay Human', in *Red Rag* 3, 1973, pp. 3-5. There is a good deal of evidence to support these arguments. above, pp. 59-60.
[1873] For the government view see *Winning the Battle Against Inflation*, Cmnd. 7293 (London, 1978), p. 6. For discussion of the fate of the Fords 'time claims' see Campbell, 'Women's Employment', 83-4.
[1874] In response to Government and industry backed appeals to women to pressure their men to limit their pay claims, the Women's Report Collective noted that women's average pay was still only 70 per cent of men's. 'Perhaps we should be making larger wage demands ourselves', they suggested. See *Women's Report* (October-November 1977).
[1875] Weir and McIntosh, 'Towards a Wages Strategy for Women', 7.
[1876] Ibid. 11.
[1877] Ibid. 11-12. In light of the later stigmatisation of single mothers in particular, the warning turned out to be well founded. See Lowe, *Welfare State*, p. 337 & 345. Morris, *Dangerous Classes*, pp. 134-5.
[1878] Weir and Mary McIntosh, 'Towards a Wages Strategy for Women', 11.

majority of low paid workers, and carried out most of the unpaid domestic and caring work, they stood to lose disproportionately, in the short term at least, from the demise of a Social Contract which embodied the idea of re-distribution though state benefits and improved social services, and the closer equalisation of wages. A gendered understanding of the issues was visible on both sides of the political divide. Although this drew on ideas which had long been expressed political discourse, particularly in electioneering discourse, the following examples suggest the recent revelations regarding the disparities between wages and housekeeping money had also been influential in shaping opinion.[1879] In the run-up to the February 1974 election, Castle recorded her theory:

> The vote in this country is polarizing, not so much along class lines, as on sex lines. The pursuit of money wage increases is a masculine syndrome; the fight for the social wage is a feminine need. Wage increases, which put up prices, don't necessarily put up the wife's housekeeping money by the same amount. While the chaps talk militancy in the pub the women have to cope with the consequences.[1880]

This represented a development of Castle's long-held socialist, and Bevanite, inspired belief that 'the trade unionist votes at the polls against the consequences of his own wild-cat strikes.'[1881] Similar views were found on the socially conservative political right. Rhys Williams wrote to Ian Gilmour with his thoughts for the 1974 Election:

> …we certainly can and we must split the Labour vote in the country as a whole. The vulnerable element is the women, particularly the mothers not in full time work. They are instinctive guardians of tradition; …and deeply concerned about rising costs…It is justifiable to bring about a transfer of spending power from men to women because the men are getting the wage increases while the wives are facing the price increases. [1882]

[1879] See above, for Castle and Rhys Williams' involvement with the Select Committee on Tax Credits.

[1880] Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 9 January 1974.

[1881] Castle's White Paper, *In Place of Strife*, an ultimately failed attempt to re-negotiate and re-balance trade union rights and freedoms against the Government's responsibility to the wider community, was named after Bevan's *In Place of Fear*. As Castle argued in her autobiography, the worker-as-producer should not be set against the worker as consumer. See Castle, *Fighting all the Way*, p. 316. Reflecting on the potential impact of Thatcher's election to the Conservative leadership she recorded, 'I think it will be a good thing for the Labour Party too. There's a male dominated party for you... I remember just before the February election last year pleading...for us not to have a completely producer-orientated policy, because women lose out... The battle for cash wage increases is a masculine obsession. Women are not sold on it... What matters to women is the social wage. Of course, no one listened to me: even to suggest that the battle for cash wage increases might be a mirage is to show disloyalty to trade unionism…To me, socialism isn't just militant trade unionism. It is the gentle society, in which every producer remembers he is a consumer too." See Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 11 February 1975.

[1882] B. Rhys Williams to I. Gilmour, 27 August 1974, LSE Rhys Williams B/4/5.

Rhys Williams saw no need to 'run after the emancipated women who can hold down a full-time job.'[1883] Although these views commanded some support, neither Party embraced the approach. As we shall see below, they moved further from this position as political and public sentiment turned increasingly against generous public spending. Furthermore, as pay policy became unworkable, the battle against inflation helped push the Government closer to an explicit acceptance of women as low-paid, secondary workers whose primary responsibilities lay with their families.

Immediately on Labour's coming to power in 1974, the Government moved to fulfil their side of the Social Contract by increasing public expenditure on increasing benefits, subsidies, and improving public services.[1884] Healey agreed with Castle, that it was important for the Government to publicise the virtues of the 'second' (social) wage so that ordinary workers and shop stewards would understand the dangers of their falling short on their part of the bargain.[1885] Jack Jones, Wilson and other Government colleagues also expressed hope for the approach.[1886] To this end, Castle produced a draft 'social wage' document, for popular readership, laying out what the 'second wage' was worth to average working people.[1887] The social wage was described as 'a vast insurance policy.' People paid in when they could afford to, and drew when they were in need. It concluded with a warning:

> How the Social Wage fares in future depends on how much we are prepared to pay in taxes and contributions for social benefits *without demanding pay rises to compensate.*[1888]

The TUC, for its part, asked trade unions to accept the scope for increased living standards was, for the time, limited. Members were advised to seek increased compensation only to match the loss to inflation – although special consideration should be given to low pay and women's

[1883] Ibid.
[1884] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 125.
[1885] B. Castle to H. Wilson, 28 February 1975, TNA PREM 16/350; D. Healey to H. Wilson, 10 March 1975, PREM 16/350. See also Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 1 March 1975.
[1886] W. Price to N. Warner, 3 March 1975, TNA PREM 16/350; S. Williams to B. Castle, 21 May 1975, TNA PREM 16/350. For Jack Jones Comments see Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 21 April 1975.
[1887] Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 5 March 1975. It claimed that 'Mr Average' paid about £23 in taxes and received about £20 back in the form of a second wage. This comprised spending on pensions and other benefits, education, health, housing, food, fuel and transport services, recreation and community services, law and fire services (the remainder went towards defence, roads and transport, agriculture, industry and commerce, and servicing the national debt).
[1888] B. Castle, 'Pamphlet on the Social Wage (revised draft 14/8/75)', in Bodley, MS Castle 298. Emphasis in original.

pay.[1889] Leo Pliatzsky, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, observed an improved social wage did not make workers more amenable to accepting smaller real wages. They 'said thank you very much, or no thank you very much, to the social wage' and continued to demand 'real wages.'[1890] A more sympathetic Whitehead observed that 'the middle figures on the payslip did not pay the bills at a time of inflation.'[1891]

At the beginning of 1975, the Retail Price Index was up 17 per cent year-on-year, and wage inflation was running at 22 per cent. British inflation reached a record high in April, an annual equivalent of 33 per cent.[1892] Castle continued to argue the value of the 'second wage' in speeches, radio broadcasts, and meetings.[1893] She asked male wage earners to try and see what she perceived as women's point of view. As she explained to a Yorkshire Labour Regional Conference:

> Whilst it may be the men who most notice the cost…of the social wage, it is the women who most notice its value to their families…You men may think that a fatter wage packet means more wealth. But your wife knows that may not be true, as the money disappears as fast as it ever did... the social wage is secure…there when one most needs it….[1894]

Other members of the Government continued to express their support for the approach, which depended on an optimistic reading of human nature as much as anything else.[1895] Even Healey remained in favour of publishing Castle's social wage document, though his hope was fading. He told Cabinet that it might well prove 'double-edged'. He thought 'people would be shocked, not pleased, when they saw how much [the government] were spending on the social

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[1889] J. Gardiner, 'What is the Social Contract', in *Spare Rib* (August 1974), p, 21.
[1890] Quoted in Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 126.
[1891] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 126.
[1892] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, pp. 180 -82.
[1893] DHSS, 'Wage Restraint or Social Cuts, Says Mrs Castle: Second Wage worth £20 a Week', 3 September 1975, Bodley, MS Castle 298, f. 264.
[1894] 'Speaking at the Yorkshire Regional Conference of the Labour Party, Yorkshire, 1 March 1975, Bodley, MS Castle 298, ff 93r – 97.
[1895] For expressions of support see Ken Stowe to Norman Warner, 3 July 1975, TNA PREM 16/344; SoS for Northern Ireland to H. Wilson, 17 July 1975, Bodley, MS Castle 198, f. 173n. Castle believed that 'people are motivated more by hope than negative fear. They must believe there is a way out…as opposed to the 'whip' of unemployment.' See B. Castle, [handwritten note] 'Analysis of Problem, 19 May 1975', Bodley, MS Castle 301, ff. 45-50. J.K Galbraith summed up the economists' argument against incomes policies: 'Here we encounter the commitment to avarice. Only the soft-minded could suppose that government, by regulation, could thwart the primal instinct for self-enrichment.' See J.K. Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 254.

services.'[1896] One adviser speculated that, 'Mr Average' was more likely to react to the (strictly inaccurate) claim that 'the Government pays Mr Average so much and takes exactly the same amount from his in taxes…by suggesting that the process is unproductive, than by agreeing that his present earnings are adequate.'[1897] Castle's leaflet was never published.[1898] The popular leaflet that was finally distributed to nearly every UK household, at the end of August 1975, as a complement the government's anti-inflation strategy, made no direct reference to the social wage. Apocalyptically titled, *Attack on Inflation: A Policy for Survival*, it warned in large red print: 'One man's pay rise is not only another man's price rise: it might also cost him his job – or his neighbour's job.'[1899] The Government had abandoned belief in the political feasibility of appealing for collective restraint on the grounds of protecting and extending the social wage. It had raised the spectre of unemployment instead.

The social / cash wage conflict was normally understood within the ostensibly gender neutral or gender blind framework implied by Healy, who thought that the central question was, 'how much of their income were people prepared to allow the government to spend for them and on them rather than deciding for themselves how to spend?'[1900] However, Castle and others were right to assert there was a gendered dynamic to this tension. This was clearly illustrated by the 'Child Benefit Fiasco'.[1901] As the previous chapter showed, the child benefit programme had been accepted by all parties and by the TUC.[1902] Yet, in April 1976, there were signs that the Government was cooling on its commitment. It was no coincidence that this occurred at the

[1896] Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 14 July 1975. For Healey's views on the electorate's attitudes to tax and spending, see Healey, *Time of my Life*, pp. 402-3 & 486.
[1897] N.R. Warner to G.A. Mosser, October 1975, TNA PREM 16/351.
[1898] Treasury civil servants at the Treasury and the Central Statistical Office had never liked the document. The latter were concerned about various discrepancies and were 'never keen' on publishing it. See Central Statistical Office to S. Robson, 2 September 1975, TNA PREM 16/351). The document spent a month 'bogged down' with Treasury officials. See Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 24 June 1975; Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 26 June 1975. In August, the Treasury advised the Prime Minister that 'Ministers will wish to consider whether there is still advantage in publishing the document.' See Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 27 August 1975.
[1899] 'Attack on Inflation: A Policy for Survival. A Guide to the Government's Programme.' HMSO 1975. The publication of this leaflet, with deliveries planned to ensure that 'every household in Britain' got a copy was one of the first acts of the Counter-Inflation Policy Unit. Copy available at Bodleian Lib., MS Castle 298.
[1900] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 4 August 1975, TNA CAB 128/57/9.
[1901] Since Cabinet were leaked at the time some very good accounts of this already exist. See Land, 'Child Benefit Fiasco', pp. 116-131. See also Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 93. 'Killing a Commitment', is re-printed in the same volume, pp. 108-113.
[1902] The TUC reiterated their support when the Social Contract was renegotiated and extended in 1975. In addition to their normal demands for improved pension provision and other benefits, they also demanded 'a generous level of child benefits.' John Hunt, 'Draft White Paper on Inflation', 9 July 1975, p. 19, TNA CAB 129/184/2. To the extent this support appears as luke warm, the TUC had always offered only a careful welcome to the child benefit programme.

same time as Callahgan became Prime Minister. His accession marked a change in political style and a shift to the right.[1903] Donoughue, who served as Special Adviser to him and his predecessor, described Callaghan as 'much more of a family man than Harold' with 'more of the common touch.'[1904] Pleased that Callaghan shared his concern to restore 'responsible values in society', he affectionately recalled a man with a 'strong sense of values – really like those of a non-conformist Victorian'.[1905] Three days after becoming Prime Minister, Callaghan sacked Castle. She lost her role as Secretary of State for Social Services and her seat in Cabinet.[1906] She informed *Woman's* readers that Callaghan was 'a bit of male chauvinist' unlike Wilson who she described as 'more pro-woman than any other person I know.'[1907] This was more than sour grapes. Callaghan admitted that he was an 'old-fashioned male chauvinist' who 'would not want a woman private secretary in Private Office.'[1908]

That week, against a backdrop of inflation, pay restraint, and declining living standards, Healey announced an increase in child tax allowances to help relieve the burden on families with children. He claimed that, since 1972, policy on low pay and equal pay had tended 'to help single people more than married people and married people with children least of all.'[1909] He explicitly offered the tax cut as 'part of the compensation' for the low pay limit which he was offering the TUC.[1910] Under the original terms of the child benefit programme, whereby no family was to be left worse off, the tax allowance concession rendered the putative child benefit rate more generous. It also meant breadwinners would lose more take home pay when the switch was made.[1911] There was another sign of policy reversal when, in contravention of Labour's earlier claim, that child benefit would eventually negate the need for FIS, the DHSS announced a substantial increase in FIS.[1912] In spite of these developments, Castle's replacement, David Ennals, continued to push for the introduction of child benefit which at least maintained real levels of support.[1913] His task was made more difficult when the cost of the

[1903] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun,* pp. 459 and 464.
[1904] Donoughue, *With James Callaghan,* p. 3.
[1905] Ibid. p. 2.
[1906] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun,* pp. 463-4.
[1907] *Woman,* September 1976, quoted in Land, 'Child Benefit Fiasco', p. 124.
[1908] Donoughue, *With James Callaghan,* 11 October 1977. See also introduction, p. 2.
[1909] HC, 6 April 1976, c. 274.
[1910] Ibid. c. 275.
[1911] B. Castle, 'The Death of Child Benefit', in *New Statesman,* 4 June 1976, pp. 735-6. Tax concessions did not count as public spending.
[1912] Pratt, 'Labour Party and Family Income Support Policy', pp. 316-9
[1913] Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76,* 8 April 1976; Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 29 April 1976, TNA CAB 128/59/2.

scheme increased again, following a decision, later that month, to grant child benefit to non-resident children.[1914]

Resistance to the scheme continued to harden. Callaghan told Cabinet he had received 'an excellent report from the Whip's Office' which predicted the introduction of child benefits would have 'grave political consequences.'[1915] The Whip claimed that the public could probably not be educated to accept the merits of the cash transfer from husband to wife'. He advised the Government not to risk its economic strategy by allowing 'anticipated criticism by pressure groups to prevent the Government deferring the [introduction of child benefit].'[1916] Cabinet's response was mixed. So far as they agreed with the Whip's analysis, it was felt that opposition would be 'particularly strong...amongst miners and similar sections of the working community.'[1917] Callaghan told his Cabinet to 'weigh very carefully the political disadvantages of introducing the scheme...against the tangible benefits which it would be likely to provide for families as a whole.'[1918]

Ennals and Shirley Williams continued to push for a modified but reduced scheme, while opinion in Cabinet continued to swing towards (potentially indefinite) deferment.[1919] TUC opinion was sought.[1920] According to TUC records, Healey told their representatives that the Cabinet believed that the 'removal of the tax allowances on take-home pay would be catastrophic.'[1921] Despite their concern about deferment, TUC representatives recognised that many of their members would probably react strongly to a fall in take home pay, particularly in the context of pay restraint. They stressed the importance of extending family allowance to the first child. Ultimately, however, they concluded that the decision must be left to the

[1914] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 29 April 1976, TNA CAB 128/59/2. Donoughue, *With James Callaghan*, 29 April 1976 and 6 May 1976. For Donouhue, this marked the moment when child benefit that child benefit became too expensive (although the all the signs were there previously). Dismayed by the prospect of the loss of the scheme, an unsympathetic Donoughue attributed the decision to a fear of 'being called racist' and to 'emotional speeches' from two Cabinet members with large numbers of constituents from Pakistan. The debate around non-resident children highlighted again the ambiguity of the relationship between tax allowances and benefits.
[1915] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 6 May 1976, TNA CAB 128/59/3.
[1916] Ibid. The TUC had foresaw this difficulty and tried to stress the importance of public education. See above, p. 255.
[1917] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 6 May 1976, TNA CAB 128/59/3.
[1918] Ibid.
[1919] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 20 May 1976, TNA CAB 128/59/6.
[1920] Minutes of the TUC Social Insurance and Industrial Welfare Committee, 14 July 1975, MRC, MSS 292D/161/8; B. Castle to L. Murray, 17 July 1975, MRC, MSS 292D/118/2.
[1921] Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the General Council, 26 May 1976, MRC MSS 292D/118/1. These minutes relate the happenings of the three days leading up to the meeting.

Government.[1922] So Healey was over-stating the case when he told the Cabinet that the TUC 'had reacted immediately and violently against its [child benefit] implementation, irrespective of the level of benefits which would accompany the reductions in take-home pay.'[1923] In short, Healey and Callaghan had exaggerated the Cabinet's fears to the TUC. In turn, they then exaggerated the TUC's reaction to their Cabinet colleagues. This escalation achieved their politically and economically preferred outcome.[1924] Cabinet agreed to defer the scheme.[1925] Ennals made a public announcement that afternoon. He told the public the introduction of the scheme in its original form', with its consequential impact on take home pay, would have 'imposed an excessive strain on the pay policy' which was 'vital to the Government's continuing success in overcoming inflation.'[1926] He said that the 'primary objective' would be met by the introduction of a cash benefit for the first child. The recently introduced interim Special Family Allowance would be replaced with an additional premium for one-parent-families.[1927]

The TUC's reaction was ambivalent. The General Council (Marie Patterson aside – who pointed out that 'half the population were women and their reaction had to be taken into account') recognised full implementation would have rendered pay restraint more difficult. However, their main bone of contention was that the Government had told them, days beforehand, pensions would not be increased, largely because the money was being spent on child benefit.[1928] In public, the TUC lamented the postponement of 'a real socialist measure.'[1929] Castle was enraged. Freed from the constraints of collective responsibility, she became an outspoken Government critic. She immediately and publicly refuted Ennal's explanation:

> I do not accept that the primary objective of the Scheme was the provision of a cash benefit for the first child. *On the contrary, its main purpose was to unite the family*

[1922] Ibid.
[1923] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 25 May 1976, TNA CAB 128/59/7.
[1924] Based on the leaks, the Conservative Opposition drew the same conclusion. See Conservative Research Department, 'Child Benefit', 25 June 1976, CPA, CRD 4/7/2.
[1925] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 25 May 1976, TNA CAB 128/59/7.
[1926] 'Child Benefit: Mr Enal's Statement', 25 May 1976, MRC MSS 292D/118/1.
[1927] Ibid. For more on Special FAM (or CHIB, granted to the first children in one-parent families) see Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, 28 April 1975n; 25 November 1974n; 6 January 1975; 9 January 1975; 14 January 1975; 1 April 1975. This had originally been granted as a result of a previous concession to Castle for her having agreed to postpone child benefit's introduction until 1977
[1928] Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the General Council, 26 May 1976, MRC MSS 292D/118/1 .
[1929] Minutes of a meeting of the Social Insurance and Welfare Committee, 9 June 1976, MRC MSS 292D/118/2; 'Note on Child Benefit Scheme', n.d. (1976?), MRC MSS 292D/118/2.

> *allowance…with the child tax allowance in one cash benefit payable for all children and to the mother.*[1930]

She pointed out its other main purpose had been to ensure families below the tax threshold gained the advantage of the allowance they were otherwise too poor to receive.[1931] Attacking the 'stubborn masculine bias of British politics', she emphasised the needs of mothers.[1932] She told *New Statesman* readers:

> …an adequate system of family support is not one of the trimmings we can regretfully dispense with if times get hard. It is a simple fact that without it there is no way of dealing with economic and sex inequality.[1933]

Castle's anger reflected more widespread concern within Labour. According to the MP, Helene Hayman, many Labour women MPs were 'extremely disturbed' that the scheme had been deferred on the assumption 'a cash payment to the mother did not compensate for a reduction in take-home pay'.[1934] With the declared support of women's groups, old and new, from the National Council of Women, to the NCCL, to the Women's Liberation Campaign for Legal and Financial Independence, the CPAG spearheaded a new CHILD BENEFITS NOW campaign to press for implementation of the full scheme. They disputed the claim that working men would object by arguing, 'they've got more sense' than that.[1935] It is unlikely these pressures would have proved decisive. The primary reason for Government's eventual capitulation was the embarrassment caused by what the *Observer* described as 'the most extensive leak of Cabinet papers this century'.[1936] Following the Government's capitulation, child benefit was phased in from 1977.[1937]

[1930] 'The Right. Hon. Barbara Castle M.P., speaking at a Press Conference at 5.00pm on Tuesday 25th May', Oxford, Bodleian Lib., MS Castle, 332. Emphasis added.
[1931] Ibid.
[1932] For 'stubborn bias' comments see B. Castle, 'The Death of Child Benefit', in *New Statesman*, 4 June 1976, p. 735. See also, B. Castle, 'The Battle I'm Fighting for the Mums of Britain', *Mirror*, 13 June 1976. In return, women and women's groups looked to Castle as their representative. See Deidre Sanders (consumer page editor of *Woman's Own)* to Barbara Castle, 8 March 1977, Bodleian, MS Castle 332; Janet to Barbara Castle, 16 June 1976, Bodleian Lib,, MS Castle 332, fols 69-73.
[1933] B. Castle, 'The Death of Child Benefit', in *New Statesman*, 4 June 1976.p. 735.
[1934] H. Hayman to L. Murray, 26 May 1976, MRC 292D/118/1
[1935] Circular letter from Ruth Lister with CHILD BENEFITS NOW leaflet attached, July 1976, CPA CRD 4/7/2.
[1936] *Observer* quoted in Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 19. See also p. 45. The papers were leaked throughout May and June. See F. Field, 'Killing a Commitment: the Cabinet v the Children (1976)', reproduced in Field, *Poverty and Politics*, pp. 108-113 (originally published in *New Society*, 17 June 1976).
[1937] Field, *Poverty and Politics*, pp. 44-5; Labour Party Information Department, 'News Release', 29 July 1976, MRC, MSS 292D/118/2; Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the TUC Economic Committee, 11 August, 1976, MRC, MSS 292D/118/2; Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 23 September 1976, TNA CAB 128/60/2; DHSS, 'Government to Introduce Full Child Benefit Scheme', 23 September 1976, MRC, MSS 292D/118/2.

Castle felt forced to conclude that the Government now believed, 'Labour's social aims, far from forming an essential part of the Social Contract, [were] incompatible with pay policy.'[1938] Certainly, both Healey and Callaghan remained wary of generous universal benefits, such as child benefit, on the grounds that the necessary levels of taxation would be electorally unviable.[1939] In his autobiography, Healey credited Callaghan with being the first to realise the 'wallet-to-purse transfer' inherent in the child benefit scheme might cost the Labour Party 'male votes'[1940] This was disingenuous. As the preceding chapter shows, the matter had hardly been overlooked. Callaghan had consistently resisted any reform to family allowances that involved wallet-to-purse transfers on the same chauvinist grounds since the l960s.[1941] In this respect, his views were the mirror-image of Castle's. Where Castle focused on the potential support a social wage could win from female voters, Callaghan focused on the cost to male wallets and potential lost Labour votes among men. This tension between 'female' benefits and 'male' costs was entwined with the much broader conflict of interest which the Social Contract had attempted, but failed, to address.

By 1976 pay policy was also floundering. In the period of free collective bargaining that had followed Heath's defeat, organised and powerful groups of workers won pay settlements of up to 30 per cent and more. Less powerful groups, which contained disproportionate numbers of women, such as unorganised workers, or housewives dependent on housekeeping money, found their real income substantially eroded by inflation. [1942] In July 1975 faced with the prospect of hyper-inflation, the TUC and the Government agreed a policy: a flat-rate limit of £6 for those earning below £8500 per annum; nothing for those who earned more. Jack Jones is widely credited with having sold the policy to the unions. For a period of one year, from August 1975, the policy operated, as far as he knew, without any breach.[1943] Although some feminists on the political left held fast to the view that any attack on free collective bargaining was an attack on a

[1938] B. Castle, 'Is Labour's Social Policy Safe' (printed in *Tribune*, 11 June 1976) Bodleian Lib., MS Castle 332.
[1939] See above, pp. 239 and 69n. Healey's approach to Castle's social wage strategy suggested that he was willing to be disproved.
[1940] Healey, *The Time of My Life*, p. 448
[1941] Pratt, 'Labour Party and Family Income Support Policy', pp. 287 & 469.
[1942] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 150. The *New Statesman* Editor, Paul Johnson, fiercely attacked free collective bargaining, 'this may be good trade unionism but it is not socialism as I know it' Quoted in Whitehead, *The Writing on the Wall*, p. 149-50. See also Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, pp. 180-81 and 346-8.
[1943] Whitehead, *The Writing on the Wall*, p. 152. Jones proudly reflected that 'for many workers up and down the country it was a decided advance.'

sacred tenet of British socialism, there is a good argument to be made that women, as low paid workers, benefitted disproportionately from the policy.[1944] Shirley Williams has said that, when the cash limits on pay increases were eroding differentials, 'her ministerial postbag was full of letters from badly paid women urging her to fight to keep the social contract.'[1945]

Yet, in the eyes of many, the Government had already reneged on its side of the Social Contract. In what has been seen as a watershed moment, Healey cut spending in the face of rising unemployment in 1975.[1946] He imposed further cuts in 1976 in the wake of the sterling crisis which eventually led to the 1976 IMF intervention, from which flowed more cuts.[1947] Although the flat-rate pay policy contributed to falling inflation, the benefits were not universally or immediately felt as living standards continued to decline.[1948] Some estimates suggest that the real net earnings of a typical family fell by between 8 and 10 per cent in the years between 1974 and 1977.[1949] Partly because of the success of the flat-rate pay policy, skilled workers suffered a particularly steep relative decline. In June 1971, a skilled engineering worker was earning, on average, 38 per cent more than his unskilled counterpart. By the middle of 1976, the figure was 27 per cent (a fall of well over one quarter).[1950] Many workers saw their demands being frustrated by the Social Contract. [1951]

These grievances were reflected in the pay deal agreed for the year commencing July 1976 which made a concession to the restoration and maintenance of differentials: a flat-rate limit of £2.50 for those earning up to £50 a week, a £4 limit for those earning over £80, and a 5 per cent

[1944] Campbell, 'Women's Employment', 81. Campbell's argument was hotly contested by Weir and McIntosh in the context of a broader ideological debates. Nevertheless, for this specific period they were unable to convincingly contest Campbell's claim. See Weir and McIntosh, 'Towards a Wages Strategy for Women', 8-9. For a good summary of these debates see Tomlinson, 'Incomes Policies and Women's Wages', 47-50.
[1945] Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, p. 437.
[1946] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 185.
[1947] Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979*, p. 11. See also Martin, 'End of an Era', p. 42 A despairing Tony Crosland recorded his private thoughts on the consequences of the cuts: '(a) Demoralisation of decent rank and file… (b) Strain on TU loyalty… (c) breeding of illiterate and reactionary attitude to public expenditure… (d) …Now no sense of direction and *no* priorities; only pragmatism, empiricism, safety first, £ supreme. (e) and: unemployment, even if politically more wearable = grave loss of welfare, choice; very high price to be paid.' Tony Crosland's commonplace book quoted in Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 187. Many contemporaries believed that the age of full employment had ended. Peter Jay, James Callaghan's son-in-law and responsible for Callaghan's 1976 Conference speech penned an article for *The Times*, 10 April 1975, titled 'Ending the age of full employment.'
[1948] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 356. For notes on declining living standards see, Butler and Kavanagh, *British General Election of 1979*, p. 29.
[1949] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, pp. 654-5 & 709.
[1950] Ibid. p. 655. This is an average figure. Many families would have experienced worse.
[1951] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 657; Taylor, 'Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes', p. 381.

limit for those in between.[1952] Available evidence suggests this failed to appease growing resentment among skilled workers. In two spring by-elections, in 1977, Labour lost safe seats to the Conservatives in Setchfield and Ashford. In what it described as a 'suburb of craftsmen', *The Times* detected, in 'that suburb of craftsmen', 'deep resentment…against a policy which has advanced the interests of the unskilled at the expense of the skilled.'[1953] Ever alert to the gender dimension of situations, Campbell sensed 'a feeling that the interests of women and the low paid were being asserted against the traditional vanguards of the trade union movement.'[1954] Pressures continued to mount. In the summer of 1977, Government proposed a maximum pay increase target of 10 per cent for the coming year. The TUC thought even this was too stringent to be workable. Donoughue described the meeting which marked the end of the Social Contract: 'the gap between the two sides of the table was simply unbridgeable. Because they [the TUC] could not deliver, not because they did not agree with us.'[1955] Pay policy, or lack of it, had come to reflect the apparent political fact that it was impossible to defend the interests of the low paid and vulnerable, from either the effects of inflation or from the wage inequalities which defined low pay. The events of the next two years seemed to confirm this.

In the twelve months to October 1978, living standards rose by 6 per cent.[1956] North Sea oil came on stream; sterling staged a recovery; the UK official reserves reached a record $20.6 billion, and the balance of payments moved into surplus. It became apparent that the full IMF loan had never been needed[1957] Yet the sense of national decline and crisis did not diminish.[1958] Callaghan had lost his governing majority, but did not feel confident enough in Labour's prospects to risk calling a General Election. An improved economic situation, he hoped, might

[1952] Weir and McIntosh, 'Towards a Wages Strategy for Women', 9.
[1953] *The Times*, 17 March 1977, quoted in Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 657. This remark refered to Setchfield. See also Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 710; Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, pp. 257-8; Cook and Stevenson, *Britain Since 1945*, p. 67.
[1954] Campbell, 'Women's Employment', 81.
[1955] Donoughue, *With James Callaghan*, 13 July 1977. In the twelve months that followed, most unions were barred under TUC rules for demanding new deals. The Government attempted to hold the public sector to the ten per cent. See Sandbrook *Seasons in the Sun*, pp. 658-9.
[1956] Butler and Kavanagh, *British General Election of 1979*, pp. 12-13.
[1957] Ibid. pp. 33-4; Cook and Stevenson, *Britain Since 1945*, p. 171; Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out*, pp. 344-57.
[1958] Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979*, p. 43; Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 278; For a critique of 'declinism' see J. Tomlinson, 'Economic 'Decline' in Post-War Britain', in P. Addison and H. Jones (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 164-179

deliver a 'proper majority'[1959] This assessment probably helps to explain Callaghan's decision to unilaterally announce a 5 per cent limit for pay increases in his 1978 New Year's broadcast.[1960] Though it seemed too tight to be feasible, the polls showed most people thought he was doing the right thing.[1961] Under the influence of other Cabinet members, particularly the Secretary of State for Employment, Albert Booth, who urged his colleagues to 'be conscious of the social justice of the claims of the lowest paid groups', the guideline was amended to allow some limited flexibility.[1962] The July 1978 White Paper, *Winning the Battle Against Inflation,* explained that exceptions could be made in the case of lower earners. In such cases, the paper declared – optimistically or naively - 'the government expects those on higher earnings in the same or other industries to accept the consequential relative improvement in the position of the lowest paid.'[1963]

Predictably the 5 per cent guideline, still well below inflation, was roundly and spectacularly rejected. At Labour's Autumn Conference NUPE's spokesman, Alan Fisher, demanded a return to free collective bargaining. Percentages, he said, give 'least to those who need it most and most to those who need it least.'[1964] In a highly charged session, Government and union moderates warned against 'the philosophy of the pig trough' where 'those with the biggest snout get the biggest share.'[1965] Their warnings were widely ignored and Fisher's resolution was passed two-to-one.[1966] Since the episode is always portrayed as a confrontation, it is perhaps worth emphasising that protagonists on both sides sought to protect the interests of the low paid and vulnerable. However, the case for pay restraint in the name of the collective good was

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[1959] For outline of political situation, see Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* pp. 258 & 277; Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979,* p. 34.Callaghan quoted in Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun,* p. 708. Callaghan's decision on this count has been described as one of the great 'what ifs' of modern British politics. See Kavanagh, 'The Making of Thatcherism', p. 229. See also Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* pp. 275-9 and Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun,* pp. 701-709 & 803-4.

[1960] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* p. 276.

[1961] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun,* p. 715. As Callaghan sagely remarked of public opinion, 'no doubt they want us to be more firm with *other* people's claims.' See Memo to Prime Minister, 'Pay Policy', 16 February 1979, CCam, DNGH 1/1/29.

[1962] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 20 July 1978, TNA CAB 128/64/7.

[1963] *Winning the Battle Against Inflation,* p. 5. See also Draft Speech, attached to note from B. Donoughue to J. Callaghan, 12 January 1979, esp. p. 12, CCam, DNGH 1/1/28

[1964] Quoted in Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* p. 279. Whitehead describes Fisher as combining 'a gift for easy left-wing rhetoric with a real commitment to eliminate the low pay and bad conditions from which many of his members suffered.' See p. 283.

[1965] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* p. 279.

[1966] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun,* p. 717.

undermined by the imposition of a regressive pay policy.[1967] Conversely, when Fisher spoke for those who believed that low paid workers would, through the power of solidarity and organisation, be able to force an improvement in their position, he did so in defiance of recent past experience. The industrial unrest that followed became known as the Winter of Discontent.

When Fords settled for a 15 per cent rise in December 1978, Government initially decided to hold firm.[1968] There were dissenters, such as Booth, who argued for a further concession for the low paid which, he hoped, would also prevent negotiators 'being able to masquerade as champions of the low paid.'[1969] In response, his colleagues pointed out that, reportedly, the 'emphasis in all current negotiations was upon the re-establishment of differentials'. Apparently, 'some negotiators had already indicated that any concession to the low paid would have to be extended through the pay range.'[1970] It is highly unlikely any concession on low pay would have prevented what followed.[1971] Nearly all workers wanted more pay, certainly enough to keep pace with inflation. There is no solid evidence to support the view that any significant proportion or the workforce would have willingly risked an erosion of their relative living standards, either in return for an improved 'second wage', or for the benefit of those paid less than themselves. As Weir and McIntosh pointed out, in support of their argument that women workers *did* care about cash wages, some of the hardest fought battles in the Winter of Discontent were fought by women workers in the NUPE.[1972]

NUPEs membership was predominately female.[1973] Although the leadership had remained male dominated, the union had been infused with ideas from women's liberation and done more than

[1967] It was also undermined by rising profits in the private sector. At Fords, it was well know that the Chairman and Managing Director had an 80 per cent rise in salary in 1978. See Martin, 'End of an Era?, p. 104.
[1968] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, pp. 280-81. Sandbrook puts the settlement figure at 17 per cent. Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 719. Fords were generally regarded as pay round pace-setters. Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 7 December 1978, TNA CAB 128/64/22.
[1969] Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 7 December 1978, TNA CAB 128/64/22.
[1970] Ibid. See also Dennis Healey, 'Low Incomes', 11 July 1978, TNA CAB 129/203/3.
[1971] Although it did not help the Government's position when their proposals to impose sanctions on Fords were voted down after a group of Tribune Labour MPs abstained. See Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, pp. 280-81. Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, pp. 719-20.
[1972] Weir and McIntosh, 'Towards a Wages Strategy for Women', 7. On the Government side, Dounoughue advised 'a firm stance against the local authority manuals' since 'this will be seen as an acid test of the Government's resolve in the public sector.' See 'Counter-Inflation Policy – The Current Pay Round and and Election Platform', nd. [8/12/78], CCam, DNGH 1/1/28.
[1973] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 747.

any other trade union in the 1970s to address gender inequalities.[1974] Throughout the 1970s, it had grown in strength from 250,000 to 600,000 members by recruiting from an expanding public sector and drawing in large numbers of previously unorganised workers.[1975] Much of NUPE's membership was based in local authorities where women accounted for over half the workforce, and where they were concentrated in low-paid, unskilled or semi-skilled manual jobs such as dinner ladies or cleaners.[1976] Their membership included hundreds of thousands of refuse workers, cooks, porters, sewage workers, and road sweepers.[1977] NUPE had also worked on organising the hospital ancillary workforce where workers were drawn from three main groups: men made redundant by de-industrialisation; overseas workers, particularly West Indian workers whose opportunities were limited because of racist attitudes; and white working-class women who were primary or essential breadwinners.[1978] The members, particularly the lower paid ones, had fared particularly badly in the latter 1970s, partly as a result of Healey's imposition of spending cash limits.[1979] A school canteen worker, Maureen Groves, wife to a lorry driver and mother of four, believed that women workers, like her, were being neglected and exploited:

> Women would work for next to nothing because it's a little bit extra. The authorities know that. We couldn't afford to give up the job even if we are low paid. That's why they don't bother about our jobs [in local authorities].[1980]

Similarly, the *Guardian* explained to its readers:

> [A]s the local authority workers go…the majority are part-time and the great proportion are women. They are not working for pin-money, but to help out husbands who are already in the low paid sector, public or private.'[1981]

In January 1979, one and a half million workers including caretakers, cleaners, nurses, dustmen and porters struck for a minimum wage of £60 a week. It was the largest industrial action since the General Strike.[1982] Particular actions appeared to offend public opinion with the strikers' supposed callous indifference to human suffering. One was the gravediggers strike. Another

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[1974] Martin, 'End of an Era?', pp. 154-7, and 158-78.
[1975] Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 283.
[1976] Martin, 'End of an Era?', p. 147; Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 747.
[1977] Martin, 'End of an Era?', p. 147.
[1978] Ibid. pp. 180-87.
[1979] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, pp. 355 and 710.
[1980] 'No more Making Do…We Want a Living Wage', *Women's Voice*, 26, February 1979, quoted in Martin, 'End of an Era?', p. 166.
[1981] *Guardian*, 23 January 1979, quoted in Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, pp. 745-6.
[1982] Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, pp. 747-8.

was the strike of the hospital ancillaries.[1983] Hospital laundries, staffed largely by married women, became key area of disruption because strikers were concerned not to deny sick patients vital services. The result was emotive newspaper headlines like: 'WASH OUR LINEN! Plead Hospitals.'[1984] Another report described how 'nurses looking after disabled and elderly patients broke down in tears when confronted with 'a mountain of soiled and infected linen.'[1985] To many commentators, strikes like this were some of the greatest propaganda tools for Thatcher's Conservatives.[1986] Lord Halisham articulated this theme in the lead up to the 1979 election:

> Do they [Labour] really think we have forgotten last winter? We have seen gravediggers refusing to bury the dead. …refuse accumulating in the streets. ….schools shut in the face of children because the caretaker has walked off with the key. And now we see the teachers making them do without their lunches. We have seen cancer patients having to postpone their operations because hospital laundry is not done, floors not swept, or meals not cooked….[1987]

Halisham attacked the strikes for their impact on the 'weakest and most vulnerable, the old and the sick and the poor'. However, his list of guilty culprits is, in turn, a list of low paid, low status, occupations, many of them associated closely with women's work. As Tara Martin has demonstrated, for many people these strikes were a legitimate protest at harsh conditions and society's refusal to deal with the low paid.[1988]

As discussed above, there was often a symbiotic, if evolving, relationship between 'women's work' and low paid, low status work.[1989] A simple gendered dichotomy does not withstand close scrutiny.[1990] It was not gender per se that shaped attitudes towards the strikes and the strikers. Political views were influential. At Fords, for example, groups of workers' wives claiming to speak for the 'silent majority' called upon the men to return to work. Other wives and girlfriends responded with the 'Ford Women's Action Group' which held counter-protests.[1991] Attitudes

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[1983] For remarks on the impact of disruption at hospitals see Sandbrook, *Writing on the Wall,* p. 749. See also Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* p. 283.
[1984] *Liverpool Echo*, February 3&4, 1979, quoted in Martin, 'End of an Era?', p. 199.
[1985] Quoted in Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 750.
[1986] Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979,* p. 190.
[1987] Ibid.
[1988] Martin, 'End of an Era?', pp. 229-30. See also Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall,* p. 281.
[1989] See above, p. 296.
[1990] Weir and McIntosh, 'Towards a Wages Strategy for Women', 11. See also Tomlinson, 'Incomes Policies and Women's Wages', 57.
[1991] Martin, 'End of an Era?', p. 112. Where some women had been key players in the hospital actions, the media showed pictures of other women, young female nurses in this case, ripping up their union cards in disgust. See Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun,* p. 750.

were also shaped by personal economic circumstances. Low paid women struck, not because they were women, but because they were low paid. In turn, their claims were regarded unsympathetically, not simply because they were women, but because – as reactions to the gravediggers', caretakers', and other strikes suggest - they were low status service workers who were expected to prioritise their duty to other people and to society over any selfish desire to improve their individual position.[1992] As Tomlinson pointed out, joining the feminist debate in 1984, although incomes policies were not inherently socialist or feminist, they did offer a favourable framework in which socialist and feminist policies could be pursued.[1993] In this sense, low paid and unpaid women emerged from Winter of Discontent and the abandonment of incomes policies as some of the biggest losers.[1994]

The failure to address low pay generally, and women's low pay specifically, led the Government towards a more explicit embrace of women as low paid secondary workers, only months after the new 'equality package' had passed into law. In 1976, after twenty years of narrowing divides between rich and the poor, income inequality began to increase.[1995] Relative and absolute poverty remained a real problem.[1996] To the disappointment of the Labour left and the trade unions, Wilson's Government had not implemented the promised wealth tax.[1997] As an act of appeasement Wilson allowed Foot to establish a Royal Commission in 1974 under the Labour MP, Jack Diamond, to examine the Distribution of Income and Wealth.[1998] The Commission continued to produce reports under its standing terms of reference until it was abolished by Thatcher's Government.[1999] What is important to understand here is how the Commission's findings, which were widely reported, helped shape Government's attitudes to low pay.[2000]

[1992] There is a striking similarity between this and the notion that women work for love not money. For an expression of this idea see Yvonne Thomas writing in the *Daily Mail*, 26 September 1975.

[1993] Tomlinson, 'Incomes Policies and Women's Wages', 57. He recognised though that 'Thatcherism' had (temporarily) rendered the debate irrelevant but, in 1984, thought that '…incomes policy is desirable as a macro-economic policy and, barring permanent 'Thatcherism', the issue in the future is likely to be not whether such a policy is pursued but how.'

[1994] Campbell reflected that 'once free collective bargaining was resumed women's wage demands were more or less immediately abandoned in the trade union movement.' Campbell, 'Women's Employment', 81.

[1995] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Living Standards and Consumption', p. 231; Taylor, 'The Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes', p. 380. See also Field, *Inequality in Britain: Freedom*, esp. p. 48.

[1996] For figures see Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, p. 427; Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 692.

[1997] Whithead, *Writing on the Wall*, pp. 150-51.

[1998] Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, p. 424 and 424n; Morgan, *Foot: A Life*, p. 293.

[1999] See *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. Report Number 8*, pp. xi & 238. The standing terms of reference had defined the Commission's rationale: 'To help to secure a fairer distribution of income and wealth in the community there is a need for a thorough and comprehensive enquiry into the existing

The Commission found a relatively low correlation between low wages and poverty. Only one fifth of the individual workers whose earnings fell into the lowest tenth belonged to a household whose total earnings fell into the lowest tenth.[2001] To a Government battling a wage/price inflation spiral, often in the face of emotive attacks about the plight of the low paid, this was highly salient. Donoughue advised Callaghan:

> Much of the concern about low pay rests upon the assumption that low pay and poverty are closely connected. In fact the link...is tenuous. If *family* income and *family* responsibility (ie needs) are taken into account, the reason… becomes clear. The vast majority of low paid workers are either *young*, in which case they are likely either to belong to someone else's household or to be single; *old*, in which case they will have few responsibilities; or *women*, the great majority of whom will be secondary earners contributing to a *household* income.[2002]

He emphasised the importance of ensuring that Government supporters were clear about what is, and what is not the real problem.' If the professed aim of a low pay initiative was to reduce family poverty, 'action through minimum wages', he argued, would not be 'cost effective.'[2003] Healey was advancing similar arguments to advance his counsel against making concessions to the low paid within the strictures of pay policy. He informed Cabinet, 'the majority' of people on 'low incomes are entirely dependent on state benefits.' Of the other 1.8 million adults earning less than £40 a week, he explained, '80 per cent are women, few of whom are likely to be the main source of income for a poor family.'[2004] The argument was put more crudely by Joel Barnett who, according to Benn, remarked that 'the NHS auxiliaries are well-paid unskilled people, and the trade union leaders have raised the expectations of people on £60 a week, who do not starve, and anyway fifty per cent of their wives work.'[2005] The implication of this

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distribution of income and wealth. There is also a need for a study of past trends in that distribution and for regular assessments of the subsequent changes.'

[2000] For remarks on the reporting of the findings see Tomlinson, 'Incomes Policies and Women's Wages', 52.

[2001] B. Donoughue to James Callaghan, 3 November 1978, CCam, DNGH 1/1/27.

[2002] Ibid. Emphasis in original.

[2003] Ibid. Donoughue continued to repeat the message. See 'Counter-Inflation Policy – The Current Pay Round, and An Election Platform', n.d 1979, CCam, DNGH 1/1/28.

[2004] Dennis Healey, 'Low Incomes', 11 July 1978, TNA CAB 129/203/3. Of the 300,000 remaining low paid men, 'a significant proportion… are unlikely to be family breadwinners.' For Healey, the real looming problem was unemployment. Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 13 July 1978, TNA CAB 128/64/6.

[2005] Tony Benn, *Conflicts of Interest: Diaries 1977-80* (London, 1990), p. 450, quoted in Martin, 'End of an Era?', p. 203.

renewed focus on household income was that women's individual wages were no longer a problem, so long as they lived men who earned reasonable (or perhaps 'family') wages.[2006]

There was an unremarked contradiction – or circularity - in these arguments. It was acknowledged, implicitly and explicitly, that married women's earnings represented an important, often crucial, component of family income.[2007] Although less than one tenth of working wives earned more than their husbands, 'mother's earnings' were judged to be 'one of the main factors affecting variations in families' levels of affluence at different stages in the life cycle.'[2008] The number of families with working husbands in poverty would have increased four-fold had their wives not been working.[2009] In other words, wives' willingness to accept low paid employment as a means of supplementing their husbands' low pay, was used as an excuse to avoid facing up to the issue of low pay. Increased employment of married women kept many families out of poverty, and lifted others out of the lower incomes range. It simultaneously lowered the relative position of one-earner families.[2010] Looking to the future, the CPRS predicted 'a sharper disparity between those families with two earners (full or part-time) and those with only one bread-winner, whether on account of lack of job opportunities, or dependants requiring full-time care.[2011]

Although many families stood to gain from the phasing in of child benefit, Healey told the Cabinet it would not, by itself, provide adequate help to the poorest.[2012] Indeed, there had never been any suggestion that this was desirable or feasible. As we have seen, there was a significant resistance among the public, elected politicians, and the civil service, to the idea that child benefit (or equivalents) should meet the basic costs of raising a child. This effectively constrained and limited the role that universal benefits could take in tackling family and child

[2006] Tomlinson, 'Incomes Policies and Women's Wages', 52.
[2007] *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes*, pp. 50 & 107.
[2008] In 1975 only 6 per cent of working wives earned more than their husbands – where both partners worked. Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, p. 12, TNA CAB 184/516. For notes on the importance of mothers income see Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *Social Topic Note No. 3: The Family II*, September 1978, p. ii, TNA CAB 184/517.
[2009] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family II*, p. 12, TNA CAB 184/517. Based on 1975 figures. Poverty measured using supplementary benefit levels.
[2010] *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth, Lower incomes*, pp. 50 and 106-7. Frank Field observed in 1980 that 'family poverty among the working poor is characteristic of households with young children.' For these families the second wage offered the only route out of poverty. Yet many mothers desired to remain at home whilst their children were young. See Field, *Inequality in Britain*, p. 182.
[2011] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, p. 8, TNA CAB 184/516.
[2012] Dennis Healey, 'Low Incomes', 11 July 1978, TNA CAB 129/203/3.

poverty. Where earned income proved insufficient, Government looked to means-tested benefits. FIS – paid to the heads of low income families who worked 30 or more hours a week - had the advantage of being related to family size, helping significant numbers of one-parent families, having no impact on inflation, and having the potential (through increasing payments) to encourage work incentives. Labour and the TUC had never liked FIS because it was means-tested, and a Tory measure.[2013] Feminists disliked it because it was based on the principle of wives' dependence.[2014] Yet, as Keith Joseph had concluded some years earlier, it offered an apparently effective way of quickly directing resources to those most in need.[2015] FIS was raised twice in 1977, and again at the end of 1978. The coverage of free school meals was widened and further allowances made for rate and rent rebates.[2016] The number of people dependent on means-tested benefits increased.[2017]

The implications for single mothers were peculiarly profound. In 1976 there were approximately 750,000 one-parent families containing one and a quarter million, or one tenth of dependent children. Most were headed by women.[2018] By 1979, this had increased to about 12 per cent.[2019] The rapid increase in numbers was driven by rising divorce rates (nearly two thirds of divorcing couples had dependent children), and by the increasing tendency of unmarried mothers to keep and raise their own children.[2020] Single parent families were generally reliant on the income of one adult, whose ability to undertake paid work was constrained by their being solely responsible for caring and domestic responsibilities.[2021] Lone mothers, as opposed to fathers, faced additional challenges.[2022] Women employees were rarely found in low income households, except where their earnings constituted the chief means of support, e.g. in one-

[2013] Bernard Donoughue to James Callaghan, 3 Novemeber 1978, CCam DNGH 1/1/27. Although its extension, as it stood, would extend the poverty trap over a wider band of income.
[2014] A. Coote, 'The Tories' strange affair with women', *New Statesman*, 13 October 1978, p. 462-463. *Women's Report* (March-April, 1977).
[2015] See above, p. 244.
[2016] Dennis Healey, 'Low Incomes', 11 July 1978, TNA CAB 129/203/3.
[2017] Whithead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 402. Between 1971 and 1985, the number of FIS claimants nearly trebled from 71,000 to 199,000. See Andrew Dilnot and Julian McCrae, 'Family Credit and the Working Families' Tax Credit', (London, 1999), p. 2.
[2018] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family II*,p. 3, TNA CAB 184/517.
[2019] Gardiner, 'Women, Recession, and the Tories', p. 198.
[2020] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family II*, p. 3, TNA CAB 184/517. The number of adopted children fell by half between 1966 and 1976.
[2021] *Report Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes*, p. 147. See also pp. 110-111 & 132,
[2022] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 500 and pp. 500-519 more generally.

parent families.[2023] Conversely, relatively few one-parent families headed by fathers fell into the lower income brackets. In other words, unequal employment opportunities and low pay for women contributed directly to the poverty experienced by single mothers and their children.[2024]

The Finer Committee on One-Parent Families had reported in the summer of 1974 with a very thorough analysis of the problems faced by one-parent families, and 230 recommendations.[2025] The low political priority afforded to the issue can be inferred from the fact that a year elapsed before the Report was formally debated. In the Commons, Castle praised the report for bringing to light the special problems which had previously been overlooked but said that all decisions had to be taken 'in the light of today's economic realities.'[2026] As *Women's Report* summarised, the Government acknowledged the very real difficulties faced by one-parent families but could only afford to look at improvements which would cost little or nothing.[2027] The extension of FIS in lieu of the alternatives - for example, a more equal pay structure, or more generous universal benefits – helped to push lone mothers towards means- tested benefits, rendering them increasingly vulnerable to stigmatisation and to swings in political and public sentiment.[2028] About half of the Families in receipt of FIS in 1978 were one-parent families.[2029] Until the mass unemployment of 1980, they were the fastest growing group of poor people.[2030]

Nursery and Childcare Provision

The provision of accessible and high quality childcare would have done much to alleviate the difficulties faced by many women and low income families in particular.[2031] The Government

[2023] *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes, pp.* 65 & 147-8. For more on lone fathers see *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families*, p. 500.
[2024] *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes,* pp. 147 – 8.
[2025] *Report of the Committee on One-Parent Families.*
[2026] HC, 20 October 1975, cc. 53-4.
[2027] *Women's Report* (November-December 1975).
[2028] A similar argument was advanced by Frank Field, although with a different emphasis. He put generous universal child benefits and home responsibility allowances at the heart of his proposals for reform. See Field, *Inequality in Britain*, pp. 179-193, esp. 190-93. See also A. Atkinson, 'The Case for Universal Child Beneift', in A. Walker, A Sinfield, and C. Walker (eds), *Fighting Poverty, Inequality and Injustice: A Manifesto Inspired by Peter Townsend* (Bristol, 2011), pp. 79-90. On the subject of electorates attitudes towards welfare and poverty in general see P. Townsend, 'Democracy for the Poor', Foreword to McCarthy, *Campaigning for the Poor*, pp. ii-iii. For more on developing attitudes towards lone-mothers and the 'feminisation of poverty', see Morris, *Dangerous Classes*, pp. 112 – 123.
[2029] David Ennals, 'Christmas Bonus', 9 October 1978, TNA CAB/129/203/22.
[2030] Field, *Inequality in Britain,* pp. 190-91.
[2031] The Diamond Commission found that 'domestic responsibilities and lack of facilities for child care were often given as reasons for not working by wives covered by our survey. See *Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth: Lower Incomes*, p. 147. See also pp. 110-111 & 132. When considering this sort of evidence,

understood – intellectually at least - that 'nursery education and day care' were 'essential if women are going to be able to make the most of the increased opportunities now available.'[2032] Within the women's movement, lack of childcare was widely seen as a key determinant of women's inequality.[2033] (Some older feminists observed that the focus on childcare obscured another difficulty faced by women: 'the WLM has…tended to overlook those with dependent parents.')[2034] Although a strand of feminist opinion criticised this apparently unerring association of women with responsibility for childcare, *Women's Report* acknowledged 'surprisingly little attempt has been made, even within the women's movement to present a sustained challenge to this entrenched attitude.'[2035] Most women seemed to accept their responsibility for children as a fact of life. They simply wanted to know why there was such a dearth of adequate childcare.[2036]

Thatcher had been one of the few Ministers in the 1970s to actively champion the extension of nursery school provision. Her 1972 White Paper, *Framework for Expansion*, published as Heath's Minister for Education, had proposed a fifty percent increase in expenditure, with a particular focus on the expansion and improvement of nursery and primary provision. Her objectives were increased economic efficiency and greater equality of opportunity, with the latter responding to Josephs' diagnosis of a 'cycle of deprivation', rather than to women.[2037] Her planned reforms were swept away in the emergency cost-cutting mini-budget of December

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it must be accepted that a certain ambiguity will always surround women's stated intentions and wishes in the context of a culture and society so established around certain gender norms – and the need to work for a income. For more on the conflict faced, by single mothers particularly, see Morris, *Dangerous Classes*, pp. 134-5.

[2032] Bernard Donoughue to James Callaghan, 'Elections Policies Handbook', 30 March 1979 1979, CCam, DNGH 1/1/29. This had long been understood – and resisted. The policy laid out in Plowden report, which advised against the provision of full-time nursery provision for the under-fives, since it may encourage more mothers to work full time, held sway well into this period. See Department of Education and Science, *Children and their Primary Schools: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England). Volume 1: The Report* (London, 1967) , pp. 120 – 127. See also Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* 2nd edn, p. 287.

[2033] McDonald, 'Women in the Labour Party Today', p. 160.

[2034] *Women's Report* (May-June 1977).

[2035] *Women's Report* (September-October 1976).

[2036] See below, p. 324.

[2037] Lowe, *Welfare State*, p. 219, see also p. 363. See also R. Lowe, 'The Social Policy of the Heath Government', in S. Ball & A. Seldon (eds), *The Heath Government 1970-1974: A Reppraisal* (Harlow, 1996), p. 210. When forced to prioritise between expanding provision for under-fives or improving existing primary school provision, she argued for the former (against the wishes of local authorities) on the grounds that 'the need for the establishment of a firm basis for learning in the pre-school years is widely recognised.' See Sara Morisson to M. Thacher, 14 January 1974, and M. Thatcher to S. Morisson, 21 February 1974, both in CPA, CCO 60/4/19. Joseph had referred to a need to 'tackle the emotional an intellectual deprivation of young children.' For a full text of Joseph's speech see Keith Joseph, Speech organised by the pre-school playgroups association at Church House, 29 June 1972, attached to a letter from Keith Joseph to Sara Morrison, 26 June 1972, CPA, CCO 6/4/18. For detailed analysis of that speech see Welshman, *Transmitted Deprivation to Social Exclusion*, pp. 23-75.

1973.[2038] In her autobiography, Thatcher described how the 'figures and more fundamentally the approach' had been overtaken by events. In retrospect at least, she believed the 'crisis of 1973 to 1976…had led to a deep skepticism about the value of Keynesian demand management and to a new appreciation of the classical liberal economic approach.' She came to believe 'there was no way that a programme of universal nursery education was affordable.'[2039] Any hopes that a Labour Government would do more to extend nursery provision were dashed by the 1975 Budget as Healey's cuts dealt a final blow to the planned extension of nursery places to three-and-four year olds.[2040] As Peter Moss, of the Thomas Coram Research Unit remarked in 1976, 'government departments have neglected to an extraordinary extent the needs of working parents and their children.' [2041]

In contrast to this weight of policy inertia, initiatives to lobby for expanded childcare and nursery provision appear weak. The EOC recognised the problems caused by inadequate provision of childcare but internal disagreements forestalled strong policy recommendations. In 1977, they produced a pamphlet, *I want to work but what about the kids?* Most EOC staff and Commissioners agreed that childcare should generally be based in group settings and be funded by the state. Elspeth Howe, however, was a long-time supporter of playgroup schemes. In keeping with the views of her Party, she also believed that parents should pay for childcare where they could. For this reason, it was agreed the pamphlet should not come down on either side of the debate. However, just as it was being published, Howe disregarded the EOC's compromise and publicly announced that parents should bear 'a proportion, if not all of the cost themselves.'[2042] In 1976, the TUC finally responded to the growing demands that something be done about facilities for pre-school children. After two years of investigations, they produced a Charter for the Under-Fives which called for a 'comprehensive and universal service of care and education for children, from birth to five years old' available, free of charge, to all who wished

[2038] Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 590; Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* 2nd edn, p. 287. Even at their conception, some government-based observers believed that Thatcher's plans were structurally flawed, too costly in the economic context, and lacking in conviction. For more, see P. Shapely, *Urban Deprivation and Government Policy [Working Title]*, chapter 4, forthcoming.
[2039] Thatcher, *Path to Power*, pp. 191 - 3.
[2040] Conservative Research Department, 'Unmarked Report on Nursery Education', October 1975, CPA CRD 4/5/31. Thereafter, buildings allocations were reduced. And, despite a special £4 million being made available for 'areas of social and educational disadvantage', local authorities appeared generally apathetic, with half not even applying for an allocation. See *Women's Report* (April-May 1978). See also Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* 2nd edn, p. 287.
[2041] M. Phillips, 'Family Policy: The Long Years of Neglect', in *New Society*, 8 June 1978, p. 533.
[2042] A. Coote, 'Equality and the Curse of the Quango', in *New Statesman* (1 December 1978), p. 737.

to use of it. The Charter called for the system to be designed to meet the needs of working parents. It also articulated an opposition to 'low-cost provision' and argued that there should 'be no distinction between the education and welfare needs of young children.'[2043] Yet by 1978, the trade union movement, was about to lose much of its former influence over policy and the moment for reform had passed. As we will see below, 'family policy', including childcare policy, was becoming increasingly dominated by a liberal anti-state approach.

As the TUC Charter implied, the childcare issue had a significant class dimension. *Women's Report* explained how the choice of childcare was a matter of affordability rather than free choice:

> For the well-heeled, 'The nanny is alive and well'. For the slightly less affluent middle classes, the traditional au pair will come slightly cheaper… For the majority of working women, who earn little and work from sheer necessity the choices narrow down…[2044]

Demand for places at council-run day nurseries vastly outstripped supply. Nearly all places were awarded to children from 'deprived backgrounds', effectively ghettoising them.[2045] Workplace creches were uncommon.[2046] Playgroups were rarely a feasible option for working mothers since one of the Association's guiding principles was that mothers must participate in the running of their groups.[2047] Most working mothers turned to child-minders, who provided a relatively cheap service.[2048] However, there was widespread unease about the standard of care and only about half of the estimated total 70,000 child-minders were registered. There was no monitoring of the unregistered, and little confidence in those who were.[2049] Granted, there is a suggestion of moral panic here. In 1975, for example, the Child Minding Research Unit claimed that children left with child minders were 'educationally retarded as a result of the lack of mental stimulation' and that 'only 5000 of the 50,000 children with registered minders [were] getting

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[2043] *Morning Star*, 19 September 1978. For more on this episode see, Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, pp. 301-3. For more on historical trade union attitudes towards this issue see, Lewenhawk, *Women and Trade Unions*, pp. 255-7.
[2044] *Women's Report* (October/November 1977). Quote on the Nanny taken from *The Times*, 27th August 1977.
[2045] *Women's Report* (April-May, 1979). Coote and Gill, *Women's Rights,* 2nd edn, p. 287. These 'priority cases' included children of single parent families, children of employed single parents, children of ill mothers, children of ill mothers, or children of teachers. Only 2 per cent of under-fives had places, and there was not even enough places for priority cases.
[2046] *Women's Report* (October/November 1977).
[2047] *Women's Report* (November-December 1975)
[2048] *Women's Report* (October/November 1977).
[2049] Ibid.

any real help.'[2050] Yet the overwhelming majority of mothers did not perceive child-minders to be a desirable option.[2051] There was also concern, particularly in feminist circles, that child-minders themselves were overworked and underpaid.[2052]

At the beginning of 1979, *Women's Own* launched a campaign for 'Fair Care for Children and a Fair Deal for Mum.' The campaign centred on the undisputed fact that, whilst 'experts and factional interests squabbled' over whether mothers should go out to work, millions of mothers *were* and no special provision was being made for their children. The result, claimed *Women's Own,* was that the Government was 'turning a blind eye' as women were forced into a 'poor pay ghetto.' Noting that the forthcoming election was being talked up as a 'Family Election', they observed hopefully, 'if this [childcare] isn't a major issue for a family election, what is?'[2053]

The Family

The 'family' re-emerged as a key political theme towards the end of the 1970s.[2054] Renewed interest in the idea grew up partly out of the anxieties and contradictions generated by the social and cultural changes discussed in the preceding chapters. It also reflected certain economic challenges. This section explores some of the main approaches to family policy, within political parties and among feminist thinkers, that were articulated in the debates around the subject as both main parties vied to become the 'Party of the Family.'[2055] It explores the divergences in opinion over ideas about how the family and its members could or should relate to each other, to wider society, to the state and to the economy. Central to most discourses on the family was an acknowledgement - and often related anxiety or resistance – of the fact that women's roles had changed, were continuing to do so, and that this had consequences for the traditional family, and for wider society.[2056] The CPRS explained:

[2050] Ibid.
[2051] *Women's Own,* 24 February 1979, p. 55. Only 2 per cent of the mothers polled by Gallup for *Women's Own* thought that child-minders were 'the answer to the shortage of care for the under-fives.
[2052] *Women's Report* (October/November 1977).
[2053] *Women's Own,* 17 February 1979.
[2054] *Sunday Times*, 28 May 1978. Cousins and Coote, *The Family in Firing Line*, p. 7.
[2055] For 'Party of the Family' remark see Whitehead, *The Writing on the Wall,* p. 320.
[2056] M. Phillips, 'Family Policy: The Long Years of Neglect', in *New Society,* 8 June 1978, p. 533. Melanie Phillips argued that 'at the centre of the pressure on the family…stands the change in women's expectations and the reluctance of society to acknowledge that change.'

> Many policies implicitly assume the normal household has one member, usually female, free to carry out tasks which society does not normally entrust to public agencies – e.g. upbringing of pre-school children, care of the sick, and elderly disabled, and practical help to other members of the family group in any personal crisis…[S]ocial services have generally been underpinned by housewives running voluntary organisations…and supplying paid part-time services such as home helps…and school crossing patrol officers…[T]he system of provision of commercial and other services such as shopping and banking hours…assumes the availability of their main customers and clients during week day working hours….[2057]

In view of the fact that most married women now fulfilled two or three roles (wife/mother/paid worker) simultaneously, the CPRS believed there were 'particular implications for employment policies and for the scale of public social provision that may be required'. There were also questions 'over income support and distribution policies.'[2058] As this suggests, from a feminist, progressive, and even some conservative perspectives, it was believed that changes in women's roles would have to be positively accommodated by wider policy changes. Since it was not possible, however desirable some perceived it to be, to turn back the clock, the only alternative was to deny that change was happening.[2059]

Some feminists – although they were largely unrepresentative of their movement at the time – had anticipated the renewed focus on the family, believing it to be a necessary and desirable consequence of the 1970s equalities legislation. In their 1975 article, Luise and Dipak Nandy had welcomed the forthcoming equalities legislation as a step forward. However, they asked, can 'women be fully equal without more help for families as a whole?' Consciously mirroring the arguments of equal rights feminists, they maintained that debates about equality for women should not be kept separate from the discussions about the need for adequate family provision.[2060] Increasing numbers of women were working outside of the home. The importance of child-rearing was being emphasised. '*Something* will have to give', they concluded. Since society could not afford to neglect children's upbringing, radical solutions would be needed if women were to avoid being shackled to the role. Contrary to the hope of some radicals, they did not believe that the family was not about to be abandoned as the basic

[2057] Central Policy Review Staff and Central Statistical Office, *The Family I*, p. 7, TNA CAB 184/516.
[2058] Ibid. p. 6.
[2059] M. Phillips, 'Family Policy: The Long Years of Neglect', in *New Society*, 8 June 1978, p. 533.
[2060] Luise and Dipak Nandy, 'Towards true equality for women', in *New Society*, 30 January 1975, pp. 246-249.

unit of society.[2061] On explicitly feminist grounds they called for increased importance to be placed on the child-rearing role so that it would be socially acceptable and financially viable for people of either sex to take on and to share the child-rearing role. Only by making this 'special provision for the business of child-rearing' was it possible for society to address what they saw as the most 'enduring source of the inequality of women – the demand we have made on them to be wage earners as well as unpaid mothers and housekeepers.' [2062] However, feminists had initially been reluctant to engage with the family debate, and these ideas were not prominent at this time.

The Labour MP, Perry Barr, believed that Finer was the 'starting point' for the renewed emphasis on the family since it had been predicated on the assumption that the family was a 'valuable unit' and one-parent families were missing out on some of that value.[2063] Frank Field pointed to the importance of individual influences, and claimed that Rhys Williams and Peter Bottomley (Virginia Bottomley had conducted research into the lives of poor families and it was Peter's concern for the family which drove him into politics) 'did most to push the Conservative Party along the road to family policy.' [2064] Yet, there were broader forces at work at work here. As we have seen above, families with children had been becoming relatively worse off over a number of years.[2065] It was not only the poorer groups feeling the pinch. A 1978 'Spectrum Special' in *The Sunday Times* detailed how children had become a 'luxury'.[2066] In social and cultural terms, the renewed focus on the family tapped into deeper wellsprings of moral unease about perceived changes in modern living and modern morality. This can be seen in various speeches delivered by both main Party leaders before the family debate had properly taken off. For Callaghan, as 'Labour's Conservative', an embrace of the theme came naturally.[2067] Near the beginning of his Premiership he had called for 'more family responsibility and social

[2061] Ibid. Empahsis in original. One survey, not cited by the Nandys, showed that support for alternatives to the family, such as communal living with other married couples, was less than 5 per cent. SeeMarplan, 'The State of the Family', n.d. (1978), LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/8/1.
[2062] Luise and Dipak Nandy, 'Towards true equality for women', in *New Society,* 30 January 1975, pp. 246-249. For more discussion on their article see above, pp. 222-3.
[2063] M. Phillips, 'Family Policy: The Long Years of Neglect', in *New Society,* 8 June 1978, p. 533. See also Lord Hyton's remarks, *HL,* 16 June 1976, c. 1295.
[2064] M. Phillips, 'Family Policy: The Long Years of Neglect', in *New Society,* 8 June 1978, p. 532. Both men were critical of Conservative policy, FIS in particular. Peter Bottomley described it as a 'typically technocrat Tory thing to do. It would affect the family, but not with a family approach.'
[2065] See above, pp. 234-7. See also M. Phillips, 'Family Policy: The Long Years of Neglect', in *New Society*, 8 June 1978, p. 533; Bernard Donoughue to James Callaghan, 7 April 1977, CCam, DNGH 1/1/16.
[2066] *The Sunday Times*, 28 May 1978.
[2067] K.O. Morgan, *Callaghan: A Life* (Oxford, 1997), p. 759. In 1968 he had expressed a desire to call a 'halt in the alarming tide of so called permissiveness'

cohesion.'[2068] Thatcher traced the beginnings of the Conservative re-engagement with the family to Keith Joseph's 1974 infamous Edgbaston speech ('the balance of our population, our human stock is threatened'). This built on an earlier speech in which Joseph had attacked the evils of the permissive society blaming, inter alia, the 'facile rhetoric of total liberty' the absence of 'rules of community, place and belonging, responsibility and neighbourliness.' [2069] Although the eugenicist sounding remarks at Edgbaston were generally believed to have cost Joseph his chance of becoming Conservative leader, Thatcher observed 'an outpouring of public support for Keith in opinion polls and five bulging mail bags.'[2070] She believed that his speech had 'sent out powerful messages about the decline of the family, the subversion of moral values and the dangers of the permissive society' and had represented an attempt to provide a 'backbone for Conservative social policy.'[2071]

During her own campaign for Party leadership, Thatcher gave a fondly remembered 'full-blooded rendering of her views' to the Young Conservatives. It shows how, from early on, Thatcherism attempted to harness the meritocratic ideal (entirely compatible with an idea of equal rights for women) to a nominally family orientated agenda (which suggested that women were to be cast in their domestic roles) based on the principle of self-help:

> I believe we should judge people on merit and not on background. I believe the person who is prepared to work the hardest should get the greatest rewards and keep them after tax. That we should back the workers and not the shirkers: that it is not only permissible but praiseworthy to want to benefit your own family by your own efforts.[2072]

The proper emergence of the family as a political theme was marked by a Lords debate in June 1976.[2073] Baroness Young (Morrison's successor as Conservative Deputy Chairman with special responsibility for women) believed it marked 'the turning of the tide', coming 'at a time when a great many people are seriously concerned at the breakdown of the fabric of society.' [2074] The tone was set by the Archbishop of Canterbury's motion which drew attention to 'the continuing

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[2068] *HL*, 16 June 1976, c. 1266.
[2069] Thatcher, *Path to Power*, p. 262. The following week, *The Sunday Times* published a thorough analysis of the speech which showed that, contrary to Joseph's claims, the working-class birth rate was falling. See Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 234. For discussion of the earlier speech see pp. 232-33.
[2070] Thatcher, *Path to Power*, p. 262.
[2071] Ibid.
[2072] Ibid. p. 279.
[2073] *HL*, 16 June 1976, cc. 1257 – 365.
[2074] Ibid. c. 1274.

importance of the family in the changing circumstances of Britain today.'[2075] There was little sense of partisan politics.[2076] The debate covered wide-ranging and diverse topics. They included housing, sex education, contraception, abortion, pornography, 'latch-key children', hooliganism, marriage, divorce, child benefits, disability, the welfare state, religious values, and grandparents.[2077] Despite the traditionalist overtones, Young explicitly refrained from endorsing the view that 'all the faults inherent in the breakdown of family life can be attributed to women going out to work'. After all, she pointed out, Young herself managed a career and three children. Instead, she echoed what may be seen as the 'C/conservative feminist' line. Women must feel they had a *choice*. There was 'no more important job than bringing up a family'. She thought the 'danger of too much emphasis on...a career is that those who choose to stay at home will feel that they have done so because there is absolutely nothing else they are capable of doing.'[2078] The idea of the 'Minister for the family', mooted in the Archbishop's motion, was not generally well received; the practical and intellectual difficulties of overseeing and co-ordinating all the potentially relevant strands of policy were felt to be virtually insurmountable.[2079]

Patrick Jenkin, then Shadow Secretary of State for the Social Services, perceived potential electoral advantage and a theme that could well be suited to Conservative ends. Like Castle and Rhys Williams, he believed that Labour was becoming 'identified more and more in the public mind as the Party which represents Trade Unions, that is to say…people at work.' He noted that less than half the population were at work and that the number of people represented by Trade Unions was about half that again.[2080] Unlike Castle and Rhys Williams, Jenkin believed that the electoral advantage was to be gained, not by viewing politics through the prism of conflicted gender interests, but by developing 'the family' as an all-encompassing theme which would effectively neutralize perceptions of competing interests between different groups of people. Where Labour stood 'for organized breadwinners', he thought the Conservatives should stand

[2075] Ibid. c. 1257.
[2076] Ibid. For example, see Lord Glendevon's remarks. *HL*, 16 June 1976, cc. 1308.
[2077] Ibid. For example, see cc. 1260, 1258, 1263, 1296, 1270, 1302, 1281, 1259.
[2078] Ibid. A call echoed by Baroness Phillips. See cc. 1290. See also Sally Oppenhiem's speech as a sponsor of the Sex Discrimination Bill. HC, 14 February 1973, cc. 1397-8. See also a debate between Juliet Mitchell and Sally Openhiem on the meaning of choice in this context, *Argument. Women's Rights:Radical Change*, Tx. 21 March 1974, BBC2, available to view www.bbc.co.uk/archive, accessed 12th October 2014.
[2079] *HL*, 16 June 1976, cc. 1265-7, 1272-3, 1278, 1280, 1286, 1313, 1320.
[2080] Patrick Jenkin to David Snells, 16 June 1977, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.

for 'the whole family, husband, wife, children, dependents, and others.'[2081] With Young's support, Jenkin persuaded the leadership to dedicate a whole afternoon of their forthcoming 1977 Annual Party Conference to the subject to test and showcase the policy initiative.[2082]

John Houston, in the Conservative Research Department, produced a thorough preparatory paper.[2083] 'Family Policy' identified what he saw as the key drivers behind the Conservative revival of interest in the subject. These included concern about the corrosion of moral values; the search for a 'naturally Conservative lobby; and a linkage with the self-help theme which emobided 'a belief in self-help as a way of improving the social and economic conditions of this country and identification of the family as the fundamental unit of responsibility'.[2084] On the central political question, namely the potential electoral popularity of family policy, Houston noted that needs differed within and between families, partly because of 'piece-meal social services', but also because of unavoidable conflicts of interests such as those between working and economically inactive wives.[2085] Nevertheless, he thought there were many potential family votes to be won.[2086] The Research Department was confident that 'a strong belief in the family cuts completely across Party and class lines.'[2087] Indeed, like other conservative commentators, Houston thought that Labour supporters were possibly even more likely to take a 'traditional view' of the family and 'women's role' than their Conservative counterparts.[2088] Commitment to family was also understood to cut across ethnic divides.[2089] Beyond this however, Houston's paper identified research into public attitudes to family policy as a 'pressing need'.[2090]

[2081] Ibid.
[2082] Ibid. Janet Young to Patrick Jenkin, 17 June 1977; Janet Young to Sir Charles Johnston, 30 June 1977, all in CPA, CCO 170/5/19. This was an unusual departure from precedent and was designed partially with the aim of attracting media attention.
[2083] Conservative Research Department (John Houston, Head of Home Affairs),, 'Family Policy', 9 September 1977, CPA CCO 170/5/19. To the extent that the CRD was losing influence, Thatcher had expressed an interest in their explorations into family policy from the outset. See Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 174.
[2084] CRD, 'Family Policy', p. 1, CPA, CCO 170/5/19. He also noted the relative decline of the financial position of the family. Also the influence from increased contact with Parties in Europe. For more how the Research Department drew on the family taxation ideas of the German Christian Deomcrats see Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 174.
[2085] CRD, 'Family Policy', p. 16, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.
[2086] Ibid. p. 14.
[2087] Chris Mocker, 'Conservative Party Conference', p. 6, attached to letter from Chris Mockler to Lady Young, 21 September 1977, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.
[2088] CRD, 'Family Policy', p. 15, CPA, CCO 170/5/19. See also Ronald Butt's comments in *The Times*, 13 September 1977.
[2089] Chris Mocker, 'Conservative Party Conference', p. 6, attached to letter from Chris Mockler to Lady Young, 21 September 1977, CPA, CCO 170/5/19. Although, it was also observed that, for example, in Asian communities, families were less orientated towards nominally Christian values.
[2090] CRD, 'Family Policy', p. 16, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.

His paper highlighted the great strength – and weakness – of family policy: its ability to encompass almost any objective. Reflecting on recent discussions, Houston wondered if any agreement on the basic social objectives existed, or could be achieved.[2091] For example, family policy could encompass the aim of establishing a social wage, or of reducing the dependence of parents and children on the State and making it easier for families to accumulate and pass on wealth. It could encompass the aim of providing quality childcare and encouraging mothers to go out to work, or it could discourage mothers from working.[2092] Challenges aside, Houston's paper identified three possible methods of adopting a family policy: 'Cosmetic' - i.e. presenting existing policies with a family emphasis; 'Administrative' - i.e. creating an effective family lobby with a voice in government; or 'Financial' - i.e. redistributing resources towards family support.[2093] The difficulties associated with the proposal for a Minister for the Family suggested administrative approaches might well prove problematic and only invite the creation of further bureaucracy.[2094] If 'any real commitment to family policy' were to 'be given teeth', changes to financial policy would be necessary.[2095] Therefore, Houston concluded that a cosmetic approach offered the easiest and most promising way of embracing the family theme in terms of the immediate future. Interestingly, he provided an example of how this might be achieved by grouping together existing policies with 'various general remarks about the virtue of the family as an institution.'[2096] In keeping with Thatcher's expressed sentiments on the subject he drafted the following suggestion:

> Conservatives believe that the interests of families with children should be a primary concern of any Government. The state cannot and should not try to take over the role of parents, who need support and encouragement in preparing their children to be useful members of society. We believe it is in the interests of freedom that the family should be strong and independent, that parents should be able to choose how to spend their income rather than having it appropriated by the state, and that there should be positive encouragement of self-help and responsibility.[2097]

[2091] Ibid. p. 4.
[2092] Ibid. pp. 4-5.
[2093] Ibid. p. 5.
[2094] Ian Bancroft to K. Stowe, n.d., TNA PREM/1686; CRD, 'Family Policy', p. 14, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.
[2095] CRD, 'Family Policy', p. 7, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.
[2096] Ibid. p. 6.
[2097] Ibid. For examples of later statements that reflected this suggested approach, see below, p. 353.

As we shall see, this approach – whereby the family was both the government's primary concern and an institution with which the government should not meddle – was only one strand in the Conservatives developing approach to family policy in 1977. However, it was prominent and well in the process of being developed. This line of reasoning carried very broad political and philosophical implications. Among them, were implications for equal opportunities policies. In an influential 1977 IEA paper, *Liberty and Equality*, Lord Robbins acknowledged that equality of opportunity was an admirable and inspirational objective but he warned against persuing it at the cost of interfering with other 'desirable institutions', in particular the family:

> The advantages of being born into a happy and civilized family…can only be removed by the elimination of the institution of the family itself…Unless it is our aim completely to remove all inequalities of wealth and income, I see no justification for confining the advantages of superior spending power to ostentatious display and personal enjoyment…[2098]

In other words, the nascent Thatcherite meritocratic notion of equal opportunities conflicted with the Conservative notion of family.[2099] It was- judged unacceptable – indeed, unavoidable – to sacrifice one to protect the other. The family-as-a-self-sufficient-unit argument eventually found its strongest and most detailed expression in Ferdinand Mount's 1982 book, *The Subversive Family.* One of Thatcher's closest advisers, Mount argued the family was the 'only true revolutionary class…the ultimate and only consistently subversive organisation.'[2100] Although the conflict of interest between family and equal opportunity was generally discussed in gender neutral terms the implications for women were clear. Reforms which would have provided more meaningful support to the equal opportunities legislation, e.g. the 'special provisions' advocated by the Nandys, required collectivist or interventionist solutions. The point was not lost on the free-market Conservative right.[2101]

[2098] Lord Robbins, *Liberty and Equality* (London, 1977), pp. 13-14. He illustrated this by saying that: '[S]ome current ideologies…seem to hold that it is permissible to work harder to buy a car or foreign travel but not to give any special help to one's children or sick members of the family. I find this patently absurd.' See also Bell's comments on meritocracy. See above, p. 72.

[2099] CRD, 'Family Policy', 9 September 1977, p. 3, CPA CCO 170/5/19

[2100] F. Mount, *The Subversive Family* (London, 1982), esp. pp. 1 & 162. Chris Mocker, of the CRD, had articulated this theme early on. He saw the family as a 'natural and stable' element of social life and 'the best means yet devised for raising children'. It also had the additional 'Conservative virtue of being essentially a self-sufficient unit.' See Chris Mocker, 'Conservative Party Conference', attached to letter from Chris Mockler to Lady Young, 21 September 1977, p. 5, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.

[2101] Campbell, *Iron Ladies*, p. 214; A later but extreme example is C. Quest (ed.), *Equal Opportunities: A Feminist Fallacy* (London, 1992). The tone of the book is captured in the editor's introduction, pp. 1-6. Equal pay and anti-discrimination laws were 'abrogations of freedom and private property' which had undermined justice. (p. 2). Or,

In 1977, however, the future direction of family policy was still being debated in the Conservative Party. In preparation for the 1977 Conference, the CRD warned against the adoption of an overtly moralist agenda and capture of the family territory by the reactionary Conservative right. Houston and Mocker advised that thought needed to be given to the extent to which family policy should simply be a re-assertion of traditional concepts of the family –'the importance of…marriage, …encouraging mothers to stay at home and care for the children, more authority and discipline in the family…with perhaps the divorce-is-too easy, television-is corrupting-our-morals and abortion-is-murder lobbies tagging on…'[2102] This makes sense when it is noted that the family theme was originally conceived of as a 'big tent' idea. Opening the family debate at Conference, Young declared that 'the family stands at the centre of our society, at a time of ever increasing change, for four great principles: …stability, …continuity, for individual responsibility and self help…all good Conservative principles.'[2103] Young directed her speech to all families - including single parent and extended families. She spoke to families '*as a whole'* because, she said, specific types or groups such as single mothers, handicapped children, unemployed husbands, etc. already had lobby groups to speak for them.[2104] Reading the debate as a whole, however, a clear moralistic and traditionalist tone is evident, as reflected in Jenkin's closing speech:

> Many of the symptoms of the pressure [on] families are among our greatest social anxieties. The rising tide of juvenile crime, the growth of truancy, the break up of marriages, family violence, the loneliness of the aged, the growing dependence on the social services, the steadily mounting numbers of children in care. In [this] discussion there have been many strands…one…is the profound change…occasioned by the number of married women who now take a job outside the home… There is now an elaborate machinery to ensure [women] equal pay and equal rights; but I think we ought to stop and ask – where does this leave the family?[2105]

'In a free society, there would be no need of state subsidy for child care to enable women to go out to work. Either their ability alone would merit pay sufficient to cover the costs…or there would be no external economic imperative compelling them to go out to work….' (p. 6).

[2102] CRD, 'Family Policy', p. 15, CPA, CCO 170/5/19. See also Chris Mocker, 'Conservative Party Conference', attached to letter from Chris Mockler to Lady Young, 21 September 1977, p. 3, CPA, CCO 170/5/19. Mockler pointed out that the idea of any Victorian 'golden age' is a 'complete myth.'

[2103] Conservative Party, *Annual Conference Report 1977* (London, 1977), p. 77.

[2104] Ibid. Emphasis in original.

[2105] Ibid. p. 87.

Feminists were alarmed, not just at the anti-feminist tone but, in the context of cuts in public expenditure, at Jenkin's call on the family (by which they read 'women') to be 'the front-line defence when Gran needs help'.[2106] Yet, despite the emphasis on the family as a self-sufficient unit and the traditionalist approach, it was not an entirely forgone conclusion in 1977 that the family theme was a cover for cuts in public spending.

Across the board, anti-state speeches were broadly balanced by those condemning Labour's failure to implement the Tax Credit scheme properly, and to introduce child benefits. There were calls for the next Conservative Government to remedy the situation.[2107] To some extent, this reflected a desire to exploit Labour's embarrassment over the child benefit fiasco. Yet there had been strong support in the Conservative Party for the Tax Credit scheme. In 1976, Young herself had expressed regret at Labour's decision to abandon the Child Benefit scheme and her 'very strong' view that the tax credit scheme offered a way to help the most vulnerable family members without resort to means-testing.[2108] In Spring 1977, Jenkin had publicly accused the Labour Cabinet of 'surrendering to the male chauvinists in the Labour Party', and Callaghan of 'never really understanding or accepting the case' for tax free cash payments to mothers.[2109] In front of the Conservative Party Conference, probably consciously speaking over its head, he vowed to 'retrieve the Child Benefit scheme from Mr Healey's waste-paper basket and give it top priority.'[2110] Jenkin also suggested that the next Conservative Government would realign the tax system and perhaps introduce the tax credit scheme as a way of 'recognising the costs of bringing up children' and the value of motherhood. He also mentioned other caring work done by women.[2111] Pre-Conference, Mockler had told him that married women, the group who did most work caring for disabled relatives, were ineligible for the Invalid care Allowance. The simple reason was to avoid costs of between £25 and £50 million per annum.[2112] In Conference, Jenkin described this, not as 'discrimination against women', but as 'unfair discrimination' 'against the family'. He suggested that a Conservative government might remedy the

[2106] For Jenkins' remarks see Ibid. p. 88. For comment see A. Coote, 'The Tories' strange affair with women', in *New Statesman*, 13 October 1978, pp. 462-3.
[2107] Conservative Party, *Annual Conference Report, 1977*, pp. 78-86.
[2108] *HL*, 16 June 1976, cc. 1275-6.
[2109] HC,10 May 1977, c. 1268. Jenkin had also suggested to Field that he would be willing to use opposition votes to help force the Government into introducing child benefits if need be. See Field, 'Killing a Commitment' in Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 112.
[2110] Conservative Party, *Annual Conference Report, 1977*, p. 88.
[2111] Ibid.
[2112] Chris Mocker, 'Conservative Party Conference', attached to letter from Chris Mockler to Lady Young, 21 September 1977, p. 10, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.

situation.[2113] Although they would not establish a Ministry for the Family, Jenkin suggested the creation of a 'powerful and effective lobby group' comprised of delegates from voluntary bodies. This Family Council would be invited to make Family Impact assessments of policy proposals.[2114]

In *The Times*, the conservative Ronald Butt welcomed Jenkin's speech, interpreting it as a promise that the next Conservative government would take 'positive action to help the family.'[2115] Conveniently forgetting that the trend stretched back to the War, Butt attacked 'Labour's tax policies' which incentivised the working mother.[2116] Echoing Rhys Williams' line, he concluded that 'the woman who works as a full time mother' was 'virtually not deemed to be an equal worker' and he applauded the proposals to redress this balance through child benefits and tax credits.[2117] On one level, Butt's comments show that feminist alarm at the direction of travel was justified. In a newspaper column, outside the formal political arena, Butt was able to take parts of Jenkin's speech to their implied conclusions. Taking a swipe at the trendy idea of equal opportunities for women in the workplace he argued:

> Equal opportunities for the full time mother is a concept which will echo the common sense of many ordinary people in the country. I do not know what the Equal Opportunities Commission will make of it. But it could even be quite useful at a time of high industrial unemployment if it helps more women to stay home – quite apart from its value to human happiness.[2118]

Furthermore, where Jenkin had publicly declared that 'a loving family is worth more than all the psychiatrists in Britain put together' Butt added, 'Well, most of us know it is – and the happiness of a family depends, more than anything else, on the willingness of a mother to devote herself to it as a matter of priority.'[2119] On another level, Butt's remarks demonstrate how a conservative,

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[2113] Conservative Party, *Annual Conference Report, 1977* (London, 1977), p. 88.
[2114] *Conservative Annual Conference Report*, 1977, p. 89. There was always the Conservative dislike of bureaucracy to contend with. Houston had referred to article in *The Times* in his paper on the Family. See CRD, 'Family Policy', p. 14, CPA, CCO 170/5/19.
[2115] *The Times*, 13 September 1977.
[2116] Ibid.
[2117] *The Times*, 13 September 1977. For more on Rhys Williams, see above, pp. 263-5.
[2118] *The Times*, 13 September 1977.
[2119] Ibid.

even an anti-feminist, commitment to family did not preclude, and could even necessitate, interventionist and redistributive policies.[2120]

Since Callaghan had been persuaded of the need to increase child benefit, Labour were able to remove the immediate political sting from the Conservative's claim to be the true Party of the family with Healey's announcement of the biggest ever increase in family support.[2121] Otherwise, Donoughue noted, Labour's "family' record would have looked a bit thin.'[2122] As it was, Labour was in a position to respond to the family initiative, and encouraged by Donoughue, Callaghan did so.[2123] Like the Conservatives, Callaghan believed that traditional families were the necessary basis of a stable society.[2124] In one speech, referring to 'the growth of vandalism and hooliganism', Callaghan pointed to the need 'to preserve the beneficial influence of the family as a whole.' Traditionalist that he was, he placed the mother at the centre of the family in her traditional role and, in a variation on the 'two roles' theme, that would have been warmly welcomed by Elspeth Howe and other conservative women's rights activists, argued more attention should be paid to how 'industry organises women's roles at work, so that her influence at the centre of the family is not weakened.'[2125] Callaghan's speeches attracted significant attention so that by May 1978, his advisers believed that 'the media are now looking for some

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[2120] In a speech which Rhys Williams wrote for Thatcher's appearance before the National Council of Women in 1976 (but possibly never delivered), he argued: 'the contrast between the spending power of housewives who can earn through a full time wage or salary, and those who have no cash resources of their own because they contribute by work at home is a crying anomaly which we *must* correct…[I]t is the access to cash – through factory or office work for the most part – which is making possible the dramatic change in the status of women…Yet I hesitate to call it female emancipation…The feminine values of continuity and tradition, protection of the family and support of the weak against the strong. Have these no longer a place?'. See 'Notes for Mrs. Thatcher's Speech at the Dinner at the Café Royal, Regent Street, Following the Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Women, 27 October, 1976', LSE RHYS WILLIAMS B/4/7.

[2121] For notes on Callaghan's attitude see John Hunt to Mr Stowe, 3 May 1977, CCam, DNGH 1/1/17; Extract from the minutes of a Meeting of the TUC SIIWC Committee, 13 July 1977, MRC, MSS 292D/118/2; Deidre Sanders to B. Castle, 8 March 1977, Bodleian Lib., MS Castle 332; Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, 7 July 1977, TNA CAB 128/62/2; Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 14 July 1977, TNA CAB 128/62/3. For comparative claims see Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 48. An irate Castle observed, that despite his historic resistance to child benefits, Callaghan proved pleased to be able to claim child benefits as key Labour family policy. See Castle, *Diaries, 1974-76*, epilougue, pp. 737-8.

[2122] Donoughue, *With James Callaghan*, 22 May 1978

[2123] Ibid.

[2124] *Telegraph*, 12 June 1978; Donoughue, *With James Callaghan*, 22 May 1978; *Guardian*, 23 May 1978.

[2125] Cousins and Coote, *Family in the Firing Line*, pp. 7-8; *The Times*, 1 June 1978. In 1978, Elspeth Howe expressed concern about the disappearance of the 'single-role family', and argued that 'as a society we are right to worry about what is now happening to women as they struggle to carry the double burden of their traditional duties and their role as workers.' See M. Phillips, 'Family Policy: The Long Years of Neglect', in *New Society*, 8 June 1978, p. 533. Nevertheless, Howe continued to endorse a variety of the 'two roles argument', asserting that part-time work for women – albeit part-time work of 'greater variety and skill.' – was the solution to the problem. See *Women's Own* (24 February 1979). This echoed her husband's views. See above, p. 167.

positive sign of action…even on a defensive basis we will have to show soon that some specific action has been taken.'[2126] At this point, the Government started to seriously look at the potential implications and meaning of 'family policy.'

One initiative was the announcement of a Green Paper on the Taxation of the Family.[2127] Callaghan did not advance any preferred initiatives and the paper was proposed as a discussion of options. Having adopted a piecemeal approach to changing needs and pressures over the decades, the Inland Revenue welcomed the opportunity for a thorough reassessment.[2128] Despite the title, the main pressure behind the initiative came from a growing desire to tackle the ways in which the tax system discriminated against women.[2129] Callaghan left office before the paper was published and a modified version was published by Thatcher's Government.[2130] Although the case for greater co-ordination of policies as they related to families was accepted as sound, Callaghan was also advised to reject the idea of a Minister with responsibilities for the family since the 'sheer range of Government activity' which the term 'family' encompassed made the idea 'impracticable.'[2131] The CPRS undertook to gather and collate research on 'the most significant trends in the way families are structured and function', with the aim of providing a tool to better understand the problems faced by families and the potential impact of various policies.[2132] In the meantime, Callaghan invited ideas from Ministers asking for suggestions on the contribution their Department might make to Government policies to support the family.[2133] The exercise ultimately yielded no tangible results but the episode is discussed here because it well illustrates the very wide spectrum of policy areas that related to the family. It also shows how the notion of the family itself was a fluid and contested concept which embodied various tensions, specifically, those which related to the contradictory demands and expectations placed on women.

[2126] T.D. McCaffrey to Mr Stowe, 'The Family', 23 May 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2127] J. B. Bridgeman to GG Hulme, 11 August 1978, TNA CAB 184/517.
[2128] Private Secretary of the Board of Inland Revenue to the Chief Secretary, 2 February 1979, plus attached Annex A, 'Recent Proposals for Changes in the System of Family Taxation', TNA T 366/398. See also Denis Healy to James Callaghan, 11 July 1978, TNA PREM/1686; Denis Healey to David Ennals, 27 July 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2129] Equal Opportunities Commission, *Income Tax and Sex Discrimination.*
[2130] H. Land, 'Who Still Cares for the Family?', in J. Lewis (ed.), *Women's Welfare. Women's Rights* (Beckenham, 1983), p. 75. Many of the papers relating to this exercise are held at the TNA and it would be interesting to see how the project changed under Thatcher's Government.
[2131] T.D McCaffrey to Mr Stowe, 23 May 1978; N.C Wicks to Sir Ian Bancroft, 11 May 1978; Ian Bancroft to Mr. K.R. Stowe, n.d. c. May 1978; NE Wicks to Sir Ian Bancroft, 6 June 1978, all in TNA PREM/1686.
[2132] Ian Bancroft to Mr. K.R. Stowe, n.d. c. May 1978, TNA PREM /1686.
[2133] NE Wicks to Sir Ian Bancroft, 6 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.

The exercise would have been more difficult for Ministers had they been asked to think of domestic policies which did not impact family life. Healey observed the significant effect that taxation and social security policies had on families. Moving away from his Departmental concerns, he thought it might be fruitful to consider smaller scale things, like making it easier for parents to accompany their children to hospital.[2134] Secretary of State for the Environment, Peter Shore, thought the biggest contribution his Department could make was to ensure 'that every family had a decent house at a price it can afford'. He also thought more could be done to ensure families with children were not stuck in tower blocks but in 'housing on the ground, preferably with a garden', and more could be done to keep generations in close proximity. He also suggested improving the provision of sporting and leisure facilities.[2135] Among other things Shirley Williams suggested 'real help for marriage guidance services.[2136] The Home Secretary, Mervyn Rees, highlighted the 'special stresses' faced by families from ethnic minorities, particularly as they raised the next generation in a new culture. He also wondered about the effect of 'indecent displays' in some films and programmes on family life, and suggested the provision of free bus and train travel for dependent children.[2137]

Many Ministers highlighted tensions between women's roles as workers and mothers, and between the notion of equal opportunities and more traditional notions of the family, touching on the relevant policy implications. Ennals was unrepresentative of his colleagues when he, rather disingenuously perhaps, claimed that 'as a Government we have neither encouraged nor discouraged mothers of young children to go to work: that is a choice for them.'[2138] Part of the difficulty with the formulation and implementation of family policy was, as Healey put it, 'being sure what kind of family it is we want.'[2139] Michael Foot thought difficult judgements would have to be made. For example, would it be better to devise incentives which made it easier for mothers with young children to stay at home, or would be better to 'make it easier for them to

[2134] Denis Healey to James Callaghan, 20 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2135] Peter Shore to James Callaghan, 22 June 1978, TNA PREM 1686.
[2136] Shirley Williams to James Callaghan, 13 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2137] M. Rees to James Callaghan, 19 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2138] D. Ennals to the Prime Minister, 20 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2139] Denis Healey to James Callaghan, 20 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686. See also S. Williams to Prime Minister, 13 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.. Healey argued that the government needed to be clear about its objectives than previously. To illustrate his point he observed that although family cohesion was a desirable objective housing policies had tended to work in the opposite direction helping to create a more fragmented society. See also S. Williams to Prime Minister, 13 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.

keep up the family standard of living by going out to work?' In either case, he thought, the Government risked being accused of telling people how to 'run their private lives.[2140] Booth described his Department's conflicting priorities. They wanted to help the long-term unemployed who were disproportionately 'family men.' However:

> …we need to face up to the implications for family life of the equal opportunities legislation and the increase of the number of women who want to work; but any measures which assist women to combine work with domestic responsibilities are likely to draw more women into the labour force and so reduce opportunities for the unemployed bread-winner.[2141]

Practically, Booth highlighted the need for childcare for working parents. He suggested also that maternity provision might be improved. (He considered public opinion was 'not yet ready' for paternity leave provision.)[2142] The Home Secratary, Mervyn Rees also explored the potential 'conflict between developing family policies and our commitment to equal opportunities for women.'[2143] He warned against reinforcing a stereotype male breadwinner image of the family, pointing that more mothers were being drawn into employment outside the home, and there were also increasing numbers of one-parent families. Rees thought that a key problem was the considerable decrease in the amount of time available to parents to bring up their children. He did not want to blame parents for failing to do a job (i.e. spend lots of time with their children) which modern society made very difficult. If both men and women could take a truly flexible approach to their careers this would provide an environment more conducive to equal opportunities for women. It would also meant that one parent of any child could properly dedicate themselves to child rearing. Rees worried, however, that 'some of our policies may mean that neither parent does so, with the responsibility left to strangers and schools.'[2144] Having outlined an analysis of the situation that would have found broad agreement from many

[2140] Michael Foot to James Callaghan, 15 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2141] Albert Booth to James Callaghan, 16 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2142] Ibid. Grenville Janner's had introduced the 1976 Paternity Leave Bill which had the modest ambition of making provision for fathers to take three days leave within the twenty-eight days of their child's birth. He asked the House to recognise that 'men, too, have rights, not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of their working wives.' Tellingly, the eight other sponsors were female left-wing MPs. See HC, 21 July 1976, c. 1807. The Bill prompted no significant debate and fell at the first reading.
[2143] M. Rees to James Callaghan, 19 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2144] Ibid. As Creighton has explained, time was an important part of the compact around the male breadwinner ideal. See above, pp. 15 and 18.

feminists, Rees finally, and tellingly, turned to focus on the role of women: 'the most practical answers…are likely to involve making life easier for the working mother.'[2145]

Throughout the replies as a whole, there was a heavy stress on the idea of helping families help themselves, a call to encourage the family within the community to accept greater responsibility for themselves and those around them. This was closely related to a broader line of thinking being explored concurrently in parts of the Party.[2146] Rees clearly articulated this idea when he wondered if it were possible to:

> ...help families to help themselves in times of trouble, instead of providing aid through public services at considerable cost? Are there cases when children are put in care, or where elderly people are put in old people's homes, and where if half the cost of institutional care were made available to some willing member of the family a home could be provided? Does the same apply in respect of the severely disabled?[2147]

As Foot explained:

> I am very attracted to the whole idea of 'community involvement' with the emphasis on 'The Family'. It is a constructive approach to a number of thorny problems – care of the elderly (and the very young), football hooliganism, vandalism, race relations – and I think it could be electorally very attractive.[2148]

Obviously, Healey was also keen that this line of enquiry should not be overlooked since there were several possibilities here which 'would not necessarily involve the injection of large additional resources.'[2149] Callaghan saw potential value in the approach.[2150] However, various factors militated against Labour's pursuit of the 'family self-help' theme. On one level, there was wariness about the appearance of an election 'gimmick'.[2151] More fundamentally it was ideologically problematic. Even Donoughue, who had positively encouraged the theme, had

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[2145] M. Rees to James Callaghan, 19 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2146] Office of the Lord President of the Council, Privy Council Office [signature indistinguishable, Michael Foot was office holder) to Shirley Williams, 8 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686. The other specific initiative being discussed here was Fank McElhone's paper, 'An Alternative Approach to Public Expenditure.'
[2147] M. Rees to James Callaghan, 19 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2148] Office of the Lord President of the Council, Privy Council Office [signature indistinguishable, Michael Foot was office holder) to Shirley Williams, 8 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686. See also Ennal's comments D. Ennals to the Prime Minister, 20 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2149] Denis Healey to James Callaghan, 20 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2150] Nigel Wicks (Private Secretary to Callaghan) to Stephen Jones Esq. 15 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.
[2151] Office of the Lord President of the Council, Privy Council Office [signature indistinguishable, Lord Peart?] to Shirley Williams, 8 June 1978, TNA PREM/1686.

warned at the outset of it becoming 'indistinguishable from Thatcherism.'[2152] References to family 'self-help' in particular were held to be potentially 'dangerous' since:

> [they] can lead to the kind of philosophy that most Labour politicians and their supporters have been fighting for years, i.e a kind of survival of the fittest laissez-faire-ism in which those who cannot help themselves are blamed for it and allowed to sink.[2153]

Although Callaghan may have been a natural spokesman for family values, his Party were less convinced and he was warned of 'considerable dissent' in the ranks.[2154] As the CPRS wryly observed, there was a 'traditional Labour Party suspiciousness of bourgeois Janet and John policies.'[2155]

By the time the CPRS had completed its booklet on *The Family,* in July 1978, family policy initiatives in both Parties had manifested into little more than empty rhetoric, though for rather different reasons. In an answer to a formal Parliamentary question, in August 1978, about 'the role of the family in the future development of British society', Callaghan replied that the family had 'a central place in the development of a healthy society'. He reassured listeners with the vague, and essentially meaningless, promise that 'Ministers, in developing the broad range of their social and economic policies', will 'continue to pay particular attention to the contribution that improved provision for and protection of the family can make'. His examples of how this care had shown itself, e.g. free school milk and child benefits, long pre-dated any notion of 'family policy.'[2156] Ministerial interest in family dissipated.[2157]

On the other side of the political divide, Conservative family policy was morphing increasingly into a 'no family policy' based on an economically liberal, anti-state, morally conservative base. This change of mind did not become entirely apparent until Howe's first Budget in 1980 when he failed to uprate child benefit in line with the increase in individual tax allowances he had

[2152] See Bernard Donoughue to James Callaghan, 15 April 1976, CCam, DNGH 1/1/11.
[2153] Tessa Blackstone to Mrs Bridgeman, 'The Family', 7 July 1978, CAB 184/517.
[2154] Ibid.
[2155] Note from Mrs J. Bridgeman, 28 February 1978, TNA CAB 184/516. See also Welch's comments in *Telegraph,* 12 June 1978. See also Butt's remarks. *The Times,* 13 September 1977.
[2156] Prime Ministers Answer, 3 August 1978, annexed to CPRS, 'Reviews Affecting the Family', n.d. c. Sept. 1978, TNA CAB 184/517.
[2157] J. B. Bridgeman to GG Hulme, 11 August 1978, TNA CAB 184/517.

instigated. [2158] Ideology played an important part in this apparent change of heart. Thatcher had always opposed the tax credit scheme, perceiving it as 'destructive of self-reliance.'[2159] Whereas Rhys Williams advocated positive universal benefits (the basis of child benefit), Thatcher cleaved to the view that, in order to strengthen families and family responsibility, family commitments (e.g. to provide for children) should be at least partially recognised through tax reliefs on earned income.[2160] The Tax Credit policy stayed alive long enough to appear in the 1978 draft manifesto. Thatcher underlined the commitment to 'make progress towards our tax credit objectives', scribbled it out, wrote a large 'NO' in the margin, and underlined 'NO' twice.[2161] Thatcher later expressed her regret that universal flat-rate child benefit had displaced child tax allowances. In her view, the latter had the merit of combining a recognition of family commitments with the 'principle of taking responsibility.'[2162] However, these ideological convictions were not made apparent in the 1979 General Election Manifesto, which explained that further moves towards a tax credit scheme would 'be very difficult in the next few years, both for reasons of cost and because of technical problems involved in the switch to computers.'[2163]

In order to fully understand what many perceived as the Conservative's 'astonishing U-turn on child benefit', it is necessary to look also to public opinion, to which the Conservative leadership were carefully attuned. [2164] At first reading, the opinion polls seemed to suggest that more support for families, in the form of cash benefits, would be welcomed. In the Labour Government, the popularity of child benefits had widely been accepted as a given.[2165] In the

[2158] *The Times*, 28 March 1980. As *The Times* observed, it would have been previously unthinkable to not fully uprate the old child tax allowances in line with other tax allowances. The Budget was praised as economically sensible but the leader declared that the Government 'needs to take more deliberate account of families', it declared, 'or forget its claim to make this the centre of its social policy.'

[2159] 'Minutes of a Meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee set up to study the possibility of adoption of a scheme along the lines of that of Sir Brandon Rhys Williams', 29 July 1969, LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/5/8.

[2160] Thatcher, *Path to Power*, p. 546. In keeping with these views on responsibility, Thatcher also took a dim view of divorce for 'selfish' reasons. Apart from some genuine cases, she believed that 'putting the children first' will sometimes require 'putting off the divorce. See p. 563.

[2161] Conservative Party Manifesto for the 1978 Election – 2nd Draft, Thatcher Foundation Archive, Thatcher MSS 2/6/1/163. Online resource at www.margarethatcher.org.

[2162] Thatcher, *Path to Power*, p. 564

[2163] Conservative Party, *Conservative Party General Election Manifesto, 1979.*

[2164] For remarks on child benefit see Cousins and Coote, *Family in the Firing Line*, pp. 20-22. Child benefit was allowed to fall in real terms after the 1979 election. For remarks on how the Conservative General Election Manifesto was 'carefully tailored to the public rating of issues of importance', see Whitehead, *Writing on the Wall*, p. 365.

[2165] It is difficult to gauge, without further research, the extent to which this reflected a politician's desire to push their own agendas. Foot had reassured Callaghan that 'the increases in child benefit have been universally welcomed and the withdrawal of tax allowances accepted.' See Michael Foot to James Callaghan, 15 June 1978,

Conservative Party, the CRD looked at a 1978 Marplan survey on the family which showed 'strong support for marriage and the family unit'.[2166] Nearly half of all respondents, unprompted, had said that the greatest 'drawback' of family life was the 'expense'. This far outweighed all other concerns mentioned, including 'lack of freedom' and quarrels.' The Marplan report concluded:

> It is clear that money, and virtually money alone is souring the joys of family life. Indeed, *its noticeable the less well off who have the most negative view about the joys of family life*.[2167]

In a letter to Howe, Lawson, and Jenkin, Mockler noted how the falls in family income since 1973 would have aggravated these concerns. He believed mothers with young children felt increasingly 'obliged' to obtain part-time work in order 'to maintain a reasonable standard of living for their children', and he detected 'a real sense of grievance', among a large number of parents, 'at the way 'the system has moved against them and... disrupted their family life.' On these apparently very reasoned grounds, he highlighted child benefit as a potentially urgent concern.[2168]

Yet public opinion can be complex. In the Spring of that same year, 1978, the Conservatives commissioned the detailed survey of public attitudes on the family and 'family policy' the CRD had recommended.[2169] The findings offer a glimpse of public attitudes. More pertinently, they provide a useful insight into Conservative understanding of public opinion. They sugest how how the Conservatives were able to interpret and respond to certain concerns within the context of their political agenda. The survey suggested that the electorate were about evenly divided on the merits of a 'Ministry for the Family' (even when interviewees were prompted to consider the suggestion that it might increase 'government interference' in the 'lives of ordinary people').

TNA PREM/1686. Donoughue had believed it was a particularly direct way of winning support among working-class women in the 25-40 age group where the polls had shown that Labour had been losing support. See Bernard Donoughue to James Callaghan, 1 February 1978, CCam, DNGH 1/1/23; Bernard Donoughue to James Callaghan, 'Elections Policies Handbook', 30 March 1979 1979, CCam, DNGH 1/1/29.

[2166] C. Mockler to G Howe, P. Jenkin, Mr Lawson, Mrs Chalker, Peter Cropper, 17 February 1978, LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/8/1; Marplan, 'The State of the Family', n.d. (1978), LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/8/1.

[2167] Marplan, 'The State of the Family', n.d. (1978), LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/8/1. Emphasis added.

[2168] C. Mockler to G Howe, P. Jenkin, Mr Lawson, Mrs Chalker, Peter Cropper, 17 February 1978, LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS B/8/1

[2169] Opinion Research Centre, 'Report on a Survey of Family Policy' March 1978, CPA, CCO 180/9/5/3. For the CRD's recommendation, see above, p. 329.

The primary opposition came from 'middle aged and older people, middle class and male.'[2170] A majority of those questioned, 59 per cent overall, thought it was a 'bad thing' for mothers with young children to go out to work. Even among the 18-24 year old group, where support was strongest, only 22.5 per cent saw it as a categorically 'good thing.'[2171] The firm majority view was that young mothers worked to 'make ends meet', or for a 'little extra money.' Less than one tenth of all respondents (including working mothers) thought mothers might work for selfish reasons, i.e. because they enjoyed their jobs or wanted time away from their families.[2172] Although the survey found very strong support for the payment of child benefit to mothers, there was very little support for increasing the benefit, especially among older voters.[2173] By a majority of two to one, people also thought that responsibility for care of the elderly should lie with the family rather than the local authority. Unsurprsingly, since they were more likely to face the prospect with fewer resources, lower-socio economic groups tended more towards the latter view.[2174]

The most interesting section of the survey related to government spending, the means by which Houston had said family policy could be 'given teeth'. Accounts of Thatcher's 1979 election victory often suggest that voters seemed unconvinced about prioritising tax cuts over spending on public services.[2175] This glosses over the importance which people appeared to place on the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor.[2176] Despite comparatively low levels of welfare spending, public attitudes on the subject were often markedly punitive.[2177] There was a loudly voiced belief that tax payers' money was being wasted on excessive welfare payments to the undeserving.[2178] One of the survey questions had asked respondents to select the two 'most'

[2170] Ibid. p. 6.
[2171] Ibid, p. 72.
[2172] Ibid, pp. 76-7. It is interesting to read consider these findings in tandem with those of a 1977 NOP poll for *The Times* which had found that over half of the working wives questioned thought they could manage on their husband's income alone. Three quarters said that if unemployment got worse, 'men should take priority over women in the job market.' Poll quoted in CRD, 'Family Policy', pp. 9 and 15 September 1977, p. 10, CPA CCO 170/5/19
[2173] Opinion Research Centre, 'Report on a Survey of Family Policy', CPA, CCO 180/9/5/3.Ibid, pp. 71 and 8.
[2174] Ibid, pp. 7 and 8.
[2175] Kavanagh, 'Making of Thatcherim', pp. 220 and 23; Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979*, p. 342; Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 803.
[2176] Welshman, *Underclass*, pp. 5, 8, & 229.
[2177] See Commission of the European Communities, *The Perception of Poverty in Europe* (1977), pp. 70-71, cited in Field, *Poverty and Politics*, p. 72-3. UK spending on welfare system was very low by international standards in the industrialised world. See Lowe, *Welfare State*, pp. 307-8; Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, p. 371.
[2178] For example, a presenter of the BBC's *You and Yours* programme opened a programme on social security by quoting from a letter which she described as typical of the very many we've had: 'Would you not agree that this

and 'least' important items from a list for priority government spending. 'Pensioners' and 'Help for the Disabled' were ranked most important, scoring +27 each. One-parent families were also viewed relatively sympathetically with 'help for one-parent families' (+13) scoring significantly higher than the more general 'Social Security Benefits' (+1). The items ranked 'least important' were 'more Social Workers' (-22) and 'bigger cash allowances for child benefits' (-18), which were deemed marginally less important than 'the Unemployed (-15). Some issues provoked no strong feelings one way or the other. Among these were 'More Places in Nursery Schools' (-3) and 'More Financial Help for Families with Children'.[2179] These findings had a direct influence on the direction of Conservative policy.

At the beginning of 1978, in line with his public utterances, Jenkins had prioritised child benefit within the Social Services' section of the draft 1978 manifesto proposals, committing the next Conservative Government to 'complete the phasing in of Child Benefit as rapidly as possible' and to 'give high priority, within our tax cutting budgets, to increasing the level of child benefit.' He also proposed a commitment to uprate child benefit in line with inflation and other tax thresholds.[2180] At a Shadow Cabinet meeting in May 1978, after the public opinion research results had been circulated, it was agreed that there would be no family council, and no family impact statements, as suggested at the Conservative Conference only months earlier. Nor would a Conservative Government be 'able to go faster or promise more on child benefit than the Government at present were doing.'[2181] Jenkin explained to Houston:

> The second point that emerges [from the survey] is the public's ambivalent attitude toward Child Benefits. If the Government had failed to act much more positively, this could have been a source of embarrassment to us. As it is, I doubt we would now be able to promise anything significantly more than the Government are now planning. While we can

country is now being ruind by the payment of allowances, grants and rebates to many people who don't need them…" Partial transcript of Castle's interview on *You and Yours,* Tx 4 February 1976, Bodleian Lib., MS Castle 295. See also remarks from Labour Party workers on the ground in Market and Opinion Research International, 'Polling Presentation', 30 April 1979, CCam, DNGH 1/1/30; Jim Corr, 'Recent Opinion Polls', 3 April 1979, CCam, DNGH 1/1/30. See also Bob Chamberlain, 'General View: West Midlands', 24 April 1979, CCam DNGH 1/1/30.

[2179] Opinion Research Centre, 'Report on a Survey of Family Policy', CPA, CCO 180/9/5/3.Ibid, p. 13.

[2180] Draft manifesto from circa February 1978, attached to Minutes of a Meeting of the Conservative Shadow Cabinet (Leader's Consulative Committee), 8 May 1978, CPA, LCC, 1/3/15.

[2181] Minutes of a Meeting of the Conservative Shadow Cabinet (Leader's Consulative Committee) and attached draft manifestos from circa February 1978, 8 May 1978, CPA, LCC, 1/3/15.

> certainly claim credit for having shoved the Government away from their 1976 debacle… I am not sure how wise it would be politically to make too much of our commitment.[2182]

This change of heart was welcomed by Howe, who had harboured political reservations about the scheme from the outset on the basis of its re-distributory effect from tax payers to non tax-payers.[2183] Another good indication of where Conservative attitudes on women and the family were headed in the late 1970s also came from Howe. He suggested that each tax payer should be granted a single persons tax allowance, transferable between married partners. This would remove the effective tax concession to working wives; it would also provide a larger potential tax allowance for married couples where one partner remained at home.[2184] The suggestion gained political momentum. The Conservative WNAC especially welcomed Howe's proposal, claiming that it would 'enable women to be treated as independently as they wish to be treated, but at the same time to encourage and support the family.'[2185] This endorsement overlooked the fact that the policy would only benefit high income couples with one dependent partner (usually wife). It would tend to disadvantage low income couples, where both partners worked but had incomes too low to take advantage of the tax allowances.[2186] For Jean Gardiner, the episode illustrated how 'a commitment to women's equal rights can coexist with moral beliefs about the family which give rise to policies that go against women' interests.'[2187] As the final outcome of the protective legislation debates had demonstrated, many policies which were ostensibly gender blind, or based on the idea of the equality of the sexes, could also be policies which were neither progressive nor pro-women.

[2182] Patrick Jenkin to John Houston, 10 May 1978, CPA, CCO 170/5/20. The 'first point' was the public's failure to understand what was meant by 'family policy.'

[2183] Peter Cropper to Rt. Hon Geoffrey Howe, 21 May 1976, CPA CRD 4/7/2. For more on Cropper's relationship with Howe and attitudes towards the new liberal economics see Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 165. After the 1980 budget in which child benefit was not uprated, Howe openly wondered if it had been wise to depart 'from the idea of the state dealing with the family as a unit headed by the father' by giving child benefit to women. Quoted in Campbell, *The Iron Ladies*, p. 162.

[2184] Private Secretary of the Board of Inland Revenue to the Chief Secretary, 2 February 1979, plus attached Annex A, 'Recent Proposals for Changes in the System of Family Taxation', TNA T 366/398.

[2185] Conservative Women's Advisory Committee Discussion Document, *Women and Tax, 1979*, quoted in J. Gardiner, 'Women, Recession and the Tories', p. 196. For more on their views on taxation see above, p. 262.

[2186] For more on this see Antony Seely, 'Tax, Marriage & Transfereable Allowances', *Commons Library Standard Note*. 10 January 2014, Available to download from http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN04392/tax-marriage-transferable-allowances , accessed 6th February 2014.

[2187] J. Gardiner, 'Women, Recessoin, and the Tories', p. 196.

The WLM and its Message

British culture in the 1970s saw the increasing emergence, in films, books and television programmes, of tough, articulate, assertive, and 'liberated' female characters with concerns beyond the traditional sphere. Nonetheless, prejudice, gender stereotyping, male chauvinism, and misogony remained deeply embedded. It was evident in phenomena from Miss World, to Page Three, to the *Daily Mirror's* 1976 mini-skirt campaign, to the emergence of the Campaign for Feminine Women, which campaigned against the 'doctrine of women's liberation', which it perceived as 'more menacing' than either communism or fascism. [2188] While these signs of a backlash can be read as evidence of women's successful progression towards equality, it remained the case that feminists did not enjoy a positive image.[2189]

Unfortunately the reforms discussed above, and the Sex Discrimination Act in particular, encouraged a widespread belief that the most important feminist demands had been met.[2190] Attempting to counter 'mainstream press shouts of 'You are equal now so stop complaining', *Spare Rib* ran a rousing editorial: 'Women's Liberation is NOT Redundant.' 'Really freeing women', it argued, 'means challenging the sexual division of labour and the division between home and work.'[2191] Yet, although the issue was understood to lie at the heart of women's oppression, the WLM had failed to articulate a relevant coherent strategy in that direction.[2192] At the 1976 National Women's Liberation Conference in Newcastle, one workshop discussed a proposal for a seventh demand based 'around the sharing of domestic labour and care of dependents.' They recognised that more work needed to be done on the issue and the related childcare demand but were unable to formulate a proposal clear enough to put forward.[2193] In the end, no such demand was ever adopted.

[2188] *Women's Report* (May – June, 1976); (July – August 1976); (*November-December 1976*); Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, pp. 368-90 and 407-14; For the Campaign for Feminine Women see *Open Door: In Praise of Femininity and the Feminine Women*, Tx. 25th September 1978, BBC2. Available to view at www.bbc.co.uk/archive, accessed 12th October 2014.

[2189] One of the more bizarre investigations undertaken was reported in the The *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Research suggested that 'people expect feminists to be uglier than other women'. See *Women's Report* (November-December 1975).

[2190] George H. Gullup, *International Public Opinion Polls 1976* (West Point, 1977) cited in Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, p. 121.

[2191] *Spare Rib*, 4 March 1976.

[2192] Homans, 'Wages for Housework', pp. 77-88. See also *Women's Report* (December 1977-January 1978).

[2193] *Spare Rib* 47, June 1976. See also *Women's Report* (May-June 1977).

The 1977 National Women's Liberation Conference was the largest ever, but the movement itself was beginning to fragment and lose momentum.[2194] The largest campaign associated with women's liberation in the latter half of the 1970s was the National Abortion Campaign (NAC). Despite asserting a 'woman's right to choose', the NAC was essentially a defensive response to repeated attempts to restrict the operation of the 1967 Abortion Act.[2195] It failed to secure new concessions, though it claimed some remarkable organisational achievements. In 1976 it achieved TUC backing after Conference voted for abortion 'on request'. Despite continued disagreements between feminist, trade unionists, and political left groups, 90,000 people marched against John Corrie's restrictive abortion Bill in October 1979. It was the largest ever pro-choice march and the largest ever trade union demonstration for a cause outside the scope of traditional collective bargaining.[2196] The event illustrated the potential strength of an alliance between the feminist cause, left groups, and the trade union movement. Although the trade union movement had already passed the peak of its power and the political right was in the ascendency. There were concerns too that strengthened associations between feminism and abortion, with all of its potential to offend working-class morals and family sensibilities, did little to recommend women's liberation to working-class women.[2197] Moreover, as Campbell acknowledged, linking a woman's right to chose solely with abortion and contraception ignored the fact that, 'for *some* women their childlessness is yet another compromise, a choice, that only women have to make.'[2198]

[2194] For reports on the 1977 Conference see *Women's Report* (May-June 1977). The signs were clear at the 1976 Conference where the main theme was the gap between national campaigns and their organisation, and informal local women's groups. See *Spare Rib* 47, June 1976. In a 1979 paper on 'Tendencies in the Movement', Amanda Sebastyen believed that there was a political shift in 1976. Looking back on the Newcastle Conference she recalled that, 'it wasn't just the radical feminists who were saying that we thought consciousness raising was central and that we weren't satisfied with campaign politics. It was everyone.' See Sebastyen, 'Tendencies in the Movement', p. 23, available from the Pamphlet Section in FemL. For a first-person articulation of this belief see *Spare Rib* 58, May 1977. For example, '[Consciousness raising] that's where its at for me. No change in capitalist patriarchy outside unless my head is changing too. If you think you've got the answers sister, you're the one that needs it most….' This agrees with Pugh's broad assessment, see Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement,* p. 331.

[2195] *Spare Rib*, 42, December 1975, pp. 20-21. There were 85 NAC groups nationwide at the end of 1975, representing women's groups, trade union branches, trades councils and political organisations, incorporating 900 women and men.

[2196] Coote and Campbell, *Sweet Freedom,* pp. 157-9. They put the numbers at 80,000. Meehan recorded 100,000. See Meehan, 'British Feminism', pp. 200-201.

[2197] *Spare Rib*, 42, December 1975; Gardiner, 'Women, Recession and the Tories', p. 202.

[2198] See B. Campbell and V. Charlton, 'Work to Rule', in *Red Rag,* 1978, p. 30. Policy makers at this time were also considering the question. The CPRS put the question: 'As a matter of principle, should Government compensate families with children for the costs of raising children, the earnings forgone by the mother, or the entire difference between their standard of living and that of a couple without children and, if so, to what extent? Two changes in the last few years may be relevant. First, the number and timing of children is now generally a matter of personal choice given the wide availability of contraception and abortion, and second, while family support policies benefit everyone at a point in their life when they are generally relatively badly off – as a child – more people are

The movement had never overcome its inability to appeal to 'ordinary' women. Some of this can be attributed to media misrepresentations, to class divides, and to the feeling that women's liberation was an un-British American import. This can be seen in Pat Dallimore's (an 'ordinary working-class housewife') reply when asked what she thought of Women's Liberation.

> I think, looking at you all, and listening to you on the television and reading about you in the paper, you all seem very hard, very intense about your views…To me it's [Women's Liberation] like a women's club… And the women at Knowle West [my Bristol Community] wouldn't join you – it'd be a big thing for them to do - because of *you*, not because of your ideas. The things you want for women are all good but it's as if there's something American creeping in – the dominating-American-woman type.[2199]

There were also deeper reasons for the widespread mistrust and scepticism of the feminist message. For women who had made their life's work in the home and for their family, and particularly for those who had seen this as a positive life choice, it might have been difficult to accept that women's liberationists were on their side.[2200] There was an emerging consensus that the women's liberation message (if not the actual intention behind it) had not had entirely positive consequences for women.[2201] Angela Neustatter, self-defined feminist, concluded that 'a central but essential flaw in the evolution of women's liberation' had been the way in which women had 'felt themselves inexorably drawn to try to become Superwoman, to…match men in the workplace as well as intellectually while also fulfilling the role of mother and often that of the traditional wife or partner.[2202] The (unintended) warning had been there in Conran's bestselling, *Superwoman: the* 'how to' guide for working wives and mothers. One of her top tips on how to run a home and a job was 'We are all too often too tired, but try never to let the phrase cross your lips.'[2203] Those who were sceptical of women's liberation might well have observed

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now electing not to have children.*'* See 'Social Topic Note of the Family II: Commentary by the CPRS', n.d. c. 1978/9, TNA CAB 187/517.

[2199] 'Report of the Women in Media Conference, Bristol, July 1974', p. 47, FemL, Special Collection Two, Conference Papers, Box 1. For more on the Americaness of WLM see Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 220.

[2200] Ingham, *Now We Are Thrity*, p. 140.

[2201] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, p. 158

[2202] Neustatter, *Hyenas in Petticoats*, p. 226. As Humphries observed, 'those few working women who, through hard work, supportive partners, flexible jobs and sheer good luck, mange to combine career with motherhood are the heroines of the hour. Deserving as they are of admiration, they perpetuate the myth that you can have it all, including children, without sacrifice. See Humphries, J. 'Special Issue on the Family: Introduction', in *Cambridge Journal of Economics 23* (1999), 516.

[2203] S. Conran, *Superwoman: Everywoman's Book of Household Management* (Harmondsworth, 1977), p. 151. (first published in 1975). Lowry re-counted a story of a woman who was admitted to hospital, heavily pregnant and

that 'superwoman' was essentially a modern middle-class manifestation of the 'dual-burden', long experienced by working-class women.[2204]

From the vantage point of 1980, Lowry concluded that the movement's 'greatest failure was the failure to offer 'a really convincing alternative to the warmth of a conventional family situation when it works well.'[2205] Such arguments had always been vulnerable to exploitation by anti-feminists and chauvinists, which helps explain why so many feminists drew back from engaging with them. Yet there had always been a more profound explanation for the feminist reluctance to engage with this line of argument. From a women's liberationist perspective, any reforms based on an acceptance of the gender division of labour could not bring about true gender equality.[2206] As the CPRS had recognised, any true challenge to the gender division of labour would entail fundamental changes to the structure of society.[2207] As discussed above, the WLM had failed to articulate a clear alternative strategy.

By the end of the 1970s, women's liberationists were paying greater attention to these critiques.[2208] The explanation is perhaps partly demographic. In 1976 the downward trend in the birth rate reversed, hailing the start of a mini baby-boom. Demographers explained this with reference to the increasing tendency of working women to delay having their first child until their mid-thirties.[2209] Women's liberationists noticed the trend in their own movement and it is probably no coincidence that, about this time, many feminists began to question some of their previous assumptions.[2210] It is difficult to generalise this development. Personal experiences of motherhood were intensely different, and often contradictory, even on an individual level.[2211]

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with high blood pressure. Forced to retreat from some of her hopes and expectations she sent her friend a card: 'Superwoman didn't make it.' See Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 201.

[2204] Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 210; Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, pp. 200-201.

[2205] Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 212.

[2206] For example, see above, pp. 209-10. See also the debate, *Women's Rights:Radical Change,* Tx. 21 March 1974, BBC2, available to view www.bbc.co.uk/archive, accessed 12th October 2014.

[2207] For a vox pop interview which brings out this dilemma at the level of the individual, see *People for Tomorrow. Selma James: Our Time is Coming.* Tx. 21st January 1971, BBC. Available to view at www.bbc.co.uk/archive, accessed 18th October 2010.

[2208] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, p. 200 – 201; Ingham, *Now We are Thirty*, pp. 214 – 215.

[2209] Bouchier, *Feminist Challenge*, p. 198; See also *Guardian*, 26 February 1980, cited in M. Ingham, *Now We Are Thirty*, p. 200. Ingham herself, through the stories and experiences of individual women who had delayed motherhood, argues the case convincingly. For the beginnigs of this trend, see above, p. 49.

[2210] B. Campbell and V. Charlton, 'Work to Rule', in *Red Rag*, 1978, p. 30. Rowbotham commented on the experience of becoming a mother in 1977, 'there is nothing like experience for making theory come alive.' See Rowbotham, *Dreams and Dilemmas*, p. 80.

[2211] An American Feminist, Jane Lazarre wrote of the 'Mother Knot'. See Rowbotham, *Past is Before Us*, p. 116.

There were some dominant themes however. Many women reflected they might have placed too much importance on women working outside the home, without stopping to consider what sort of opportunities were available, and how comparatively attractive they were. Although the belief in the right to work remained strong, the positive side of motherhood was increasingly articulated.[2212]

As the feminist movement began to fracture from the late 1970s onwards, energies focused on diverse projects, from gay rights, to supporting the miners' strike, to identity politics, to anti-war protests which manifested most spectacularly at Greenham Common, to various attempts to reclaim motherhood through goddess culture.[2213] In 1980s popular culture, 'power woman', smartly dressed in power suits, with high ambitions, became a dominant cultural image of new women.[2214] Anne Oakely was more representative of the intellectual British women's liberationist reaction. In 1979 she penned a pessimistic article for *New Society* entitled 'The failure of the movement for women's equality'.[2215] She acknowledged that a minority of women had obtained large pay increases, new job opportunities, and new positions of power. However, women in general were trapped. On the one hand, the strain of being trapped in the home could prove significant to the point of devastating. On the other, the increased employment of married women had diminished their freedoms because of the enormous pressure of doing two jobs. Women could not win. The widely feted equality legislation had failed to alter the balance of power between the sexes because it did not challenge inequalities in the home. Oakley argued that the choice to pursue sex equality by encouraging female participation in the masculine world, rather than the other way round (why did nobody mention men's 'under-achievement' in the home?), had been informed by an acceptance of the dominant value system which deemed

[2212] In 1986, Anne Oakley conceded: 'as many people have pointed out, the women's movement articulated an implicitly, if not explicitly, negative evaluation of motherhood for many years before it was able to articulate the positive side', quoted in Freedman, *Feminism*, p. 71. See also Marsha Rowe's (creator *Spare Rib*) reflections in Neustatter, *Hyenas in Petticoats*, p. 229; Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us*, pp. 108-10 and 184; Lowry, *Guilt Cage*, p. 193; Ingham, *Now We Are Thirty*, esp. p. 139; Transcript attached to Campbell, 'Women's Employment', 10 (1985), p. 95; Gardiner, 'Women, Recession and the Tories', p. 202. Even those found their experience of motherhood less positive conceded that the movement had failed to face up to issues around motherhood. See the account of Sue Cooper in A. Sebestyen, *'68, '78, '88. From Women's liberation to Feminism,* pp. 76-7.

[2213] For personal accounts see *Personal Histories of the Second Wave of Feminism.* Especially Juley Howard and Sarah Hipperson on their experiences of Greemham Common, Monica Sjoo and Angela Rodaway on Goddess culture. See also A. Sebestyen (ed.), *'68, '78, '88;* Lowry, *The Guilt Cage*, p. 201.

[2214] *BBC Women's Hour Women's History Timeline, 1980-1989.* Available at www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/time.

[2215] A. Oakely, The failure of the movement for women's equality', in *New Society*, 23 August 1979, pp. 392-4.

women's work 'inferior'.[2216] There is a telling irony here; Oakley herself is still cited by writers as one of the women's liberationists who, through her seminal work *Housewife,* seemed most willing to challenge and ultimately dismiss women's own positive assessments of their housewife role.[2217] From a historical perspective, the 1970s movement for women's liberation had, in the short term at least, failed to solve the problem that had divided and defied feminists across several generations.[2218]

Yet, as feminist activist and scholar, Helen Taylor, recently reflected, some of the key ideas that were developed throughout these years – the idea of a society in which men and women were afforded equal opportunities in the public sphere, and in which men would accept an equal share of domestic responsibility – were taken forward into high politics by women like Harriet Harman.[2219] Intellectually, feminists continued to develop their ideas into policy proposals. In 1981, the NCCL and CPAG published a joint discussion paper on family policy which asserted that 'the elimination of family poverty and the achievement of women's equality are entirely compatible goals, rather than mutually exclusive ones, as some of the back-to-the-home brigade would have us believe.' They set out six basic 'ideal standards by which family policies should be measured'. First, Equal Parenthood and Equal Opportunity: family policy should aim to break down the 'artificial' division of labour. Second, the Right to Choose: individuals should have greater access to contraception and abortion facilities and a real choice about how they lived (i.e. as couples, alone, with friends etc.). Third, recognition of children as 'our most precious resource': all economically and politically active citizens should recognise their obligation to the next generation and attempts should be made to counteract the commonly held view that 'if people choose to have children, it's their responsibility'. Fourth: the social wage should be maintained and expanded. Fifth, proper attention should be paid to the distribution of resources *within* households. Sixth, to ensure greater economic equality between families with and without dependents, attention should be paid to fighting low pay, to resourcing proper levels of child benefits and perhaps additional cash resources to pre-school children, and to amending

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[2216] Ibid.
[2217] Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 392; Zweiniger-Bargelwska, 'Housewifery', pp. 151-2.
[2218] Lowy called this the 'outside equality first'Lowry, *Guilt Cage,* p. 209. See the introduction for a fuller analysis of these debates within feminism, esp. pp. 12-27.
[2219] Homan's, 'Wages for Housework', p. 95. See also Harriet Harman, 'Future of Feminism: Fawcett Seminar for Women MPs, 24 January 2006', http://www.harrietharman.org/future_feminism.html, accessed 3 September 2008. See also H. Harman, *20th Century Man. 21st Century Woman. How Both Sexes Can Bridge the Century Gap* (London, 1993).

the tax system.[2220] The message stood in stark contrast to the line espoused by the NCCL only a decade and a half earlier. In the intervening years, women had made significant strides towards equality. As they had done so, it had become increasingly apparent that equality for women could not be won as a thing in itself.

It is clear also that the feminist movement had helped to create a change in expectations. Disagreement, or even rejection, of the ethos and approach of the Women's Liberation Movement, did not necessarily equate to anti-feminism. The 'I'm not a feminist but….' phenomenon might have been widely derided by committed feminists but it empowered many women. For example, one woman wrote to Harold Wilson to complain about the unfair treatment of women under tax laws and unequal voting rights at her local socialist club. She concluded her letter: 'I am not an ardent women's libber – I just want a fair deal'.[2221] In 1979, writer and journalist Suzanne Lowry conducted a series of wide-ranging interviews in an attempt to discover how deep feminist arguments had 'cut into the basic fabric of society', and the extent to which they had touched the 'ordinary' housewives of Britain'. She concluded:

> 'Feminist' is increasingly a label with its own British rather than borrowed American identity, and is being used by women who might never attend a meeting or join a campaign. There are women who…deny all interest in 'women's lib' but in the same breath express solid support for the main feminist issues – especially some form of equality between the sexes at work and in the home. Women have learned to stand up for themselves…confidence is growing.[2222]

[2220] Cousins and Coote, *Family in the Firing Line*, pp. 3 and 36-9. For details of a similar programme developed by other socialist feminists, see Campbell, 'Women's Employment', 84. See also, Anna Coote, 'The AES: A New Starting Point', *New Socialist* (Novemeber / December 1981), cited in . Lewis, 'Introduction', in Lewis (ed.), *Women's Welfare, Women's Rights,* p. 15.

[2221] Mrs Hazel M Topham to Harold Wilson, 5 December 1974, Bodelian Lib., MS Wilson. C838, Case Files, Home Office, Equal Rights for Women Folder. In another letter to *The Times*, a woman concluded her complaint about the 'curious form of sex discrimination practised by the Inland Revenue' with 'I have no sympathy for the more bizarre proceedings of the Women's Liberation Movement but if officialdom is deaf to rational remonstrance what are women to do?' See *The Times*, 13 July 1973. In this vein, Elizabeth Vallance extended Butler and Stokes's thesis on political change – whereby political change is seen to result from the different experiences and social perceptions of generations as much as from class or partisan differences – to help explain the different attitudes between generations of female MPs towards women's rights and feminism. See Vallance, *Women in the House*, p. 87.

[2222] Lowry, *The Guilt Cage*, p. 220.

The 1979 Election

In one respect at least, the outcome of the 1979 General Election would have helped nurture that confidence. As a female Prime Minister, Thatcher helped normalise women's success.[2223] The biological fact of being female, it seemed, was no bar to achievement. In many other respects, it marked a set-back to women's cause. The main parties' manifestos had held out little hope for radical change. Through their five allotted seats on Labour's NEC, the NWAC, had managed to ensure that proposals for nursery provision, for improving women's low pay, and for reforming the tax system, were included in the NEC draft manifesto. These were dropped, along with other NEC policies, or watered down to vague 'aims' or 'objectives' in the final draft prepared by Callaghan.[2224] The portion of Labour's manifesto headed 'Equality for Women', was of significant size. A cynic might have pointed out that it comprised chiefly a list of past achievements and various non-specific promises such as that to 'progressively eliminate the inequalities that still exist in the social security and tax systems'. Nevertheless, there was a specific commitment to improving and extending maternity grant provision, and a promise on child benefit and assistance to one-parent families.[2225] The Conservative manifesto made no reference to women's rights and no promises on child benefits. The section of the manifesto headed 'Helping the Family' employed the 'cosmetic' approach to family policy suggested by Houston.[2226] It contained a variety of statements about a wide range of issues. Policies to help the family included the sale of council houses; revival of the private rental sector; improving standards in education; 'extending parent's rights and responsibilities, including their right of choice'; and, as a way of improving health and welfare provision, doing more 'to help people help themselves, and families to look after their own.' Tax cuts would help the family by 'restoring the will to work.' [2227]

Thatcher's Conservatives came to power in 1979 on the largest swing in the postwar period.[2228] It was also the largest swing in working-class support to the mainstream party of the political right, being particularly high among young, male, white, skilled manual workers from the south

[2223] Walters, *Feminism*, p. 138.
[2224] Phillips, *Divided House*, p. 163. For a more detailed narrative on the process by which the Labour Manifesto was drawn up see Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979*, pp. 146-150.
[2225] Labour Party, *General Election Manifesto 1979.*
[2226] See above, p. 330.
[2227] Conservative Party, *General Election Manifesto 1979.*
[2228] Ibid. p. 338.

of England.[2229] According to available statistics, there was an 11.5 per cent swing to the Conservatives among skilled workers and a 9 per cent among the unskilled working-class, again this was particularly marked among men.[2230] Lynne Segal later felt it necessary to explicitly contradict the 'popular, typically misogynist myth', that it was women as a group, who switched their votes to Thatcher in the 1979 and 1983 elections.[2231] Although men and women voted Conservative in roughly equal numbers, the swing towards the Conservatives was much greater among men (7 as opposed to 4 per cent).[2232] It is by no means clear that women, as a distinct group, were sold on the 1979 Conservative message. A Marplan poll of marginal seats just prior to the election, showed that 41 per cent of women as opposed to 47 per cent of men were planning to vote Conservative.[2233] Women in Labour households had been one of the prime target groups of the expensive Saatchi and Saatchi advertising campaign focusing on the issues of jobs, prices, and law and order.[2234] Having directed their 'hardest sell' at women, the Conservatives were surprised that the swing was greater among men and, according to Butler and Kavanagh, were disappointed not to have made 'more headway among women.'[2235] Campbell surmised that although men and women were voting Conservative in roughly equal proportions, they were moving in different directions; men were moving to the right whilst women were moving away.[2236] Many feminists on the left drew hope from this trend.[2237]

After the 1979 General Election, nothing more was said of Family Impact Statements or Family Councils. The family retained its place in Conservative rhetoric where it was used to justify wider Conservative policy, which often amounted to the actual withdrawal of support for

[2229] Taylor, 'Rise and Disintegration of the Working Classes', pp. 380-81; Segal, 'Heat in the Kitchen', p. 214; Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* pp. 226-7. For some discussion about the caution needed with generalizations see Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979,* p. 398-402.
[2230] In the context of increased voter instrumentalism, Butler and Kavanagh argued that, 'the skilled working class were peculiarly afflicted by pay policies and the squeeze on differentials'. In 1979, as Labour candidates learned on the doorsteps, Labour's redistributive rhetoric may have combined with Conservative promises of tax cuts to shift the C2 voters [into voting Conservative]'. See Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979,* pp. 347 & 350. For discussion on middle-class reactions to the erosion of their status see Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun,* pp. 365-85; Tiratsoo, 'You've never had it so bad?', pp. 187-190.
[2231] Segal, 'Heat in the Kitchen', p. 214; Campbell, *Iron Ladies,* pp. 110-122.
[2232] Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979,* p. 342.
[2233] Poll attached to Letter from Jim Corr to David Lipsey, 'Opinion Polls – The Marginals', 25 April 1979, CCam, DNGH 1/1/30
[2234] Butler and Kavanagh, *General Election of 1979,* p. 139.
[2235] Ibid. p. 351.
[2236] Campbell, *Iron Ladies,* p. 121.
[2237] Segal, 'Heat in the Kitchen', p. 214; S. Rowbotham, L. Segal, H. Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London, 1979), p. 7.

families.[2238] For example, in the autumn of 1979, Jenkin explained Conservative opposition to the state provision of childcare:

> I am convinced that a mother is by far the best person to look after her own young children… I accept that where parents wish…or have to work there should be facilities for their children. I do not accept that all [*the word 'all' added as an afterthought in the typed transcript*] these facilities should be provided free by the State…If they are made available at the public expense too readily, then they can all too easily be seen as the expression of a philosophy which preaches that parents may do what they like and it is the duty of the State to look after the children.[2239]

The failure to uprate child benefits led to disagreement within the Conservative Party. Rhys Williams had continued to fight for improved child benefits, long after they had become detached from his beloved tax credit scheme. In 1980, along with Peter Bottomley, and working in cross-part conjunction with Frank Field, he led a rebellion against his Government when it refused to honour its commitment to uprating child benefit.[2240] Five years later, Conservative Women successfully joined forces with groups in the women's movement and the poverty lobby against government proposals that would have distributed benefit income from mothers to fathers.[2241] However, the dominant Conservative message was that no special allowances were to be made for women.[2242] Thatcher was proof that none were needed.

Conclusion

Feminists and others had highlighted the inherent weaknesses embodied in the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts since their inception. Those weaknesses became all too apparent in the contexts of the late 1970s. Even as changing economic conditions drew ever larger numbers of women into the labour market, it did so on terms that were often disadvantageous. Many of the new jobs were low paid, part-time, insecure, service sector jobs. As its creators had acknowledged, albeit reluctantly, the Equal Pay Act had not been designed to address the issue of low pay. Even on its own terms, the Equal Pay Act proved difficult to enforce, especially

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[2238] Cousins and Coote, *Family in Firing Line*, p. 5.
[2239] Patrick Jenkin's speech to the National Children's Bureau Conference, Bath, 21 September 1978, BBCw, T56/445/1.
[2240] His dealings in these areas are documented in a collection of his private papers archived at the LSE, RHYS WILLIAMS, London, LSE. He also is mentioned in Meyer-Kelly, 'The Child Poverty Action Group', p. 182; See also *Guardian*, 24 April 1980.
[2241] Campbell, *Iron Ladies*, p. 165.
[2242] The 1980 Employment Act undermined even the limited amount of maternity protection that women had recently acquired. See Cousins and Coote, *Family in the Firing Line*, p. 26.

where women worked in low-pay, low-status, occupation ghettos. It was entirely inapplicable to those who filled the growing number of part-time jobs. Contrary to the hopes of some reformers, the Sex Discrimination Act did little to address these problems. In so far as it opened up some opportunities at the top of the labour market hierarchy, it did little to advance the cause of women at the bottom. The creation of opportunity at the top did not cause the jobs at the bottom to disappear. It did not address the issues associated with those jobs, namely low pay, low status, poor working conditions, and insecurity. Equally fundamentally, the efficacy of both reforms was undermined by the stubborn social, cultural and political attachment to the gender division of labour.

It is arguable that the Social Contract could have provided at least partial solutions to both of these impediments to women's equality. First, it offered a framework in which low pay could be addressed through incomes policies. Second, the social wage could have potentially been developed in the ways suggested by Wynn, and later by feminists and the CPAG, so that it offered the special support that women needed to compete equally with men. By the same token, as the Nandys suggested, it could potentially have also provided the 'special support' that men needed to accept greater responsibility for domestic and caring work. However, the Government was unable to increase spending sufficiently to meet its stated obligations, and organised labour ultimately rejected its side of the bargain.

The increased focus on the family in the latter 1970s was born partly of the failure to satisfactorily address the growing pressures on the family, particularly economic pressures and those that arose from women's changing role. Indeed, as we have seen, these factors were interrelated. Implicitly, mothers in low income families were increasingly expected to go out to work to earn a low secondary wage to supplement otherwise inadequate family income. The growing numbers of lone mothers were expected to fulfil the roles of mother and breadwinner, and were forced to fall back on means tested benefits when they failed to. The concept of 'family policy', as nominally supported by both parties, was potentially capable of encompassing virtually any objective. Potentially, it could have been steered in directions that proactively challenged the gender division of labour. However, beyond a very superficial exploration of the idea, Labour did not fully engage with concept or its possibilities. The women's movement did begin to develop a more sophisticated and fully-rounded response to these issues but the more

significant moves in this direction did not start until the mid-1970s and later, by which time the family debate was already well underway, with feminists cast as the enemies of the family. Ultimately, the Conservatives were most successful in defining themselves as the party of the family and it became a key theme in the Thatcherite appeal to popular opinion.[2243] Although the family had always occupied a central place in Conservative philosophy, its adaption to the purposes of a free market small/strong-state agenda, in a way that both demanded and denied the increased employment of women, was a Thatcherite inspiration which, over the coming years, would prove deeply damaging to many women.[2244]

[2243] Hall, 'Great Moving Right Show', p. 29

[2244] For an example of the centrality of the notion of family to the development of Thatcherism see, for example, Margaret Thatcher, 'The Renewal of Britain', speech given at Trinity College Cambridge, July 6 1979, available to download from Thatcher Archive, CCOPR 921/79. '…if the State usurps or denies the right of the individual to make, where he is able to do so, the important decisions in his life and to provide the essentials for himself and his family, then he is demeaned and diminished as a moral being.' For a brief note on its impact see Fink, 'Welfare, Poverty and Social Inequalites', pp. 275-6; Taylor, 'Rise and Disintergration of the Working Class', p. 385.

CONCLUSION

On 30th October Patrick Jenkin, then Margaret Thatcher's Secretary of State for the Social Services, was interviewed for the BBC's *Man Alive* programme. Prompted by Jenkin's recent remarks on childcare provision, that week's episode enquired, 'Working Mothers - Should They? Can They?' Asked if he thought 'a mother has the same rights as a man to go out to work – to make that choice?' Jenkin replied:

> Well, quite frankly, I don't... If the good lord had intended us all to have equal rights to go out to work and to behave equally he really wouldn't have created man and woman. These are the biological facts of life. Young children do depend on their mothers.[2245]

Jenkin's remarks became widely cited as evidence of the Conservative Government's intention to push women back into the home.[2246] Yet, viewed from a longer term perspective, their notoriety is more interesting than their content. It points to their relative novelty. In other words, by the end of the 1970s it had become controversial to explicitly deny equal rights for men and women, even on the grounds of biological difference. The Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act had enshrined in British law, however superficially, the idea that women were entitled to equal opportunity and reward in the labour market.

These two landmark reforms would not have happened at this time without the efforts of women's rights activists. Their achievements should be recognised and celebrated. The Equal Pay Act owed its most immediate debt to the Fords Sewing machinists. Yet the strike had the impact it did because the ground had been well prepared. For many years previously, women's rights activists had worked to keep the topic on the agenda. In the latter 1960s, they were able to use events such as the anniversary of women's suffrage and Human Rights Year to draw attention to, and to legitimise, certain demands for women's equality by locating key feminist claims within a universally lauded framework of individual rights. The Sex Discrimination Act, passed five years later, owed a similar debt to those campaigners. It also owed something to the women transport workers whose public attempts to become bus drivers helped to highlight the

[2245] No Title, 30 October 1979, BBCw, T56/445/1. It is clear from the programme file that the episode had been inspired by Jenkin's pronouncements on childcare the previous month.
[2246] HC, 11 June 1981, c. 565; NALGO, Equal Opportunities Committee, 'Women and the Cuts', 11 January 1980, excerpt printed in K. Laybourn, C. Collette (eds), *Modern Britain Since 1979: A Reader* (London, 2003), p. 61. For notes on 'notoriousness' of remarks see Gardiner, 'Women, Recession, and the Tories', p. 195. Seae also Coote & Campbell, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 98.

phenomenon of sex discrimination, and a good deal to the efforts of an organised group of Parliamentary reformers. Although the actions of WIM, and to a lesser extent groups like Women's Lobby, played a vital part in forcing governments to take action at points during this process, the wider WLM was not closely involved with either of these campaigns, despite any public perception to the contrary.

Indeed, many of the changes in women's legal status that occurred in the 1970s stemmed from campaigns with roots that long pre-dated the era. Improvements in married women's legal status had been pushed forward by groups such as the Six Point Group, and by Conservative Women. The maternity leave provision in the Employment Protection Act of 1975 can be traced back directly to the 1963 Balniel Bill and the response of the women's movement to efforts to deny new mothers access to employment without making any corresponding provision for their support.[2247] The events most closely associated with the Equal Pay Act pre-dated the substantive emergence of the British WLM. In fact, the episode acted as a catalyst for its development. The WLM were more heavily involved in the actions which helped to secure the payment of child benefit to mothers. However, many of the key issues raised in that campaign proved highly controversial within the movement itself. They went to the heart of the debates about the gender division of labour, women's role in the family, the nature and meaning of equality for women, and how it could or should be achieved. In the confusion, once women's right to collect the new child benefit had been secured, many feminists drew back from the subject. They ceded, without significant resistant, the terrain of 'the family' to the Conservatives .

In terms of the legislative reforms discussed here, the WLM's most profound influence was arguably indirect. Ideas diffused through 'people' channels, such as overlaps in membership between women's liberation groups and, for example, trade union groups or through individual relationships more broadly. Newspapers, broadcasts, and other publications carried articles or programmes. More importantly perhaps, despite frequent claims that 'extremist' women's liberationists were harming their cause, the (often wilfully misguided) portrayals of an unreasonably radicalised feminism opened up space in which campaigners were able to present 'moderate' and 'acceptable' as 'sensible'.

[2247] See above, pp. 82-4.

This raft of legislation has helped contribute to the image of the 1970s as the decade of women's liberation. Yet, whilst it is important to acknowledge the achievements of women's rights activists, it is equally important to recognise the very limited nature of the concessions they won and the contexts within which they were granted. Women were granted a form of equality which accorded with the national economic interest and the dominant political ideology. Although this work has focused on a very particular range of policies, it had offered an insight into the development of policy generally, and into the development of policy in this particular period more specifically. Policy development and implementation is a highly fluid process that evolves through negotiation and contest. It is shaped by ideological forces, economic constraints, the influence of key individuals and groups, and socio-cultural norms which colour, not just the views of policy makers, but policy makers' views of the electorate. The influence of different actors, or different ideas, and the privilege accorded to certain factors, varies over time.

In the early-and-mid-1970s, this work has shown how the trade union movement, as represented by the TUC, had an influence over policy making. Like their counterpart, the CBI, they were directly represented in the policy making process process. The TUC's influence peaked with the birth of the Social Contract. Its inability to deliver the quid pro quo the Government sought for committing to its side of the bargain, helped to undermine the Social Contract. With the advent of the Thatcher Government and, crucially, the end of a political commitment to full employment, the TUC and the labour movement more broadly lost its former influence. The nature of the new sex equality was not granted in one fell swoop, or embodied in a single reform. It was granted, withheld, and developed in a piecemeal and contested fashion across the decade. The debates about sex equality and women's liberation, which we so closely associate with the 1970s, were not a sideshow to the main events of the decade. They were part and parcel of the political, economic, social and cultural developments which saw the postwar consensus, and the values and assumptions associated with it, replaced by a nascent New Right, or Thatcherite consensus, founded on a moral belief in market forces and the privileging of the individual over the collective.

Chapter One showed how full employment, combined with the demands of the affluent society, was drawing more women into the labour market, in a self-perpetuating cycle, even before feminism re-emerged into public consciousness. Whilst politicians were demonstrably reluctant

to give any impression that they were encouraging wives and mothers to go out to work, lest they offend voter sensibilities, it was increasingly understood by business, by the Ministry for Labour, and by certain politicians and commentators from the late 1950s onwards, that more women workers were needed to meet the labour and skills shortage. Indeed, it is worth stressing that business representatives were calling for the removal of restrictions on women's working hours, which they viewed as a threat to future productivity, two years before the Fords Strike had rendered equal pay an imminent possibility.[2248] Supporters of equal pay often utilised the 'national interest' argument, claiming that reform was necessary to entice more women into the labour market.[2249]

More broadly, contemporary thinkers argued, modern industrial society had created a practical imperative for the creation of a meritocratic society – that is a society which offered its citizens equal opportunities to succeed and rewarded them on the basis of their individual merit. Even hypothetically (since the ideal has never been realised in practice), the idea was not unproblematic. The notion of meritocracy was founded on the idea that the individual, not the family, was the basic unit of society. It was also opposed to the idea that equality of outcomes was a desirable objective.[2250] However, the idea had a strong body of support and was given a moral dimension partly by human rights doctrines which stressed the equal worth of human beings, and by those who utilised the argument to claim justice for those racial minorities who suffered reduced life chances as a result of prejudice. In the mid-1960s, this individualist, meritocratic notion of equality of opportunity, formed the central underpinnings of race relations legislation. Chapter Three showed how this had the effect of strengthening feminist claims to these same equal rights whilst simultaneously defining and circumscribing the debate around sex equality. The Sex Discrimination Act drew upon this liberal notion of individual human rights and was directly founded upon race relations policy. Significantly, the Sex Discrimination Act did not cost any money; it did not require any increases in public expenditure. It was a necessary, but not sufficient, measure to ensure equality of opportunity for women.

Although the Sex Discrimination Act was widely understood to be the necessary counterpart to the Equal Pay Act, the two reforms had very different roots. Equal pay was a feminist demand,

[2248] See above, pp. 135-7.
[2249] For example, see above, p. 119.
[2250] See above, pp. 72 and 331.

but it also still correlated in many people's minds to the historic trade union demand for the 'rate for job'. Though synonymous with equal pay, this formula embodied the idea that women should not be used as cheap labour. It did not necessarily imply that women should receive or seek the same treatment as men in the labour market. Since the 'rate for job' was negotiated by predominately male trade unions, it could also been seen as a 'family wage', i.e. sufficient to support a man and his family. This duality of ideas helps to explain why opinion polls continually showed a high level of support for equal pay, alongside a high attachment to the traditional gender division of labour. There is no denying that sex discrimination was underpinned by a high degree of prejudice and sexism. Yet, it should also be recognised that there were genuine anxieties about the impact that the growing number of women workers would have on wages, living standards, and ways of life.

The notion of the family wage, as deeply flawed and arbitrary as it was when transposed onto reality, had reflected a social system to which many British people professed themselves to adhere to in some respect. The concept was grounded in a discourse of need (the need for a working man to be able to provide adequately for his family) and the dignity of work. As Chapter Two showed, the Fords Sewing machinists had not started out by fighting for equal pay in a narrow sense. Against a backdrop in which Fords (who were representative of industry trends at the time) were seeking to re-evaluate different sorts of labour according to their own managerial criteria, the Fords Sewing machinists had demanded the proper recognition and valuation of their 'female' skills. The episode that culminated in the Equal Pay Act resulted in the nominal granting of equal pay, without any associated revaluation of women's work. Taken together, the ideas embodied in the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts suggest a change in attitudes towards how the value of work should be measured and the scales by which workers should be rewarded. Workers would be paid according to an objectively evaluated pay scale, removed from the concept of human need, and the work – and therefore the reward – would be distributed according to individual merit.

Historically, the interests of low paid workers and women workers had often been very closely aligned. 'Women's work' had tended to be low-paid and low status. This evaluation had been based on a view that saw women's work as 'inferior' and justified within the context of the male breadwinner paradigm which saw women's wages as secondary. The 'achievement' of equal

pay helped to mask the failure to secure a revaluation of low status work. In the long run, this failure contributed to greater inequalities. Labour market restructuring created an ever larger pool of low paid, low status, service workers. Growing divergences in individual rates of pay, which contributed to greater divergences in family incomes, contributed to rising social inequalities.

The Equal Pay Act represented a fatal conceptual blow to the notion of dependence upon which the postwar welfare state had been founded. This was not widely acknowledged at the time, perhaps because there was very little faith in the idea that equal pay was about to become a reality. Nevertheless, on the political left in particular, there were people who followed this implication to its logical end and concluded that it necessitated a wholesale, and long overdue, re-evaluation of the social security system, the taxation system, the education system and, in fact, nearly every area of society. This was entirely consistent with the view being developed within women's liberation and which was well summed up by the Department of Employment:

> Some radical supporters of women's liberation see the ultimate aim as the family ceasing to be a 'wife supporting unit'. Child bearing apart, all tasks should be shared equally by husband and wife. The state should assume greater responsibility for the care and upbringing of children, and employers should adjust their arrangements to allow both women and men to fulfil their shared responsibilities in the home.[2251]

In Opposition and in Government, Labour began to move away from the Beveridge assumptions, whereby the needs of the dependent wife and children were met primarily by the husband's family wage and supplemented with limited fiscal and welfare support, towards what may be called a 'citizen worker model', which recognised women as independent workers who would earn their citizenship by assuming responsibility for their own individual social security and tax contributions.[2252] This shift reflected reality. It was increasingly assumed that childbearing and raising period aside, women would be in paid employment from the time they left education until they retired. This change carried the promise of liberation for women since it had the potential

[2251] Department of Employment Manpower Paper, *Women and Work: Overseas Practice* (1974), p. 455, cited in *Equal Status for Men and Women in Occupational Pension Schemes. A Report of the Occupational Pensions Board in Accordance with Section 66 of the Social Security Act 1973*, Cmnd. 6599, (London, 1976), p. 23. They had identified three broad reactions to women's changing role in society: 'Traditional' (women should choose between career and family); 'Moderate' (women form an independent, necessary and permanent part of the workforce but their circumstances and domestic responsibilities vary); and Radical

[2252] For more on the citizen worker model see above, p. 27.

to free them from economic dependence. Child benefit, maternity pay, and the Home Responsibility Pension credits can all be seen as polices which provided positive support to this new ideal, and were entirely consistent with its rationale. Further reforms which could have acted in this direction included the Home Responsibility Payment and/or the provision of state funded childcare for working parents, and paternity leave. Had such an approach been adopted, it would have given real meaning to the notion of equality embodied in the Sex Discrimination Act. As it was, the changes in the political and economic climate in the latter 1970s served to militate against these more kinds of more collectivist or interventionist policies.

Some in the Labour Party, most prominently Castle, came to see family support as a necessary pre-condition, not just for women's equality but for boarder economic equality. As Chapter Five showed, this position was later taken up by feminists on the political left. However, Callaghan's Labour Government drew back from driving ahead with the necessary reforms. The most immediate obstacle was affordability. Each of the additional reforms described above would have required higher levels of public expenditure. In the economic and political circumstances of 1975 and beyond, this was deemed unacceptable. It is arguable that Labour were restrained partly by the masculine culture of their Party which saw no reason to challenge the gender division of labour. Perhaps more importantly, the response from organised labour to the progressive incomes policies suggests that there was a deep resistance to any narrowing of the wage differentials which were typically symptomatic of unequal pay structures. Perceptions of electoral resistance to redistributive policies also dealt a blow to the prospect of further reforms.

As Chapters Four and Five showed, many universal family support policies would have found support from within Conservative ranks. However, these people generally saw family support policies, not as a way of challenging the gender division of labour, but of supporting the traditional family in a time of change. Other Conservative feminists and women's rights activists fought for women to be allowed a 'choice' between a home centred role, a mixture of paid employment and domestic work, or a career. At base, this amounted to saying that women should be allowed to choose their level of interaction with the labour market, an argument which overlooked both the increased need for skilled workers and the fact that the economic circumstances of many women were such that they had no choice but to go out to work. The growing prominence of a classical liberal notion of equality of opportunity in Conservative

thinking effectively precluded recognition of these sorts of structural impediments to women's equality. The establishment in political discourse of the Conservative notion of a family/state opposed dichotomy effectively mitigated against the kind of proactive family policies which were, according to the various analyses described above, necessary to support the family as way of ensuring meaningful gender equality.

In practice, and particularly after 1976, the manner in which the family wage principle was abandoned meant that the work previously considered the preserve of housewives, was no longer recognised either in the wages system, or in the social security system.[2253] Where it was not ignored, unpaid caring and domestic work was simultaneously and contradictorily regarded as a lifestyle choice to be afforded (particularly in the case of children) and as a duty (more so in the case of sick or elderly relatives). The expansion and evolution of the means-tested FIS instead of universal family support policies, encouraged the notion that children were a personal financial responsibility, rather than a group which merited support from society as a whole.[2254]

This thesis has examined only parts of the beginnings of the process whereby politicians came to acknowledge that the male breadwinner family ideal was no longer a viable social model. Much of that process actually went into reverse in the Thatcher era. Traditional family values were expounded, even as the gender division of labour was ruptured by high levels of male unemployment combined with the creation of more low paid, part-time work undertaken primarily by women. Many social anxieties were focused on the underclass and the associated breakdown of the family.[2255] Although it is clear the changes represented by the challenge of women's liberation had an impact, more work could be done to understand the nature of that impact within its associated contexts. More could be done, for example, to examine the process whereby the dominant discourse on equal pay came to neglect the dimension of family needs and came to embody the idea that an objective value could be placed on a job. It would also be interesting to explore how these changes, in concert with economic restructurings, affected ideas and expectations around the gender division of labour not just between work and home, but also

[2253] The transferable tax allowance was an exception, but this only benefitted high income couples. See above, p. 345.

[2254] FIS, and its successors, which means-tested benefits for families in work subsequently became an increasingly important part of the UK benefits system. See A. Dilnot and J. McCrae, 'Family Credit and the Working Families' Tax Credit', Paper presented at OECD workshop on Making Work Pay, 10/11 September 1999. Copy available to download at http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn3.pdf

[2255] Fink, 'Welfare, Poverty, and Social Inequalities, p. 275; Welshman, *Underclass,* pp. 163 and 166-183.

within the workplace, and the extent to which ideas about 'men's' work and 'women's' work have altered over time. Another fruitful line of enquiry, which could do more to reveal how policy development around gender roles and the associated division of labour reflect wider political and economic concerns, would be to explore the evolution of the notion of the 'hard-working family'.[2256]

Today, in spite of the gender neutral discourse, gender equality remains elusive. That change has happened, and often for the better, is something to celebrate. But the changes have been limited and unequal in their impact. The ideal of the 'citizen worker' model has morphed into the 'one-and-a-half-earner' model.[2257] The greatest strides towards equality have been made at the top of society suggesting that gender equality is something to be afforded. As we saw in the introduction, recent research has shown that the top fifth of the female population now live lives that are very similar to the male counterparts.[2258] The other four-fifths of women must hope that gender equality trickles down.

[2256] Though the term is currently used by politicians all across the political spectrum, the term was first used in British politics by Labour in the mid-1990s. This was in a Party where, initially, the ideas of women's liberation were to be carried forward through innovations such as a Ministry for Women. Selina Todd, 'The Working Classes don't want to be 'hard-working families', *Guardian* [online], 10 April 2014; Ed West, 'Someone rid us of the awful slogan: 'hardworking families', *The Spectator* [online], 2 December 2013; Brian Wheeler, 'Who Are 'Britain's hardworking families', BBC [online], 19 April 2005. A word search on the Hansard Millbank system shows the phrase appearing Commons debates from the mid-1990s and increasing in useage from the late 1990s onwards.
[2257] See above, pp. 27.
[2258] Interestingly, whilst means-tested benefits are nearly all based on aggregated household income, income tax is levied on individuals.

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