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**Title:**

**‘Pioneers in the Corridors of Power’:  
Women Civil Servants at the Board of  
Trade and the Factory Inspectorate,  
1893-1919.**

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## **Abstract.**

In the early 1890s university educated women who were considered experts on women's issues were appointed to the Home Office and the Board of Trade. This thesis investigates their work, lives and the impact of these appointments within the political context of the period (1893-1919): the expansion of the women's movements, the rediscovery of poverty and the development of social conscience. A select group of nine women have been identified. They were pioneers in the establishment of a position for women in the professional grades within the Civil Service. Their numbers expanded during the First World War but contracted sharply afterwards.

The study reconstructs the 'life histories' of this cohort, their working practices and investigates their legacy for the civil service, for feminism and for the industrial working lives of women. It examines the influence of their work on legislation and on improvements in the working lives of women in industry and workshops throughout Britain. Sources include Parliamentary papers, select committee reports, census returns and directories as well as biographical sources and some private papers to reconstruct their working practices.

In improved sanitary conditions, the reduction of hours, the gradual elimination of truck violations, increased protection against injurious industrial processes, this cohort were effective. Clara Collet's work played a significant part in the investigative process resulting in the first Trade Boards Act in 1909 and her statistical analyses of the effects of industrial work on women and their children informed both government and the public. These women civil servants' war work was also impressive and they served on several reconstruction committees. However, post-war politics seriously impeded the progress that such a distinguished beginning might have indicated. Chapter six explores the way in which the women's achievements were obfuscated after 1919.

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## **Abbreviations.**

BEA:	British Economic Association (later Royal Economic Society).
COS:	Charity Organisation Society
GPDSC:	Girls' Public Day School Company.
NUSEC:	National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship
NUWSS:	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
RCL:	Royal Commission on Labour.
RSS:	Royal Statistical Society.
SCSS:	Select Committee on the Sweating System
SDR:	Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act.
SJCIWO:	Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations
WCC:	War Cabinet Report on Women in Industry
WCG:	Women's Co-operative Guild.
WFL:	Women's Freedom League
WSPU:	Women's Social and Political Union
WTUL:	Women's Trade Union League.

## Chapter One: Introduction: An élite group of senior women civil servants, 1893-1919.

### 1. Pioneering women enter the civil service.

***'It is now at least admitted that the rather-above-the-average woman is quite on a level with the average man:'*** Clara Collet, 1890.

The economist, statistician and career civil servant, Clara Collet summarised the position in which some well educated women found themselves in the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century in 'The Economic Position of Educated Working Women' in 1890.<sup>1</sup> In the 1890s women began to be recruited as civil servants, not solely in the lower grades but in higher positions as, for example, education inspectors for girls' schools. A select group, including Collet were appointed to investigate the working conditions for women in industry. Clara Collet and Frances Durham were appointed to the Board of Trade in 1893 and 1915 respectively. Mary Paterson, May Abraham, Adelaide Anderson, Rose Squire, Hilda Martindale and Isabel Taylor joined the Factory Inspectorate between 1893 and 1909 and Mona Wilson was appointed to the National Insurance Commission in 1911. The social and educational backgrounds of all these women were similar. They were all well educated, experienced and ambitious - an élite group, or at least 'above average' as Clara Collet put it. They came from professional, educated homes and, with the exception of Mary Paterson, they all either lived or were educated in London. They were involved in social reformism: in the Charity Organisation Society (COS), the University Settlement Movement, the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG). They were, in the wake of the Royal Commission on Labour (RCL), which proposed the appointment of women to the factory inspectorate, ideally placed to move from voluntarism to a professional career.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis is an assessment of the lives and work of a small group of women civil servants investigating women's industrial conditions. It examines the contribution they made to the working lives of women and children between 1891 and 1919. The group

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<sup>1</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *Educated Working Women: Essays on the Economic Position of Women Workers in the Middle Classes*, (London: P.S.King and Son, 1902), p.6

<sup>2</sup> The Royal Commission on Labour (RCL), set up in 1891 to investigate the relations between capital and labour after a period of severe industrial unrest.

have been selected because of their impact as investigators and providers of statistical data, through select committees, Board of Trade and Factory Inspectorate reports, on the condition of industrial women workers. It examines their education, motivation and achievements, both in terms of the establishment of a professional structure within the civil service for women and in terms of their contribution to legislative reform. The thesis reconstructs the political and intellectual environment in which women were, for the first time, able to achieve professional status. Several dynamic historical factors, often in tension with each other, created this environment. The campaigns for education and employment, for women's suffrage and married women's property, the higher education of women, and social, political and industrial change in the second half of the nineteenth century moulded these women.

The re-discovery of poverty and the revival of socialism in the 1890s meant that government, in the light of competition with its industrial rivals, recognized the need for industrial reform, including the health and safety of women workers. Collet, an investigator on the Booth Survey and with the RCL, was an ideal candidate for the Board of Trade, with its increased demand for industrial statistics. May Abraham, Treasurer of the Women's Trade Union League and dubbed the 'Tom Mann' of the women's movement and Mary Paterson, who had a long association with women's industrial employment in Scotland, were highly suited to the women's factory inspectorate.<sup>3</sup> Adelaide Anderson, a clerk to the RCL and a former lecturer for the Women's Co-operative Guild was equally well-informed on women's industrial issues and both Lucy Deane and Rose Squire had trained as sanitary inspectors. These women were well placed to take the opportunities opening to them.

The social welfare measures of the twentieth century were largely about women: working class women suffered greater degrees of deprivation at work, in the home, and through childbirth and poor maternal provision. Welfare provision, Pat Thane suggests, and other feminist historians have agreed, has been shaped in many ways by women working, either in a voluntary capacity or professionally.<sup>4</sup> Deborah Thom has shown how government departments, for example the Board of Trade, became increasingly

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<sup>3</sup> Violet Markham, *May Tennant: a Portrait*, (London: The Falcon Press, 1949), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Pat Thane, 'Visions of gender in the making of the British welfare state: the case of women in the British Labour Party and social policy, 1906-1945, in *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s*, Gisela Block & Pat Thane, eds., (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p.93.

concerned about the conditions for women workers in the latter years of the nineteenth century, alerted to the issues by the women's trade unions. She suggests these anxieties reflected women's growing political awareness.<sup>5</sup> This concern resulted in a number of government enquiries. Particularly instrumental in this process was the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), which campaigned to organise women in the workplace and to seek protection for industrial workers against the effects of the 'dangerous trades' during the 1890s.<sup>6</sup> Women workers had been excluded from many trade unions and there was a clear sexual division of labour in most industries. Most women workers in the nineteenth century were domestic servants, factory workers or governesses. Their wages were less than half of those of men in similar positions and they were barely self-supporting. Segregation, although not constant throughout the country, was commonplace. Women also suffered vertical segregation in the workplace, employed in lower grade occupations than men.<sup>7</sup> Women were also more likely to be the victims of a system of fines and deductions imposed upon them, a system which had provoked the Match Girls' Strike in 1883 but was still prevalent in the 1890s and later. In all occupations women received the lowest wages and low pay made it difficult for working women, both in the middle and working classes, to support themselves or, indeed, other family members.<sup>8</sup>

Poverty, in particular amongst women in the 'sweated', that is low paid, overcrowded, unskilled trades, had become a highly politicized issue as a result of the investigations of feminist industrial organizations and the Booth Enquiry of the 1890s. Charles Booth's seventeen volume work, 'Life and Labour of the People of London' was finally published in 1902 but had originated in Tower Hamlets in 1887.<sup>9</sup> A wealthy Liverpool ship owner, Booth had determined to measure the precise extent of poverty among the London poor. Like many early social scientists, he had a Unitarian background. A man whose riches were inextricably linked to the extreme poverty of others he considered

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<sup>5</sup> Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War 1*, (London: I. B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 1998), pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup>The Women's Trade Union League was founded as the Women's Protective and Provident League in 1874, by Emma Paterson. 'Dangerous trades' were those which resulted in occupational poisoning, such as the lead poisoning resulting with work on glazes in the pottery industry.

<sup>7</sup> Jane Lewis, *Women in England, 1870-1950: Sexual divisions and Social Change*, (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984), pp. 162-163.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *Women in England, 1870-1950*, pp. 165-166. See also, ed. Sally Alexander, *Women's Fabian Tracts*, (London: Routledge, 1988), Tract 6, pp. 105-128.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Booth's *The Life and Labour of the People of London* was one of several surveys of the lives of the urban poor.

the moral problem presented to him by his position and had set about a study to explore the nature of the effect of industrial organization on social conditions and to discover the means whereby improvements could be made.<sup>10</sup> His aim was to develop a 'scientific' approach to an analysis of the condition of the London poor, and in his attempt to measure the precise nature of the problem he enlisted the assistance of a number of very talented young people from the Charity Organisation Society, Toynbee Hall and the Royal Statistical Society.<sup>11</sup> Hubert Llewellyn Smith, Beatrice Webb, David Schloss and Clara Collet all served their apprenticeship as social investigators with these voluntary and professional organizations. Each would later play a significant role in the expansion of social science or in the civil service.

In the context of the economic depression of the 1890s, the rediscovery of poverty and the spread of the factory and workshop system to more and more areas of industry, some feminists considered improving the conditions of working women, with higher wages and skilled employments for women workers, to be just as significant as the vote. Industrial feminists believed widened educational opportunities improved the conditions for women in industry and were a pre-condition of the suffrage. The suffrage, they argued, would do little to raise working women above the poverty line, without social and economic reform. Katherine Bruce Glaser, writing a women's column for the *Labour Leader* from 1906 to 1909, under the pen name 'Iona', supported a limited franchise but argued increasingly for other reforms.<sup>12</sup> These 'social feminists' were convinced that it was only through trade union agitation and the industrial legislative process that conditions in the workplace for the majority of women could be improved. The work of women newly appointed to the factory inspectorate in the civil service was as a result of this groundswell of opinion.

Collet and the Webbs had worked on the Booth Survey between 1888 and 1892, collecting evidence on the industrial conditions of women for volume eight of 'Life and

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<sup>10</sup> T.S. Simey and M.B. Simey, *Charles Booth, Social Scientist*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.3.

<sup>11</sup> Toynbee Hall was founded by Samuel and Henrietta Barnett, for intellectual and able young people to live and work amongst the poor in the East End to develop knowledge and understanding of the problems experienced. Alumni included William Beveridge. Founded as the Statistical Society of London in 1834, the Royal Statistical Society gained its royal charter in 1887. Its aim was to gather statistical evidence about society. Members included Charles Booth, William Beveridge and Clara Collet.

<sup>12</sup> June Hannam and Karen Hunt, *Socialist Women, Britain, 1880s-1920s*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.112.

Labour of the People in London'. Collet also wrote 'Women's Work in Leeds' in 1891, for *The Economic Journal*, a study of women's work and wages in the factory-based clothing industry in Leeds, using census returns, reports from factory inspectors and surveys of women employees. In this study Collet made a sharp contrast with the conditions she had discovered amongst home workers in East London in 1888, when working on her investigations for Charles Booth. She analysed women's factory employment in Leeds and discovered improved wages and working conditions.<sup>13</sup> Her paper prefigured the Webbs' analysis in 'Problems of Modern Industry' (1898), and was a point of reference when they argued that the substitution of the 'sweater's den' for the factory and the ready-made trade would stimulate the demand for women's labour.<sup>14</sup> Like many progressives and members of the labour movement the Webbs believed that sweating, out work and home work were all evils or residues of backward sectors of the economy and that factories and machinery by regulating employment, pay and conditions would eliminate these evils. The First World War and mass production plus higher living standards, followed by economic recession were to shatter these illusions.

Poor conditions experienced by workers in the sweated industries had been investigated by the Select Committee on the Sweating System (SCSS) in its fifth and final report in 1890. Sweating was defined by low pay, long hours and insanitary conditions. It had often been attributed to foreign immigrants or subcontracting and 'middlemen' but, after the SCSS investigations the cause was considered to be out working, mainly involving female labour. This shift in public perception, attributable to the exploratory work of Charles Booth's investigators, including Beatrice Webb and Clara Collet and to the conclusions of the SCSS, helps to account for the appointment of women to the Board of Trade and the Factory Inspectorate at this time.<sup>15</sup> Public anxiety about the sweated industries impacted on the development of professional opportunities for women within the Civil Service and will be discussed fully in chapter two. Suffice it to say at this point that many contemporaries saw women as the main

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<sup>13</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep., 1891), 460-473, p. 469.

<sup>14</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Problems of Modern Industry*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898), p. 98.

<sup>15</sup> For example: Beatrice Potter, 'The Lords and the Sweating System', *Nineteenth Century: a monthly review*, 27:160, (June 1890), pp. 885-905; Barbara McLaren, 'The Sweating System: summary of evidence given before the Committee of the House of Lords', *LSE Selected Pamphlets*, (1890), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/60217995>; Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, 1887-1902; Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: a Study of Town Life*, (London: Macmillan & Co, 1902).

sufferers of outworking, and homeworking as the main cause. It was for this reason that some social feminists considered greater industrialism would ameliorate this iniquity.<sup>16</sup>

The Royal Commission on Labour (RCL), set up in 1891 under Lord Salisbury's Conservative government to investigate the 'labour question', proved the stepping stone to a professional life for Clara Collet, May Abraham, Mary Paterson and Adelaide Anderson united by shared experiences in women's issues. Collet and Abraham became two of the four women assistant commissioners appointed to the RCL to investigate the industrial conditions of women in 1891. They investigated differences in the rate of wages between men and women; the alleged grievances of women and the effects of women's industrial employment on their health, morality and the home.<sup>17</sup> Collet moved from the RCL to an appointment as labour investigator for women's industries at the Board of Trade in 1893; May Abraham and Mary Paterson were the first two women appointed to the factory inspectorate in 1893, as a result of the RCL's recommendations for the appointment of women to the factory inspectorate.<sup>18</sup> Adelaide Anderson, who served as a clerk to the RCL in 1892, also moved to the factory inspectorate in 1894.<sup>19</sup> Although candidates for such positions might be expected to compete in examination like male candidates, the first two women were appointed to the factory inspectorate through nomination by the Home Secretary. By the following year however, candidates were also required to take examinations and subsequent appointees, including Lucy Deane, Adelaide Anderson and Rose Squire, did so. Such positions very quickly became reserved for women with special technical or practical experience.<sup>20</sup> Isabel Taylor received a nomination only after taking the examination. It was probable that this was through a lack of experience in the field, as she had no earlier association with social reform. However, she had written a bibliography of unemployment and the unemployed in 1909, the year of her appointment.<sup>21</sup> The Board

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<sup>16</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds', p. 469; Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Problems of Modern Industry*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1898), p.98.

<sup>17</sup> Royal Commission on Labour, *The Employment of Women: Reports by Miss Eliza Orme, Miss Clara E. Collet, Miss May E. Abraham and Miss Margaret H. Irwin, on the Conditions of Work in Various industries in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1893), [C.6894-XX111], p. iii.

<sup>18</sup> T.G. Spyers, B.A., *The Labour Question: An Epitome of the Evidence and Report of the Royal Commission on Labour*, (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1894), p. 230.

<sup>19</sup> The work of the Commission with respect to women is discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest E. Carr, *How to enter the Civil Service: A Practical Guide to State Employment for Men and Women*, (London: Grant Richards, 1902), p.33.

<sup>21</sup> F. Isabel Taylor, *A Bibliography of Unemployment and the Unemployed*, (London: P.S.King & Son, 1909).

of Trade and the Home Office, in the changing climate of late Victorian and Edwardian social policy, had developing concerns on issues of social justice.

Clara Collet contributed significantly to the contemporary debate on the economic position of women, in employment, in marriage and on economic independence.<sup>22</sup> She was acknowledged by her contemporaries as an able economist and statistician and she was prolific writer. The first women factory inspectors were recognized as pioneers by their peers. Hilda Martindale's books, the memoirs of Adelaide Anderson, and Rose Squire, together with Collet's and Lucy Deane's written papers and diaries provided a starting point for research on an area of women's endeavours within the Civil Service where there appeared to be a case for more detailed research.<sup>23</sup> An examination of these memoirs and diaries has allowed a greater understanding of their sociability, their interests and reflections. Their personal memoirs have been supplemented by contemporary life histories and accounts of the development of the civil service during this period.<sup>24</sup> These women played an important role in the development of industrial protection for women and were perceived by their contemporaries to be successful. For example, Stanley Baldwin wrote in 1938:

It is not so long ago that all responsible and important work in the Civil Service was reserved for men, but in recent years there has been a marked tendency...for women to have a growing share, and judging by their

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<sup>22</sup> For example, Clara Elizabeth Collet, *Educated Working Women: Essays on the Position of Women Workers in the Middle Classes*.

<sup>23</sup> Adelaide Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, (London: John Murray, 1921); Rose Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service*, (London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1927); Hilda Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), *From One Generation to Another*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1944) and *Some Victorian Portraits*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1948); Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds', in *The Economic Journal*, Vol.1, No. 3 (Sep., 1891), 'The Collection and Utilisation of Official Statistics Bearing on the Extent and Effects of the Industrial Employment of Women', in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Jun., 1898), 'The Expenditure of Middle Class Working Women, in *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 32 (Dec., 1898), 'The Social Status of Women Occupiers', in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol.71, No. 3 (Sep., 1908), 'Cost of Food For an Adult Woman', in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (May, 1916), 'The Present Position of Women in Industry', in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 105, No. 2 (1942), Modern Records Centre, Warwick University, ref. COL, MSS 29.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Richard Burdon Haldane, *An Autobiography*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1929); L. Martindale, *A Woman Surgeon*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1951); Winston Spencer Churchill, *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, (Tutis Digital Publishing Pvt Ltd., 2008); Lord Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes*, (London: John Murray, 1920); Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, *The Board of Trade*, (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons Ltd., 1928); Sir Edward Troup, *The Home Office*, (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons Ltd., 1925).

performance there is no reason to question the rightness of this tendency or the likeness of its further development.<sup>25</sup>

The degree to which this group were extraordinary was therefore, fundamental to the research. Women were employed in different departments of the civil service so how different departments were structured and how the women's experiences differed was also important. Collet worked alongside men, for example, whereas the women's factory inspectorate operated as a separate entity until its amalgamation with the men's department in 1921.

Hilda Martindale's account of women in the civil service from the earliest years to 1938 has long been considered the definitive account, and historians of the civil service in the years following its publication refer its assessment of the contribution of women. Dorothy Evans, the general secretary of the National Association of Women Civil Servants, wrote on women in the civil service in the early 1930s. With the exception of the opening chapter, her book focused on the period after 1914 and it was only in the first chapter that she considered the earlier years on the development of appointment opportunities for women rather than their work.<sup>26</sup> R. K. Kelsall's study of women in the administrative class in 1955, focused in one short chapter on the restrictions imposed by post-war legislation.<sup>27</sup>

Women civil servants have been researched in the last twenty five years. However, this work has similarly centred more on the restrictions imposed on women's promotional opportunities in the aftermath of the First World War rather than an analysis of their work before the war and their contribution to the development of the civil service as a profession for women.<sup>28</sup> Within the civil service during the years before the war, as Meta Zimmeck has argued, some women were considered of value as specialists, with knowledge and skills of a specific nature. Knowledge of women's experience in the workplace, wages and employment was required for the nomination for a post within

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<sup>25</sup> Martindale, *Women Servants of the State*, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Dorothy Evans MA, *Women and the Civil Service*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd, 1934).

<sup>27</sup> R.K. Kelsall, *Higher Civil Servants in Britain*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1955), chapter 9, pp.167-177.

<sup>28</sup> See Helen Jones, *Women in British Public Life, 1914-1950: Gender, Power and Social Policy*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), chps. 2 and 6; Cheryl Law, *Suffrage and Power: The Women's Movement, 1918-1928*, (London: I.B.Taurus and Co.Ltd), chp, 4; Jane Lewis, 'Women clerical workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', in *The White Blouse Revolution*, ed., Gregory Anderson, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

the service. The nature of this specialism was regarded by many male contemporaries, appointed by examination, as merely an extension of the private sphere into public service, where they could bring their 'womanly skills' - experience in social research, philanthropy, committee work, - to the investigation of women's issues.<sup>29</sup> However, as I will argue, this small group were able to bring to the profession an understanding of industrial conditions generally and the pay and conditions for women workers in particular. Their work was influential in the creation of legislation to improve industrial conditions for women and they were instrumental in the development of the civil service as a profession for women. They certainly saw themselves as pioneers. As Hilda Martindale said of Anderson;

'For the women inspectors of factories and the women in industry it was indeed fortunate that they were led in those early days by a pioneer and a whole-hearted feminist, for those were hard and strenuous days and much opposition had to be met from all sides.'<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Herbert Asquith, then Home Secretary, referred to himself as a bold pioneer for appointing them, saying: 'It was considered by the State officials at this date to be a terrible proposition.'<sup>31</sup>

Helen Jones regretted in 1988, that although their diaries and memoirs were available for research, few historians had studied them.<sup>32</sup> Since then, Mary Drake McFeely has written an excellent account of the work of the women inspectors in 1988 and the life of Clara Collet was examined by her great-niece, Jane Miller in 2004. A biography of Clara Collet by Deborah McDonald was also published in 2004.<sup>33</sup> However, the focus of these studies was on the individual herself, few contextualise these women or assess the value of their contribution within late nineteenth and early twentieth century social policy. Yet such a bank of material gives the historian a unique opportunity to examine the class and gender relationships within the working environment for this small number

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<sup>29</sup> Meta Zimmeck, 'The 'new woman' in the machinery of government: a spanner in the works?' in *Government and Expertise: Specialists, administrators and professionals, 1860-1919*, ed. Roy MacLeod, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 190-191.

<sup>30</sup> Hilda Martindale, *Some Victorian Portraits*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1948), p.49.

<sup>31</sup> Squire, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> Helen Jones, 'Women Health Workers: The Case for the First Women Factory Inspectors in Britain', in *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 1, no. 2, (Aug. 1988), pp. 165-181.

<sup>33</sup> Mary Drake Mcfeely, *Lady Inspectors, the Campaign for a Better Workplace, 1893-1921*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988); Jane Miller, *Relations*, (London: Vintage, 2004); Deborah McDonald, *Clara Collet, 1860-1948: An Educated Working Woman*, (London: Woburn Press, 2004).

of women. Furthermore, it allows for an analysis of the substance of their work and an assessment to set alongside what has already been learned from feminist historians of the late twentieth century about the Fabian women, the women of the WTUL and other industrial and social feminists, all of whom were 'new women', part of the wider women's movement in the pre-war period.<sup>34</sup> This first generation of political women paved the way for future generations, although it would take two world wars and full suffrage to fully appreciate their achievements.

## **2. An élite group: well educated, experienced and ambitious.**

There are many similarities between the women in this study. Although they appear in varying degrees within the narrative, they are a homogeneous group. They occupied the same intellectual and social milieu; they had interests in social reform before entering the service and they were specialists in industrial women's working environment. Finally, most of them pursued a career in the civil service, the first generation to do so. Even May Abraham, who retired on the birth of her first child, was reluctant to retire and continued to serve the interests of working women in a voluntary capacity for the rest of her life.

None of the women civil servants before the First World War would have been in post without the opening up of higher education for women in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Literary and scholarly young women across the social spectrum had envied their brothers their educational opportunities long before the 1870 Forster Education Act had made education compulsory for children under the age of eleven. The schools and universities these women attended were fundamental in their intellectual development and ambition. Even Rose Squire, whose education was less enlightened, was conscious of its defects and broke with the family tradition in order to train as a sanitary inspector. She wrote resentfully that it was taken for granted the boys of the family would go to public school and university whilst the girls were

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example: ed. Sally Alexander, *Women's Fabian Tracts*, (London, Routledge, 1988); Pat Thane, 'Visions of gender in the making of the British welfare state: the case of women in the British Labour Party and social policy, 1906-1945', in eds, Gisela Block & Pat Thane, *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s – 1950s*, (Oxford: Routledge 1994); Karen Hunt, *Equivocal Feminists: The Social Democratic Federation and the woman question, 1884-1911*, (Cambridge, University Press, 1996); June Hannam and Karen Hunt, *Socialist Women: Britain, 1880s to 1920s*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

educated at home.<sup>35</sup> Only May Abraham, Lucy Deane and Squire did not receive an excellent secondary education at one of the high schools for girls founded in the second half of the nineteenth century. Such schools, like the North London Collegiate School attended by Clara Collet, Queen's College, Harley Street, attended by Adelaide Anderson and those of the Girls Public Day School Company (GPDSC), attended by Frances Durham, Hilda Martindale and Isabel Taylor, were themselves headed by pioneers in the field of girls' education.<sup>36</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century, twenty years after Collet, Anderson or Martindale, some schools were actively encouraging bright girls to continue their education at university.

By the 1870s, when universities began to open their doors to women most of the women in this study took eager advantage. Familial and educational background will be fully discussed in chapter two but a brief introduction foregrounds that investigation. Clara Collet studied for her first degree whilst teaching at Wyggeston High School. In 1885 she gave up the teaching profession and returned to London, where, in 1888 she obtained her MA in political economy from University College. Adelaide Anderson and Frances Durham went to Girton College, Cambridge: Anderson studying moral sciences from 1883-1887 and Durham studying history from 1892-1896. Mary Paterson's father, Gavin Paterson was a businessman and her mother, Annie came from a well-known Glasgow family, the Muirheads, one of whose members endowed the new Queen Margaret College in Glasgow.<sup>37</sup> Here, women students could be educated to become 'medical practitioners, dentists, electricians etc.', and Paterson was one of its first students.<sup>38</sup> However, she could not graduate as women were not awarded degrees at the college until 1892. Hilda Martindale spent two years at Royal Holloway College and then studied hygiene and sanitation at the Royal Sanitary Institute, passing the examination and becoming an associate before attending Bedford College to study hygiene and public health under Sir Thomas Legge, between 1897 and 1898. Rose Squire began training at the beginning of 1893 under the National Health Society and took examinations in anatomy, physiology, hygiene, nursing and first aid,

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<sup>35</sup> Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service*, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> See chapter two for details.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Drake McFeely, *Lady Inspectors: the campaign for a better workplace, 1893-1921*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> J.D. Mackie, *The University of Glasgow, 1451-1951*, (Glasgow: Jackson, Son and Company, 1954), p. 304.

alongside Lucy Deane.<sup>39</sup> Squire was the first woman to sit for the sanitary inspectors' certificate in 1894. Mona Wilson went to Newnham College, Cambridge, where she remained until 1896, although she took no examinations. Isabel Taylor was encouraged by her school to go to the London School of Economics, gaining a B.Sc.. Quoting Charles Grant Robertson's 1939 article in the *Sociological Review*, Carol Dyhouse emphasised this momentum: 'The new universities have, indeed, made a notable, perhaps the most decisive, contribution to the revolutionary "emancipation of women."<sup>40</sup>

Most of the women in this study had connections with the women's movements or had strong female role models. We know most about Clara Collet, because of her extensive publications and preserved private papers. Her mother, Jane, had been a self-supporting businesswoman in Scotland before her marriage in 1854, to Collet Dobson Collet, Clara's father, the editor of *The Free Press* and a close friend of Karl Marx.<sup>41</sup> Collet's great influence however, was her aunt, Sophia Dobson Collet, a writer, musician and campaigner for women's rights and a member of the Kensington Society. After graduating, Adelaide Anderson initially coached girls for examinations, but on the advice of Isabella Ford, the socialist propagandist and suffragist, she began to lecture on philosophy and economics for the Women's Co-operative Guild, (founded in 1883 to work for an improvement in the status of married women). Anderson's aunt by marriage was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, with whom she was close, as later women factory inspectors' meetings were sometimes held at her house (see chapter four). Martindale's mother was a great influence on both her daughters.<sup>42</sup> A liberal and a Free Church non-conformist, she was president of the Women's Liberal Association in the Home Counties.<sup>43</sup> Not only did the elder Louisa ensure that her daughters had every academic opportunity, she also introduced them to the ideas of the women's movement and those of the Liberal Party.<sup>44</sup> May Abraham came to London in 1887 aged only eighteen, bringing with her an introduction to Emilia Dilke, the art historian and trade

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<sup>39</sup> Appointed to the Factory Inspectorate in 1894, Lucy Deane (later Streatfeild), was later one of six women appointed by the British Government to report on conditions in the prison camps during the Boer War. She retired through ill health in 1906.

<sup>40</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *No distinction of sex? Women in British universities 1870-1939*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.2.

<sup>41</sup> Miller, *Relations*, pp. 161-163.

<sup>42</sup> Martindale's sister was the gynaecologist, Louisa Martindale.

<sup>43</sup> L. Martindale C.B.E., *A Woman Surgeon*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1951), p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> L. Martindale, p.35.

unionist. Lady Dilke made her her secretary, where she learned quickly and became treasurer of the Women's Trade Union League and developed an interest in conditions for women in industry. Isabel Taylor had not intended to join the civil service but met the social reformers, Sidney and Beatrice Webb when a student at the LSE. They recognised her talents and suggested the factory inspectorate to her.<sup>45</sup>

All of these women were interested in social reform. For example, Clara Collet published widely on industrial conditions for women and was an investigator on the Booth Survey between 1888 and 1890.<sup>46</sup> She spent two years reporting to the Royal Commission on Labour on 'sweating' and when appointed Labour Correspondent at the Board of Trade in 1893, she was given special responsibilities for women's industrial conditions.<sup>47</sup> On leaving Newnham, Mona Wilson joined the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) as secretary in 1899. Through its President, Lady Emilia Dilke, Wilson met other women interested in social reform, including Lucy Deane, the trade unionist Gertrude Tuckwell and the women's trade union organiser, Mary Macarthur. Wilson compiled a handbook of the legal regulations affecting working women, designed to inform women working in the field of social reform.<sup>48</sup> In March 1901, she published, *Contracting-Out From the Workmen's Compensation Act*, and in 1902, with Edward G. Howarth, she began work on a study of social and industrial problems in West Ham, which they published jointly in 1907.<sup>49</sup> Frances Durham had joined the Women's University Settlement in 1900.<sup>50</sup> She became co-founder and co-secretary of Southwark Registry and Apprenticeship Committee 1900-1907 and an inspector and organiser of technical classes for women and trade schools under the London County Council Education Committee 1907-1915. Isabel Taylor joined the women's factory department in 1909, publishing in the same year, *A Bibliography of Unemployment and*

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<sup>45</sup> Martindale, *Some Victorian Portraits*, p. 55.

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Clara E Collet, 'Reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour on Working Women, 1870-1889', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 1, No.2 (Jun., 1891), 398-405; Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds'; Clara E. Collet, 'Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Sep., 1895), 518-528.

<sup>47</sup> Miller, *Relations*, pp.109-110.

<sup>48</sup> Mona Wilson, *Our Industrial Laws. Working Women in Factories, Workshops, Shops and Laundries, and how to help them*, (London: Duckworth and Co., 1899), issued by the Industrial Law Committee.

<sup>49</sup> Mona Wilson, 'Contracting-Out From the Workman's Compensation Act', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 41 (Mar., 1901), pp. 23-30; Edward G. Howarth M.A. and Mona Wilson, *West Ham: A Study in Social and Industrial Problems*, (London: J.M.Dent & Company, 1907).

<sup>50</sup> The Women's University Settlement was founded in 1887 by the women's colleges at Cambridge, London and Oxford universities. Its objectives were to promote welfare in the poorer areas of London and to provide opportunities for education.

*the Unemployed*, with a preface written by Sidney Webb.<sup>51</sup> The book was the first in a series of bibliographies written by students from the London School of Economics. This group were part of a political and feminist environment which informed their ideas and enabled the realisation of their ambitions.

### 3. Feminism and the professional woman in the 1890s.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of practical reform for women. The first suffrage petition was presented to Parliament by J.S. Mill in 1867. Feminists had been advocating the education and employment of women since the 1850s, and although few women of the professional classes could gain higher education or enter the professions, the woman question was on everyone's lips by the 1870s and 1880s and the 'new' woman was more than a figment of the literary imagination.<sup>52</sup> Clara Collet was a feminist and suffragist and moved in circles where such views were commonplace. Her friendship with the novelist George Gissing, 1857-1903 was a central part of her life from their first meeting in 1892 until his death in 1903. In Gissing's novel *The Odd Women*, published in 1893, the main character, Rhoda Nunn, free thinking and determined on a business career, encapsulates the image of the 'New Woman'. Collet was a member of the 'Pioneer Club', founded in 1892 by Emily Massingberd as a club for women with 'advanced views'. It typified the 'new woman', and included in its membership the 'new woman' novelists, Sarah Grand, Mona Caird and Olive Schreiner.<sup>53</sup> The feminist, Margery Corbett Ashby and several branch presidents of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) were also members of the Pioneer Club.<sup>54</sup> The 'new woman': free thinking, well educated and professionally minded, appears in literature and poetry, in education and in the rational dress movement, of which Collet was also a member, which pressed for a more comfortable mode of dress for women. Opponents often referred to these women

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<sup>51</sup> F. Isabel Taylor, *A Bibliography of Unemployment and the Unemployed*, (London: P.S.King and Son, 1909).

<sup>52</sup> See Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst, *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c. 1880-1900*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Chapter 4. The term 'new woman' was widely used after two articles appeared in the *North American Review*, one by Sarah Grand, (Frances Elizabeth McFall, née Clarke, 1854- 1943) and one by 'Ouida' (Marie-Louise de la Ramée, 1839-1908), both novelists.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Sarah Grand, *The Beth Book, 1897*, (reprinted, London: Virago, 1980); Mona Caird, *Daughters of Danaus, 1894*, (reprinted, New York: The Feminist Press, 1989); Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm, 1883*, (reprinted, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866-1928*, (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 126-127.

pejoratively as ‘mannish’ or ‘Girton Girls’ and they were frequently ridiculed in *Punch* magazine.

All ten women, the pioneers of this thesis recognized discrimination against women in work and the struggle for economic independence.<sup>55</sup> In the factory, for instance, Adelaide Anderson wrote that the main impetus for her work came from: ‘the needs of the women workers who had persistently called –from 1878 onward – for the personal aid and understanding of “women inspectors”’.<sup>56</sup> Prosecution of employers for the lack of hygiene in the factory, Squire recalled was difficult, as often both employers and Justices of the Peace seemed to think women were ‘thirsting for an orgy of spring cleaning’ rather than enforcing important factory legislation.<sup>57</sup> Such trivialisation of serious contraventions of the factory acts was deeply concerning, Squire argued. Collet articulated for a wider audience of the discrimination encountered in the lives of professional women. In 1890 she pointed out, for example, that whilst the self respect of middle-class women might have improved with greater educational opportunities, their economic position had not.<sup>58</sup> She wrote cogently and with authority on the problems of self-supporting women; indeed she put the idea of the working woman’s dependents into the minds of economists and policy makers.<sup>59</sup> Some of these educated, exceptional women recognised discrimination because they themselves experienced it. Deputy Chief Inspector Isabel Taylor, for example, was passed over for promotion three times.<sup>60</sup>

Most of these women supported the campaigns for education, suffrage and economic independence for women at least. To what extent, as individuals, they responded to these challenges differs; Anderson, Collet and Martindale’s work reveals support for many women’s organisations and Durham was an advocate of the progress of women

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example, ‘The Economic Position of Educated Working Women’, in *Educated Working Women*, pp. 66-89.

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p.2.

<sup>57</sup> Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service*, p. 45.

<sup>58</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p.6.

<sup>59</sup> See also, Clara E. Collet, ‘The Expenditure of Middle Class Working Women’, *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 8, No.32 (Dec., 1898), 543-553; Clara E. Collet, ‘The Social Status of Women Occupiers’, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 71, No.3 (Sep., 1908), 513-515; C.E. Collet, ‘Cost of Food for an Adult Woman’, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (May, 1916), 300-308.

<sup>60</sup> Martindale, *Some Victorian Portraits*, pp. 59-60.

in the Civil Service throughout her career.<sup>61</sup> Mona Wilson's position, however, was more ambiguous: '(I) always found the ordinary middle class woman the worst enemy of the questions I care about which does not induce me to be particularly anxious that she should have a vote.'<sup>62</sup> Views on feminism of Paterson or Taylor are more difficult to gauge, although their work is indicative of a sympathetic approach. I return to the issue of personal feminist ideologies in chapter two.

The term 'new feminism' was first coined by Eleanor Rathbone in the 1920s, when she became president of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC, formerly NUWSS). Rathbone supported demands for women on account of their difference from men; i.e. maternal provision and protective legislation. 'New Feminism' had its roots in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. In particular, protective legislation divided feminists. Millicent Fawcett, for example, President of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was an equality feminist. That is she believed legislation to improve the conditions for women in the workplace was discriminatory and would exclude women from attaining equality on the same terms as male workers. Beatrice Webb, Fabian socialist on the other hand, argued in favour of legislation. This division informed feminist debate for many decades to come and brought middle class feminists face to face with the issue of class difference, although these divisions were not always straightforward. For example, the position of women in the civil service: as professional women, they were more likely to be 'equality' feminists; working alongside their male colleagues without receiving equal remuneration or security of tenure. However their contributions to committees reveal the importance they placed as individuals on the maternal role and the place of the family and the woman's responsibility within it and places them largely in the new feminist camp. Such a paradox remained a real rift for feminists, polarizing in the 1920s into the battle between 'old' equality feminism and the 'new' family orientated feminism although the battle lines were never clearly drawn.

#### **4. Politics, poverty and social reform.**

In the latter years of the nineteenth century, a group of intellectual young men and women had become involved in political debate through social investigation, working

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<sup>61</sup> Mark Pottle, 'Durham, Frances Hermia (1873-1948)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://o-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/62141>].

<sup>62</sup> Senate House Library, 'Thomas Sturge Moore Papers', ref. MS978/1/32/94.

with Charles Booth on his enquiry, charity visiting under the auspices of the Charity Organization Society (COS) and working in the University Settlement Movement. In a time of industrial unrest and awakening of social conscience, they were liberal, tolerant and confident. Highly intelligent and educated at the best universities, they were would become a new generation of civil servants and included Clara Collet, Adelaide Anderson, Frances Durham and Hubert Llewellyn Smith, also an investigator on the Booth Survey and a close colleague of Collet. This new generation included others of the women who are the focus of this study.

The Charity Organisation Society had been founded in 1869 and originally called the Society for Organising Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity, a title which revealed its aims. The principle behind the COS was that poverty was the result of moral failure of the individual and unsystematic charitable aid only reinforced that failure.<sup>63</sup> The work of the organisation was to co-ordinate all charitable relief in each Poor Law district in London. The COS officer in control of each locality had the responsibility of registering every applicant, and passing each case to the local committee, which then discerned its worthiness before referring it to the relevant charitable agencies or on to the Poor Law. Thus the concept of the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' poor was established, and remained at the centre of COS philanthropic action, although this was increasingly challenged and there was a gradual rejection of these values during the latter years of the century by many in the middle classes, in favour of greater state intervention, influenced by the campaigns of T.H. Green and Henry Sidgwick, amongst others.<sup>64</sup> By the 1880s the COS had begun to initiate a more systematic training of its charity workers. Training schemes were set up and lectures were provided through the University Extension scheme. Many social investigators learned their craft here, although most would later reject its ethos. Both Collet and Martindale worked with the COS, as did the young Beatrice Potter, (Beatrice Webb after her marriage to Sidney Webb in 1892). Collet's involvement lasted from 1888 until at least 1906, long after Beatrice Webb had disassociated herself from its principles.<sup>65</sup> Even in 1923, in her obituary to Sir Charles Loch, the social worker and honorary

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<sup>63</sup> Charles Loch Mowat, *The Charity Organisation Society 1869-1913: Its Ideas and Work*, (London: Methuen, 1961), p.68.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Humphreys, *Sin, Organized Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), pp.107-109.

<sup>65</sup> Miller, *Relations*, p.130.

secretary of the COS from 1875 until 1914, whilst admitting the controversial nature of the COS philosophy, Collet does not condemn it.<sup>66</sup>

The first University Settlement was founded in 1884, the brain-child of Canon Samuel Barnett, vicar of St, Jude's, Whitechapel and Henrietta Barnett, his wife, and named after Arnold Toynbee, the social reformer and political economist.<sup>67</sup> The settlement was run by university men with the express purpose to live amongst and aid the deprived inhabitants of London's East End. The first Women's University Settlement was founded under the influence of Henrietta Barnett in 1887, in Southwark, and many Oxbridge women graduates had become involved with its work. One of these was Clara Collet, who gave a series of five lectures at Toynbee in 1891.<sup>68</sup> Another was Frances Durham, who joined in 1896. Within the Women's University Settlement movement, a separation quickly appeared between those whose goal was the alleviation of hardship through direct action and a smaller group whose aim was social reform through legislation. The latter group included Beatrice Webb and Eleanor Rathbone, Clara Collet and Frances Durham.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there was an increasing interest in the nature and structure of 'society'. Richard Haldane highlighted its importance in his preface to 'The Labour Movement' in 1893, arguing that society should not be seen merely as a collection of individuals but rather viewed as a living entity.<sup>69</sup> Such interest could be observed in all Western cultures, but its expression and interpretation differed. Jose Harris has argued European theorists considered that British efforts to understand the nature of society were shallow and took a moralist approach to social and economic inequalities and the importance of social reform, whereas in other European cultures a more detached perspective prevailed. Many Europeans considered British sociological

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<sup>66</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Obituary', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 129 (Mar., 1923), pp.123-128. Such affiliations and their significance in political terms will be discussed on chapter two.

<sup>67</sup> Arnold Toynbee had been one of the new Liberals who wanted to protect the alliance between labour and Liberalism by updating Liberal ideology. A follower of the philosopher, T.H. Green, he had similarly advocated greater intervention by the state. Toynbee had been one of the Oxford lecturers for the Association of the Education of Women (AEW). He had taught political economy over a baker's shop as women were prevented from attending lectures at this time. He had died early, aged only 31, in 1883.

<sup>68</sup> Warwick University, Modern Records Office, COL, MSS. 29/8/1/55.

<sup>69</sup> Haldane in L.T. Hobhouse, M.A., *The Labour Movement*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, no date), p. xi. Published in 1893. Richard Haldane was a lawyer. As Liberal MP for East Lothian in 1885, he quickly became involved in progressive politics within the party.

thought to be superficial and methodologically unsound.<sup>70</sup> For most Victorians, the term 'society' meant largely the 'public sphere', and uncertainty as to the meaning of social action was characteristic of British economic, political and sociological thought until well after the First World War. This uncertainty is mirrored most clearly within the diverse membership of the Charity Organisation Society (COS). The accumulation of statistics exposed regularities in the pattern of behaviour. At the same time the expansion of knowledge about history and anthropology brought Victorians into contact with other societies and social structure and solidarity became more important than individualism.<sup>71</sup>

From the 1880s, high unemployment and poor housing conditions led to social disaffection among the underprivileged and a growing anxiety among many of Britain's political élites about the condition of the poor and the 'labour problem'. Conservative and Liberal administrations feared that the working classes might turn to socialism, a concrete threat following the formation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893, and the Labour Representation Committee in 1900. Labour unrest and an anxious social conscience led to an expansion of empirical enquiry into the practical social problems that dominated British society, of which Charles Booth's enquiry, begun in 1887 and finally published in 1902, was the most significant. As well as Booth's enquiry, the work of Seebohm Rowntree, published in 1901, had further established poverty as a major cause for concern. Beatrice Potter's study of the sweated industries in 1888, and David Schloss's work on wages in 1892 were symptomatic of this concern.<sup>72</sup> The recognition that poverty, if it could not be eliminated should be ameliorated through a collective approach and state intervention gathered strength amongst progressive liberals under pressure from the labour movement and its feminist supporters. The Boer War changed attitudes towards poverty even more powerfully, as the malnourishment found among the enlisting troops increased the pressure for social reform. Social liberalist philosophy

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<sup>70</sup> Jose Harris, p.221.

<sup>71</sup> Jose Harris, pp. 220-225.

<sup>72</sup> See Beatrice Potter, 'Easy London Labour', *The Nineteenth Century*, 24:138, (Aug. 1888), pp. 161-183; Beatrice Potter, 'Pages from a Work-Girl's Diary', *The Nineteenth Century*, 24:139, (Sept. 1888), pp. 301-314; David Frederick Schloss, *Methods of Industrial Remuneration*, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1892). Schloss, an economist and later a civil servant, was later engaged by the Webb's as a lecturer at the new London School of Economics in 1895. Graham Wallas, the political psychologist and educationalist, had been appointed at the same time.

engendered the move from 'laissez-faire' to intervention through the provision of, for instance, old age pensions, health care and education under the Liberal Government of 1906-1911.

By the 1890s it was clear that Gladstonian Liberalism, (low taxation, limited government expenditure and intervention in the economy, free trade) was exhausted. There was a need for a new form of Liberalism which would engage with an expanded working class electorate.<sup>73</sup> 'Laissez-faire' principles were being challenged by a new 'social liberalism' which advocated state intervention and legislative reform to improve economic and industrial conditions and relieve poverty. Some advocated collectivism in order to compete more effectively with Britain's European and United States competitors. Others put the case for welfare as citizenship; a progressive model linking social policy and social change. This concept of late Victorian and Edwardian social reform, as Roger Davidson has argued, viewed welfare provision as a planned programme of social reform intent on broadening the social rights of citizenship.<sup>74</sup> Politicians such as Haldane and Anthony Mundella were exponents of what became known as 'New Liberalism'.<sup>75</sup> Haldane first used the phrase 'the new Liberalism' in the preface to L.T. Hobhouse's 'The Labour Movement'. It was not the production of wealth that was the current problem but its distribution, he wrote. The better distribution of wealth he suggested was dependent on state intervention, giving voice to the new collectivist policies central to progressive Liberalism.<sup>76</sup> Haldane had worked with the Webbs to found the London School of Economics in 1895, and retained a friendship with both, liaising between the progressive Liberals and the socialist Fabian Society.<sup>77</sup> Mundella, as President of the Board of Trade, had appointed both Llewellyn Smith and Collet the 1893. He extended the Labour Department within the Board of Trade, with a headquarters, staff and correspondents in the provinces. Llewellyn Smith was the first 'Commissioner of Labour' and Collet was the first woman labour correspondent.

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<sup>73</sup> P.F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.4.

<sup>74</sup> Roger Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain, a Study in Official Statistics and Social Control*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p.4.

<sup>75</sup> Anthony Mundella was a hosiery manufacturer and politician, with a strong involvement in social issues. Appointed to the Board of Trade under the brief Liberal administration of 1886, he created a separate Labour Department within the Board of Trade. In opposition, he had sponsored the act of 1889 prohibiting the employment of children under ten years.

<sup>76</sup> L.T.Hobhouse MA, *The Labour Movement*, pp.ix-xii.

<sup>77</sup> *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Volume 2 1892-1905*, eds Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, (London: Virago Press Limited, 1983), pp. 94-95; Richard Burden Haldane, *An Autobiography*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1929), p. 114.

## 5. The development of the Civil Service as a profession for women.

The first women factory inspectors were appointed in 1893, a response to political pressure from trades unions, industrial women's organisations as well as liberal reformers to improve the conditions for women workers who were among the lowest paid, least skilled and unorganised of all workers in the period. The Royal Commission on Labour (RCL) had recommended such appointments. Clara Collet was appointed to an expanded Board of Trade in the same year, to investigate women's industries. Women workers, their pay and conditions were part of the 'labour problem' or the problem of poverty which, as we have seen, aroused anxiety among the educated and governing classes in the late nineteenth century and was perceived by some to threaten the very foundation of society.<sup>78</sup> These women civil servants would utilise their expertise to examine industrial conditions for women and to help to formulate the legislation designed to offer women greater protection in the workplace. The 1895 Factory Act was the context for the newly appointed women factory inspectors: all factories were to provide 'sufficient and suitable' sanitary conveniences; restrictions were introduced on overtime for young persons and for women, restrictions were placed on the employment of young people at night and on the length of shifts for young people; all young people employed in workshops were to be registered.<sup>79</sup> Writing in 1927 the factory inspector, Rose Squire recalled:

The memory is still vivid of those exciting days which followed the introduction into Parliament of the Bill which afterwards became the Factory and Workshop Act, 1895, when in the Standing Committee, clause after clause bearing upon the matters which had been part of my daily life were debated.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See Sir Edward Troup, *The Home Office*, (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons Ltd, 1925), p 164; Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, *The Board of Trade*, (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons Ltd, 1928), pp. 182-185 and p. 219; Roger Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, (London: Croom Helm, 1885), chapter 2; Gareth Stedman-Jones, *Outcast London*, (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 2002), Introduction, pp 1-16 and Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (London: Penguin, 1993), pp 332-333.

<sup>79</sup> 1895(329). *Factories and Workshops: A Bill to amend and extend the Law relating to Factories and Workshops 1895*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895), Section 35, p. 16 and Sections 14 and 15, pp. 6-7.

<sup>80</sup> Squire, p.25. See also, Martindale, *Women Servants of the State*, pp. 55-58; Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p.11.

Sir Edward Troup, permanent under-secretary at the Home Office between 1908 and 1922, considered the appointment of women inspectors the most important event on the industrial side of the Home Office in the forty years he served in it.<sup>81</sup>

The constant preoccupation of successive governments in the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the structure of the Civil Service and, to a lesser degree, the role of women within it led to two major government enquiries, the Playfair Commission, (1874-1875) and the Ridley Commission, (1888-1890). A third, the Royal Commission on the Civil Service 1912-1914, (the MacDonnell Commission), set up under Herbert Asquith's Liberal government to re-examine the structure of the Civil Service recommended the extension of the employment of university-educated women and stated that they should be eligible for particular administrative positions. The Commission also recommended that the Treasury should also begin to employ suitably qualified women.<sup>82</sup> Clara Collet, appointed to the Board of Trade after serving on the Royal Commission of Labour, was the first woman to hold an administrative post when she was promoted to senior investigator of women's industries at the Board of Trade in 1903.

Women had been employed as civil servants since 1870, when the telegraph system came under the jurisdiction of the Post Office; those women already employed as telegraph operators were from then on part of the service. In 1871, the Postmaster General introduced women clerks into the Clearing House Branch of the Post Office to deal with the telegram work. Women telegraph clerks were all nominated to their posts, rather than entering through examination, the norm for male appointees. They all came from professional families.<sup>83</sup> The nomination would be expected to come from the Post-Master General.<sup>84</sup> The Playfair Commission, 1874-1875 had acknowledged that women were employed successfully in the Post Office and recommended the employment of women could be extended to other departments as long as they could be

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<sup>81</sup> Squire, p.5.

<sup>82</sup> The Royal Commission on the Civil Service: *Fourth Report of the Commissioners*, [Cd. 7338.], (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd, 1914), p. 92.

<sup>83</sup> Dorothy Evans, M.A., *Women and the Civil Service: a history of the development of women in the Civil Service, and a guide to present day opportunities*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd, 1934), p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> E.E. Carr, *How To Enter The Civil Service, A Practical Guide To State Employment For Men and Women*, (London: Grant Richards, 1902), p. 32.

accommodated separately.<sup>85</sup> The Ridley Royal Commission, 1888-1890, endorsed this policy and women clerks were employed in increasing numbers.<sup>86</sup> This was partly due to the greater use of the typewriter and particularly so in the Post Office.

In 1873, the first woman was selected as Poor Law Inspector, a senior position within the civil service.<sup>87</sup> Although Mrs. Nassau Senior was in post for a short time, the precedent had been set and women continued to be employed specifically to examine issues perceived to be of concern to women and girls. The first senior women appointments were not affected by the marriage bar although the Treasury had made this a condition of service for all lower grades in 1894.<sup>88</sup> May Abraham, appointed as one of the four women assistant commissioners to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1891, was one of the two first women factory inspectors to be appointed in 1893. She did not resign on her marriage in 1896 to H. J. Tennant, the politician, but shortly before the birth of her first child a year later. She was not obliged to resign but did so because of family pressure.

Departments in the civil service increasingly admitted women: first the Post Office and then the Board of Trade and the Home Office, in the Factory Department and the Department of Education. Each department organised its own recruitment and salary scales in conjunction with the Civil Service Commission.<sup>89</sup> The Factory Department, for example, employed women experienced in social work.<sup>90</sup> The Board of Trade employed Clara Collet for her experience in investigative work. All but one of the women discussed here had gained experience in the investigation of women in industry before joining the service and that experience was valued as successive governments began to address the issues of poverty and the sweating system in the aftermath of the depression of 1892-1895.

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<sup>85</sup> Richard A. Chapman, *The Civil Service Commission 1855-1991: A Bureau Biography*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.195.

<sup>86</sup> E. N. Gladden, *Civil Services of the United Kingdom, 1853-1970*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 23.

<sup>87</sup> Mrs. Jeanie Senior had been appointed as a Poor Law Inspector, to provide a woman's perspective on the education of girls in pauper schools. In post for a relatively short time, she resigned through ill health and died in 1877.

<sup>88</sup> Meta Zimmeck, 'The 'New Woman' in the Machinery of Government', Roy MacLeod, ed., *Government and Expertise, Specialists, administrators and professionals, 1860-1919*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 194.

<sup>89</sup> Not all departments admitted women. For example, the Treasury began to admit women in the 1930s and the Foreign Office first admitted women as diplomats in 1946.

<sup>90</sup> Evans, pp. 10-11.

Collet moved from the Royal Commission on Labour to join the Board of Trade as labour correspondent in 1893 and she was senior investigator (for women's industries) by 1903; Anderson went from the Royal Commission to the factory department and in 1897 she was appointed principal lady inspector; Squire joined the factory department in 1895 and was a senior lady inspector by 1903; Martindale joined the department in 1901 and Taylor in 1909. By the early years of the twentieth century, women were being appointed to the higher grades in the Department of Education, the Home Office and at the Board of Trade. Collet, appointed Senior Investigator in 1903, was the first woman to attain an important post of an administrative nature.<sup>91</sup> Wilson was the Secretary of the Women's Industrial Law Committee and the Women's Trade Union League, 1899-1902 and an investigator into social conditions in Dundee and West Ham, 1904-1906. This gave her the qualifications for nomination as the first woman Health Insurance Commissioner in 1911, a post she held until her retirement in 1919.<sup>92</sup> Frances Durham had been appointed an inspector and organiser of technical classes for women and trade schools in 1907 and was on the Board of Education consultative committee from 1908-1913. She entered the civil service in 1915 as Chief Woman Inspector in the Employment Department at the Board of Trade.<sup>93</sup> All of these appointments were in areas where it was thought that the services of women could best promote the interests of the department: the Foreign Office, the Board of Inland Revenue, the Board of Agriculture and the Treasury had not yet opened their doors to women beyond the lowest grades. However, the advance of women had begun and its impact did not go unnoticed.

In 1910, Sir Charles MacLaren, the Liberal MP and husband of suffragist Laura MacLaren, introduced a private member's bill into the House of Commons designed to secure equality between male and female civil servants. Although the bill received little support in the House at this stage, the Royal Commission on the Civil Service, 1912-1914 had as one of its objects, 'the conditions under which women should be employed in the service.'<sup>94</sup> In the report, When the Royal Commission published its report in 1914, it stated that generally women inspectors were recruited and employed under similar conditions to those of men, except in respect of salary and retirement on

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<sup>91</sup> Kelsall, p.168.

<sup>92</sup> Newnham College Register 1871-1971, Volume I 1871-1923, (Cambridge: Newnham College, Cambridge, 1979), p. 118.

<sup>93</sup> Kelsall, p.171.

<sup>94</sup> Royal Commission on the Civil Service, p. 87.

marriage. Furthermore, the commission acknowledged the 'important situations' which were held by women with specialised knowledge. It stated that, in respect of the appointment and tenure of office of women at the Board of Trade with particular experience and the women Health Insurance Commissioners, for example, Clara Collet and Mona Wilson, there was nothing to differentiate between them and male appointees.<sup>95</sup> The future for women civil servants at the outbreak of war in August 1914 looked relatively optimistic. Women had secured for themselves a place and the 1914 Royal Commission had led them to expect this to continue and develop.

The war led to the vast expansion of jobs for women: new departments such as the Ministries of Pensions, Food and Munitions were almost entirely staffed by women, except for executive positions. The demand for women in the inspectorial grade increased and in 1915, Frances Durham was appointed to the Board of Trade as Chief Inspector of Women's Employment, at a salary of £700 per annum.<sup>96</sup> Further development after the war was curtailed, however. The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, 1919 was intended to remove discriminatory procedures against women by equalising the franchise, opening the legal professions and making all levels of the civil service open to women. In practice, the Act imposed considerable limitations upon the employment status of women, to whom the armed forces; the Church; the Stock Exchange were still closed and, most significantly of all, it placed serious limits on government employment. With the post-war priority being given to demobilised soldiers, the expectations of women who had reached higher positions within the service before the war were not to be realised in the near future.

## **6. Conclusion.**

What then do these first pioneer civil servants have in common and what was their significance? Most came from families and environments where the education of women was valued; they attended good independent schools for girls, whose teachers encouraged higher education, most attended universities in London, Cambridge or Glasgow, and they were all interested in social reform. Only two of them married and several had siblings who also did not marry. These were among the educated

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<sup>95</sup> Royal Commission on the Civil Service, p. 88.

<sup>96</sup> Evans, pp. 19-21.

professional 'surplus' women of the Census, the Odd Women of George Gissing's novel of the same name, published in 1893. These unmarried women continued within a profession for their entire working lives, although to what extent they were totally self-supporting is not known. Collet's comment in 1892 is perhaps the most revealing, 'marriage has naturally very much less attraction for women than for men.'<sup>97</sup> We can't know whether any of these women consciously rejected marriage, but we do know that some feminists in the late nineteenth century, like Collet, were critical of marriage; of women's economic dependence within it, of husbands' control over their wives and of the difficulties of combining paid employment with motherhood. Clara Collet's diaries, one of the few personal papers we have, reveal very little on marriage although they do reveal her interest in men when she was a young woman. There has been much speculation over the exact nature of her relationship with the writer George Gissing, but Collet destroyed all of her diaries for that period.<sup>98</sup>

Both Collet and Martindale had been influenced by the previous generation of feminists, in Collet's case, her aunt Sophia Dobson Collet and in Martindale's, her mother, Louisa. Both women were the children of radical families, mixing in the circles that drew them to the ideas of social reform. They were families where education was valued; professional families open to new possibilities for women to train for a profession.<sup>99</sup> Several of these women had siblings who also achieved significant success: for example, Martindale's sister, Louisa, became an eminent gynaecologist; two of Wilson's brothers had careers of note, one as a colonial administrator and politician, (Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson, 1884-1940) and one as a singer and musical administrator, (Sir James Steuart Wilson, 1889-1966); two of Durham's sisters also achieved significant success, Florence Durham in medical research and Mary Edith Durham as a traveller and anthropologist. There was no single explanation as to why these women were drawn to the civil service but their interest in social reform was a dominant factor and the professional opportunities for women of ambition were widening.

Chapter two details the social and educational background which provided the motivation and the expertise required for a career in the Civil Service. It examines the sociability of these women; their common interests and the intellectual networks which

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<sup>97</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p 6.

<sup>98</sup> Deborah McDonald, *Clara Collet, 1860-1948: An Educated Working Woman*, (London: Woburn Press, 2004), pp. 125-160.

<sup>99</sup> Harris, p. 25.

created the environment wherein their ambitions could be achieved. Chapter three is an assessment of Clara Collet's work at the Board of Trade. It examines her career and the influences that shaped it. Chapters four and five examine the work of women in the factory inspectorate and the development of their department and the authority they exerted on legislation for the protection of women and children in industry. Chapter five assesses the achievements of this cohort, in terms of strengthening the influence of women within the service and the potential that their achievements may have had for the future. Chapter six considers the impact of the First World War and its effects on the prospects of women within the civil service. It examines the consequences in terms of the political and economic tensions created by the war. Chapter seven explores the legacy of this élite group and its impact both on the lives of women in industry, and on the careers of future women civil servants.

Methodology has been straightforward. The purpose has been to chart the working lives of a group of women civil servants, their influences and beliefs, throughout their lifetimes. Census records, college registers, diaries, and memoirs have enabled the construction of family structures and education.<sup>100</sup> The richness of these sources has made it possible, in some cases, to reconstruct motivational influences from their earliest years. Affiliations to clubs and societies, published papers, in conjunction with memoirs and diaries have enabled networks of sociability to emerge, through which it has been possible to contextualise this group within the late Victorian and Edwardian period of political, economic and social change. As a result, an examination of the interaction between them and their colleagues, often discernable through their diaries and memoirs, and through the memoirs of their contemporaries and colleagues, is a fundamental part of this research revealing as it does contemporary attitudes and conceptions of the women's role in the workplace. Additionally, the sources have been used to determine how these social interactions were used to support and further the women's work.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> The Girton College Register 1869-1946; Newnham College Register 1871-1971, Volume 1, 1871-1923; Modern Records Office, Warwick University, ref. COL. MSS.29 (Clara Collet), ref. LAS. MSS. 69 (Lucy Deane Streatfeild); Adelaide Anderson, *Women in the Factory*; Hilda Martindale, *From One Generation To Another, Some Victorian Portraits, Women Servants of the State*; Louisa Martindale, *A Woman Surgeon*; Rose Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service*.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, Dorothy Evans, *Women and the Civil Service*; Richard Burdon Haldane, *An Autobiography*; Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, *The Board of Trade*; Sir Edward Troup, *The Home Office*.

The evidence this group gave to various Select Committees, Annual Chief Inspectors' Reports, letters and memoranda and the memoirs written by colleagues have enabled the construction of a picture of the group's working lives, which extends from the earliest appointments in 1891 to the years immediately after the First World War, when some were beginning to reach retirement.<sup>102</sup> In addition, the close reading of private papers where available has made possible a comparison between the private face and the public. For example, in 1890, when Collet was beginning to successfully establish her name as an economist, her diary reveals great personal insecurities and self-doubt. She described herself as 'a visitor everywhere and at home nowhere'. She berated herself for self-perceived lack of inter-personal skills.<sup>103</sup> Where personal records allow, I have made comparisons and attempted a more nuanced account of their lives and work. This evaluation is of their contribution to the improvement of working conditions for women and their significance in the establishment of a professional place for women within the civil service.

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<sup>102</sup> See, for example, The Women's Library, Papers of Adelaide Anderson (7AMA), (available from Spring 1911); Papers of Hilda Squire (7HMS), (niece of Rose Squire); Leeds University Library, Special Collections MS 973, Letters and papers relating to Hilda M. A. Squire and her family; Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Official Board of Trade Correspondence, re. CHAR 11 and 12.

<sup>103</sup> Modern Records Office, Warwick University, ref. COL. MSS.29/8/1/104-109; Collet's extensive tribute to Foxwell's life and work was published in 1936: C.E.Collet, 'Herbert Somerton Foxwell', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 184 (Dec., 1936), pp.589-619.

## Chapter Two: From Philanthropy to the Civil Service: the emergence of the higher ranking female civil servant.

***'Soft, my sister! Not a word!***

***By speaking we only prove we can speak,***

***Which he, the man here never doubted.***

***What he doubts is, whether we can DO the thing***

***With decent grace, we've not yet done at all.***

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'Aurora Leigh', 1857

This chapter seeks to contextualise the emergence of the woman civil servant within the historical framework which determined her actions and aspirations. It is an exploration of motivation, family background, interests and ambition. What made this small group of ten women, when seeking employment, remuneration and personal fulfilment, choose to join a bureaucratic institution, the civil service, in which they would be performing work that had previously only been done by men? Was this a deliberate move engendered by feminist idealism, one that was the result of chance or indeed an element of both: feminist influences and burgeoning possibilities? The historical context of women in the civil service has been discussed briefly in chapter one.<sup>104</sup> It is the individual, her experiences and her incentive that is the issue here. I have used diaries and memoirs where available and where not, have drawn on contemporary sources if possible.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See also, for example, Dorothy Evans M.A., *Women and the Civil Service*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1934).

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, Adelaide Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, (London: John Murray, 1921); Rose Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service*, (London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1927); Hilda Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938), *From One Generation to Another*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1944) and *Some Victorian Portraits*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1948); Modern Records Centre, Warwick University, ref. COL, MSS 29, and Richard Burdon Haldane, *An Autobiography*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1929); L. Martindale, *A Woman Surgeon*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1951); Winston Spencer Churchill, *Liberalism and the Social Problem*, (Tutis Digital Publishing Pvt Ltd., 2008); Lord Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes*, (London: John Murray, 1920); Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, *The Board of Trade*, (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons Ltd., 1928); Sir Edward Troup, *The Home Office*, (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons Ltd., 1925).

One woman's perspective was not necessarily that of another, however similar their educational and even political circumstances. Nonetheless, none of these women would have entered the profession without the opening up of schools and university education by earlier generations of the women's movement. Thus shared experiences and sensibilities necessarily informed their ambitions and professional objectives. Although they failed to break into the Foreign Office, that stronghold of male authority that would remain inviolate for several further decades, Hilda Martindale was appointed to the Treasury, another male bastion, in 1933, as Director of Women's Establishments. However, in entering both the Home Office and the Board of Trade in the 1890s, they were breaking new ground. Neither department had admitted women before except in the lower grades. The investigation of this elite group's negotiation through unfamiliar territory and an assessment of their achievements are the central themes of this study.

The frontispiece of Collet's book carried a quotation from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'Aurora Leigh'. First published in 1857, 'Aurora Leigh', was still widely read at the turn of the century and would therefore have been familiar to Collet's readership. The 'Woman Question' had been well debated the in latter half of the nineteenth century and, as Cora Kaplan pointed out in her introduction to 'Aurora Leigh', by the mid nineteenth century more educated women were developing aspirations as writers, social critics and reformers.<sup>106</sup> The importance of this 'novel in verse' is that it directly addressed these issues through the life of the protagonist, a young poet who defied convention in her efforts to develop as a writer.<sup>107</sup> As such, it became something of an inspirational text for feminists.

In the same year 'Aurora Leigh' was published, a review of Mrs. Anna Jameson's: 'The Communion of Women; a Lecture on the Social Employment of Women' appeared in the *North British Review*.<sup>108</sup> The review included several articles published on the education and the employment of women. The anonymous reviewer states: 'We have written of the amateur work of those whom necessity compels not to work; we have written of the professional work of those who are born to work; but we have not written

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<sup>106</sup> Cora Kaplin in Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh, with other poems*, (London: The Women's Press, 1989), p. 9.

<sup>107</sup> Browning, p. 7.

<sup>108</sup> Review of 'The Communion of Labour; a Lecture on the Social Employment of Women', by Mrs. Jameson, anon, in *The North British Review*, 26:52 (1857 Feb.), pp. 290-338.

of the professional work of those who are not born to work.<sup>109</sup> Anna Jameson, together with two younger women, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and Bessie Parkes, were foremost in the founding of the *English Woman's Journal* in 1858. Located in Langham Place, its purpose was to widen the educational and employment opportunities for women. The women who met there became known as the Langham Place Group. Jameson proved a valuable mentor to the younger women.<sup>110</sup>

Education and training was a significant part of the work of early Victorian feminism.<sup>111</sup> The first women civil servants benefited from these developments, were inspired and influenced by some remarkable individual teachers and the philosophy of these politically able and intellectual women helped to shape their own academic backgrounds. Furthermore, the shifts in opinion about the place of women engendered the opportunities for professional development. Both the Kensington Society and the Langham Place Group were founded to consider the position of women in society. Formed in London in 1865, the Kensington Society brought together like-minded women to discuss issues of concern to all women. It existed for only three years but included women who were to lead the early feminist movements: educationalists Emily Davies, Dorothea Beale and Frances Buss; journalists Frances Power Cobbe, Sophia Dobson Collet, the artist Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the poet Isa Knox. The pioneer doctor, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was also a member. It was the Kensington Society that delivered to Parliament in June 1866, the first petition demanding women's suffrage: their lasting contribution.<sup>112</sup> Many of these women were also members of the Langham Place Group, formed in 1857 to promote the interests of women. One, the journalist Sophia Dobson Collet, was the aunt of Clara Collet; another, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, was the aunt, by marriage, of Adelaide Anderson.<sup>113</sup> These were

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<sup>109</sup> North British Review, p. 328.

<sup>110</sup> Judith Johnston, *Anna Jameson, Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), p. 233.

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Carol Dyhouse, *No distinction of sex? Women in British Universities 1870-1939*, (London: Routledge, 1995); Daphne Bennett, *Emily Davies and the Liberation of Women*, (London: André Deutsch Ltd., 1990); Emily Davies, *The Higher Education of Women*, (London: Alexander Strahan, 1866); June Purvis, *A History of Women's Education in England*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991).

<sup>112</sup> Ann Dingsdale, Kensington Society, (act. 1865-1868), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn., (Oxford University Press, May 2007).

<sup>113</sup> See: Phillippa Levine, *Victorian Feminism, 1850-1900*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), chapter 3; Candida Ann Lacey ed., *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group*, (New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987); Ann Dingsdale, 'Generous and Lofty Sympathies': *The*

members of the mid-Victorian intelligentsia. The Langham Place women, as Sally Alexander has pointed out, sought work for women, not simply through economic need but the realisation of women's abilities: 'of whatever women are capable, that they were intended'.<sup>114</sup> Their influence permeated the next generation and is detectable in Collet's own paradoxical observation: 'The futility of forbidding women to do what they were incapable of doing was never perceived by the opponents of the movement for the higher education of women, who based their opposition on this ground.'<sup>115</sup> It is also evident in her acknowledgment of the debt by her own generation to the previous one: 'We owe much to the women who, at the risk of great unpopularity and much social loss, fought the battles by which the doors were opened.'<sup>116</sup> The need to work had been the central theme of 'Aurora Leigh', portraying a heroine who is a young poet fighting to learn and to become a writer. This ambition is realised in Collet's generation.

In 1902, Clara Collet had published a collection of essays under the title, *Educated Working Women*.<sup>117</sup> Collet's essays and those of her contemporaries assessed and measured the advances made by women into the professions in the second generation of the women's movement. Written between 1890 and 1900, these essays reflected Collet's concerns with the social and economic status of educated working women like herself. They critically explored the contemporary position of professional women and addressed the economic issues they faced. Collet used economic and statistical methods to clarify social issues of concern to women in her own socio-economic group. The journals in which these essays were first published demonstrate the places where late-Victorian women articulated their concerns on gender related issues. The earliest had been read to the South Place Ethical Society in 1890 and the other five had appeared in journals, including *The Nineteenth Century* and *The Economic Journal* between 1892 and 1900.<sup>118</sup> Whereas the professional possibilities for women had

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*Kensington Society, the 1866 Women's Suffrage Petition and the Development of Mid-Victorian Feminism*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Greenwich, 1995).

<sup>114</sup> Sally Alexander, *Becoming a Woman, and Other Essays in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Feminist History*, (London: Virago Press, 1994), p.139.

<sup>115</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *Educated Working Women, Educated Working Women: Essays on the Economic Position of Women Workers in the Middle Classes*, (London: P.S.King & Son Ltd., 1902), p. 3.

<sup>116</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 5.

<sup>117</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women: Essays on the Economic Position of Women Workers in the Middle Classes*, (London: P.S.King & Son Ltd., 1902).

<sup>118</sup> Originally called the South Place Religious Society, the South Place Ethical Society changed its name in 1888. At this time it gave Sunday concerts and provided a forum for debate for all manner of social issues.

begun to broaden in the ten years before this book's publication, as Collet's own position as a senior civil servant verifies, the social and economic implications for such women had not been widely considered. Despite fifty years of agitation for education and the vote, for a wider sphere of influence for women and greater equality within the judicial system, educated women were still largely teachers or governesses, with some writers, journalists or actresses. Most were poorly paid and undervalued. Professional women like Collet were exceptional, but they tied in their fate with that of their working sisters by becoming the investigators of women's working conditions.

Others were contributing to the debate. In 1895 Alice Gordon had explored the after-careers of university educated women.<sup>119</sup> Gordon's paper provided a statistical analysis of the routes followed by new female graduates, pointing out that a university education had not yet opened many professional doors. In 1901, Louise Creighton had written about 'The Employment of Educated Women'.<sup>120</sup> Creighton focused on the lack of work available for any educated women which would provide sufficient payment on which to live adequately, though she did not confine her study to those with a university background. Creighton's emphasis was on the need to develop professional possibilities for all educated working women. However, it was Collet's essays which provided a greater depth to the expression of these anxieties. She explored similar issues such as the economic position of women or their position as middle-class professionals but her statistical analyses provide a greater authority. Collet wrote on specific issues, like marriage and age limitations for women, presenting a contemporary representation of differing circumstances for well-educated professional women and as such, they are a rarity.

In her first essay, Collet emphasised the importance of demanding an appropriate salary for the job, arguing that it was the social responsibility of women graduates not to undersell themselves and so further reduce the salaries of those women less well qualified. She challenged the view that men's family responsibilities justified higher salaries than women's: the man who lived in the parental home would not expect a

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<sup>119</sup> Alice M. Gordon, 'The After-Careers of University Women', in *The Nineteenth Century*, 37:220 (1895:June), pp. 955-960. The statistics were provided by the participating women's colleges, but to date, I have been unable to find more of Gordon or the reason for their collation. This does not detract from the argument.

<sup>120</sup> Louise Creighton, 'The Employment of Educated Women', in *The Nineteenth Century*, 50:297 (1901:Nov.), pp. 806-811.

lower salary so why was it assumed that women would do so? Collet used statistics to disprove the assertion current at the time that because there were was a surplus of women teachers they should accept lower salaries, thus foregrounding one of the disputes on pay which would recur on countless occasions.<sup>121</sup>

Her second paper discussed the prospects of marriage for professional women, a vexed debate for many years to come. Written in 1892, this paper pre-dated the marriage bar in the civil service, although female civil servants in the lower echelons of the service would be required to retire on marriage from 1894. The first superintending factory inspector, May Tennant (née Abraham) had married on July 8<sup>th</sup> 1896. However, she remained in post until May 1897, a few weeks before the birth of her first child, in spite of family pressures.<sup>122</sup> Lucy Deane, her fellow factory inspector, recorded the event in her diary: 'She (Tennant) goes for a short honeymoon and then back to her work which she will not at present relinquish.'<sup>123</sup> Collet, who had herself refused a marriage proposal in 1884, argued that marriage was considered by many middle-class working women as a 'possible, but not very probable, termination of their working career'.<sup>124</sup> Gordon's paper had indeed shown how few women graduates married: at Newnham, 120 out of 720 ex-students and at Girton, only 46 out of 335 ex-students had married.<sup>125</sup> These figures appeared to reinforce Collet's own conclusion, that marriage had more to offer the man than it did the woman.<sup>126</sup> In her review of this paper, the economist Mary Paley Marshall summarised Collet's perspective: 'She is not holding a brief for women, but evidently wants to get at the truth, whether it tells for or against them. And she is not inclined to consider their work as a thing apart, but in close relation to the present and future well-being of society.'<sup>127</sup> Collet's essays, and those of her contemporaries, assessed and measured the advances made by women into the professions in the second generation of the Victorian women's movement. The development of feminist education for girls and young women was fundamental in the creation of professional prospects for women and this group of civil servants

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<sup>121</sup> Collet, 'The Economic Position of Educated Working Women', in *Educated Working Women*, pp. 3-26.

<sup>122</sup> Warwick University, Modern Records Office, COL, MSS.29/1/18.

<sup>123</sup> MSS/ 69/1/15.

<sup>124</sup> Collet, 'Prospects of Marriage for Women', in *Educated Working Women*, p. 56.

<sup>125</sup> Gordon, p.956.

<sup>126</sup> Collet, 'Prospects of Marriage for Women', in *Educated Working Women*, p. 65.

<sup>127</sup> Mary P. Marshall, review author, 'Educated Working Women', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 46 (Jun., 1902), 252-257. Mary Paley Marshall, a notable economist, was married to the better known economist, Alfred Marshall.

exemplified the opportunities it offered. The widening participation of women in the educational system had begun at the time of 'Aurora Leigh' and the professional aspirations of educated women were developed in its wake.

### 1. The development of an academic, liberal education for girls.

The invidious position of the governess had been increasingly considered in the middle decades of the nineteenth century and had been powerfully portrayed in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, first published in 1847. In 1844, a young Charles Dickens spoke of the way in which knowledge could be a source of weakness rather than of strength. At a dinner held by the Governesses Benevolent Institution, a society inaugurated the previous year, and with an influential support group, Dickens depicted knowledge as a governess, 'her eyes red with poring over advertisements in search of a new situation'.<sup>128</sup> Two members of the Governesses Benevolent Institute, David Laing and Frederick Denison Maurice were influential in the opening of serious educational opportunities for girls. Laing, a clergyman and friend of the Buss family, was deeply committed to education and social projects and Maurice, a Christian Socialist and Professor of English Literature at Kings College, London was also committed to the extension of educational opportunities for women. Both men realized that governesses were low paid and undervalued because of one major factor: the lack of education for women. They began to consider the possibility of a qualification for governesses. However, this was hardly practicable without access for women into colleges and universities. The extension of educational opportunities for these women was a prerequisite to their position and worth: certificates would have no value without them. Engaging the support of several professors from Kings College, Laing and Maurice formed themselves into a Committee of Education which first met in October 1847.

In fact, a college for governesses had first been mooted by the Honourable Amelia Murray, a friend of Anne Jameson and a maid of honour to Queen Victoria. She had tried to interest the College of Preceptors and joined forces with the Governesses Benevolent Institution in 1846.<sup>129</sup> She had published *Remarks on Education*, in 1847, expressing a similar view to that of Maurice, and it was assumed to be her influence

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<sup>128</sup> Elaine Kaye, *A History of Queen's College, London*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972), pp. 11-12.

<sup>129</sup> Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860*, London: MacMillan Publishers Ltd., 1985), p. 131.

that gained Victoria's support.<sup>130</sup> The lease of 67 Harley Street was bought and this led to the foundation of Queen's College in 1848, the first institution in Britain where women could study and gain academic qualifications, predating the second, Bedford College, by a matter of months.<sup>131</sup> Its syllabus included mathematics, arithmetic and English literature as well as several languages including Latin, and, importantly, methods of teaching. The college was open not solely to governesses but to all women and girls.<sup>132</sup> The college from the start, therefore, was going to attract a far wider clientele than aspiring governesses. Educationalists, Dorothea Beale and Frances Mary Buss were both early alumni of Queen's College, as was, a generation later, Adelaide Anderson.

Dorothea Beale, born in 1831 and Frances Mary Buss, born in 1827, were two remarkable headmistresses fundamental to the development of education for girls in the latter part of the nineteenth century. They belonged to both the Kensington Society and the Langham Place Group which, as we have seen initiated the formal campaigns for education and employment for women, and women's suffrage. Initially educated by governesses, Beale was sent to Paris for a year to continue her education before attending Queen's College just after it was opened in 1848. She went on to become Principal of Cheltenham Ladies College, a post she held from 1858 until her death in 1906. She also founded St. Hilda's College, Oxford in 1893. Frances Mary Buss was an able student who was educated at her local free school. When her mother opened her own school, Buss was asked to teach the older pupils. She attended Queen's College as an evening student in 1849 and in a letter to Beale forty years later, she wrote: 'Queen's College opened a new life to me, I mean intellectually.'<sup>133</sup> She founded the North London Collegiate School in 1850, which quickly gained an excellent reputation, and she remained Headmistress there until her death in 1894. Emily Davies, born in 1830, had had little formal education. A member of the Langham Place Group, in 1863 she was responsible for pressuring the Local Examination Boards of Oxford and Cambridge to accept female candidates on the same terms as men.<sup>134</sup> In 1869, she

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<sup>130</sup> Kaye, p. 16.

<sup>131</sup> Kaye, pp. 12-19.

<sup>132</sup> Kaye, p. 38

<sup>133</sup> K. Anderson, 'Frances Mary Buss, the Founder as Headmistress, 1850-1894', *North London Collegiate School 1850-1950*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 28.

<sup>134</sup> Daphne Bennett, *Emily Davies and the Liberation of Women*, (London: André Deutsch Lt., 1990), pp. 47-55.

had founded Girton College, Cambridge and was Mistress there from 1872-1875. These women became an intellectual tour de force, providing a sound academic education from which subsequent generations of girls benefited. They were ambitious for their students and this ambition is visible in both Adelaide Anderson, who was a student at Queen's College and then at Girton, and Clara Collet, who had attended the North London Collegiate School, studied for her BA through Bedford College and her MA at University College, London.

The Girls' Public Day School Company (GPDSC) was also instrumental in widening the educational opportunities for the some of the women in this study. Founded in 1872, its origins lay in the Schools Enquiry Commission of 1864 (the Taunton Commission), which had highlighted the lack of general educational provision for girls. The challenge to improve provision was tackled by Maria Grey (a member of the Kensington Society) and her sister, Emily Sherriff. They had already published *Thoughts on Self-Culture, Addressed to Women*, in 1854, in which they had examined the issue of the shortfall in provision of education for women. In November 1871, the sisters initiated the National Union for Improvement of the Education of Women of all Classes, which later became the Women's Education Union, the aim of which was to provide good and cheap day schools for girls from all social groups - the driving principle behind the foundation of the GPDSC. The success of the venture can be judged in the establishment of twelve such schools in London alone by 1892, the majority of the best schools for girls in London according to Collet, in *Studies in Secondary Education*, in the same year. Collet's contribution to this overview of education in England was actually an account of her work on educational provision for girls which appeared in Poverty 3 of the Booth Enquiry.<sup>135</sup> Of the twenty London schools she considered, twelve were part of the GPDSC.<sup>136</sup>

The establishment of such schools and the consequent development of educational provision is the background to the professional opportunities opening to and

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<sup>135</sup> See both Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, (First Series: Poverty 3, where he was assisted by Collet, Hubert Llewellyn Smith and Beatrice Potter), (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1902), ps. 290-306 and Arthur H. D. Acland, M.P. and H. Llewellyn Smith, M.A., B.Sc., eds, *Studies in Secondary Education*, (London: Percival & Co, 1892), pp. 200-221. Both Acland and Llewellyn Smith had been investigators on the Booth Enquiry with Collet, Acland joining the Gladstone government in 1892 and Llewellyn Smith becoming her colleague at the Board of Trade.

<sup>136</sup> See Collet's contribution to Arthur H.D. Acland and H. Llewellyn Smith, eds., *Studies in Secondary Education*, London: Percival & Co., 1892), p.200-221.

experienced by women from the early 1890s onwards; the women who are the subjects of this thesis seized and defined these opportunities. The prerequisite of a high educational standard and formal education became increasingly evident: of the first two factory inspectors appointed, for example, May Abraham had no formal education or training, but Mary Paterson had been a pupil at Glasgow Ladies College and an early student at Queen Mary's College, Glasgow. Of the subsequent appointments, Lucy Deane had no formal education but had trained as a sanitary inspector and worked as such in the Kensington Vestry prior to her appointment in 1894, Adelaide Anderson was a Girton graduate, Rose Squire had had no formal education but had completed a similar training to that of Lucy Deane and they had been colleagues at the Kensington Vestry. Of the next two appointments, Anna Tracey in 1897 and Emily Sadler in 1898 little information is available, although Emily Sadler is recorded in the 1881 census records, aged eighteen, as being a scholar, so it can be assumed that she had had an education. Adelaide Anderson mentions Anna Tracey in her diary of 1893, when Tracey was employed as a clerk to the Royal Commission of Labour. It can, from this, be deduced that Tracey was also educated.<sup>137</sup> Slightly later appointments followed suit; Hilda Martindale had attended Brighton High School, a GPDSC school, Royal Holloway College and Bedford College, London. Mona Wilson attended Clifton High School and St Leonard's School, St Andrews, before going to Newnham College, Cambridge, in 1892. Isabel Taylor, appointed in 1909, had attended both Streatham High School and Sutton High School, both GPDSC schools, before going on to attend the London School of Economics. Frances Durham attended Notting Hill High School (GPDSC) before going to Girton College in 1892. After the first two appointments, therefore, a good educational background and training in the field, or a university education became obligatory for the appointment of women (unlike men) into the senior grades of the civil service.

The personal impact of an academic secondary education on such women is difficult to assess as we do not know enough about individual lives. However, Clara Collet's adolescent diary provides a singular portrait. Dating from 1876, when she was sixteen and a pupil at the North London Collegiate School, Collet's diary recounts the insecurities and self-absorption of a schoolgirl, as well as giving a detailed account of

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<sup>137</sup> London Metropolitan University, The Women's Library, *The papers of Dame Adelaide Anderson*, 7AMA/B/01.

syllabus, examinations, school trips and activities both at school and at home that give substance to her development. Her reading list alone is quite breath-taking! The education was academic, with an increasing emphasis on mathematics, classics and the sciences. Collet's diaries reveal this broader curriculum, as well as a rather timeless attitude of the schoolgirl towards the school trip:

Oct 21<sup>st</sup> (1876) Went to South Kensington Museum to the Scientific Exhibition with Miss Bryant and Miss Buss and the LUC. Dreadfully instructive. Very few things that I cared about except the machine for measuring the intensity of thought. Sarah Mason was with me so I got on pretty well.<sup>138</sup>

Collet's favourite exhibit does reflect her future interests.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence about the schooldays of the other women in this study. Hilda Martindale reveals little in her books, but her sister, Louisa, does provide snippets of life at Brighton High School, founded in 1876. Louisa said that, although her mother appeared to enjoy life at this time, her children were not quite so content. It appeared that their earlier private lessons were not as thorough as they could have been and the girls felt disadvantaged by this at school. Louisa wrote that high schools provided a superior education, particularly as they catered for girls of all classes, but, as the Martindale girls were accompanied to and from school by their governess, they failed to make many friends.<sup>139</sup> Louisa, at least, resented this lack of social interaction. This is a very different account from Collet's, who appeared to have found friendships easier, despite always doubting her communication skills.<sup>140</sup> The Martindale girls, like Collet at the North London Collegiate School, were given vast amounts of homework, and this, coupled with swimming, riding and playing the piano and violin at the weekend meant that life was strenuous! However, Louisa particularly liked the Mathematics teacher, just down from Girton, whom she thought very good with the added advantage of a sense of humour. Louisa Martindale reveals similar attitudes to those of Collet: a bond with some members of staff; an emphasis on social life and a desire for academic achievement. Such aspirations and insecurities would be familiar to many young women today.

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<sup>138</sup> Warwick University, Modern Records Office, COL, MSS.29/8/1/7. Census, 1881 England Census, *U.K. Census Collection*, The National Archives, <<http://search.ancestry.co.uk>.

<sup>139</sup> L. Martindale, *A Woman Surgeon*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1951), p. 23.

<sup>140</sup> MSS.29/8/1/

The North London Collegiate School, Queen's College and the Girls' Public Day School Trust were products of the tireless efforts of individuals and of feminist groups such as the Kensington Society and the Langham Place feminists to develop a system of education for girls in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Girl's Public Day School Company, as we have seen, was pivotal in sending girls to study at university, and recognising talent where the home environment may not have been so progressive. These schools instilled not just disciplines but the desire to improve the lot of all women, socially and economically. Streatham and Sutton High Schools for example, encouraged the young Isabel Taylor to take a place at the newly founded London School of Economics, where she met the Webbs. Founded in 1895, by the Webbs, with Graham Wallas and George Bernard Shaw, the purpose of the LSE was to 'train experts in the task of reforming society'.<sup>141</sup> All the women in this study profited either directly in that they attended such schools, or indirectly, in that they benefited from the professional opportunities that were the inevitable outcome for better educated middle class women.

## **2. A place at university: the broadening of horizons.**

As we have seen, a university education very quickly became necessary for women entering the civil service at higher grades. This was only possible because the universities were gradually opening their doors to women. Emily Davies, whose personal struggle for education motivated her life's work to establish education for women was responsible for the foundation of Girton College in 1869, and also for ensuring that the new university-sponsored examinations were open to girls as well as boys.<sup>142</sup> A feminist and a member of the Langham Place Group, her efforts were crucial in the establishment of a university education for women. The educationalist and suffragist, Alice Zimmern (1855-1939), argued that in the preceding half century, the greatest advantage to women's education was the admission to universities: 'It is the keystone of the arch, without which the rest of the fabric could have neither stability nor

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<sup>141</sup> Beatrice Webb, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Volume Two 1892-1905: All the Good Things of Life*, Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, eds., (London: Virago Press Ltd., 1983), p.16.

<sup>142</sup> See Emily Davies, *The Higher Education of Women*, (London and New York: Alexander Strahan, Publisher, 1866) for a personal account and Daphne Bennett, *Emily Davies and the Liberation of Women*, (London: André Deutsch Ltd., 1990).

permanence.<sup>143</sup> An old Girtonian herself (1881-1885), Zimmern argued that, without outside guidance, the girls' schools had too diverse and varied a curriculum, and that the universities gave them direction. Zimmern credited this movement to provide a university education for women, firmly established by 1898, chiefly to Emily Davies, who believed that to teach the younger generation, teachers must be adequately instructed themselves. They both aimed to bring an excellent liberal education within the reach of all women.<sup>144</sup> Higher education would enable women, or be the first step towards entering professions other than teaching. One such profession was the civil service.

In 1869, university education for girls was in its infancy. Girton was struggling on the Hitchin campus and although Bedford College was admitting students, London University degrees were withheld from women. Founded as a women's college in 1849, by the wealthy feminist widow, Elizabeth Reid, Bedford College's constitution had been drawn up to specifically ensure female governance.<sup>145</sup> Clara Collet took her first degree through Bedford College, studying Greek, Latin and English, alongside applied mathematics.<sup>146</sup> Later, Frances Durham's sister, Florence attended the college from the age of 14, for four years, before going up to Girton. Another Durham sister, the anthropologist, Mary Durham also attended and recorded in a letter that for full-time students all their time was: 'entirely taken up in the Classrooms or by doing preparation in the Library'.<sup>147</sup> Their teachers were nothing if not pedantic: Mary Durham was severely reprovved for referring to the word 'omnibus' by the term 'bus'.<sup>148</sup> Such snippets of school life are rare. Hilda Martindale also studied hygiene at Bedford. This short-lived course had only a few students, but added prestige to the college since students who took it were thoroughly prepared for professional work: they included other civil servants; Maud Hartland, one of the first women inspectors under the National Health

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<sup>143</sup> Alice Zimmern, *The Renaissance of Girls' Education in England; A Record of Fifty Years' Progress*, first printed A.D. Innes Co., 1898, (Memphis: General Books, 2010), p. 47.

<sup>144</sup> Zimmern, p.47.

<sup>145</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *No distinction of sex? Women in British Universities 1870-1939*, p. 38.

<sup>146</sup> MSS.29/8/2/5-6.

<sup>147</sup> Margaret Tuke, *A History of Bedford College for Women 1849-1937*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p.284.

<sup>148</sup> Tuke, p.287.

Insurance Act, and Irene Whitworth, a factory inspector and later, Assistant Director, Welfare and Health Department, Ministry of Munitions.<sup>149</sup>

Several of the first women civil servants were daughters and nieces of mid-Victorian feminists.<sup>150</sup> Collet we have seen was connected with the Kensington Society through her aunt, Sophia Dobson Collet. Adelaide Anderson was also a second generation feminist: she was the daughter of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson's brother-in-law, Alexander Gavin Anderson. These two women were closely connected, as it was in Garrett Anderson's house that Adelaide had held at least one meeting of the women factory inspectors.<sup>151</sup> Adelaide Anderson had had the advantage of a university education, reading for the moral science tripos at Girton (1883-1887).

Frances Durham was also a 'Girton Girl'. Her sister, Florence had gone up in 1888: she later became an eminent geneticist. Frances followed her in 1892 and had an equally distinguished university career, winning the Alexander Medal awarded by the Royal Historical Society in 1898.<sup>152</sup> Following university, Durham went into historical research before joining the Women's University Settlement in Southwark, in 1900. Mona Wilson studied at Newnham College in 1892, but although she was there for four years, she took no examinations.<sup>153</sup> Her younger sister, Margaret also went to Newnham in 1906, although she spent less than two years at the college.<sup>154</sup> It was not unusual for Newnham students not to complete the course: the policy at the time was that each student should complete a course most suited to her individually.<sup>155</sup> Wilson left Newnham and went on to become secretary of the Women's Industrial Law Committee and the Women's Trade Unions League, 1899-1902.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Tuke, pp. 159-160. (The Hygiene Course was discontinued in 1919.)

<sup>150</sup> Elizabeth Crawford, *Enterprising Women: The Garretts and Their Circle*, (London: Francis Boutle Publishers, 2009), p.39.

<sup>151</sup> Warwick University, Modern Records Office, LAS, MSS.69/1/

<sup>152</sup> Future medalists would include Rose Graham in 1903, J. E. Neale in 1920 and S. B. Chrimes in 1934.

<sup>153</sup> A.B. White, ed., *Newnham College Register 1871-1971, Volume 1, 1871-1923*, (Cambridge: Newnham College, 1971), p. 118.

<sup>154</sup> Newnham College Register, p. 197. The register also suggests that an elder sister went in 1876 but left through ill health shortly afterwards. This student, however, could not have been a sibling because Mona Wilson was the eldest in the family, although she may well have been a cousin or an aunt.

<sup>155</sup> Newnham College Register, p. iii.

<sup>156</sup> Newnham College Register, p. 118.

Mary Muirhead Paterson attended Queen Margaret College, Glasgow. Established in 1883, teaching had begun there in 1884.<sup>157</sup> She was related to the Muirhead family on her mother's side and this influential Glasgow family had endowed the university. She was one of its first students although in its early days, the university was not allowed to confer degrees. The family's commitment to the education of women is evident, and as a young woman, Paterson had travelled widely with her uncle, Henry Muirhead, who was a socialist and a member of the Independent Labour Party. They had visited both the United States and Canada to investigate industrial conditions.<sup>158</sup> Familial influences and educational opportunities are obvious in the early life of Mary Paterson.

At least seven of the women in this group had a university or higher education, although, with two exceptions, little is known about their university experiences. Anderson's annotated lecture notes reveal a very meticulous student.<sup>159</sup> They include notes from lectures on ancient philosophy and psychology, and an essay on political philosophy which considers communism and socialism. Anderson won the Gamble Gold Medal in 1893 for an essay entitled: *Johannes Scotus, called Erigena: a backwater in the history of philosophical thought*, about the early medieval philosopher.<sup>160</sup> A prestigious award, her achievement was reported in the newspapers. Congratulatory letters included letters from family friends and one from the biblical scholar, Herbert Ryle.<sup>161</sup> However, Anderson joined the Women's Factory Inspectorate and further academic study was not continued. She did gain an MA in 1906.<sup>162</sup>

Collet read for her first degree whilst teaching at Wyggeston High School, in Leicester, where she began work in 1878, aged eighteen. As University College, London first allowed women to take degrees in that year Collet, whilst still at the North London Collegiate School wrote in her diary:

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<sup>157</sup> <http://www.gashe.ac.uk>

<sup>158</sup> Mary Drake McFeely, *Lady Inspectors: The Campaign for a Better Workplace, 1893-1921*, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 15.

<sup>159</sup> 7AMA/A/02/2.

<sup>160</sup> K.T. Butler, H.I. McMorran, *Girton College Register, 1869-1946*, (Cambridge: Privately Printed for Girton College, 1948), p. 24. This prize was instituted in memory of Jane Gamble, a Girton College benefactor and was first awarded in 1888. It was for research by a certificated (graduate) student, the winner receiving books and a gold medal.

<sup>161</sup> 7AMA/A/03/2.

<sup>162</sup> *Girton College Register*, p. 24.

Miss Buss sent for me.....She told me that she had recommended me for a post at the new Wyggeston Girls' Grammar School to be opened Whitsun week. I should only have £80 a year to begin with but Miss Ellen Leicester, the Headmistress, would give me every facility for preparing myself for the intermediate arts examination in July 1879 and the final BA in Oct 1880.<sup>163</sup>

Miss Buss had previously recommended a training college before entering the teaching profession but had changed her mind after the announcement of the acceptance of women for degrees. Collet was told that masters from the boys' grammar school would teach her Greek and applied mathematics and she could manage the Latin and English by herself.<sup>164</sup> Ellen Leicester was a friend of Miss Buss, and had been in the school for a few days. It was obviously arranged between the two of them. Collet took the opportunity this position offered. At this time, the BA degree was taken in two parts, the first and second BA. Collet recorded in her diary that she heard she had passed her first BA in September 1879. She was just nineteen. Of her fellow students, she recounted six had achieved the first division, including herself, and three the second.<sup>165</sup> At this point there is a gap in her diary, but when she resumed writing in February 1882, she mentioned passing her second BA towards the end of 1880. In October of that year the school magazine recorded: 'At last we have a BA! Clara Collet has just passed successfully the Second B.A. Examination.'<sup>166</sup>

No one factor enabled young women to acquire a university education at the end of the nineteenth century. Several factors were important: family background and attitudes; the development of a relevant school curriculum through the efforts of such establishments as Queen's College and the North London Collegiate School and further development for girls under the auspices of the Girls Public Day School Company; the growth and development of university education for women, through the efforts of Emily Davies and others. Nineteenth century feminists knew that without education, training and employment women would never achieve either equality with men, or their own self-realisation and fulfilment. Elizabeth C. Wolstenholme Elmy (1833-1918), member of the Kensington Society, campaigner for women's rights and

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<sup>163</sup> MSS.29/8/2/1.

<sup>164</sup> MSS.29/8/2/5-6.

<sup>165</sup> MSS.29/8/2/9.

<sup>166</sup> The North London Collegiate School 1850-1950: A Hundred Years of Girls' Education, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 36-37.

utopian socialist, writing in 1869 had argued the importance of education for women, both through public schools and the universities. She concluded:

We ask that the gifts of God may not be wasted, that women themselves may not be robbed of the purest joys of life, those of intellectual effort and achievement, and that society that needs their help so much may not be defrauded of their best and worthiest service.<sup>167</sup>

Collet would have agreed with her sentiments: in 1915 she wrote, 'Justice for women has been the inspiring motive of most of the educational pioneers.'<sup>168</sup>

### 3. The making of a woman civil servant: influences and experiences.

The influences beyond family and education which moulded these women's ambitions and career choices are more difficult to determine. Collet's diary is alone in providing the minutiae that can build a picture of her development from an earnest school girl to a pioneer woman civil servant, although some hints are available from other sources to gain some insight into the other women. From 1876, when they begin, Collet's diary entries reveal her growing awareness and interest in the issues which would shape her future. She was sixteen years old, a schoolgirl living in London with her family. It was a radical Unitarian background, and her father was a great friend of Karl Marx. Like many ardent feminists, religion, religious stories and identifications were significant in the young woman's intellectual development.<sup>169</sup> On October 8th 1876, for example, she attended a sermon on the martyr Anne Askew. According to the sermon, when challenged on the issue of transubstantiation and whether Askew believed that the wafer, when blessed became the body of Christ, Askew answered: 'I believe that God made man but I cannot believe that man can make God'. Collet's comment was that such a response was 'not bad for a woman'.<sup>170</sup> Aged sixteen, the young Collet can be seen to question the prescribed role for women. Religious doubt and her own personality failings are explored in the diaries, as well as her support for the women's

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<sup>167</sup> Elizabeth C. Wolstenholme, 'The Education of Girls', in *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, Josephine Butler, ed., first published in 1869, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 327-328.

<sup>168</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Movement for Intellectual Training', *Some Aspects of the Women's Movement*, Zoe Fairfield ed., (Memphis: General Books, 2010), p. 34.

<sup>169</sup> See, for example, Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in late Victorian and Edwardian England*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 78.

<sup>170</sup> MSS. 29/8/1/7.

cause. Accounts of her visits to her Aunt Sophy (Sophia Dobson Collet), the writer and member of the Kensington Society were commonplace. On one such visit, Aunt Sophy recounted the events of her two day visit to the Alcotts' (the family home of Louisa Alcott, author of *Little Women* and *Good Wives*). Mr. Alcott, apparently advocated celibacy as a life choice. His wife became so sick of hearing him emphasise its importance that she left him! He bore this for one day and then he had to go and get her back.<sup>171</sup> The sixteen year old Collet made no further comment herself but thought it interesting enough to include. Visits to Aunt Sophy were regular events for Collet and she appears in her diaries far more regularly than either of her parents.

A lack of self-confidence, both intellectual and personal, revealed in Collet's diaries resonates down the generations, transcending time and place and alone justifies its emphasis here. Although Collet admired and was influenced by Frances Buss, to whom she was to dedicate her book, *Educated Working Women*, in 1902, her strongest influence at school and beyond was reserved for Sophie Bryant, the charismatic second headmistress at the North London Collegiate School, who succeeded to the post of headmistress on Buss's death in 1894. Mrs. Bryant had been the first woman to obtain a DSc in 1884. Highly talented, she was much loved by her students, including Collet.<sup>172</sup> Bryant became a member of staff in 1875 and worked closely with Miss Buss for the next nineteen years, succeeding her early in 1895.<sup>173</sup> In 1885, Mrs. Bryant was still Miss Buss's second mistress at the North London Collegiate School, Collet's alma mater and where her sister, Edith Collet was to teach mathematics. Mrs. Bryant supported Collet in her preparation for her MA, by providing examination papers to complete in logic, moral ideals and ethics. Collet wrote at this time: 'I saw a great deal of Mrs. Bryant. She always puts fresh energy into me although she is hardly aware of my feelings for her, it is all one sided.'<sup>174</sup> What she means by this comment is open to speculation. Mrs. Bryant appears regularly in Collet's diary, often attending the same

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<sup>171</sup> MSS. 29/8/1/10.

<sup>172</sup> Born in Ireland, Sophie Bryant had left the country at the age of thirteen and at sixteen had won a scholarship to Bedford College, one of the first girls to take advantage of the Cambridge Locals Examinations which were available to women from 1865. She was remembered by Miss Buss as one of the few girls taking the examinations to specialise in Mathematics and she was offered a part-time position teaching Mathematics and German at the NLCS in 1875.

<sup>173</sup> Eleanor Doorly M.A., 'Mrs. Bryant', in *North London Collegiate School, 1850-1950, Essays in Honour of the Centenary of the Frances Mary Buss Foundation*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 71-91.

<sup>174</sup> MSS.29/8/2/77.

walking parties, and continuing to provide her with support in her academic studies until she achieved her MA.

Collet's diaries reveal something about her studies and the importance she attributed to them and a growing dissatisfaction with teaching. They disclose more, however, about her development as an intellectual and her growing interest in social reform. On March 30<sup>th</sup> 1882, she had heard Arnold Toynbee, Lecturer on Political Economy at Balliol College, on 'Are Radicals Socialists?' She found him 'extremely good looking', with a 'very sweet voice'. She thought the lecture good, although pointed out that it appeared better at the time than it did retrospectively. Collet found Toynbee sentimental, but added that others thought her hard-hearted and no doubt she was!<sup>175</sup> Collet's diaries reveal an acerbic clarity of thought in tension with self criticism, qualities present later in her relationships both with family and colleagues.

By February 1882, when she was twenty two and had been teaching for four years, she realised she wanted to study further and that she no longer wished to teach. She had originally made up her mind to go for her MA in 1883, and had completed preparation in logic and psychology to this end, but this was temporarily shelved until 1884.<sup>176</sup> Although this meant moving back to London and giving up her teaching career, she did remain interested and involved in education as an investigator and as a member of the Association of Assistant Mistresses.<sup>177</sup>

In 1942, Collet revised her early diaries possibly for publication and entitled them: 'Diary of a Young Assistant Mistress, 1878-1885.'<sup>178</sup> This included useful addenda and traced her enthusiastic start in the teaching profession in 1878, until her gradual disappointment and desire to leave teaching for further study. For much of this period, she lived with her sister, Carrie, and a friend, and apparently enjoyed a varied and lively social life. She wrote of the intricacies of relationships, and peppered her diary with information about Wyggeston School and pupils' examination successes. Her interests were diverse but women's suffrage and religious doubt were discussed, and university extension lectures were attended.<sup>179</sup> For example, on November 15<sup>th</sup> 1882, Collet

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<sup>175</sup> MSS/29/8/1/25.

<sup>176</sup> MSS/29/8/21.

<sup>177</sup> Arthur H. D. Acland and H. Llewellyn Smith, eds., *Studies in Secondary Education*, pp. 200-222. Collet was a member of the Association from its inauguration in 1884 until at least 1888.

<sup>178</sup> Warwick University, Modern Records Office, COL, MSS.29/8/2.

<sup>179</sup> MSS.29/8/2/45.

attended a women's suffrage meeting, where the women speakers included Miss Sturge, who spoke intelligently but with an 'abominable voice' (probably Emily Sturge 1847-1892, the campaigner for women's education and suffrage), Mrs Lucas (possibly Margaret Bright Lucas 1818-1890, the temperance activist and suffragist, and sister to John Bright) and Lady Halberton, also associated with the radical dress movement from the early 1880s.<sup>180</sup> Again, she explained nothing of the meeting's content but more of those present. However, her sympathies were with the suffrage movement and June 1884 found her in the Ladies' Gallery to hear the amendment to the Franchise Bill to include women, proposed by William Woodall.<sup>181</sup> The Liberal M.P. for Stoke-on-Trent, Woodall was a supporter of home rule and disestablishment, as well as the extension of the franchise to women. Her attendance at another suffrage event demonstrated the strength of support. Her assessment of the debate appears even handed but again personalities rather than content are reported. The diary was intended, presumably, merely as a reminder for her and a place where she could explore her own feelings. Both Collet and her sister Edith were signatories to the declaration in favour of women's suffrage in 1889, so their allegiance was clear.<sup>182</sup> Their aunt, Sophia Dobson Collet was also a signatory.

By March 1883, disillusion and dissatisfaction with the teaching profession led to: 'indulging in a fit of hysterical crying because of my sense of worthlessness and exhaustion'. She wished she could 'go to Girton or University College [London] or give up teaching or emigrate'.<sup>183</sup> This exhaustion appears to be less to do with long hours but rather with boredom and lack of stimulus. Collet added an addendum in 1942 that in 1882, London University had instituted Teacher's Diploma examinations open to London graduates only. Partly to escape teachers' meetings at school she presented herself at the first examination for the diploma in 1883. The literature of the educational theorists was responsible for her 'insipissated gloom'.<sup>184</sup> She hated both the theory paper and the practical, in which she had to teach a lesson at the North London Collegiate School in front of Miss Buss, amongst others. She called the experience

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<sup>180</sup> MSS. 29/8/1/47. Collet herself was later a supporter of the rational dress movement.

<sup>181</sup> MSS.29/8/2/75.

<sup>182</sup> London and National Society for Women's Service, 'Declaration in favour of women's suffrage: being the signatures received at the office of the Central Committee for Women's Suffrage, etc.', *L.S.E. Selected Pamphlets*, (1889), (LSE Library: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/60224329>).

<sup>183</sup> MSS.29/8/2/37.

<sup>184</sup> MSS.29/8/2/59. Not widely used today, insipissated means thickening.

'wretched' although she did pass.<sup>185</sup> By November 1883, this discontent was crystallizing. Collet felt as if she was 'leaving off being a girl' (she was twenty three). She no longer wished to teach and felt she had reached a nadir, with no focus or ambition for the future. However, by December she was beginning to study again and on January 8<sup>th</sup> 1884, she attended the London University Convocation.<sup>186</sup> She was the only woman there, and later added in the diary that there were only three other women qualified for membership – an indication of her academic pride and ambition.

During this period of hard work, disillusion and change of direction, Collet received a proposal of marriage from an 'EW' and rejected him. Her great-niece, the author Jane Miller writes that this was an Edward Weymouth, probably one of the tutors. He proposed at least twice and was rejected again, but she did keep a letter he sent to her.<sup>187</sup> After the proposal, she went off to Newnham College for three weeks in the summer of 1884 and found it 'delightful'.<sup>188</sup> An experience very much enjoyed, this was also unsettling and she returned to the school early in 1885 feeling more discontented. This unsettled period had also been a time for decisions, for Collet added in a further postscript in 1942 that her earlier entries made no reference to her decision to go into residence at College Hall, London in 1885, to study at University College and take her M.A. in Moral and Political Philosophy, (which included psychology and economics). She had also failed to mention that, in spite of informing her headmistress that she was going to leave, Ellen Leicester had raised her salary from £150 to £160.<sup>189</sup> Collet's own misgivings about her teaching abilities were unfounded as this demonstrates she was very much a valued member of staff. Ellen Leicester had always shown her a great deal of support throughout her career at Wyggeston and evidently wished to retain her services.

Collet was working through her own attitudes towards men and marriage and the insecurities she felt in her relationships during this period. The 'EW' proposal had evidently been disturbing and although Collet had given no information about the

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<sup>185</sup> MSS. 29/8/2/61.

<sup>186</sup> Founded in 1858, The London University Convocation was to represent the views of the alumni and refer these views to the university administration.

<sup>187</sup> Jane Miller, *Relations*, (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 127.

<sup>188</sup> MSS.29/8/2/76.

<sup>189</sup> MSS.29/8/2/76.

identity of 'EW', he was at the Convocation and was 'rather nice looking'.<sup>190</sup> Her final diary entry before leaving Leicester for London said: 'It is much better to live an old maid and get a little honey from the short real friendships I can have with men for whom I care myself than to be bound for life to a man just because he thinks he cares for me.'<sup>191</sup> This sounded very much like she had reached a decision and this attitude reflected Collet's personal view of marriage and also perhaps enlightens her future relationship with the novelist, George Gissing. She made several allusions to her admiration for George Eliot, whose relationship with the critic George Lewes caused such scandal a generation earlier.<sup>192</sup> Collet was not going to be easily lured into marriage with a man she did not love, a relationship that might subjugate her freedom. This decision suggests a more passionate and romantic side of her nature.

On October 28<sup>th</sup> 1885, having begun her studies in Political Economy at University College, the first diary entry was written in College Hall. For Collet, everything was 'delightful' and since arriving in London from Leicester she had spent everyday reading in the British Museum – a pattern she retained for the duration of her studies. She had met up with her close childhood friend, Eleanor (Tussy) Marx, with whom there had been a rift, although she says nothing about the cause.<sup>193</sup> Collet says they made friends, but Collet refused an invitation to go and see her, or to explain why she would not go, but merely promised help if ever Eleanor should need it.<sup>194</sup> She appeared to be more content during this period, although her self-doubt is retained: there is the first mention of slum visiting, when the plans of two acquaintances to live in the slums for a month, were discussed over dinner in the college hall. Her feelings about these plans are not stated, but she says of the ensuing conversation that she 'felt dismal about my irritation about being contradicted and over my didactic habit of preaching to everybody.'<sup>195</sup> At this time, she was also going to Frances Buss at the North London Collegiate School twice weekly for political economy lessons.

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<sup>190</sup> MSS.29/8/2/74.

<sup>191</sup> MSS.29/8/2/81.

<sup>192</sup> See, for example, MSS.29/8/2/77.

<sup>193</sup> Karl Marx and Collet Dobson Collet were great friends and the families were close. Clara Collet and Tussy Marx were childhood friends. Collet had always very much admired Tussy, who was the elder and very beautiful. The rift was never explained, but might have been over Edward Aveling, with whom Tussy lived. Given Collet's own attitude towards marriage, this was unlikely to be a moral standpoint but more likely a personal dislike.

<sup>194</sup> MSS.29/8/1/51.

<sup>195</sup> MSS.29/8/1/51.

There are no diary entries from 1886, when Collet was taking her MA in mental and moral science, (probably the first woman to do so) and spending most days in the reading room of the British Museum, until 1<sup>st</sup> May 1890, when the diary resumes.<sup>196</sup> She had won the Joseph Hume scholarship in political economy in 1886, which earned her £20 a year for three years and she gave lectures to supplement her income, completing her studies in 1888.<sup>197</sup> However, the four year gap means that a detailed account of her university experience is missing. So also is the beginning of her investigative work for Charles Booth (see chapter one). By 1890, as she said herself, her handwriting had changed, which seemed to indicate to her a greater maturity. She was still angst-ridden about her character defects, but these perceived shortcomings would prove to be strengths in her future career.

#### **4. Philanthropy and social service.**

The Charity Organisation Society (COS) was the conduit through which some future professional women gained the necessary knowledge of research into social and economic conditions of the labouring population which would equip them for employment within the civil service. Although most later eschewed its aims, COS methodology would be utilised in other contexts: the collection of statistical data by civil servants like Collet and the acquired investigatory skills for factory inspectors like Hilda Martindale.<sup>198</sup> In 1890, C.S. Loch, (1849-1923), honorary secretary of the society, argued the importance of inquiry to ascertain these conditions.<sup>199</sup> His principle was that unless there was an efficient enquiry network, best use of charitable support and resources for those in most need could not be made.<sup>200</sup> This principle drew many middle-class men and women to investigate the circumstances of those applying for charitable assistance, to define the worthiness and therefore, by default, the unworthiness, of the various cases of hardship investigated. Data was accumulated on cases histories and analysed in order to formulate general principles.

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<sup>196</sup> MSS/29/8/1/53.

<sup>197</sup> Named after the politician, Joseph Hume, this scholarship was awarded by the University of London. Collet's was awarded for political economy.

<sup>198</sup> The aims and objectives of the Charity Organisation Society were briefly discussed in chapter one.

<sup>199</sup> The social worker, C.S. Loch was a stern exponent of self-reliance and an opponent of state intervention.

<sup>200</sup> C.S. Loch, *Charity Organisation*, first published, London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1890, (Bibliolife, 2010), pp. 61-62.

The principle of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor was subject to increasing criticism as the century drew to a close, numbers of unemployed did not diminish, the Labour Party was formed and the idea that the poor were responsible for their own conditions of existence began to be challenged. In 1883, Beatrice Potter began to work as one of the COS visitors to the poor, in Soho. Her job was to visit each case in the home and decide whether or not the family should receive charitable relief. It was impossible to understand chronic poverty from the few cases with which she worked, she complained.<sup>201</sup> She could not make definitive decisions about those deemed 'deserving' poor and those who were not. There were few cases in which a confident judgement could be reached.<sup>202</sup> She, like the social reformers and founders of Toynbee Hall in London's East End, Samuel and Henrietta Barnett, were, by the 1880s looking for provision which would include co-operation between the state and charity. They began to question the very root of the COS philosophy. Beatrice wrote forcefully, 'there was a deeper and more continuous evil than unrestricted and unregulated charity; namely unrestricted and unregulated capitalism and landlordism.'<sup>203</sup> Nevertheless, like Clara Collet, her experiences working for the COS and then for Charles Booth as an investigator transformed her into, 'a professed brain worker, overtly out for a career of my own.'<sup>204</sup>

Collet had joined the COS when she left Wyggeston School and returned to London to study and by 1888 she was on the Charity Organisation Council.<sup>205</sup> She contributed regularly to the Charity Organisation Review, the mouthpiece of the COS. In November 1889, she wrote a paper on 'Maria Edgeworth and Charity' and in December of that year responded to a previous letter on 'Charity and Strikes'. In the former, she drew from the work of the novelist to illustrate the difference between what she refers to as 'fashionable sentiment' and real humanity.<sup>206</sup> Edgeworth's novels, Collet argued demonstrated support for considered charitable giving. Her paper 'Charity Organisation' appeared in the May 1891 edition of the Charity Organisation Review. In this, Collet wrote as an apologist for the Charity Organisation, espousing both its values and its

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<sup>201</sup> Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 151.

<sup>202</sup> Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>203</sup> Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, p. 207.

<sup>204</sup> Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship*, p.257.

<sup>205</sup> *The Charity Organisation Review*, Vol. V, January-December, 1889, p. 36.

<sup>206</sup> Miss C.E. Collet, 'Maria Edgeworth and Charity', in *The Charity Organisation Review*, Vol. V, January – December 1889, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1889), pp. 418-412.

work. However, in March 1892, Collet had also been appointed as one of the four lady assistant commissioners to the Royal Commission on Labour and she wrote with increasing authority, challenging the nature of philanthropy:

To those who wish to take some share in philanthropic work I put the question: "What object have you in view? What is the end towards which you wish to work? Is it the relief of the distressed poor you wish to accomplish? or is it merely the relief of your distressed self, pained by the sight of suffering?"<sup>207</sup>

The COS, at least in the earlier years of her career in the civil service, continued to play an important part in Collet's life. Although she wrote of the need for professionalism in charity work, arguing that there was a need to train doctors or dressmakers before they practiced their skills, and the same should apply to social work, she did not completely disassociate herself from its values.<sup>208</sup> Despite her reservations, she retained a level of commitment until 1906, most likely because she acknowledged the value of casework for social investigation. Indeed, it was Clara Collet who wrote Loch's obituary for the *Economic Journal* in 1923, pointing out the failings of the COS and its increasing unpopularity, through the latter years of the nineteenth century, particularly its opposition to the movement for state pensions, whilst still presenting Loch as an empathetic and selfless leader, with 'a large sympathy for all sorts and conditions of men'.<sup>209</sup> This he may have been, but his firm resistance to any form of state assistance had found him increasingly in conflict with many members of the COS.<sup>210</sup>

Clara Collet and her colleague at the Board of Trade, Hubert Llewellyn Smith were both recruited after the appointment of Anthony Mundella as President of the Board of Trade and his creation of a Department of Labour within it. They had developed many of their research skills working on Charles Booth's vast investigation, 'The Life and Labour of London'. Booth's purpose was to: 'enumerate the mass of people in London in classes according to degrees of poverty or comfort and to indicate the conditions of life in each

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<sup>207</sup> Miss C.E. Collet, 'Charity Organisation', in *The Charity Organisation Review*, Vol. VII, January – December 1891, No. 77, May 1891, p. 210.

<sup>208</sup> Collet, 'Charity Organisation', p. 211.

<sup>209</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Obituary, Sir Charles Stewart Loch', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 128 (Mar., 1923), pp. 123-128.

<sup>210</sup> Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 48.

class.<sup>211</sup> Begun in 1887, Booth's survey would take fifteen years, and produce seventeen volumes. The Booth Survey aimed to investigate every street and alley in London. Social investigators and reformers who cut their teeth on the Booth enquiry included Beatrice Potter, Octavia Hill, Hubert Llewellyn Smith, David Schloss and Clara Collet. The Booth survey recruited case workers from the COS but the purpose was very different: this was not a philanthropic organisation using case-work to ascertain worthiness of charitable support (indeed, Booth was an advocate of the state provision of relief and for the state pension), but a sociological study of the character and degree of poverty in the East End of the London capital. Set up as a survey to challenge the socialist claim that twenty five per cent of Londoners lived in extreme deprivation, its findings revealed greater levels of poverty than anyone had previously thought. The survey marks the transition from philanthropy to sociological study and its investigators were involved with the collection of statistical data to determine more accurately the level of need.

Collet worked on the Booth survey between 1888 and 1892, during which time she collated vast numbers of statistics on women's industries, including milliners, dressmakers, shirt-makers and artificial flower workers.<sup>212</sup> Collet's own interest and involvement in the area of statistics and data evidence collation developed from this period. She now had a background in economics (her MA was in political economy), she was a member of the Royal Statistical Society and was continuing to hone her research skills. The Booth survey, as Roger Davidson has shown, with its emphasis on empirical investigation, influenced its young investigators and provided them with statistical expertise that Schloss, Llewellyn Smith and Collet took with them to the Labour Department in the early 1890s.<sup>213</sup> Much of Collet's work was also used in her reports to the Royal Commission of Labour (1892) on conditions in women's industries.<sup>214</sup> However, Collet remained judgemental, as her remark on women working in the box trade illustrates: 'Many women, I am convinced, only take the work in order to make an appearance of industry, and so qualify themselves for charitable

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<sup>211</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London [1]*, first published, 1902, ([www.General-Books.net](http://www.General-Books.net), 2009), p. 1.

<sup>212</sup> London School of Economics Library, Charles Booth Online Archive, A20.

<sup>213</sup> Roger Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 119-120. See also, Rosemary O'Day and David Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's Enquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London Reconsidered*, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993), pp.16-17.

<sup>214</sup> For example, LSE, Charles Booth Online Archive, B110, p. 67, B110, pp.62-63.

assistance'.<sup>215</sup> This implicit critique of the effects of the working classes themselves on the ethos of the COS led her, with others to believe in state intervention into the lives of the poor as a right. She also wrote warmly and with humour about the people she met in the course of her investigation, many of whom preferred work to charity well into old age: 'One delightful old woman, seventy seven years of age, began shirt making at the early age of sixty eight'.<sup>216</sup>

Collet was living in Whitechapel during the period of her investigation for the Booth Enquiry, at the time of the Ripper murders. How she became involved with Booth's investigation is not clear but Collet, Booth and Llewellyn Smith were all members of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS).<sup>217</sup> Collet later described Booth as a ship-owner for whom the wretched conditions of the dock labourers were a problem for which he felt personally responsible.<sup>218</sup> In 1886 Booth read his first paper to the RSS, 'Occupations of the People of the United Kingdom, 1801-81, where he criticised the statistics drawn from the Census as misleading, and proposed for his enquiry, to make use of all available information, through a system of cross verification to provide a more accurate view of society.<sup>219</sup> He began collecting a staff of collaborators from the RSS and the COS.<sup>220</sup> Simey has argued that Booth required a depth of insight only obtained through a balance between personal examination and statistical measurement, gaining insight from the former and accuracy from the latter; that he was the founder of empirical sociology.<sup>221</sup> Writing in 1927, Collet summarised Booth's precise methodology and emphasised that, after her own long experience within the civil service, most of his work could never have been carried out in a government enquiry. She argued that the expenditure for such a vast statistical record of the degrees of poverty would never have survived departmental censure.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London, First Series: Poverty 4*, assisted by David Schloss, Clara Collet and Beatrice Potter, (London: Macmillan, 1902), p.281.

<sup>216</sup> Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London, First Series: Poverty 4*, p.263.

<sup>217</sup> Deborah McDonald, *Clara Collet, 1860-1948: An Educated Working Woman*, (London: Woburn Press, 2004), p.68-69. Booth was President of the RSS between 1892 and 1894.

<sup>218</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Charles Booth, The Denison Club and H. Llewellyn Smith', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 108, No. ¾ (1945), p. 482.

<sup>219</sup> T.S. Simey and M.B. Simey, *Charles Booth: Social Scientist*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 78.

<sup>220</sup> Collet, 'Charles Booth, The Denison Club and H. Llewellyn Smith', p. 483.

<sup>221</sup> Simey and Simey, p. 4.

<sup>222</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Some Recollections of Charles Booth', in *Social Services Review*, 1:1/4 (1927: Mar./Dec.) p. 384-385.

By 1890, Collet was beginning to weary of investigative work with which she was occupied with both in the COS and the Booth enquiry. She had begun to write her diary again, after a four year break, and although she had previously enjoyed the contact with people that she would not normally have encountered socially, a sense of dissatisfaction with the work runs through her entries. Not only was there no monetary reward but there is also the sense that she needed to branch out and find an area in which she might achieve personal success.<sup>223</sup> Collet felt that she had 'burnt her ships' in leaving teaching in search of higher education and social research and doubted whether she should have done so.<sup>224</sup> She was now living with her sister, Edith, who was teaching at the North London Collegiate School, where she spent the whole of her working life.<sup>225</sup> Collet felt that Edith's life was more meaningful than her own and that success was eluding her. She wrote, 'I am a visitor everywhere and at home nowhere'.<sup>226</sup>

However, this further period of personal and intellectual uncertainty and self-questioning lead Collet to the civil service. A chance encounter with Henry Higgs, a fellow economist and her contemporary at University College, in a bread shop opposite the British Museum where she worked in the reading room, opened a long conversation.<sup>227</sup> Apparently, they had never spoken until this point but Higgs had been asked for Collet's address by their former tutor, Professor Francis Edgeworth, the statistician and economist, who wanted to thank Collet for an article she had written for the Charity Organisation Review the preceding year, hence this encounter<sup>228</sup> During the conversation, Collet learned Higgs had been lecturing at Toynbee Hall for the past four years and had written an article for the Quarterly Journal of Economics for which he had been paid twenty pounds. He was pleased with the sum and Collet was impressed

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<sup>223</sup> MSS/29/8/1/52.

<sup>224</sup> MSS.29/8/1/52.

<sup>225</sup> North London Collegiate School, p.87.

<sup>226</sup> MSS/29/8/1/54.

<sup>227</sup> Henry Higgs was an economist and a civil servant. He was a colleague of Collet's and their common interests will be discussed in Chapter 3. This shop was opposite the British Library reading room.

<sup>228</sup> Clara Collet, 'Maria Edgeworth and Charity', in *The Charity Organisation Review*, Vol. 5, No.59, November 1889, pp.418-424. Collet had written on the novelist, Maria Edgeworth, who was an aunt of Francis Edgeworth. The article was an analysis of charitable giving Maria Edgeworth's considered charitable donation, drawing on her work to support the views of the COS.

with the possibilities for her to earn money in a similar way, as money was a worry to her.<sup>229</sup>

The introspection of early 1890 lifted and was replaced with a lighter tone. Having renewed her contact with Francis Edgeworth, they became friends and she was invited to join his walking party and on 15<sup>th</sup> May joined a walk in St Albans, together with Sophie Bryant, among others. At the same time she was invited to dinner by Higgs and to attend one of his lectures afterwards. After a gap of six months, she took up her pen again on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1890. By this time she had completed an investigation of the Ashby-de-la-Zouch workhouse; was just starting to write on elementary scholars in high schools; had given five lectures at Toynbee Hall in the absence of Mr Higgs; given a lecture on the COS to the North London Collegiate School and written 'Moral Tales' for the South Place Ethical Society. Furthermore, she had been elected a vice-president of Toynbee Hall Economic Club and had been asked to go again to the Association of Assistant Mistresses committee. She was also in the process of writing two articles for the Political Economic Dictionary. The diary was resumed in a different tone: less contemplative and more satisfied, reflecting a lively and full life, both socially and intellectually. The walking group had obviously been a success as Collet had joined them on several occasions.

In 1892, when she was 31, Collet was appointed as an Assistant Lady Commissioner to the Royal Commission on Labour (RCL), 1891-1894. May Abraham, Eliza Orme and Margaret Irwin were appointed at the same time. An article appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in April 1892, making it clear that the commission, with a remit to investigate all labour, including that of women, could not function efficiently without experienced women serving on it:

When the Labour Commission was appointed last summer an effort was made to induce the Government to add the names of a few women to the list of men composing the Commission. The effort failed, the proposal being too revolutionary for a Tory Government. But scarcely had the Commission been six months in existence before it discovered that it could not properly get through its work without assistance of women.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> MSS/29/8/1/52.

<sup>230</sup> 'The Lady Labour Commissioners', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 April 1892, Issue 8442.

Eliza Orme (1848-1937), the senior woman commissioner, was a social campaigner and lawyer. She, like Collet, had attended Bedford College and went to University College, London to study law and political economy in 1871. She gained an LLB in 1888, from the University of London. She was also an active supporter of women's suffrage and the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women. Margaret Irwin (1858-1940) was a women's labour activist and was organiser of the Scottish branch of the Women's Protective and Provident League. She was also active in the suffrage movement and campaigning for women's rights in the workplace. May Abraham was, of course, to be one of the first two women factory inspectors. Experienced and dynamic women, the assistant commissioners had social research into the position of women in industry in common. The RCL further honed those skills and all four women spent their working lives investigating and seeking to improve industrial conditions for women. Both Collet and Abraham entered the civil service after working for the RCL.

We know more about Clara Collet, her motivations, everyday life, friendships and feelings through her diary which above all enables us to follow her route through the educational process, than is possible with other members of this group. Adelaide Anderson and Lucy Deane wrote business diaries. These are a valuable source on their professional life with some snippets of information about home circumstances. Lucy Deane, for example, records her gynaecological problems and her menstrual cycle, using a series of crosses, the code employed by women for decades. She refers to herself as 'seedy' very often at these times, so appeared to suffer quite severely from menstrual cramps. Both Anderson's and Deane's accounts of work in the factory inspectorate will be discussed in chapters four and five but since Anderson's diary does disclose something of her earlier working life, it is included here.

Adelaide Anderson (1863-1936) was the eldest daughter of a Scottish shipbroker, and the niece, by marriage, of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. She had left Girton in 1887 with a moral sciences degree and began to lecture on philosophy and economics for the Women's Co-operative Guild, in London. Founded in 1883, the Guild was one of the first organisations for working class women. It became a valuable platform for women's rights as well as a means of personal and collective development.<sup>231</sup> Anderson's series of six lectures included the nature of wealth and the agents of production; labour and

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<sup>231</sup> Jean Gaffin and David Thoms, *Caring and Sharing, The Centenary History of the Co-operative Women's Guild*, (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd, 1983), p. 1.

land, the first two requisites of production; the organisation of industry and the advantages of production on a large scale; the differences between the laws of production and the laws of distribution; unskilled and skilled labour and the influence of trades' unions on wages, including co-operation and industrial partnership.<sup>232</sup> In the summer of 1889, she was approached by the journalist and Girton graduate, Rosalind Shore Smith, to give some elementary lectures on some economic subjects at Toynbee Hall, to an audience of working women and members of the Women's Co-operative Guild.<sup>233</sup> In the spring of (probably) 1890, Anderson also gave a series of six lectures at Hampstead Library, on the English Moralists, including Hobbes, Locke and J.S.Mill, as well as the contemporary ethical theories of Herbert Spenser and T.H.Green.<sup>234</sup> But it was women's labour on which Anderson was to focus her attention.

Anderson was appointed a clerk on the staff of the Royal Commission on Labour in 1892 and worked for the RCL for two years. She wrote in her memoir that pressure to employ women to investigate women's industrial conditions had reached a turning point between 1891 and 1892, when the RCL appointed four women assistant commissioners (see above). Furthermore, one of the two secretaries to the commission, Geoffrey Drage, employed university women as clerks.<sup>235</sup> In a supervisory role, Anderson wrote in her diary on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1893 that she had discussed with Miss Tracey (Anna Tracey, a future factory inspector), memoranda written on Foreign Labour and Sweating, and on 16<sup>th</sup> January, that she explained the Trade Index to Miss E Hogarth and corrected Miss Macaulay's précis. It was Drage with whom she discussed this work and the corrections she had been making, so it appeared that she worked directly under him, but that other clerks, presumably also university graduates, were advised by her.<sup>236</sup>

Anderson was keen to obtain an interview with Charles Booth during 1893, when working for the RCL. This was about the possibility of joining his team of investigators, and she had an interview with Clara Collet to this end, which apparently took place on a bus! Anderson wrote on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 'Met Miss Collet in omnibus from Parliament Street

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<sup>232</sup> 7AMA/A/05.

<sup>233</sup> Rosalind Shore Smith wrote on suffrage and labour issues and was also a member of the Women's Co-operative Guild.

<sup>234</sup> 7AMA/A/05.

<sup>235</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 9.

<sup>236</sup> 7AMA/B/01.

to Charing Cross. She spoke of Home Office Inspectorships, termination of Labour Commission and work offered to me in connexion with Mr. Booth's enquiry.<sup>237</sup> The connection between the two women would be a useful one for Anderson, as Collet was not only employed as an assistant commissioner but also had worked on Booth's enquiry until 1892. On 10<sup>th</sup> March she had an interview with Drage about Collet's communications and three days later she sent a memo to Drage on Collet's overtures about Board of Trade clerkships. Anderson was obviously looking for alternative employment on the termination of her work with the RCL, and she had explored several routes with Collet. There is no record of her having joined the investigators on the Booth enquiry, although she was undoubtedly considering it. She remained with the RCL for the rest of that year, discussing questions on women's labour and its relations to the socialist movement with Drage on 17<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>238</sup> However, the idea of Home Office inspectorships had been suggested by Clara Collet and this may have been the first time she had considered it. By December 1893, Anderson had decided to leave her position as a clerk with the RCL and she spoke to Drage about fixing a date for leaving. His advice was to go when she pleased, because there was no certainty of the duration of her appointment with the RCL.<sup>239</sup> The first two women factory inspectors, May Abraham and Mary Paterson had been appointed in 1893. Anderson had experience and was well qualified for such a position: in 1894, she began her career as a factory inspector, joining the inspectorate shortly after Lucy Deane. She was the fourth woman inspector to be appointed.

We have no such personal information about the other women in this study, although Hilda Martindale's sister Louisa has left some insight into Hilda's development and Hilda herself has described the way in which her mother was the guiding influence on both of her daughters.<sup>240</sup> Their career choices were heavily influenced by their mother, although their specific interests seem to be very much their own. There are no further diaries extant which reveal anything of the women at a young age. However, something is known of their career routes and there are conclusions that may be drawn from these. Frances Durham (1873-1948), after a bright career at Girton, left in 1896 to study palaeography. At the same time, she began working for the Women's University

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<sup>237</sup> 7AMA/B/01.

<sup>238</sup> 7AMA/B/01.

<sup>239</sup> 7AMA/B/01.

<sup>240</sup> Hilda Martindale, *From One Generation To Another, 1839-1944*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1944), pp. 9-56.

Settlement in Southwark. We have no records as to the motivation here but, having made this move, by 1901, the census records find her in a convalescent home on the Isle of Wight. The Hygeia Nursing Home for invalids was in Ventnor, run by a Miss Armstrong. Frances Durham, giving her parents' home address of Aldwick in Sussex, was a patient.<sup>241</sup> It is known that such recuperation was sometimes necessary for women working in the Southwark Settlement. The settlement minute book records the absence of another worker on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1900, who had contracted scarlet fever. Whilst this resident was away, the room was disinfected and repapered at the expense of the resident.<sup>242</sup> It is possible that Durham was at the Hygeia to recuperate from one of the diseases known to affect some of the Settlement workers, like scarlet fever, but no evidence is in the minute book of Durham's absence. She was certainly back at the settlement by November 1902, because the Registry and Apprenticeship Committee was established and the work was being done by Miss Durham and a Miss Jean Stevenson.<sup>243</sup>

Lucy Deane (1865-1950) and Rose Squire (1861-1938) entered the factory inspectorate through the Kensington Vestry, Deane in 1894 and Squire the following year. Both Squire and Deane had trained as lecturers in first aid, hygiene and nursing and gained diplomas through the National Health Society. Both women had become lecturers for the society in London and Deane was a member of the Women's Trade Union League.<sup>244</sup> The National Health Society was twenty years old when Ernest Hart, the medical journalist and chairman of the society's council, summarised its work in 1893. The society's formation was, he said, thanks to the energies of a group of philanthropic women whose aim was to advance the sanitary laws as a way of preventing the spread of disease. At first they organised lectures in men's clubs and at mothers' meetings and had steadily built up the scope of its work since its inception. By 1893, it had offices in Berners Street, near Oxford Street, where lectures were held and practical demonstrations given. It awarded certificates for women who were successful in examinations and published pamphlets on subjects like 'The Management of Infants' and 'How to Prevent and Oppose Cholera'. By 1891, it was recognised by County Councils all over the country, and lecturers were sent out to towns and villages,

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<sup>241</sup> Census 1901.

<sup>242</sup> The Women's Library Special Collections Catalogue, 5/WUS/3, minute book Vol. III. Clara Collet was also an active committee member until her resignation in 1903, through pressure of work.

<sup>243</sup> 5/WUS/3, minute book Vol. III, entry for November 7<sup>th</sup> 1902.

<sup>244</sup> McFeely, p. 23 and p.41.

lectures being given free of charge to the poor.<sup>245</sup> Both Rose Squire and Lucy Deane were involved in this programme.

Mary Paterson (1864-1941) returned to Scotland where she developed her interest in the experiences of women in the workplace after completing her travels with her uncle, where they had visited industrial areas in the United States and Canada in the late 1880s. Paterson, the daughter of Scottish businessman had been one of the first women students at Queen Margaret College in Glasgow, before her travels. On her return she also did charitable work with women and girls, organising health education classes. She was appointed a factory inspector alongside May Abraham in May 1893.<sup>246</sup>

Mona Wilson (1872-1954) shared her father's interest in industrial conditions and social investigation in Bristol. Leaving Newnham in 1896 aged twenty four, she joined the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) as secretary in 1899. Here, she worked alongside Emilia Dilke and through her she would have met both Lucy Deane and May Tennant (Abraham). May Tennant wrote the preface to her book, *Our Industrial Laws*, issued by the Industrial Law Committee in 1899.<sup>247</sup> Wilson was also secretary of the Women's Industrial Law Committee, holding both positions until 1902. She investigated social conditions in Dundee and West Ham from 1904-1906, and wrote, with Edward Goldie Howarth, *West Ham, A Study in Social and Industrial Problems*, in 1907.<sup>248</sup> Wilson was the first woman Health Insurance Commissioner from 1911-1919.<sup>249</sup>

This group are representative of a growing number of women: they are the products of early feminist ideals, an excellent education and strong motivation as social investigators and reformers. Despite pressure from the unions, and union activists like Emma Paterson (1848-1886), who was instrumental in the foundation of the Women's Trade Union League and had campaigned for a women's factory inspectorate over many years, it had taken a long time for the need for women factory inspectors to be recognised. Emma Paterson's intention was that it should be working women who

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<sup>245</sup> Ernest Hart, 'Objects of the National Health Society of London', *Public Health Papers and Reports*, 1893, Volume 19, pp. 71-73.

<sup>246</sup> McFeely, p. 15.

<sup>247</sup> Mona Wilson, *Our Industrial Laws, Working Women in Factories, Workshops, Shops and Laundries, and How to Help Them*, (London: Duckworth & Co., 1899).

<sup>248</sup> Edward G. Howarth, M.A. and Mona Wilson, *West Ham, A Study in Social and Industrial Problems, Being the Report of the Outer London Inquiry Committee*, (London: J.M. Dent & Company, 1907).

<sup>249</sup> Newnham College Register, p. 118.

would be selected. However, it was middle-class, educated women with a proven track record in industrial conditions for women who were eventually appointed from 1893. So what gave this group of middle-class women the expertise to do it? All had developed an interest in the conditions for women both at home and in the workplace. The only exception to this was Isabel Taylor, but she had compiled a bibliography of unemployment, a related field in 1909, just prior to joining the inspectorate. They had developed similar interests, through the COS, the RCL, the Booth Enquiry, the Women's University Settlements, the Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Co-operative Guild. These women had the specific training and expertise in women's industrial issues Anthony Mundella, Llewellyn Smith, Geoffrey Drage and Charles Booth were all among their supporters. The group were powerful candidates for branches of the civil service like the Board of Trade and the Factory Inspectorate, at a time when there was a growing recognition that women had a future in the civil service if it was to be effective.

There is also, inherent in their diaries and memoirs, a sense of determination and of adventure: these were feisty and assertive women who made the transition from Victorian philanthropy and gentility to the modern world of state provision, education and employment for women. Although none came from the shop-floor, or unskilled work, or homes of the poor, some, like Collet, needed to earn money; so did Rose Squire and, to an extent Lucy Deane, whose father had died in India and left the family in more straitened circumstances, although she and her sister Hyacinth had some monies if their own.<sup>250</sup> Many women of the middle classes, the daughters of professional and business men, like Clara Collet, Rose Squire or Adelaide Anderson; the daughters of clergymen, like Mona Wilson; the empire-serving officer classes like Lucy Deane, needed to earn money: 'But changes come to the most secure and sheltered lives', Rose Squire wrote 'and at thirty-two I was seeking a career and a livelihood'. She had already been involved in philanthropic work merely through social class but she had not been educated sufficiently for teaching and the alternative was: 'the dreadful dullness of a "companion's" lot.'<sup>251</sup> Had money not been an issue with Collet, it might have meant that that she would have continued with her writing and her committees alone, of which there were many. Concern about financial security appears

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<sup>250</sup> Rose E. Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service*, (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1927), p. 18; MSS. 69/1/15.

<sup>251</sup> Squire, pp. 17-18.

frequently in her diary at this early period, when she had rejected teaching and was beginning to develop the expertise that would equip her for a career in the civil service. She had begun working with Charles Booth alongside Beatrice Webb (then Beatrice Potter) and there were similarities of interest and personality in both women: both were acerbic and less philanthropic in their approach to investigation but more interested in the collation of evidence and analysis: they were less social workers than social analysts. Indeed through these women's working lives, we can trace the development of social welfare, the shift from provision of need according to moral worth to social provision as a right of citizenship.

For some, then, family circumstances led them to paid employment. Most did not marry. The exception was May Abraham who, on the birth of her first child, left paid employment. However, she continued to be active in the field for the rest of her life. Lucy Deane eventually married an old family friend, Granville Streatfeild, in 1911, but this was after she had retired from the inspectorate in 1906, through ill health. She too, remained active in a voluntary capacity for many years and both she and Mary Paterson were two of the first women to become Justices of the Peace. For both Mary Paterson and Mona Wilson, family interests in industrial conditions led them towards the investigation of conditions for women in industry, whilst for Clara Collet, Adelaide Anderson and Hilda Martindale, a background of strong female role models was also influential. For all of these women, marriage was not a life choice whereby one moved from the parental home to that of the husband. These women would be pioneers, not only in their part in the development of the civil service as a career for women but also as part of a larger movement, forging a viable and attractive professional path for educated women. At the same time they hoped to transform the conditions of the less socially and economically privileged. Their social class, education and disposition as well as friendships gave them access to this path: the way in which they utilised these opportunities to negotiate the workplace and entrench their position will be discussed in the next chapters.

## Chapter Three.

### An Efficient Woman: the work of Clara Collet.

**Make us efficient workers, able to earn our living in order that we may be good, useful, healthy, self-respecting women.** *Charlotte Brontë: 'Shirley', 1849.*

Clara Collet was a formidable woman: one of the first generation of female graduates, assertive and ambitious. Her great niece, Jane Miller, remembered her as having 'chilly ways' and a photograph of her in later life reveals a stout woman with a direct and rather stony gaze into the camera.<sup>252</sup> Collet was thirty three, with an MA in political economy and a background in social investigation when she was appointed labour correspondent to the Board of Trade in 1893 and she spent most of her working life there. In 1903 she was promoted to senior investigator for women's industries, a new post. She was the first woman to achieve such a position. When the Board of Trade became the Ministry of Labour in 1917, she retained the same position in that department until her retirement in 1920. A highly esteemed economist and statistician, an acknowledged expert on women in industry, Collet also wrote widely on the economic position of middle-class professional women like herself: on marriage, pay parity and the age limits imposed on qualified women in the workplace, issues for which she and her generation of feminist industrial investigators and activists laid the intellectual foundations and which still resonate today.

This chapter will explore Collet's work as an economist and as a statistician, as well as her advocacy and promotion of women in industry and the professions. It will examine Collet's appointment as an Assistant Lady Commissioner with the Royal Commission on Labour in 1892 and her subsequent work at the Board of Trade. It will provide an overview of the breadth and depth of Collet's work between 1893 and her retirement in 1920 and demonstrate the importance of this work in terms of providing the statistical

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<sup>252</sup> Jane Miller, *Relations*, (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 105.

data needed to inform legislative change. It will explore the investigations undertaken by Collet, both as an individual and in her role as a labour correspondent and later as senior investigator, as she documented shifting patterns of employment and the impact of outside employment on the domestic setting and the resulting anxiety regarding the health of both mothers and their children, a significant concern in late Victorian Britain.

Collet negotiated uncharted waters. She worked as a professional equal with male as well as women colleagues; her knowledge and experience of working women's conditions of work was unrivalled. What was the personality of a woman who held a senior position in the civil service for thirty years exercising unprecedented authority? Chapter one looked at the philanthropic and feminist movements which nurtured women's education and offered them opportunities for social work; chapter two explained the family backgrounds and histories from which the first women civil servants came. Both this chapter and the following two will focus on individual contributions to the professions whilst considering this influential group of women's lasting contribution to the civil service and to the women's movements: their professional legacy.

The quotation from *Shirley* (above) appeared at the end of Collet's book of essays *Educated Working Women*, published in 1902.<sup>253</sup> It had been included in a paper written in 1900 reflecting on the economic progress of women during the previous fifty years and first published in the Frances Mary Buss Schools' Jubilee Magazine. The paper had discussed the place of marriage in a woman's life and the need for many women in the middle classes to earn a reasonable income: issues to which Collet would often return in her writing. Brontë's high-minded aspiration, written fifty years earlier inspired Collet and her generation. Collet had been a pupil at the North London Collegiate School, where Frances Buss was the headmistress, and by writing for the school magazine, Collet deliberately aimed for a readership of young women and their parents encouraging them with the prospect of a more satisfying and purposeful future:

More and more it is being recognised by parents that girls should be fitted to be self-supporting; and the tendency among the girls themselves is to concentrate their energies on the profession they take up, and to regard marriage as a possibility

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<sup>253</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *Educated Working Women: Essays on the Economic Position of Women Workers in the Middle Classes*, (London: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1902), p. 137.

which may some day call them away from the path they are pursuing, but which should not be allowed to interfere with their plans in the meantime.<sup>254</sup>

By 1900 Collet might indeed have felt herself to be Brontë's efficient and self-respecting woman and a suitable role model for her young readers.

### 1. A background in economics.

In 1890, Clara Collet was twenty nine years old. She had been working as a social investigator for Charles Booth on *Life and Labour* since 1888, working for the Charity Organisation Society (COS) and contributing to journals on women's industrial issues (see previous chapter). In June of that year, she had initiated the move to organize the Junior Economic Club in London, as a forum for economic debate. In the 1880s, political economy, particularly at Oxford and Cambridge, was part of the required education for the governing classes. A contributory field within history and philosophy, not until between 1890 and 1915 did economics emerge as an independent discipline in its own right. Post-war scholarship had represented this period as 'a watershed dividing the predominately amateur tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from World War 1, when the professionalism of economics began to gather momentum.'<sup>255</sup> Such an assumption has latterly been challenged, and it is evident that there was a sense of energy and dynamism reflected in the foundation of the Junior Economic Club and the British Economic Association founded slightly later that same year.<sup>256</sup> Clara Collet's contribution to that vitality was substantial.

The origin of economics as an independent discipline is located in the work of the 'father' of modern economics, Adam Smith, 1723-1790. However, a significant group of early economists were women, as Dorothy Lampen Thompson has shown, and their contribution to the subject was significant particularly as their influence was felt by the

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<sup>254</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 138.

<sup>255</sup> A. W. Coats and S. E. Coats, 'The Social Composition of the Royal Economic Society and the Beginnings of the British Economics "Profession", 1890-1915', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 21, No.1 (Mar., 1970), p.75, and A. W. Coats and S. E. Coats, 'The Changing Social Composition of the Royal Economic Society 1890-1960 and the Professionalization of British Economics', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Jun., 1973), p. 165.

<sup>256</sup> Alon Kadish and Richard D. Freeman, 'Foundation and Early Years', in John D. Hey and Donald Winch, eds., *A Century of Economics: 100 Years of the Royal Economic Society and the Economic Journal*, (Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 22.

subsequent generation who developed and synthesised their ideas.<sup>257</sup> However, it was the classical economist John Stuart Mill, 1806-1873 who paid closest attention to the feminist causes in his work and who had the most direct influence on the next generations of women. Mill did not delineate the roles of men and women in circumscribed terms but rather argued that the very subjection of one sex to another is inherently wrong: 'The social subordination of women thus stands out an isolated fact in modern social institutions.'<sup>258</sup> Working for much of the time with Harriet Taylor, 1807-1858, whom he met in 1831 and married in 1851, his ideas on equality are unequivocal. *The Subjection of Women*, published in 1869, is a searing indictment of the position of women in society.<sup>259</sup> Comparative images to slavery appear throughout and indeed, in the second chapter, Mill refers to the laws of marriage, in extreme circumstances, as being nothing less than complicity in legalised rape.<sup>260</sup> It is in chapter three however, that Mill addressed the question of the exclusion of women from political rights, education and the professions:

The utmost that can be said is, that there are many things which none of them have succeeded in doing as well as they have been done by some men – many in which they have not reached the very highest rank. But there are extremely few, dependent only upon mental faculties, in which they have not attained the rank next to the highest. Is not this enough, and much more than enough, to make it a tyranny to them, and a detriment to society, that they should not be allowed to compete with men for the exercise of these functions? Is it not mere truism to say, that such functions are often filled by men far less fit for them than numbers of women in any fair field of competition?<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Dorothy Lampen Thompson, *Adam Smith's Daughters*, (New York: Exposition Press, Inc., 1973). See also: Jane Rendall, *Women in an Industrialising Society: England 1750-1880*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990); Sally Alexander, *Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century London, A Study of the Years 1820-50*, (London: The Journeyman Press Ltd.), pp 7-8; Michèle A. Pujol, *Feminism and Anti-feminism in Early Economic Thought*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1992); Michèle Pujol, 'The feminist economic thought of Harriet Taylor', in Mary Ann Dimand, Robert W. Dimand, Evelyn L. Forget, eds, *Women of Value, Feminist Essays on the History of Women in Economics*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1995); Susan Moller Okin, 'Editor's Introduction' in *The Subjection of Women*, pp.v-xiv.

<sup>258</sup> John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1988), pp 20-21.

<sup>259</sup> Although published in 1869, it was actually written in 1861, but was kept back its publication could be most useful.

<sup>260</sup> Mill, p. 33.

<sup>261</sup> Mill, pp. 54-55.

However, it was Barbara Bodichon 1827-1891, whose impact in the field of feminist political economy was the most pertinent to the women in this thesis, and that of the women of Langham Place. Whilst their importance in raising the consciousness on all aspects of the women's movements is well known, they were particularly important in promoting economic independence for women. Here, the most significant contributor to the debate was Bodichon who argued vociferously for the inclusion of women in the professions:

Again we hear cries that the world is gone wrong for want of women, that moral progress cannot be made without their help; that Science wants the light of their delicate perceptions; that Moral Philosophy wants the light of their particular point of view; Political Economy, their directness of judgement and sympathy with the commonalty; Government the help of their power in organising; and Philanthropy, their delicate tact.....

One great corresponding cry rises from a suffering multitude of women, saying, "We want work."<sup>262</sup>

Addressing this tract to all those who work with their hands and their heads, Bodichon argued that they were by far the largest group and the most responsible for the failure to prepare their daughters for work. Her argument was one to which Collet returned on several occasions in *Educated Working Women*, where she argued that women's education would be raised by greater parental demand for equality in educational provision for their daughters, and also greater parental consideration in their daughters' futures.<sup>263</sup>

Bodichon and the women of Langham Place argued that women should have the same economic freedoms as those of men. They were supporters of John Stuart Mill's parliamentary campaign in 1865 and as a founding member of the Kensington Society, Bodichon was instrumental, alongside Helen Taylor, Harriet Taylor's daughter and Mill's step-daughter and others, with gathering signatures for a petition to Parliament in support of the franchise for women and Mill's amendment to the Suffrage Bill in 1867, to replace the word 'men' with 'person'. A generation later, Clara Collet was developing and synthesising many of these arguments.

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<sup>262</sup> Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, 'Women and Work', in *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group*, Candida Ann Lacey, ed., (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1986), p. 57.

<sup>263</sup> Clara Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 8 and p. 18.

In 1890, Collet initiated the Junior Economic Club, a group of young economists who had trained under the economist and statistician Herbert Foxwell in London. The first meeting was held at the Denison Club that June and early committee members included the economist Francis Edgeworth, the feminist and economist Ada Heather-Bigg, Ernest Aves, who had worked with Collet on the Booth Survey, Hubert Llewellyn Smith, who had also worked alongside her and Henry Higgs, a fellow student in political economy from UCL as well as Collet herself. Debates and discussion at these early meetings included Charles Booth's work in progress; the economist, Alfred Marshall's discussed his work on family statistics and, according to Sidney Webb, Fabian and social investigator, there was 'an evening over Industrial Democracy'.<sup>264</sup>

Collet recalled the origins of the Junior Club in a note at the end of her obituary to Henry Higgs in 1940. She quoted from a letter Higgs wrote to Professor Foxwell on the founding of the club:

*29 June 1890.* You will see from the enclosed letter that your old pupil, Miss Collet, is anxious to form a little London group of students in Social Science. She thinks that University College in particular ought to furnish a band of progressive economists who have had the blessing of a training under you. I hinted to her that the junior ought not to be born before the senior. But she thinks that the two bodies would have neither common aims nor common members; and with the usual impulsiveness of women she is convening meeting of students next Friday.<sup>265</sup>

In fact, Higgs had had a point: the British Economic Association, founded later that same year, was the 'senior' organisation and the two societies did have a great number of members in common.

Collet was a great 'joiner' and her name is linked with many clubs and societies from the late 1880s. In November 1890, she noted in her diary that she had also been elected a Vice-President of the Toynbee Economic Club, formed to promote a greater study of economics amongst the students at Toynbee Hall.<sup>266</sup> She was a founding member of the British Economic Association, (BEA, later the Royal Economic Society), and an active member of the Royal Statistical Society. Present at the inaugural meeting

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<sup>264</sup> Rosemary O'Day and David Englander, *Mr. Charles Booth's Enquiry, Life and Labour of the People in London Reconsidered*, (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>265</sup> Clara E. Collet and Charles K. Webster, 'Obituary', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 200 (Dec., 1940), p. 558.

<sup>266</sup> Warwick University, Modern Records Office, COL, MSS. 29/8/1/55.

of the BEA were many of those Collet counted as friends or colleagues: Ernest Aves, Charles Booth, Sophie Bryant, Professor Francis Edgeworth, Professor Herbert Foxwell, Henry Higgs, David Schloss and Hubert Llewellyn Smith. Several had also been members of the Junior Economic Club. Collet contributed to the second volume of the new *Economic Journal* in June, 1891.<sup>267</sup> Clara Collet, both in this way, and in her work in the statistical comprehension of women's employment, her empirical observations on feminist issues concerning women in industry, was a driving force behind the move to professionalise the field of economics in the latter years of the nineteenth century.

P.D. Groenewegen has referred to Collet in *Feminism and Political Economy in Victorian England* as 'a neglected daughter of Adam Smith'.<sup>268</sup> Inexplicably recent scholarship has also failed to redress the balance and examine Collet's contribution.<sup>269</sup> Collet devoted her professional working life to improving opportunities for working women and Groenewegen raised the valid question as to why this work has been neglected in historical research.<sup>270</sup> Groenewegen argued that Collet was acknowledged by contemporary opinion to be *the* expert on aspects of women's work and wages, which she always treated from a woman's perspective and the outlook of a single professional.<sup>271</sup> Collet's work has been overlooked until recently, therefore a detailed reconstruction of her work, her research and analysis of women and work and her contribution to the establishment of economics as a discipline is an essential part of this thesis. In this period of economic dynamism, and the expansion of the social sciences, where the concepts of collective responsibility and state action were

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<sup>267</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour on Working Women', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Jun., 1891), pp. 398-405.

<sup>268</sup> P.D. Groenewegen, *Feminism and Political Economy in Victorian England*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 1994), Chapter 6. The reference is to Dorothy Lampeen Thomson, *Adam Smith's Daughters*, (New York: Exposition Press, 1973), in which her six subjects are Jane Marcet, Harriet Martineau, Millicent Fawcett, Rosa Luxembourg, Beatrice Webb and Joan Robinson. All of these had contributed to economic science, and had been recognised by their contemporaries and by subsequent generations. So, Groenewegen argued, has Clara Collet.

<sup>269</sup> See, for example, Michèle A. Pujol, *Feminism and Anti-Feminism in Early Economic Thought*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1992) and James P. Henderson, 'Women's wage rates and total earnings: two early scientific studies' in Mary Ann Dimand, Robert W. Dimand and Evelyn L. Forget, eds., *Women of Value, Feminist Essays on the History of Women in Economics*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1995), which looks at early contributors, including Mary Paley Marshall, but does not include Collet;

<sup>270</sup> P. D. Groenewegen, p. 22-23.

<sup>271</sup> P. D. Groenewegen, p. 3.

determining social reform, she brought the concern of the women's movement within that framework. Her work was focused on the collation of statistical evidence, a new skill that gained profound respect among the rapidly increasing social sciences, and was highly valued by practitioners. She highlighted the discrimination suffered by single women and their relegation under the term 'surplus', arguing that society should rather extol their efforts and realize the benefits that their expertise could bring to the labour market.<sup>272</sup> The value of her book, *Educated Working Women* is the unique insight into the contemporary difficulties encountered by professional working women. She knew the predicaments faced by women at this period, who were unable or not willing to marry and who were dependent on their own efforts for their income but Collet's expertise allows her to give the reader a much broader account of women's circumstances and employment than that of the purely personal. The young Clara Collet, reading Mill on October 9<sup>th</sup> 1876 aged sixteen, wrote in her diary: 'Read some J.S. Mill; he is dull and no mistake.'<sup>273</sup> Yet it would be Collet who would develop many of the questions discussed first in *The Subjection of Women*. As middle-class women began to enter the professions, Collet was the only economist to address the issues of the consequences of their employment in any real depth, and her work still has resonance today.

**2. Economic independence: there is no hardship in women working for a living, the hardship lies in not getting a living when they work for it.<sup>274</sup>**

Collet's *Educated Working Women: Essays on the Economic Position of Women Workers in the Middle Classes*, was written in the ten years between 1890, when she was thirty and 1900. The collection appeared in 1902, shortly before her appointment as senior investigator for women's industries. Collet referred to herself with obvious pride as 'Fellow of University College, London' on the title page. In 1896, she had been the first woman to be appointed a fellow, a remarkable achievement. In the same year she had gained her MA and won the Joseph Hume scholarship jointly with Henry Higgs.<sup>275</sup> This award gave her twenty pounds a year for three years, and she continued

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<sup>272</sup> Christine Collette, *For Labour and for Women, The Women's Labour League, 1906-18*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 13.

<sup>273</sup> Warwick University, Modern Records Office, COL, MSS. 29/8/1/7.

<sup>274</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 25.

<sup>275</sup> The Joseph Hume Scholarship, awarded by University College, London, is for academic excellence, and is still extant. It was named after the Scottish radical MP. Collet said in her diary that she had never

to study, giving lectures to help with her living expenses. During these years, she experienced at first hand the difficulties of being self-supporting, and the collection gives expression to these anxieties.

The first paper in the collection was initially read to the South Place Ethical Society in February 1890. It focused on the unresolved problems for educated women entering the workplace and Collet developed some of the ideas which would exemplify her work and make her a significant contributor to the contemporary discourse on women's issues. She compared the position of women in the 1890s with that of the previous generation, acknowledging the debt owed to earlier feminists and the success of the earlier Langham Place generation. University education was not only opened to women, Collet remarked, but colleges such as Newnham and Girton had had to enlarge their premises; with changing education had come changing attitudes and a growing number of women graduates were now (in 1890) entering the job market. However, despite the burgeoning of educational provision for girls in the twenty years or so before 1890, very little was available in terms of career other than teaching:

.... although our self-respect may be considerably increased, what is our economic position? There are not yet 800 women graduates of London and Cambridge. Of these the majority are assistant mistresses in public and private schools, visiting teachers, lecturers, or headmistresses. There were in 1881, according to the census of that year, 123,000 women teachers, and over 4,000,000 girls between the ages of five years and twenty; and yet already this little handful of graduates is told it is in excess of the demand and that it must take lower salaries in consequence.<sup>276</sup>

This is a typical example of Collet's analytical style: she used statistical evidence to refute commonly held arguments simply and unequivocally, reducing them to foolishness. Of course, Collet was influenced by her own experience of the teaching profession, working in Leicester at the Wyggeston School from 1878 until 1885 and then, once in London, lecturing part-time to support herself. She had tired of teaching within a few years and therefore wanted to ensure for other educated women a far greater variety of career choices. The need to maintain enthusiasm for one's work was a recurrent theme of her writing.

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spoken to Higgs whilst studying at UCL, but a chance meeting in the Civil Service Bread Shop outside the British Museum in 1890 turned into a life-long friendship.

<sup>276</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, pp. 6-7.

Collet explored contemporary arguments which impacted directly on the economic position for women, particularly that of salary, in this first chapter of *Educated Working Women*. She addressed the advantage for women of a growing educated female workforce: 'One effect on the economic position of educated working women of such an extension of employment would be to enable them to measure their value.'<sup>277</sup> She suggested that women, like men, should look for a point in business where there are fewer candidates of ability and the prospects are greater. Collet was careful to differentiate between professional women and those who were working with no formal training, for whom choice was far less likely to be an option. Her focus was on the former group – her readership. Collet wrote here for women like herself who, no matter what their financial circumstances, wanted to be trained to work. For her, the extension of employment for women meant they could experience a sense of individual achievement.

Collet argued that women graduates should not accept rates of pay below the minimum so as not to undercut the non-graduates within the professions. She had little time for the appointment of women to unpaid appointments on school boards or poor law guardians; only when women are paid adequately for their labour will they be valued in the workplace she argued:

The incapacity of a man is referred to the man himself: that of a woman is credited to her sex. But although the man may foolishly vote for a woman to be placed on the School Board or the Board of Guardians merely because she is a woman, without knowing anything about her, I am not afraid that he will ever give her a well-paid post in his own business unless she is fit for it. Women who give their services for nothing are rarely told the truth; it will be a good thing for them when they receive, instead of flattery and thanks, criticism and payment.<sup>278</sup>

By drawing a sharp contrast between philanthropic and professional work, only as the latter could women be made accountable for their performance and able to measure the value of their worth.

In *Prospects of Marriage for Women*, her second paper, Collet reflected on where the institution of marriage stood in relation to the extension of educational opportunities that

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<sup>277</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 21.

<sup>278</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, pp. 22-23.

had been achieved in the century since Mary Wollstonecraft and Maria Edgeworth.<sup>279</sup> Langham Place feminists in the mid-nineteenth century had continued to argue for the education of all women. They had also raised the issue of the sexual division of labour in trade and industry and for the employment of married women. Whereas Harriet Taylor, the utopian socialist (and later wife of John Stuart Mill) had argued that marriage and motherhood should not disqualify women from any profession, the Langham Place group recognised the tensions between employment and marriage and reached no consensus. Collet herself felt the two were incompatible but argued for economic independence, which brought with it choice and security.

The question of marriage was vital to Collet and to all her professional contemporaries. May Abraham had continued to work as Superintending Lady Inspector after her marriage to the politician Harold Tennant, but had resigned three weeks before the birth of her first child in 1897. Thereafter, although being constantly employed in a voluntary capacity in advisory roles, she did not resume her career. Of the other women in this study, none married, with the exception of Lucy Deane, who married in 1911, rather later than most and after she had retired from the factory inspectorate through ill-health. She too continued to work in a voluntary capacity. The marriage bar, introduced for women in the lower grades of the civil service in 1894, became generally applicable to all until just before the Second World War. For most of these women, and the subsequent generation, combining marriage and a career was simply not an option. The issue never ceased to be controversial among feminists, trade unionists, socialists and across the labour force.

Collet's focus in 'Prospects of Marriage' is the likelihood of marriage as part of a larger question of training and work for women. She provided a statistical analysis of the numbers of married women in London, comparing the various socio-economic groups to be found demographically.<sup>280</sup> Her results showed that the common view that 'every woman can get married if only she will make herself agreeable and not be too particular' to be erroneous.<sup>281</sup> In her analysis of the 1881 census returns Collet's aim

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<sup>279</sup> It was through the publication of a paper in the Charity Organisation Review on Maria Edgeworth that she had renewed the acquaintance of her old teacher, Professor Edgeworth, the author's nephew. The friendship continued for many years.

<sup>280</sup> Her groupings are the same as those used by Charles Booth in *Life and Labour*, on which Collet was employed in the latter years of the 1880s.

<sup>281</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 28.

was not to show marriage patterns for women but rather that a considerable number of women will not be able to marry, by demonstrating that there was a shortfall of men. These statistics tended to provoke anxiety about demographic change but, Collet pointed out, they could not have surprised educated women, many of whom had not married.

Age differentials in different socio-economic groups was one cause of women's difficulty: 'In a district where boy-and-girl marriages are very common, everybody can be married and be more or less miserable ever after', but that in upper middle class groups (Collet's terminology), age differences appeared to be wider, with older men marrying younger women. This resulted in a surplus of marriageable women over marriageable men.<sup>282</sup> Another reason for the difference in numbers of marriageable age (using figures from the 1881 Census), was locational: working class girls in service moved away from home whilst middle class girls generally remained at home, whereas the reverse was true of men, therefore the sexes were distributed unequally.<sup>283</sup>

Collet used the 1881 Census returns to compare statistics in England and Wales with those of London: in England and Wales the proportion of women who remained unmarried was roughly one in six, but in London the proportion was one in five. The uneven figures for London, she argued, were, on the face of it, explained by the fact that these middle-class areas were the servant keeping classes, G and H according to the Booth descriptors, and most unmarried servants 'living in' were females and therefore increased the numbers of single women living in these areas. She admitted the plausibility of such an explanation, but then explained that her personal experience had led her to understand that there were, indeed, more unmarried women among the educated middle classes. This accounted for not only the differences between London and the rest of the country, but also differences within the capital. Although the impact might be expected to be small at this time, the expectation would be for it to expand as more women took advantage of increasing educational opportunities. In other words, the better their education, the less likely were women to marry, a fact not lost on those in government, concerned with what was perceived as a growing class imbalance. Fertility decline was evident amongst the well-educated whilst the poorer and less

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<sup>282</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 29.

<sup>283</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, pp. 29-30.

educated were producing two-thirds of the nation.<sup>284</sup> This perception has been challenged in recent research. Variations in fertility decline have been found to lie not solely in economic and class difference, but in geographical variations. Such differences are more difficult to explain.<sup>285</sup>

Collet celebrated the advantages for all women of the effect on industry of strong and unhampered women (by which she meant unmarried), who were able to manage the associations for women, working to improve wages and the provision in old age.<sup>286</sup> Furthermore, she viewed further education for women, often seen as wasted on those whose future was marriage, as broadening the horizons for many, providing an alternative to marriage with an independent, liberating and fulfilling future.<sup>287</sup> While she relegated the opponents of higher education for women to history, Collet does not, as Harriet Taylor did fifty years earlier in *Enfranchisement*, argue for the continuation of work after marriage amongst her own socio-economic group. She went further and argued that amongst the working-classes, married women's work was an 'evil'.<sup>288</sup> By this she meant that work for married women was a necessity for many but should not be a choice; for her, mothers working had a detrimental effect on their children, although the census returns could not quantify this effect. She also argued that home work, if properly organised, would be a better alternative for married women with children; that lack of education among the poorer classes was harmful to the development of their children and that girls should be educated in domestic skills. For Collet, education was key; working in the East End left her with a lasting memory of wasted intelligence and talent among girls and wretchedness among many of the women.<sup>289</sup>

Paper three, 'The Expenditure of Middle Class Women', appeared in the *Economic Journal* in December, 1898, when Collet was thirty eight and had been self-supporting for several years. This is one of the few essays detailing working women's expenditure. It investigates and itemises the annual expenditure of eight working women to determine whether their salaries were sufficient for them to maintain a reasonable

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<sup>284</sup> Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 46.

<sup>285</sup> Eilidh Garrett, Alice Reid, Kevin Schürer & Szreter, *Changing Family Size in England and Wales, Place, Class and Demography, 1981-1911*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 321-323.

<sup>286</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p.40.

<sup>287</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p.41.

<sup>288</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p.45.

<sup>289</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, pp. 45-46.

standard of living.<sup>290</sup> The examples included four teachers, two clerks, a journalist and a non-wage earner living at home but in receipt of a dress allowance. Two very significant questions were asked: firstly, was the salary each woman earned sufficient to maintain a reasonable standard of living for a number of years and secondly, in middle age, when total dependence on her own 'efficiency' was likely was her earning potential enough to allow her to support that standard of living?<sup>291</sup> Many young professional women, often in receipt of some parental support at the beginning of their careers, did need to consider the long term position. Collet's argument was centred on her 'cost of efficiency' or standard of living, and she was very clear to differentiate between this term and the 'cost of living'. She was one of the first to evaluate the importance of a job with a career structure for women and one with clearly delineated promotional opportunities. She constantly berated the poor salaries paid to women, which did not allow them the possibility to relax, enjoy their leisure, holidays and past-times, and as such it is one of the most interesting and useful of her papers.

Although these were simply samples of the type of data required to make such an analysis, they allow some interesting hypotheses to be drawn; most, particularly the teachers, were dependent on help from family and friends during holidays because their salaries were not sufficient to pay for lodgings. Secondly Collet found some women were reluctant to divulge personal information for fear of being judged as either struggling or profligate. Some of the individual problems and embarrassments encountered by these women were highlighted, particularly the expenditure on dress. The non-wage earner spent far more on clothes than the other women, largely because she received presents of money during the year, and did not have to pay for mending and laundry as this was part of the family budget. Interestingly, her expenditure on white gloves fell as she aged, as she was invited to fewer dances!<sup>292</sup> The most stressful aspect of independent living was revealed to be the inability to buy enough clothes to ensure a reasonable social life. 'Between season' clothes were a particular problem: one woman complained of having 'nothing to wear' in April as the new season's clothes were not yet available and she could not afford clothes just for the spring.<sup>293</sup> One clerk was given 'one pair of good evening slippers, one blouse, one dozen handkerchiefs,

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<sup>290</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p.71.

<sup>291</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p.67.

<sup>292</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>293</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, pp. 85-86.

one lace collar, a total value of £2 4s.<sup>294</sup> This woman was referred to by Collet as the most representative of middle class working woman of the future, as she appeared to 'regard bicycling, tennis, hockey, society, and pretty dresses as being as much the right of the girl wage-earner as her stay-at-home cousins.'<sup>295</sup> The picture that emerges is one of genteel poverty, a common theme for feminist authors from Wollstonecraft onward.<sup>296</sup> This paper exposed the complexities of a small sample of professional women's lives; it indicated the difficulties experienced by women who were striving for both economic independence and unobtrusive respectability.

'The Age Limit for Women' appeared first in *The Contemporary Review*, in December 1899.<sup>297</sup> Collet engaged here in a debate on what she regarded as a de facto limitation on women's right to work. She quoted an advertisement for a headmistress, which stated that, 'No one over 35 need apply'. Collet was at this time thirty-nine, and would be promoted at forty-three. She considered it vital that the assumption that women's critical powers diminished after thirty-five was challenged. She showed that the age of adult responsibility was not static but fluid and subject to change; for example, using illustrations from children's literature during the eighteenth century, she was able to show that the length of childhood appeared to have shifted from six years on average to twelve. Furthermore, the age at which single daughters might have been expected to assume the role of running the household previously held by their mothers had also changed – fifty seemed to be the new forty as far maternal retirement was concerned! Collet suggested that the supposition inherent in the headmistress advertisement was outdated at the beginning of the twentieth century and although she was unable to determine the age at which: 'the value of a woman's increased experience is counterbalanced by diminished physical power', generalisations were inappropriate.<sup>298</sup> Lack of mental stimulation was far more likely to atrophy the brain than reaching thirty five, Collet argued.

Of the final two papers, the first was the unfavourable review of a book by an American, Mrs. Stetson, who had argued against the wife's financial dependence on her

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<sup>294</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 85.

<sup>295</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 85.

<sup>296</sup> This is reminiscent of George Gissing's *The Odd Women*, written in 1893 and telling the story of the Madden sisters, struggling to earn a living as they aged and familial support ceased.

<sup>297</sup> *The Contemporary Review* was first published in 1866 and has been in continuous publication since that date. In 1899, under the editorship of Sir Percy Bunting, its focus was on politics and social reform.

<sup>298</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 113.

husband.<sup>299</sup> Collet had, 'no objection to pecuniary dependence on the husband' provided that wives should retain the *power* (Collet's italics) of economic independence, should the need arise.<sup>300</sup> This is consistent with her view on marriage and women's work: all women should have the capability to be self-supporting, whether married or not. The final paper evaluated the economic progress made by women over the second half of the nineteenth century. Collet cast serious doubts about what greater economic freedom had achieved so far and emphasised the economic hardships that might yet be experienced in old age. She argued that, whilst women had made sufficient progress to earn enough to be 'good, useful, healthy and self-respecting' up to the age of thirty, if they had to earn a living in middle age, it would prove more difficult. As in her earlier essay, Collet expressed concern for those women in middle age whose age is a barrier to employment. Furthermore, it was not just the gifted, she argued, but also the less gifted woman who needed the training to be made competent to support herself. While there had indeed been considerable progress towards economic independence made by women over the period about which Collet was writing, there was still a great deal more to achieve.

These papers were written during the 1890s whilst Collet was establishing herself as a professional on the Royal Commission and in the civil service. Their significance lies in partly in their rarity: other women had addressed the issue, but with relative brevity and not with the expertise that Collet brought to her narrative.<sup>301</sup> She used economic and statistical methods to demonstrate the social questions that affected women in her own socio-economic group. In this she was applying the same methodology employed at the Board of Trade: she worked in a department that aimed to identify long-term movements in money wages, working class expenditure and costs of living.<sup>302</sup> In so doing, she foregrounded most of the issues that would fuel feminist debate for decades to come. While her investigation into the lives of working class women, on Charles Booth's Enquiry, on the Royal Commission on Labour gave her the expertise for a career at the Board of Trade, it is her concern with the women of her own class to which she returned throughout that career, and where we read Collet at her most

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<sup>299</sup> Collet, 'Mrs Stetson's Economic Ideal', *Educated Working Women*, pp. 114-133.

<sup>300</sup> Collet, *Educated Working Women*, p. 122.

<sup>301</sup> See, for example, Alice M. Gordon, 'The After-Careers of University-Educated Women', *The Nineteenth Century*, 37:220 (1895: June), pp. 955-960;

<sup>302</sup> Roger Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain: A Study in Official Statistics and Social Control*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 127.

original. She considered the results of fifty years of higher education for women and celebrated educated women's achievements whilst at the same time pointing out the limits. Women might have excelled in certain disciplines where their performance outstripped that of men, for example in natural sciences and medieval and modern languages, but Cambridge still refused to give degrees to women and the professional futures for women graduates remained uncertain. Women workers in trades and industries were still undervalued and under recompensed for their labour. The marriage or career dichotomy would remain unresolved and the imposition of age limits in some professions would continue.

### **3. Four Lady Assistant Commissioners: The Royal Commission on Labour, 1892-1893.**

The Royal Commission on Labour had been set up in 1891, as a response by the Conservative government to concerns about the need to examine and analyse the causes of labour militancy and the trade disputes of the 1880s. Headed by Spencer Compton Cavendish, one-time Liberal leader in the Commons and initially an all-male commission it included the union leader, Tom Mann, the economist, Alfred Marshall, and the Liberal politician, A.J. Mundella. Its remit was to:

inquire into the questions affecting the relations between employer and employed; the combinations of employers and of employed; and the conditions of labour which have been raised during the recent trade disputes in the United Kingdom; and to report whether legislation can with advantage be directed to the remedy of any evils that may be disclosed, and, if so, in what manner.<sup>303</sup>

It was to argue for the recognition of trade unions as a means of securing stability: a strategy that would be pursued in the Labour Department by such civil servants as Hubert Llewellyn Smith and Clara Collet.

From the start, there had been pressure from both inside the House and outside to include women on the Commission. On 6<sup>th</sup> March 1891, Mr. William Summers, the MP for Huddersfield asked a question in the House: 'I beg to ask the First Lord of the Treasury whether, in view of the fact that out of 1,084,361 persons employed in mills and factories in the UK as many as 656,549 are females, the government will consider

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<sup>303</sup> Royal Commission on Labour. Fifth and final report on the Royal Commission on Labour. Part One. The Report, 1894, [C.7421] [C.7421-1], xxxv.9, 263, p. v.

the advisability of appointing one or more women members of the Royal Commission on Labour.<sup>304</sup> However, no women were appointed until February the following year, when reference was made on 24<sup>th</sup> February in the House to their imminent appointment, and it was suggested that discussion on the Shop Hours Bill should be postponed until they had completed their investigations.<sup>305</sup>

This change of heart was brought about by pressure from the women's trade unions. For example, Emilia Dilke, art historian and President of the Women's Trade Union League from 1886, pointed out in an article which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in October 1891 that women workers needed representation, that, for example, two thirds of the workforce in the textile industry was women. Dilke argued that the methodology to be used for the collation of evidence was flawed as far as women were concerned. Most of the trades' organisations represented men, and therefore the woman's voice would not be heard. Of those representing women and men, the women would need different aspects to be considered and the representatives were men so again, only one perspective would be heard. There was a dearth of organisations representing the views solely of women. Women involved in home working or in the 'dangerous trades' such as white-lead works or the potteries or in laundry work would be totally unrepresented. They all required careful and specialist attention, particularly, Dilke argued, as they involved the health of women and their children. Furthermore, women working in these industries were keen that they should be represented by women.<sup>306</sup> This pressure was effective. Anthony Mundella, President of the Board of Trade under the previous Liberal government, as chairman of the section of the commission covering chemical, building, textile, clothing and miscellaneous trades, boldly appointed four women assistant commissioners to investigate women in industry.<sup>307</sup>

The women appointed all had the experience Dilke had advocated: Eliza Orme was a lawyer with a long interest in political and social issues; May Abraham, who had been Emilia Dilke's private secretary since 1887, had been instrumental in the pressure to extend the Factory Act to include laundresses and would subsequently be one of the

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<sup>304</sup> HC Deb 06 March 1891, vol. 351, cc 437-8, in Hansard 1803-2005.

<sup>305</sup> HC Deb 24 February 1892 vol 1 cc 1129-88, Hansard 1803-2005.

<sup>306</sup> Emilia F. S. Dilke, 'Women and the Royal Commission', *Fortnightly Review*, 50:298 (1891: Oct.). pp. 535-538.

<sup>307</sup> When the Liberal government was returned in 1892, Mundella resumed his post as President of the Board of Trade and was instrumental in the appointment of Clara Collet as labour correspondent in 1893.

first two female factory inspectors appointed in 1893; Clara Collet herself had moved from the teaching profession to economics and to collaborating with Charles Booth on his *Life and Labour*. Collet was an acknowledged expert on women's work, particularly after the publication of 'Women's Work in Leeds', in the first volume of the *Economic Journal* in 1891, which must have been influential in her appointment.<sup>308</sup> Margaret Irwin, the fourth woman appointed assistant to the Royal Commission, was also active in the trade union movement and until her appointment had been secretary of the Scotch Women's Protective and Provident League, sponsored by the Glasgow Trades Council.

The new assistant commissioners were given their instructions at a meeting held at 44 Parliament Square on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March 1892. Both Spencer Compton Cavendish and Anthony Mundella were present. Their particular areas of investigation were to be: differences in the wages of women and men; alleged grievances of women and the effects of women's industrial employment on their health, morality and the home. They were also to enquire into the existence and the cause of the exclusion of women from certain trades, for example, tinsplate works. Method included reading existing Parliamentary Papers, site visits to interview employers, employed and others and finally to present their findings in a report.<sup>309</sup> The women were quickly dispatched to investigate their various areas of industry.

Collet's initial investigation was on the conditions of work in London: she examined the work of shop assistants, milliners, dressmakers, laundresses and the incidence of necrosis amongst match workers. (This was not the first time Collet had inspected these industries: she had completed similar work for Charles Booth. For example, she had investigated the match workers at Bryant and May in 1889.)<sup>310</sup> From here, she investigated straw plaiting and straw hat making in Luton; factory workers and home workers in Bristol, Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall, Liverpool and Manchester. She also researched the Staffordshire potteries. Abraham centred her investigations on the textile factories in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire and the Midlands, focusing on sanitary conditions. From there she enquired into home workers in the hosiery trade and at the confectionary, cycle, watch, shoddy and flock trades. Her brief was also to

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<sup>308</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep., 1891), pp. 460-473.

<sup>309</sup> Royal Commission on Labour. *The Employment of Women*, (London: H.M.S.O, 1893), [C.-6894.-XXIII.], pp. iii-iv.

<sup>310</sup> Hackney Archives Collection, Part II, 22.1, D/B/BRY.

examine the effects on health within the white-lead works, visiting workers not just in the factories, but in their homes and in hospitals. She completed her work in Ireland. Margaret Irwin was designated to work in Scotland, enquiring into the textile industry and also a large number of industries in Glasgow and Edinburgh, including tailoring, tobacco and potteries and investigating employment in shops, printing, dressmaking, bookbinding, paper making and rag picking, amongst others. The senior woman, Eliza Orme investigated the women in the United Kingdom employed within the licensing trade, including barmaids, waitresses and book-keepers. She did not include domestic servants employed within hotels and restaurants, because of time constraints, although this was a significant omission in terms of numbers.<sup>311</sup> She was also responsible for the examination of women's industries in Wales, and in a joint investigation in Ireland with May Abraham, visiting factories, workshops and convent industries.

*The Employment of Women*, 1893, was full and detailed. It examined the wages for women in a variety of industries and also wages within sweated and domestic work, which were more difficult to quantify. The lady commissioners investigated grievances among women workers, particularly those involving the fines imposed on what were considered misdemeanours, overtime and the health implications for the families of married working women. However, as Christine Collette has shown, all major areas of women's employment under their terms of reference proved challenging. Everywhere they discovered examples of appalling working conditions and in particular the unpleasant consequences for women of heavy work on pregnancy, childbirth and family life. By emphasising the social ills associated with aspects of women's work they faced the dilemma that was to plague so many of those involved with women's labour issues: how to demand and work for improvements of training, pay and conditions without endangering the employment of women in industries and trades where they might have gained a foothold.<sup>312</sup> The issue of protective legislation would be one of the most contentious demands of feminists in the trade union movement for many years. Eliza Orme emphasised this dichotomy in her report: one witness, a manager in a colliery, explained to her that fewer women were employed in suitable work for women because of the restrictions placed on them by the Factory Acts which limited women's hours.

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<sup>311</sup> Royal Commission on Labour. *The Employment of Women*, p. 197.

<sup>312</sup> Collette, pp. 14-15.

Their work was now done by older men.<sup>313</sup> Flagrant examples of disregard for protective legislation were common, as Collet, reporting on shop assistants found, 'Of the existence of very real grievances amongst shop assistants there can be no doubt, but of expressed discontent there is very little.'<sup>314</sup> Further difficulties were found in domestic industries where family members often employed their own children. Among straw-hat makers in Luton, for example, Collet reported:

The disadvantages of a system in which children are employed by their parents for profit can only be discovered by observation and inference. It was clearly impossible for a stranger like myself to ask girls to state their grievances against their parents.<sup>315</sup>

These tensions would continue to cause dissent for many years, plaguing the work of the early factory inspectors, as we will see in the following chapters.

Collet's assessment of the conditions for women shop assistants in London began with their poor representation within the United Shop Assistants Union. No women members chose to give evidence to the Labour Commission. Collet suggested that long hours and residence at the place of work were the two main causes of their reticence. Unionisation was problematic since many employees lived on the premises and long hours meant that social opportunities were few. Most evidence about hours and conditions of work were obtained through the social and educational societies.<sup>316</sup> Few shop assistants worked less than sixty four hours a week, most worked over seventy and the longest week was seventy seven and a half hours. Since the 1886 Shop Hours Regulation Act put the maximum hours per week at 74 hours, most employers were actually within the law.<sup>317</sup> Employee or shop assistant witnesses focused on these long hours of work and the shortage of time for meals. Rest breaks were included within the seventy four hours and so workers were often required to rush or to interrupt their meals. Indigestion and anaemia were common as a result.

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<sup>313</sup> Royal Commission on Labour, *The Employment of Women*, p. 233.

<sup>314</sup> Royal Commission on Labour, *The Employment of Women*, p. 4.

<sup>315</sup> Royal Commission on Labour, *The Employment of Women*, p. 30.

<sup>316</sup> Royal Commission on Labour, *The Employment of Women*, p. 4.

<sup>317</sup> It is no surprise that the suggestion was made in the House of Commons shortly before the women began their enquiry that the discussion of the new Shop Hours Bill be postponed until the enquiry was complete, thereby allowing a more informed debate.

The Shop Hours Bill, before the House at the time of the sub-commissioners' appointments, was a re-enactment of the Shop Hours Regulation Act 1886, which should have expired in 1889 but was to continue until the end of 1891. It had stated that young persons of both sexes under the age of eighteen should not be employed in shops, warehouses or public houses for more than 74 hours per week, including mealtimes. It also had two proposed amendments: firstly that the act should be extended to include women and secondly that an inspectorate was to be appointed to ensure the terms were adhered to. However, although it had been suggested that the bill should be delayed until the investigations had been completed, the Shop Hours Bill was passed on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1892 before the final report was published and ironically on the same day Collet submitted her investigation, in which she argued forcefully that 74 hours per week was excessive.<sup>318</sup> As Collette pointed out, the direct result of the lady commissioners' work was the appointment of two female factory inspectors in 1893 and the establishment of the first female factory inspectorate with the Home Office that year. The lady commissioners' findings and report also produced a vast amount of invaluable evidence on women and labour made available to the trade unions and the women's movements then and since.<sup>319</sup>

The appointment of the lady commissioners was important. Women workers and their representatives had made significant advances between 1888 and 1893. The match girls' strike in 1888 was the first to demand a voice for women in industrial struggle in this phase of the labour and feminist movements; secondly, the Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories in 1890 referred for the first time to the existence of women's trade unions; thirdly, the appointment in 1893 of the first two women factory inspectors and Collet's appointment to the Board of Trade marked the moment of recognition of the needs of working women as different from those of men, and the need for inspection by professional women not men. The House of Lords had published its report from the Select Committee on Sweating in 1890, in which the sweating system was defined.<sup>320</sup> This definition: very low wages, excessive hours of labour and insanitary conditions, prepared the ground for the Royal Commission on Labour (RCL) and between 1892 and 1894 the Commission published its extensive series of reports.

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<sup>318</sup> Royal Commission on Labour, *The Employment of Women*, p. 85.

<sup>319</sup> Collette, p.15.

<sup>320</sup> Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, *The Sweating System*, (London: Henry Hansard and Son, 1890), pp. cxxxiv-cxxxv.

As H.A. Mess suggested in 1926, during the 1880s and 1890s, women in industry were for the first time seen in roles that were not those of victim.<sup>321</sup> The need for a voice for women in industry had received a response; the importance of women's trade unions was recognised and the pressure from those unions and from the women's groups for the appointment of female factory inspectors resulted in the appointment of May Abraham and Mary Paterson to the inspectorate in 1893. Abraham and Paterson were appointed for their experience in the field and all four women Commissioners continued to pursue a professional career after their work with the commission.

#### **4. An Odd Woman: Clara Collet at the Board of Trade, 1893-1920.**

When Clara Collet was appointed as a labour correspondent to the Board of Trade in 1893, her work was to collect statistical evidence on women's industrial conditions.<sup>322</sup> Her salary was £300 per annum –substantial enough for her close friend, the writer George Gissing to express his admiration in a letter to his sister.<sup>323</sup> This was at a time when the average woman factory worker would be fortunate to earn between £1 and £2 per week and a female schoolteacher might earn £120 per annum. Collet's work developed quickly and she was soon allowed to have an assistant, although this appointment was not without its difficulties as the first four appointees married and left the service after a couple of years. It was not until 1903, after her promotion to Senior Investigator for Women's Industries that she found someone to 'stay the course'.<sup>324</sup>

Collet was one of a small group of 'social innovators' appointed to the Board of Trade in the 1890s.<sup>325</sup> This group included Hubert Llewellyn Smith, and David Schloss, both members of the Booth Enquiry and Arthur Wilson Fox, a member of the Quaker family and, like Collet, an assistant commissioner on the Royal Commission for Labour. Collet and Llewellyn Smith had very similar social and intellectual backgrounds: both moving in the same social milieu of Toynbee Hall, the Junior Economic Club, the University

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<sup>321</sup> H. A. Mess, *Factory Legislation and its Administration, 1891-1924*, (London: P. S. King & Son, Ltd., 1926), p. xii.

<sup>322</sup> She was working under Hubert Llewellyn Smith, appointed Commissioner of Labour by Anthony Mundella.

<sup>323</sup> Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, Pierre Coustillas, eds., *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Five, 1892-1895*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), p. 160.

<sup>324</sup> Hilda Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 47.

<sup>325</sup> Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, p. 113.

Settlement movement, and, together with Schloss, the Booth Enquiry. The system of appointment at the Board of Trade differed slightly from other departments. Investigators were not appointed after competitive examination but rather because of their experience outside the civil service. As the Board's enquiries increased in depth and complexity and national unease about industrial unrest grew, new appointees typically had extensive experience in social and economic research on industrial issues.<sup>326</sup> Hubert Llewellyn Smith and Clara Collet, with such similar curricula vitae, were two such examples. As a result, the Board of Trade commenced the task of producing a series of enquiries into the wages and living standards of working people in Britain. Collet's role as the investigator of women's industries meant she was able to exercise a greater level of authority and autonomy than other women in the service, including the Principal Woman Inspector of Factories, until 1945.

Clara Collet's entry in the New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics in 1987 gives a brief résumé of her professional life and acknowledges her as the 'principal authority' on the earnings and employment of women in Britain at the time.<sup>327</sup> Palgrave, an important innovation of the 1890s provided a liberal and scholarly overview of current economic thought. Collet had contributed articles on women's labour and earnings to the first edition in 1894; these and her reports on women's industrial employment featured in Parliamentary Papers and had a contributory role to play in the passing of the Trade Boards Act of 1909.<sup>328</sup> Work with the Charles Booth enquiry and with the Royal Commission on Labour had trained her as a social researcher. In fact, she had acknowledged her debt to Booth on her appointment as senior investigator in 1903.<sup>329</sup> She had travelled widely across the country collecting data and listening to the accounts of witnesses' experiences, and she would continue to do so for the Board of Trade (later the Ministry of Labour). She was astute and well able to distinguish a sub-text in witness statements as few workers would speak out against their employers and often felt pressured to give a better account than was the reality. One of the terms of reference of the assistant commissioners had been to investigate the impact of

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<sup>326</sup> Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, p. 106.

<sup>327</sup> Collet is one of only 23 women to have an entry on their own in the dictionary.

<sup>328</sup> The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics, John Eatwell, Murray Milgate and Peter Newman, eds., Vol. 1, A-D, (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1987).

<sup>329</sup> Rosemary O'Day and David Englander, *Mr. Charles Booth's Enquiry, Life and Labour of the People in London Reconsidered*, p. 16.

employment in industry on the health and well-being of women and their families and Clara Collet spent much of her time at the Board of Trade continuing to do just that.

Two papers, both published in 1891, provide early examples of Collet's work: 'Reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour on Working Women, 1870-1889' and 'Women's Work in Leeds'.<sup>330</sup> These reports would be referenced by Sidney Webb in his study of wage differentials later that year.<sup>331</sup> In her review of the statistical evidence on working mothers provided by the Massachusetts Board of Statistics and Labour she presented an analysis of the board's investigation up to 1889. It had, from its establishment in 1869, provided particular information on working conditions for women. Collet analysed pay, hours, quality of working environment, ages of women working and living conditions. She made occasional comparisons with the situation for working women in London referring, for example, to the better diet in America and failing to resist the odd characteristic aside, commenting that dyspepsia would result from a nation's strange ideas for what constitutes a proper breakfast.<sup>332</sup> More seriously, in what appeared to be very much an academic exercise for her, Collet questioned the validity of some of the findings and the terminology used to express those findings, for example, on health issues. She found the use of 'good', 'quite good', 'fair' and 'poor' unhelpful and one person's judgement on what constituted good health might be very different from that of another. In spite of these criticisms, she concluded that the report was a thorough investigation into women's industries.<sup>333</sup> The terms and breadth of the Massachusetts Board's investigation might prove helpful to her at the Board of Trade.

In 'Women's Work in Leeds', Collet primarily examined the employment of women within the cloth industry, although she did touch on other industries. She traced the industrial development of the cloth industry in Leeds throughout the nineteenth century, from the introduction of the power loom to the development of the clothing industry: 'At the beginning of the century a clothier in Leeds was a manufacturer of cloth; at the end

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<sup>330</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour on Working Women, 1870-1889', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Jun., 1891), 398-405 and Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Sep., 1891), 460-473.

<sup>331</sup> Sidney Webb, 'The Alleged Differences in the Wages Paid to Men and Women for Similar Work', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Dec., 1891), pp. 635-662, pp. 636-638.

<sup>332</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour on Working Women, 1870-1889', pp. 401-402.

<sup>333</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Reports of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labour on Working Women, 1870-1889', p.404.

of the century a clothier is a manufacturer of clothes.<sup>334</sup> Compared with the poverty and wretchedness to be found amongst the home workers in East London Collet wrote, her work for Booth always her touchstone, there is almost nothing in Leeds.<sup>335</sup> She investigated pay differences between male and female workers pointing out that comparisons were difficult, given that workers were often employed on different tasks. However, in some workshops, although the women were paid less than men, the ease with which women and men workers were interchanged by employers indicated parity in performance and skill. This contradicts the argument that men were paid more because they were more skilful. Furthermore, women in Leeds were averaging much better wages than their contemporaries in East London. For Collet:

...the factory system has such immense advantages over the domestic system that there is good ground for hoping that East London will either lose its clothing trade entirely, or save it by adopting the much more economical factory system.<sup>336</sup>

In her comparison of the development of industry in Leeds and East London, Collet discovered the advantages of factory over home work and the sweated trades. She argued that the development of modern machinery benefited workers and improved conditions, that higher productivity meant higher wages and enabled workers to combine and organise.

Collet's 'Collection and Utilization of Official Statistics Bearing on the extent and Effects of the Industrial Employment of Women', was published in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* in 1898. This was a comprehensive study of statistical evidence on the effects of industrial work on mothers and their children.<sup>337</sup> The effects of industrialisation on mothers and children, especially children, had long been of concern to medical officers of health, doctors and philanthropists. From the 1880s political economists had turned their attention to the possible causes of high infant mortality rates. In 1882, the economist W. Stanley Jevons (1835-1882) had published a paper

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<sup>334</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds', p. 467.

<sup>335</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds', p. 470.

<sup>336</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Women's Work in Leeds', p. 469.

<sup>337</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Collection and Utilization of Official Statistics Bearing on the Extent and Effects of the Industrial Employment of Women', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Jun., 1898), pp. 219-270.

highlighting the dangers to the health of infants if their mothers were employed.<sup>338</sup> Jevons' hypothesis, couched in extremely emotive language, suggested that women's employment in factories was directly responsible for the extraordinarily high infant mortality rates in Britain's industrial heartlands. Although his hypothesis was challenged at the time, this perception of factory employment and its impact on the infant mortality rates in industrial towns persisted.<sup>339</sup> Dr. Hugh Jones argued similarly in 1894 that the children of women in factory work were suffering from maternal neglect.<sup>340</sup> His views were also challenged at the time but, as Carol Dyhouse has pointed out, the only really authoritative challenge to this perception was to come four years later from Clara Collet, whose experience within the Labour Commission and the Board of Trade gave her a greater expertise in the field.<sup>341</sup>

Collet's work on mothers in employment inaugurates a shift in the Board of Trade's perspective from descriptive to explanatory statistics: to an examination of economic and social variables to explain causation. This is illustrated by comparing Collet's work with that of Jevons. Collet's use of language in her paper on the collection and utilisation of statistics on the effects of industrial employment of women contrasted sharply with that of Jevons, who peppered his work with such phrases as: 'every mother so employed abandons her infants' and 'the infinite, irreparable wrong to helpless children'.<sup>342</sup> Collet's precise analytical narrative, by contrast, and her use of statistics made it clear where the evidence was inconclusive and where to make conclusions on such evidence would be mere conjecture. Although published sixteen years after Jevons, the supposition that factory work was the sole reason for high infant mortality rates was still as prevalent as it had been, and Collet argued that, in blaming mothers, the real reasons for infant deaths were masked. For her, the *conditions* (Collet's italics), under which women worked and changes in the employment of married women, and especially married women in factories, if recorded statistically, would be a far more

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<sup>338</sup> W. Stanley Jevons, 'Married Women in Factories', *Contemporary Review*, 41 (1882:Jan./Jun), pp. 37-53.

<sup>339</sup> Whately Cooke Taylor, "'Married Women in Factories.'" A Reply', *Contemporary Review*, 42 (1882: July/Dec.), pp. 428-441.

<sup>340</sup> Hugh R. Jones, 'The Perils and Protection of Infant Life', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Mar., 1894), pp. 1-103.

<sup>341</sup> Carol Dyhouse, 'Working-Class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England, 1895-1914', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 12 No.2 (Winter, 1978), p. 253.

<sup>342</sup> Jevons, p 37.

effective indicator of the social progress of the nation.<sup>343</sup> She was critical of the statistical information available from the census returns, which were often inaccurate because many women did not fill in their own returns. A second problem was the frequent misrepresentation of age, probably because of the desire by some fathers to escape the requirements of the education acts.

Collet found no definitive evidence that working women's 'neglect' of their children was the cause of high infant mortality rates in industrial areas. Liverpool, for example, which had the highest rate of infant mortality, also had the lowest rate of married women occupied. Insofar as factory towns generally had raised rates of infant mortality, she partly accounted for this by the absence of the 'servant keeping classes' in such towns, denoting a lack of socio-economic mix. Collet herself considered the employment of married women with small children to be an 'evil' but it did not follow that such employment accounted for a very high rate of infant mortality or that such children were neglected to any greater degree than the children of unemployed mothers.<sup>344</sup> Linking high infant mortality rates to the employment of mothers, Collet argued, was not merely subjective prejudice but dangerous: the percentages of women occupied were not the main causes of infant mortality and such thinking allowed sanitary committees to fail to investigate such conditions as, for example, overcrowding and bad sanitation, the real causes of high infant mortality.

Data collection had been inaccurate: since census returns generally only listed the employment of the husband, they were likely to under-estimate the real number of married women employed. The husband most often filled in the form and although space was provided for the wife's occupation, frequently this was left blank. No information about the wife's occupation prior to marriage was required and the injurious condition of the workplace could have had a cumulative effect on a woman's body and health later on, that is, after her marriage. Collet pointed out that factory returns, collected since 1840, had not been used to investigate the employment of women until 1897, and were only just being applied by the Labour Department to improve the collection of evidence. Census returns should be collated with factory returns, thus giving a greater clarity of the extent of the employment of women, in what trades and

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<sup>343</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Collection and Utilisation of Official Statistics Bearing on the Extent and Effects of the Industrial Employment of Women', p. 228.

<sup>344</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Collection and Utilisation of Official Statistics Bearing on the Extent and Effects of the Industrial Employment of Women', pp. 238-239.

where. Factory returns, Collet argued, had little value alone, giving a purely localised picture of employment patterns, but combined with Census evidence returns could be used for many practical purposes. Collet stressed the importance of 'using' statistics to obtain greater accuracy of evidence. Moreover, she continued, every medical officer should have this evidence to hand.<sup>345</sup> In the event, and partly as a result of work such as Collet's, Clause 17 of the Factory and Workshop Act 1901, read as follows:

The medical officer of health of every district council shall, in his annual report to them, report specifically on the administration of the Factory Acts in workshops and workplaces, and he shall send a copy of his annual report, or so much of it as deals with this subject, to the Secretary of State.<sup>346</sup>

Collet's discussion of the difficulties in acquiring the correct information that she found in her own investigations reflected problems which, Roger Davidson has argued, beset the Board of Trade in the Edwardian period.<sup>347</sup> She admitted that while she had spent some time examining the deficiencies of others' work there were unavoidable flaws in her own; she had concentrated her efforts on the effects of the industrial employment of women on health when the issue should have broadened to include the effect of women's employment on the wages and employment of men, the commercial value of women's work and social loss or gain resulting from employment. Her excuse was that very little information could be obtained from workers who had no knowledge of the situation for anyone else outside their immediate environment and that this ignorance of the larger picture could result in misconceptions and inaccuracies. It was a popular opinion, for example, that the employment of women was increasing and that women were taking work away from men. Collet used the example of Rochdale, where an article had appeared in one of the newspapers that the employment of married women was increasing whereas her own investigation proved that the opposite was true.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Collection and Utilisation of Official Statistics Bearing on the Extent and Effects of the Industrial Employment of Women', pp. 240-241.

<sup>346</sup> Factory and Workshops Act Amendment, A Bill to amend the Factory and Workshop Acts, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1901), p. 7.

<sup>347</sup> Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, pp. 234-236; Modern Records Office, MSS.29/8/1/68: Collet refers to difficulties within the Department, where some colleagues aimed 'not at the truth but at freedom from outside criticism'.

<sup>348</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Collection and Utilisation of Official Statistics Bearing on the Extent and Effects of the Industrial Employment of Women', p. 242.

In her conclusion, Collet made four main points: firstly that information on the employment of women and girls in the census returns was accurate enough to warrant further expense to improve its tabulation further; secondly that the occupations of married women should be separately tabulated; thirdly the details from both the census and the factory returns should be made available for the use of all sanitary districts with a population of more than fifty thousand and for the Potteries. The Potteries were referred to separately because, although they were a series of small towns, industrially they were one, employing large numbers of women in exceptional conditions, with a high level of industrial disease, like lead-poisoning. Furthermore, the larger women's industries should be subdivided as the women working in them were frequently subject to completely different conditions and therefore require the need for different legislative treatment. Finally, Collet argued that there were no official statistics connecting the industrial occupation of women and girls, over the course of a working life, with its effects on health and in the light of high infant mortality rates detailed and accurate statistical evidence should be collated.<sup>349</sup>

This is a path-breaking paper because in it Collet, using all the statistical and comparative skills in her possession, was searching for the causes of infant mortality and not the symptoms. Children die from poverty and from poor sanitation; there was no evidence that they died through the neglect of their employed mothers. That was not to say there was not a link between mothers' employment and infantile deaths, because it was often poverty that drove women to work and this inevitably impacted on the health of their children, often looked after inadequately and with poor nutrition, while their mothers worked to support the family.

Collet was responsible for several reports written for the Board of Trade in the 1890s: *The Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls in 1894*; *Changes in the Employment of Women and Girls in Industrial Centres, Part 1. Flax and Jute Centres*, in 1898 and *The Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants* in 1899.<sup>350</sup> In each of them, she

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<sup>349</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Collection and Utilisation of Official Statistics Bearing on the Extent and Effects of the Industrial Employment of Women', pp. 242-243.

<sup>350</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *A Report By Miss Collet On The Statistics OF Employment Of Women and Girls*, (London: H.M.S.O, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1894) and Board of Trade (Labour Department); Clara Elizabeth Collet, *A Report by Miss Collet on Changes in the Employment of Women and Girls in Industrial Centres: Part1, Flax and Jute Centres*, (London: H.M.S.O., Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898); Clara Elizabeth Collet, *A Report by Miss Collet On The Money Wages Of Indoor Domestic Servants*, (London: H.M.S.O, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1899).

employed random sampling techniques, using Census data to investigate female employment patterns. Her methods were outstanding, but her methodology did appear to create dissent amongst her colleagues.<sup>351</sup> The first report, from which much of 'The Collection and Utilization of Statistics' is derived, was an attempt by Collet to provide recent statistics on the employment of women and girls to give a general picture of the effect of industrial forces during the decade between 1881 and 1891.<sup>352</sup> It drew some interesting conclusions and Collet identified two main errors in current public opinion. Firstly the assumption that the greater employment of middle-class women was representative of general changes in female employment patterns which resulted in more women working. This was not the case. In the middle-classes, a higher standard of living and a decreasing need for daughters at home meant that girls had a greater opportunity to enter the labour market, whereas the converse was true amongst the industrial classes. Greater affluence among the less prosperous classes led to fewer married women working and a drop in the labour market.<sup>353</sup>

The second error of public opinion which Collet addressed was the assumption that women entering the labour market were depriving men of employment. This was not the case in textile trades, for example, and in the boot and shoe trade, where the employment of women had increased. This was found to be a tendency to employ younger people of both sexes. Her evidence demonstrated that women and girls employed in work previously done by men were engaged in work which had increased at an abnormal rate, therefore there was no decrease in the employment of men.<sup>354</sup> Finally, Collet argued, questions of employment must be discussed not only in the context of economic or industrial conditions but also in the context of social conditions. Prominence given to statistics on the employment of married women in this report was because the majority of women marry and therefore incur marital responsibilities. This means their employment is often curtailed or intermittent as a result. In this instance,

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<sup>351</sup> Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, p. 227.

<sup>352</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *A Report by Miss Collet on Changes in the Employment of Women and Girls in Industrial Centres, Part 1, Flax and Jute Centres*, p.3.

<sup>353</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *A Report By Miss Collet On The Statistics OF Employment Of Women and Girls*, p. 71.

<sup>354</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *A Report By Miss Collet On The Statistics OF Employment Of Women and Girls*, pp. 72-73.

Collet argued, to measure the effects of female employment on the family, economic advantage must be measured alongside social disadvantage.<sup>355</sup>

Collet's report on the jute and flax industries was presented in 1898, the same year as the *Collection and Utilization of Official Statistics*, and like that paper, the principal concern was the employment of married women and the effects of that work on the health of their children. Llewellyn Smith's introductory letter made it clear that this was part of the much larger project, *the Report of the Statistics of the Employment of Women*, published in 1894. It was in response to national concerns on the effects of the transition from the domestic to the factory system of industry, married women's labour and the relation of women's to men's work.<sup>356</sup>

The report contrasted the changing positions of women mostly in Scotland and Ireland from the early 1830s (predominantly pre-industrial) with the current (1895) position. In her introduction Collet drew attention to the purpose of her work as a whole and its significance as a fact-finding exercise. Her research and reports at the Board of Trade were to present, in an accessible form, the statistical evidence with regard to regions of industries to shed light on the position of women in those centres and the differences to be found in various localities. This was not intended to be a definitive representation of the history of a district or trade, or even of the women within that trade but rather a general outline, highlighting those disparities that occur in differing areas, to avoid the error of assuming that prevailing forces in one locality were of equal importance in others.<sup>357</sup> Although the immediate concern was for the industrial position of women, Collet felt its main value was the light thrown on the general conditions of their home lives, by which the former is largely determined and which is dependent on the economic position of men in the same district. Collet specifically stressed the importance of information concerning the position of married women. In this, and her other investigations, Collet worked to expose the relationship between women and industry, between women and men in industry and the effects of industrial conditions on wives and mothers. Again, she sought to provide the empirical evidence needed to

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<sup>355</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *A Report By Miss Collet On The Statistics OF Employment Of Women and Girls*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>356</sup> Board of Trade, (Labour Department), *Report by Miss Collet on Changes in the Employment of Women and Girls in Industrial Centres, Part 1, Flax and Jute Centres*, p. iv.

<sup>357</sup> Board of Trade, (Labour Department), *Report by Miss Collet on Changes in the Employment of Women and Girls in Industrial Centres*, pp. 3-4.

examine, for example, the correlation between infant mortality and the employment of married women.<sup>358</sup>

*The Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants* was the product of information collected between 1894 and 1898, and Collet was also responsible for the research. In his introduction, Hubert Llewellyn Smith, the Commissioner for Labour, explained the need for such a report, which was vital to a department seeking to identify long-term shifts in money wages. As we have seen, this was an area that the RCL was unable to investigate, through time constraints. Information about domestic servants was sparse and yet one third of the female population, 1.8 million, were employed in domestic service according to the 1891 census returns. Service was not only the largest women's industry but also the largest single industry for men and women. Details of money wages, Llewellyn Smith explained, were difficult to obtain in such a large and widely spread industry where many wages included board and lodging. Nevertheless, in spite of these limitations this was the first serious investigation into the wages of domestic servants. Its real value lay, Llewellyn Smith suggested, in the foundations it provided for comparisons in the future.<sup>359</sup>

Collet explained in her introduction that questionnaires were distributed privately, to interested parties, who then disseminated them to friends and acquaintances. In this way, she argued, the results would be more trustworthy and accurate as those taking part had an interest in participating. The only specific request for a response was to members of the Royal Statistical Society and the British Economic Association, amongst whose members there was already a professional interest. Simple questions were asked: the town of residence, number of resident servants and number of other people resident in the house, the occupation of the servant (cook, housemaid etc.), wages per annum, additional allowances and length of service. From this data, results on the wages of domestic servants were extrapolated.

Collet's research and commentary on the lives and conditions of women's domestic service gives a valuable portrait of conditions in the industry at the time. This was the first investigation of its kind and showed that the average wage for indoor domestic

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<sup>358</sup> Clara Elizabeth Collet, *A Report By Miss Collet On The Statistics OF Employment Of Women and Girls*, p. 6.

<sup>359</sup> Board of Trade (Labour Department), *Report by Miss Collet on the Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants*, pp. iii-v.

servants was £17 16s in London and £15 10s elsewhere.<sup>360</sup> However, wages varied according to age or the size of the household; a servant under 16 in London might expect £7 9s, but a servant over 40 might earn £27 8s; the average wage for a one servant household was £14 9s, whereas in a household employing six servants, the average was £24 4s.<sup>361</sup> The rate of money wages, Collet argued, was of primary importance, as it determined the extent to which the domestic servant could provide for her own family and for her own future.<sup>362</sup> However, Collet pointed out in her conclusion, that in confining results to money wages, other aspects of domestic service were ignored and the value of good working conditions should not be undervalued; the provision of holidays and the opportunities for entertaining friends, a rare facility, were examples of such working conditions.<sup>363</sup> The value of this work, however, is the information it provides about the wages of domestic servants, the largest single occupation of working women.

Although Collet did not travel across the country to the extent that the women factory inspectors did, nevertheless she travelled fairly widely to collect the returns from factories and businesses to assemble the vast amount of data from which she was able to write her lengthy reports. These trips appear to have been taken alone as there is no mention of assistants accompanying her:

On Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> (July, 1904) in order to get Cost of Living Forms filled up, I went to Sheerness and Sittingbourne, staying the night at the Ferguson's & making Jim's acquaintance, a very jolly baby about one year old. On the Friday I went to Rainham, New Brompton, Strood and Chatham, getting home to London about 9 o'clock.

On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July (1904), I went to Wellingboro', Rushden & Higham Ferrars, putting up at the Hind, Wellinboro' for the night. On Wednesday to Market Harboro', Desboro', Kettering & Nottingham where I put up for the night

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<sup>360</sup> Board of Trade (Labour Department), *Report by Miss Collet on the Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants*, p. iv.

<sup>361</sup> Board of Trade (Labour Department), *Report by Miss Collet on the Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>362</sup> Board of Trade (Labour Department), *Report by Miss Collet on the Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants*, p. 31.

<sup>363</sup> Board of Trade (Labour Department), *Report by Miss Collet on the Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants*, p. 30.

at the Portland. On Thursday to Long Eaton, Langley Mill & Ilkeston, back to Nottingham & London.<sup>364</sup>

The Fergusons' friendship proved loyal, and they often extended to her their hospitality:

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August 1904. Last week nothing special to record until Saturday when I had to go down to New Brompton and Rainham in Kent to see if the Co-operative Societies there could give us information as to the relative expenditure on different items of clothing. I went on to Sheerness and stayed till Sunday evening at the Fergusons.<sup>365</sup>

The following July Collet visited army contractors for Llewellyn Smith, as part of a committee inquiry into all areas of government work in factories.<sup>366</sup>

Collet recognised the need for the greater collation of statistics. There was a lack of co-ordination of labour statistics at this period in spite of pressure from the Board of Trade and the Royal Statistical Society for a Central Statistical Bureau. Statistical evidence was scattered amongst a range of departments and this information could not easily be cross-referenced to give a synopsis of industrial and social problems.<sup>367</sup> Hence the value of, and Collet's frequent use of, the statistical evidence she had amassed during her investigations with Charles Booth. Both Booth and Rowntree had fuelled the pressure for the enquiries into working class wages and living standards that were the focus of Collet's working life. She was indeed supportive of the establishment of a Statistical Bureau.

During the 1890s Collet also gave evidence to select committees on various issues concerning women's employment. Although diary entries about these committees are rare her investigations for the Select Committee on Home Work, 1907 are covered in more detail. Home work was a controversial issue at the turn of the century for those liberal economists who aimed to raise the wages and improve conditions of employment through legislation. Collet's investigations and those of the women factory inspectors (see following chapter) reflected these concerns. The first attempt at such legislation in Britain was the Wages Boards Bill in 1900, introduced by Sir Charles

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<sup>364</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/66.

<sup>365</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/66.

<sup>366</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/92.

<sup>367</sup> Roger Davidson, 'Official Labour Statistics: A Historical Perspective', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A (Statistics in Society)*, Vol. 158, No. 1. (1995), p.168.

Dilke, husband of Emilia Dilke, President of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL).<sup>368</sup> This would establish wage boards to fix the minimum rate to be paid to workers in specific trades, with the express purpose of regulating the sweated trades. For women workers in these trades, with no possibility of union organisation and pay bargaining, it was hoped to provide a minimum wage. It did not become law, although wage boards were being established elsewhere; for example, in 1896, the colony of Victoria in Australia had succeeded in establishing minimum wage-law for four sweated industries. In 1901, a sympathetic summary of this legislation by the political activist and Fabian, William Pember Reeves, had been published in the *Economic Journal*, explaining that the establishment of a minimum wage in six industries had been largely successful and was to be extended to others.<sup>369</sup> In the following edition of the journal Collet, highly critical of Pember Reeves' findings, argued that although more women were employed in Victoria at the end of the experimental period, a smaller percentage was on the higher rates of pay than had been before.<sup>370</sup> Collet also expressed concern that, whilst those industries with newly established wage boards might be successful, no data appeared on the effects of their establishment on the unregulated industries. This would, therefore, present an unbalanced analysis of the effects of the establishment of wage boards in Victoria.

Pressure continued in Britain: the formation of the Anti-Sweating League (ASL) and the Sweated Industries Exhibition, both in 1906 were an expression of public anxieties and had attracted a great deal of attention. Industrial feminists, Fabians and the Labour movement had aroused public opinion on the plight of the poorest workers. Arthur Henderson, Labour MP, presented the Sweated Industries Bill to Parliament in 1907, with the express object to provide for the establishment of wage boards with the power to fix the minimum wage in particular trades. Ernest Aves, Collet's colleague at the Board of Trade, was sent to Australia in 1907 to investigate the legislation in action there. His conclusions were similar to Collet's review of Pember Reeves. Aves was unconvinced by what he saw and pointed out that the protective tariffs in Australia

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<sup>368</sup> Wages Boards, A Bill to provide for the establishment of Wages Boards, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1900).

<sup>369</sup> W.P. Reeves, 'The Minimum Wage Law in Victoria and South Australia', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 43 (Sep., 1901), pp. 334-344.

<sup>370</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Wage Boards in Victoria', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 44 (Dec., 1901), p. 564.

made experimental legislation easier.<sup>371</sup> These reservations were ignored by the Select Committee on Home Work, set up in 1907 by the Liberal Government in reaction to public demands. The remit of this select committee was to provide evidence for the establishment of wages boards in some sweated industries and to investigate the licensing of premises used in these industries.<sup>372</sup>

The Select Committee heard evidence from women factory inspectors and sanitary inspectors, the women's organisations, trade unionists, employers and representatives of the Board of Trade. The majority of those interviewed were in favour of the establishment of wage boards, but there were two opposing voices; Clara Collet and Margaret MacDonald from the Women's Industrial Council. Collet gave evidence to the committee on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1907, shortly after the factory inspector, Rose Squire. Members of the committee, Chiozza Money, Arthur Henderson and Arthur Richardson in particular, took issue with Collet's evidence.<sup>373</sup> Firstly she argued that all home workers were not living in poverty, although some, particularly the elderly, often were; secondly, she disagreed with Squire who had argued that part-time married workers, not working through primary need, were prepared to accept lower wages so undercutting those more needy. Collet argued the opposite, saying that such workers were often more skilled and lack of desperation made them far less likely to accept lower wages.<sup>374</sup> Crucially however, she challenged the remit of the committee itself, asking for clarification as to the purpose of the proposed legislation with regard to the licensing of premises: was it to protect the public from infection or was it to improve the conditions for the home worker? If it was the latter, Collet argued, the registration of premises might simply make it impossible for those whose homes failed the registration criteria to acquire work at all, leaving them worse off. Furthermore, carrying out such legislation would be impossible.<sup>375</sup> In her evidence, she then provided an alternative to the proposal that all premises used by home workers should be registered. She suggested

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<sup>371</sup> Duncan Bythell, *The Sweated Trades: Outwork in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (London: Batsford Academic, 1978), p. 244.

<sup>372</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Home Work; with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix, (London: H.M.S.O, 1907).

<sup>373</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/100: Chiozza Money was the Liberal M.P. for Paddington and was in favour of a minimum wage in the sweated industries; Arthur Henderson was one of the earliest Labour M.P.s, elected in 1903 for Barnard Castle and succeeding Keir Hardie as Chair of the Labour Party in 1908; Arthur Richardson was a merchant and the Lib-Lab M.P. for Nottingham.

<sup>374</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Home Work, p. 38.

<sup>375</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Home Work, p. 40.

that infectious disease should be required to be notified to the employer and to the Medical Officer of Health. She considered that the better employers would be likely to pay their employees during that period in order to ensure notification and therefore compliance.<sup>376</sup>

After this point the questioning became more aggressive and challenging. Some labour leaders and enlightened liberal democrats had put their faith in legislation to improve conditions at work. Anxious to get legislation through, some members of the committee were not impressed with Collet's challenge to the remit of the committee. Not only had she argued against making assumptions about the nature of home work and the application of a generalised picture, making the point that for many women home work was a reasonable form of employment but she had questioned the validity of the proposals themselves. Collet had reservations about the effectiveness of the proposed legislation, both wage boards and the licensing of premises and believed that regulatory measures on the registration of premises might be counterproductive and drive from employment those most in need.

The questioning from Money, Henderson and Richardson, in different ways, challenged the evidence, and suggested she was presenting an incomplete picture.<sup>377</sup> All three members of the committee who questioned her asked whether she had personally visited the homes in the areas on which her evidence was based. Collet explained that many were visited by her two assistants and that she was using their evidence as well as her own. She also emphasised that she visited every trade that was new to her.<sup>378</sup>

Collet's consistent point was that notification of disease as she had suggested, would be a more effective method of infection prevention than the registration of premises. Collet, like her colleagues David Schloss and Llewellyn Smith had, as Roger Davidson has observed, been shaped by their experiences on the Booth Enquiry. They believed that a systematic analysis of working class life would supply the data with which to inform labour issues.<sup>379</sup> Collet questioned legislative proposals that ignored the realities of the labour market as she saw them. Attempts to undermine her credibility as a

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<sup>376</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Home Work, p. 41.

<sup>377</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Home Work; with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix, (London: H.M.S.O, 1907).

<sup>378</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Home Work, p.109.

<sup>379</sup> Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, p. 119

witness, by questioning whether she could have visited all the places she claimed to know about, was probably an expression of exasperation. The committee were more impressed with her Board of Trade colleague, George Askwith. However, Askwith had very little experience of the sweated trades other than boot making and he was not questioned on the licensing of premises, but solely the establishment of wages boards.

Why then did Collet's evidence provoke such aggressive questioning from members of the Select Committee? Collet expressed a direct challenge to the value of the proposed legislation and her challenges could be interpreted as an attempt to broaden the parameters of the debate, by shifting the emphasis from the sweated industries alone to those that were also established in the wholesale trades. Furthermore, it may well have been that a woman in an authoritative role, expressing her own viewpoint and not necessarily what was required appeared confrontational to some members of the panel. In the event, the proposed Sweated Industry Bill was aborted, although the expectation was that minimum wage legislation would be prioritised in the next parliament.<sup>380</sup>

Collet's work changed by 1909, prior to the Trade Boards Act. She began attending meetings in the office of Winston Churchill, President of the Board of Trade from February 1908 until April 1910 with politicians and advisors including Sidney Webb and William Beveridge. These meetings were to plan the drafting of the new Trade Boards Bill and Labour Exchanges Bill and Collet's contribution to the discussion was to advise on aspects of women's employment, particularly that of married women home workers.<sup>381</sup> As a result of these deliberations, the Trade Boards Act 1909, introduced by the President of the Board of Trade, Winston Churchill, with the support of Sidney Buxton and Harold Tennant, was finally passed in 1909 as part of the Liberal Government's welfare reforms. It applied to four trades initially: ready-made and bespoke tailoring; paper box making; machine-made lace and net finishing and hammered and dollied or tommied chain-making. These were different trades from those proposed in the earlier bills, which had been tailoring, dressmaking and shirt finishing. These industries were not confined only to the sweated trades. Furthermore, the attempt to register all places of work, including domestic environs, which Collet considered logistically impossible, was omitted. It received cautious support from the Labour movement and industrial feminists; in the event, it was extended gradually in the

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<sup>380</sup>Sweated Industries, *Hansard*, HL Deb 26 October 1908 vol 194 cc1558-64.

<sup>381</sup>Miller, *Relations*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), p.145-6.

following years, partly through the efforts of the Women's Trade Union League and the National Federation of Women Workers. To what extent Collet's evidence had obstructed the passage of earlier acts is impossible to ascertain, but the 1909 Act had widened the earlier parameters by not confining the wage boards to sweated industries, and the registration of premises was omitted. Furthermore, her concern that there would be a reduction in the numbers of women on higher rates of pay was confirmed. This is precisely what the economic historian, R.H.Tawney found in his research in the tailoring industry in 1915.<sup>382</sup> A contemporary observer called the Act, 'a prolonged and unusually deliberate study of a complex social problem'.<sup>383</sup> It has been argued since that the restriction of minimum wage legislation to a few isolated trades before 1914 diverted public opinion from further pressuring for more encompassing legislative change.<sup>384</sup> It was closely followed by the Labour Exchanges Act 1909, which established labour exchanges to enable the unemployed to find work.

Collet had appeared to have enjoyed working alongside these politicians, as the tone of some of her comments demonstrated.

'I don't think the Board of Trade loves Mr. Churchill,' she comments in her diary, 'but I confess that he interests me as a human being whatever his faults maybe. It is partly because I only know 'intellectuals' or 'thoughtful men' that this type of person governing them appeals to a side of me which might belong to a respectable bohemian.'<sup>385</sup>

Unfortunately she does not list Churchill's faults, but it is intriguing to hear her acknowledging a 'bohemian' side, albeit respectable. She also enjoyed good relations with most of her male colleagues, particularly Hubert Llewellyn Smith and David Schloss, who shared with her a background in investigation with the Booth Enquiry. However, this pleasure turned to annoyance and in August 1910, her diary takes a dramatic turn. Suddenly, for reasons which she makes clear, Collet hands in her resignation as Senior Investigator for Women's Industries after seventeen years of loyal service. She was fifty. Collet gives a full account of her exasperation:

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<sup>382</sup> R. H. Tawney, *The Establishment of Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Industry*, (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1915), p. 87.

<sup>383</sup> A.N. Holcombe, 'The British Minimum Wages Act of 1909', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (May, 1910), p. 574.

<sup>384</sup> Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, p. 270.

<sup>385</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/133.

On 2nd June I sent in my resignation for two reasons (1) in order to speak freely about the way in which the women's side of the Labour Exchanges is being organised, capable women being subordinated to men who know nothing and care nothing about women's interests and (2) because there was nothing to stay for.<sup>386</sup>

On this occasion it would appear that the frustration she had felt about the way in which able women were sidelined finally caused her to lose her temper. She had had two interviews with her colleague at the Board of Trade, George Askwith, where she had outlined her fury and she had felt that after the second, he had wanted her to go.<sup>387</sup> She wrote to him expressing her feelings and received a letter back that assured her she was quite wrong. Her response was defensive:

I replied that no doubt I had transferred to his mind the criticisms I had passed on myself & that as I had already said in my letter of resignation I had no shadow of complaint to make of his treatment of me.<sup>388</sup>

While she was conducting these discussions she was trying to negotiate a good redundancy package for herself. At this time Collet was one of the most highly paid women in the civil service but the women's pension scheme had not been updated with the men's in 1909 at the request of the Civil Servants' Women's Associations, who felt it was not beneficial to their members.<sup>389</sup> Collet's negotiations were fairly protracted throughout June 1910. At the end of the month, she went down to the Llewellyn Smiths' for the weekend, and was obviously persuaded to reconsider. After her return she wrote in the diary:

Since speaking to Sir Hubert I had been having a good many qualms of conscience as every now and then really important questions come up which do need someone with experience gained outside to be consulted and also I felt that if earlier retirement were permitted I should be greatly blamed for having

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<sup>386</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/137.

<sup>387</sup> Mr. George Askwith, comptroller of the Labour Department.

<sup>388</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/137.

<sup>389</sup> For greater detail, see Hilda Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, chapter 7, pp. 157-166; Dorothy Evans, *Women and the Civil Service*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1934), pp. 15-16.

thrown away this post. So I wrote to Sir Hubert asking to be allowed to withdraw my resignation.<sup>390</sup>

So normal business was resumed, but the real reason behind her resignation, the cause of her anger, was discrimination within the workplace and the inequalities in pay and superannuation within the civil service that disadvantaged women. She was exasperated by the environment in which she worked and the way in which the procedures of legislative change were being handled by male civil servants. However, she felt it her responsibility to ensure the future of her post in the department, which she felt would be lost to a female successor on her retirement. She was later reassured that if she were to receive a compensating annuity on retirement, for which she had been negotiating, it would not mean the abolition of her post but the likely creation of another, though it would probably be a cheaper one. This cannot have been very much of a reassurance and is indicative, as Jane Miller has argued, of the anomalous position of professional women, denied the suffrage, not allowed to marry and where their skills were considered nonessential.<sup>391</sup>

##### **5. The working environment for a woman at the Board of Trade.**

Collet's diary provides glimpses of herself as a woman in a male environment although it is often rather difficult to distinguish between discriminatory behaviour and methodological clashes. This is illustrated by her problematic relationship with her colleague at the Board of Trade, F.H. McLeod.<sup>392</sup> McLeod was the only statistician and investigator to be appointed by competitive examination - Llewellyn Smith, Schloss, Collet and others had been appointed without examination from outside the civil service. McLeod had risen from the position of a lower division clerk in 1889 to become Director of the Department of Labour Statistics in 1912.<sup>393</sup> Collet felt an antagonism in McLeod's behaviour towards her and by 1908 she distrusted his actions:

I wrote a very rapid memorandum on Thursday & got it typed in time to leave a copy of it for Mr. L.I. Smith at the Board on my way home as I never can feel sure

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<sup>390</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/139.

<sup>391</sup> Miller, *Relations*, p. 147.

<sup>392</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/110.

<sup>393</sup> Davidson, *Whitehall and the Labour Problem in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain*, p. 106.

that Mr. McLeod transmits anything in the shape I send it – or even transmits it at all.<sup>394</sup>

As early as 1898, Collet had suggested a minor disagreement with McLeod.<sup>395</sup> In August 1904, she wrote that he adopted a practice of, 'aiming not at truth but at freedom from outside criticism.'<sup>396</sup> On another occasion, in March 1905, she wrote of having had a 'straight talk with Mr. McLeod' about feeling that little of her work was valued. He apparently took this very well and changed his tone subsequently. At this point, her diary suggests that these differences were likely to have been a difference of statistical outlook rather than McLeod's prejudice, however.<sup>397</sup> A later entry mentions how Mr. McLeod withheld figures on the position of women in the cotton industry from Collet who was preparing to give evidence to the Fair Wages Committee in 1908. She had sent for these figures, to which she was perfectly entitled and this was a direct challenge to her professional status. Collet merely mentioned in her diary that this incident was characteristic of his attitude and that she would manage without the information.<sup>398</sup> She appeared to be aware of and was resigned to the origin of this antagonism. There were no further recorded clashes with McLeod.

Collet records other instances of male attitudes in the diary with wry amusement. Once in 1909, at a meeting with Winston Churchill then President of the Board of Trade, Churchill 'damned that fellow Carlisle' and then apologised to Collet for his language. She compared 'the different ways in which they (the men) treat me'. George Askwith, for instance, she records, 'aims at treating me like a man with no more respect than a man in the same place'.<sup>399</sup> Clearly Collet's position did present some male colleagues with a problem. However, others like Llewellyn Smith, with whom she spent several weekends at his home, had no such difficulties. Their friendship lasted many years, since at least the Booth Enquiry, where they had not only examined industrial issues together but had also collaborated on a study of the provision of secondary education in London, Llewellyn Smith focusing on boys' and Collet on the education of girls. Nevertheless these relationships had to be negotiated with care. Educated, privileged

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<sup>394</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/110.

<sup>395</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/57.

<sup>396</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/68.

<sup>397</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/78.

<sup>398</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/116.

<sup>399</sup> COL, MSS.29/8/1/133. George Askwith was a civil servant and industrial arbitrator, who had been appointed to the Board of Trade by Lloyd George in 1907.

women had worked alongside men in philanthropy and in voluntary positions for many years, but it was a new experience to work with women civil servants such as Collet who, by 1908 was a Senior Investigator at the Board of Trade. In her relationship with the taciturn McLeod, Collet was displaying a professional tact she often lamented a lack of in her private relationships.

## **6. Conclusion.**

Women entered the professional civil service at a vital moment in the development of industrial capitalism. Economic depression accelerated the development of low paid mass production, with a proliferation of factory and workshop trades throughout Britain's towns and villages. The Liberal intelligentsia, under pressure from the trade union and labour movement, from the growth of feminist campaigns for education, economic independence and improved conditions for women, believed that reformist legislation would improve the conditions for the industrial working classes. Political economists since Mill had formulated this possibility and the Liberal Party, together with Labour MPs, Fabians, feminists and trade unions were calling for legislation to control hours, the sweated industries and to establish a minimum wage and to provide health insurance. The 1906 Liberal administration was the great reforming government which historians still argue laid the foundations for the welfare state, and the Board of Trade was central to this reformist programme.

Clara Collet was part of these movements. Her father had been a free-thinker and friend of Karl Marx and Collet herself was a close friend of Eleanor Marx. She had an MA in political economy, was a founding member of the Junior Economic Club and the British Economic Association and an active member of the Royal Statistical Society. She had worked on the Booth Enquiry, was Assistant Lady Commissioner to the Royal Commission on Labour and by the time of her appointment to the Board of Trade in 1893, she had published widely. Her work at the Board of Trade on the collation of statistical data on working women's lives provided an essential source from which legislation could be prepared. Her report on the impact of industrial work on working mothers, for example, highlighted poverty as the prime causal agent: in so doing, she ensured that the effects of poverty, poor sanitation and bad housing on mothers and their children, not the fact of married women's, or mothers' employment outside the home, was central to the debate on social conditions. Her work on domestic service

was the first of its kind and would set the standard for subsequent studies. The evidence she provided for the Commission on Home Work in 1907, which so exasperated the commission members, illustrated her belief that in order to produce an impartial basis for debate, the methodical collection of data was essential and that superficial legislative proposals would ignore the realities of the labour market.

Collet was an exceptional woman: a pioneer within the civil service, she was an expert in women's labour statistics and the collator of evidence presented to several commissions. What differentiated Collet from her contemporaries was that her working life required her to collect and describe other women's experiences, specifically working-class women thus providing an authoritative body of evidence of use for researchers of women's experiences for subsequent generations. She empathised with women workers and yet disengaged from those she investigated.<sup>400</sup> Collet did not have the vision of Harriet Taylor: for example, for her, it was either marriage or a profession, unlike Taylor, who could see no reason why the two should not be combined. Collet saw work for those married women engaged in industry as an economic evil, often essential but not preferable. She always regarded marriage as an alternative for career woman, and a profession as an economic safety net for those married women who might need it. She believed that the increased educational opportunities for women across the social classes together with improved economic standards provided women with the prospect to achieve their potential. Collet was a facilitator, providing the statistical evidence from which to pursue economic change. She was one of many strong women who worked for the improvement of women in industry. These women, members of the WTUL, the Women's Industrial Council, suffragists and the first women factory inspectors, for example, drew attention to the issues which would need to be addressed in the future for those women of the fin de siècle generation. Educated and professional, the prospects for women of this generation were not yet certain; marriage, pay differentials, equality legislation, pension rights and security in old age were yet to be fully explored. Collet had the vision and the perseverance to give statistical substance to the discussion.

There were contradictions in Collet's 'lived life'. Clive Hill has argued for her greater radicalisation as she aged, particularly after her retirement.<sup>401</sup> However, this could be

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<sup>400</sup> Miller, *Relations*, p. 150.

<sup>401</sup> Clive E. Hill, 'A Radical in Retirement', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 15, November 2006, pp. 681-700.

accounted for by her sense of liberation after the constraints of working in the civil service. There were certainly radical ideas in her earlier life, even if these were not expressed in political terms. Miller recalls how her great-aunt voted for the Liberal party almost her life, until voting for the Labour party in 1945, and never felt herself to be a socialist, despite her early friendship with the Marx family.<sup>402</sup> However, her support of the Women's Freedom League and the inclusion of her paper on the social status of women occupiers with the reprint of Keir Hardie's *The Citizenship of Women*, published in 1906 by the Independent Labour Party, shows a woman with radical opinions and a willingness for radical action. Although Keir Hardie had argued that the enfranchisement of women was not a party issue, this was a bold move for a serving civil servant.

In 1935, Collet read 'The Present Position of Women in Industry' to the Adam Smith Club.<sup>403</sup> Published later in 1942, the introduction gave short accounts of her early influences: the eleven year old Clara in conversation with a field-labourer over the proposed match tax, who explained to her that the rich ground down the poor as he handed her a hot potato from his lunch; the twelve year old Clara, who was able to do vulgar fractions alongside her charwoman's daughter, and her realization of the growing need for educational opportunities for clever working class girls like Katie Dobbin, who was better at mathematics than Clara.<sup>404</sup> Such remembrances influenced the civil servant she became in later life. Collet's final sentence of 'The Present Position' was:

The economic emancipation of married women dates from 1870; their political emancipation from 1918. Not till 1939 will free-born voters appear on the register.<sup>405</sup>

Collet was never paid as much as men in similar employment but she was self-supporting. She and her siblings had a property income in their retirement years, although when these properties were acquired is not known.<sup>406</sup> The resignation incident, as Miller has demonstrated, illustrated the anomalies in her position in respect of male

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<sup>402</sup> Miller, *Relations*, p. 149.

<sup>403</sup> Founded in 1880, the Adam Smith Club was for discussion and debate on the work of the economist, Adam Smith. There were discussions on broader economic issues, and the club was opened to women in 1891.

<sup>404</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Present Position of Women in Industry', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 105, No. 2 (1942), p. 122.

<sup>405</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'The Present Position of Women in Industry', p. 124.

<sup>406</sup> Miller, *Relations*, p. 107.

influence and female experience, which also affected her own life.<sup>407</sup> Her anxiety that the job would cease to exist after her retirement was real. Further promotion was not possible, although she did have a career in the service and a pension on retirement.

Mary Paley Marshall, reviewing *Educated Working Women*, in 1902 wrote that no one was more fitted to write on the subject than Miss Collet.<sup>408</sup> Collet wrote extensively on the problems facing this second generation of university women like herself, for whom education was available but for whom a career structure had not yet developed. An advocate of widening participation in the professions, she also addressed the issues of marriage, promotional opportunities and ageism. In her own professional life, she was limited to working on areas which were deemed suitable for a woman, and however valuable her work might have been, promotional opportunities were restricted to that sphere. She was one of the first to recognise ageism in the workplace, a direct challenge to women's continued progress in the professions and one that remains unresolved. She was a member of the powerful group of civil servants, liberal progressives like her, who helped to construct the social reformist legislation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In her work, she never made the mistake of placing women in a general category or of generalising the experiences of individual.

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<sup>407</sup> Miller, *Relations*, p. 150.

<sup>408</sup> Mary P. Marshall, review author, 'Educated Working Women', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 46 (Jun., 1902), p. 252.

## **Chapter Four.**

### **The Lady Inspector's Visit: Women in the Factory Inspectorate, 1893-1902.**

The first two women factory inspectors were appointed in 1893. One of the outcomes of the women assistant commissioners' work on the Royal Commission on Labour, 1892-1894, had been the establishment of the first female factory inspectorate within the Home Office and the appointment of May Abraham and Mary Paterson as 'lady inspectors'. The Women's Trade Union League had long pressed for this development and although the Chief Inspector of Factories in 1879 had doubted the wisdom of such a move, increasing pressure from the women's unions and the Royal Commission's investigations changed opinion. Between 1893 and 1921, the women's department became an essential part of the inspectorate as a whole. In 1921, the Chief wrote that the departments were to be integrated into a single organisation, and the women inspectors would be eligible for all posts.<sup>409</sup> This caused disagreement among both

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<sup>409</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1879, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1880), p. 98; Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1921, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1922), pp. 9-10, as quoted in Dame Adelaide Anderson, *Women in the Factory, An Administrative Adventure, 1893-1921*, (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 190.

women and men inspectors for different reasons at the time. The historian Mary Drake McFeely has shown that most women felt the equality of opportunity offered by amalgamation was essential and would give women greater opportunity to influence policy and for promotion. Some of the men feared that there might be fewer positions for men and women lacked the qualifications to work with the whole range of industrial issues.<sup>410</sup> The amalgamation of the departments precipitated Adelaide Anderson's resignation as Principal Lady Inspector, fearing that it would mean the loss of an independent voice for women.

This chapter uses the work of these first women inspectors and assesses the early impact on the working conditions for women in factories and workshops. It will utilise the memoirs of three early women factory inspectors; Adelaide Anderson, Rose Squire and the diary of Lucy Deane, in conjunction with Hilda Martindale's *Women Servants of the State*, an overview of the history of women in the civil service before 1938. It will also use the annual reports of the Chief Inspectors of Factories to reconstruct an overview of their investigations.

The memoirs of Squire and Deane differ from those of Anderson and Martindale. With Squire and Deane the reader treads the streets of Whitechapel or Manchester, or slips into a hotel by night so as to remain unseen by the factory owner busy contravening the Factory Acts. This chapter recaptures the significance of those early visits, for the women and girls who were working overly long hours in unhealthy conditions, many of them risking infection working in the 'dangerous trades', from lead poisoning and its effects, or phosphorus poisoning, which resulted in necrosis of the jawbone (phossy jaw) or anthrax, recorded in these accounts.<sup>411</sup> The memoirs conjure up images which are both humorous and intensely tragic: glimpses of the bustling, lively and sometimes obstreperous factory workers.

Lucy Deane and Rose Squire's working lives began in 1893, as the first women sanitary inspectors. Appointed in the same year as the first two women factory inspectors, they were employed by the Kensington Vestry (later the Borough Council), after training with the National Health Society. They were to assist in the enforcement

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<sup>410</sup> Mary Drake McFeely, *Lady Inspectors; The Campaign for a Better Workplace, 1893-1921*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 156-157.

<sup>411</sup> Rose E. Squire O.B.E., *Thirty Years in the Public Service, an Industrial Retrospect*, (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1927); Warwick University, Modern Records Office, LAS, MSS.69.

of the Factory and Workshop Acts and the Public Health (London) Act 1891. They had both gained diplomas in anatomy, physiology and hygiene, nursing and first aid. The Medical Officer of Kensington was convinced of the unsanitary conditions in many workshops and laundries where women were employed and considered the nature of the work 'too delicate' for male inspectors.<sup>412</sup> Initially appointed for a probationary period of six months only, if they were to continue in post, they needed the full statutory powers of a sanitary inspector authorised by the Local Government Board (the forerunner of the Ministry of Health). They sat for the same examinations as the men, qualifying not only in public health law but also plumbing, building construction and meat inspection. Successful in examination, the Local Government Board somewhat anxiously appointed the two women.<sup>413</sup> By 1896, four of the London Vestries had appointed women sanitary inspectors.<sup>414</sup>

As sanitary inspectors in 1893, Lucy Deane and Rose Squire gained valuable experience that they brought to the women's inspectorate at the Home Office, Deane in 1894 and Squire the following year. Squire accounted for her move to the factory inspectorate as the level of frustration that she felt at being confined to dealing solely with sanitary issues, when questions of long hours, lack of mealtimes and other health related issues were similarly pressing.<sup>415</sup> As a factory inspector, she was licensed to address the broader issues of women's health and well-being in the workplace.

*Thirty Years in the Public Service*, Squire's account of her career in the Home Office is detailed, expressing empathy towards those women amongst whom she worked and frustration at the bureaucratic hurdles that often thwarted her efforts. Squire's attitude was that of the clear-headed but warm-hearted humanitarian. She was the daughter of a well-to-do Harley Street physician. Her decision in 1893, to train as a sanitary inspector was considered by her family to be at best, eccentric and 'unladylike', but they were an educated family with high aspirations and were tolerant of her ambitions. Squire pointed out that such an opinion as that of her family was not confined to her own social class but was widespread.<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Squire, pp. 19-20.

<sup>413</sup> Squire, pp. 20-23.

<sup>414</sup> Patricia Hollis, *Women in Public: The Women's Movement, 1850-1900*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), p. 242.

<sup>415</sup> Squire, p. 26.

<sup>416</sup> Squire, p. 18.

Lucy Deane's 'business diary' also provides a detailed and meticulous account of the early days of the work of women in the factory inspectorate. It was not meant for publication, but for personal use as it covers all aspects of her life, including financial details and her menstrual cycle; she records all letters sent; details of her social life and her friendships and snippets of her life with her sister, Hyacinthe, (Hye). Whereas Squire describes an upper middle-class woman boldly venturing forth into unknown territory among the factories, homes and shops to inspect working conditions for women, Deane comments on the character and approach of the other women. On April 28<sup>th</sup> 1894 having just joined the department, Deane was shadowing May Abraham. Abraham, she wrote, was 'more abrupt' than she was herself, Abraham never rang, for example, on arrival at a factory but went straight to the workers. Abraham's 'bug-bear' was overtime, whereas Deane's was overcrowding.<sup>417</sup> As we will see, the early first women factory inspectors, especially Rose Squire and Lucy Deane adopt a very 'hands-on' method in their working lives.

Adelaide Anderson and Hilda Martindale describe different aspects of the work of the women inspectors.<sup>418</sup> Anderson's memoir is a history of the early days of women in the factory inspectorate. More nuanced and reflective than that of Squire, it focuses principally on the period of her own leadership. Anderson was appointed Principal Lady Inspector of Factories in 1897 and held this position until her retirement in 1921. Although it is a personal testimony Anderson's objective was to write the story of the achievements of all the women inspectors in improving the working conditions for women and girls under the Factory Acts and the Truck Acts.<sup>419</sup> Martindale's book tells the history of women in the civil service to 1938. After thirty years in the factory inspectorate, she moved to the Treasury in 1933, retiring in 1937. She covers all aspects of women's achievement throughout the service. It is not a personal story and gives a more detached overview of the progress of women in the service than either Squire or Deane. Martindale also wrote two other volumes which include personal

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<sup>417</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/4, p. 26. (my own page numbering throughout).

<sup>418</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, and Hilda Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938).

<sup>419</sup>Squire, p. 9; Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p.ix. Truck legislation was designed to prevent the iniquitous system of paying workers in kind, rather than in money wages. This resulted in workers being paid in poor quality goods they did not want for a high price.

accounts of her work in the factory inspectorate and the work of Adelaide Anderson.<sup>420</sup> Both these will be referenced in the next two chapters.

These accounts present a full and detailed picture of the early women's factory inspectorate. They describe work on the factory floor, and the women employed there. They demonstrate the complex difficulties in dealing with the Irish gombeen men and women who paid in kind rather than money wages, issues of industrial accidents and disease, and the complexity of the subsequent prosecutions, both successes and failures.<sup>421</sup> They describe the quantities of paperwork, learning to ride a bicycle, (invaluable in getting around, and travelling incognito). They demonstrate the impact of a few intelligent professional women on the factory environment, sometimes patronising and overly dramatic, who used tact as well as coercion with employers to achieve their purpose, but who were equally capable of prosecuting lawbreakers with incisive legal skill. Such expertise, exercised with subterfuge on occasions, ensured the growth and development of the department.

Rose Squire quotes the remit of the women's authority from her own warrant, signed by the Home Secretary on her appointment in 1896. As an inspector she had the right,

to enter and inspect all factories, workshops, laundries and other places under the Act, and all schools in which she has reasonable cause to believe that children employed in a factory or workshop or laundry are for the time being educated, and to examine all persons found therein and to exercise such other powers as may be necessary in carrying the Act into effect, and in pursuance of the Act I hereby authorise the said Rose Elizabeth Squire to prosecute, conduct or defend before a court of summary jurisdiction or justice any information, complaint, or other proceeding arising under the Act, or in the discharge of her duty as such inspector.<sup>422</sup>

With this, she wrote, she 'sallied forth alone'. Mary Drake McFeely refers to these women as 'Don Quixotes in petticoats', an apt description, conjuring up as it does tilting at windmills and winning, of their strength of purpose and the way in which they created

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<sup>420</sup> Hilda Martindale, *From One Generation To Another, 1839-1944*, (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1944) and Hilda Martindale C.B.E., *Some Victorian Portraits and Others*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1948).

<sup>421</sup> Gombeen is a word of Anglo-Irish extraction meaning moneylender.

<sup>422</sup> Squire, p. 33.

a strong and vibrant department in the face of the enormity of the task and some opposition and political manoeuvrings from male colleagues.<sup>423</sup>

From the start, the women's department was not a subsection of the men's, but an independent and autonomous division, responsible for the welfare of women and children in factories and workshops, under the jurisdiction of the Chief Inspector of Factories. In 1893, the Chief was R.E. Sprague Oram, who proved a staunch supporter of the women's inspectorate until his retirement in 1896. In 1921, Squire recorded, Herbert Asquith, Home Secretary from 1892-1895, debating in the House of Commons in support of a motion that women should be appointed to, and continue to hold, positions in the civil service under the same conditions as men, said: 'I may indeed claim ... to be a pioneer in the matter. When I was at the Home Office nearly thirty years ago I introduced the appointment for the first time of women as inspectors of factories.'<sup>424</sup> He had, of course, been under pressure to do so, but that he should make such a claim is a reflection of the success of the women's department.

### **1. A Joyous Adventure: the daily life for a woman factory inspector.**

The remit of the women inspectors was to look after 'the health and the industrial conditions under which their fellow women labour in factories and workshops'.<sup>425</sup> In his introduction to the Annual Report of 1893, Sprague Oram, the Chief Inspector, had explained that the work of the two new inspectors was to make specific enquiries in particular areas, acting as peripatetic inspectors and not attached to any particular districts.<sup>426</sup> This was the only possible course, as there were just two of them, but the logistics of how this was to be most efficiently implemented was yet to be settled. It was soon realised that two women factory inspectors were not enough and two more female inspectors, (Lucy Deane and Adelaide Anderson) were to be appointed in 1894. Working women and children throughout Britain had, up to this point, little course for redress on any grievances, but there were still very few women inspectors and they had responsibility for a vast female workforce throughout Britain. The department was structured simply; they were either directed by the Chief Inspector to the areas where

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<sup>423</sup> McFeely, chapter 7.

<sup>424</sup> Squire, p. 18. It was ironic that during his tenure as Prime Minister, he was a fierce opponent of women's suffrage.

<sup>425</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1893, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1894), p. 10.

<sup>426</sup> Annual Report, 1893, p. 10.

there was considered the greatest need, for example, laundries or the dangerous trades or sent by the Chief to respond to complaints received, sometimes anonymously from employees or from women's trade unions.

In the first year after appointment, with only two in the department, the system was set up whereby all visited and outcomes were logged. Abraham and Paterson then reported on their work during the period from May until October 1893, in the Annual Report of that year. At first, Abraham had been investigating millinery, dressmaking and tailoring in London, and in eight other major cities. She also conducted special enquiries into the laundry and match trades, and made more general enquiries whilst in the area of those trades. She investigated instances of illegal overtime, inadequate ventilation, inadequate fire precautions, accidents in the workplace and violation of the Truck Acts. Since the 1888 Match Girls' Strike, public attention had been alerted to the long hours and dangerous conditions of the industry, and factory inspection in this largely female industry had been prioritised. Abraham commented on the employees reluctance to object through fear of retribution; ill health inherent in many hours of overtime; the need for an abstract of the Truck Act to be on display in factories and workshops to inform employees of their rights. These and other issues were rapidly identified as areas for investigation.

Mary Paterson, working in the north of England and in Scotland, had also been detailed to make special enquiries into the laundry and match industries as well as creameries and violation of the Truck Acts. The superintending inspector wrote that he then requested her to go through 'the principal towns in Scotland, and to report to me on the observance of the law as to the employment of women, female young persons, and children in each district.'<sup>427</sup> All this had been completed in a period of only five months. The sheer scale of the work they had undertaken immediately becomes evident. These first reports indicate where the greatest need for change was felt to be, and it is these areas that will be the focus in this chapter: laundries; the 'dangerous trades'; violations of the Truck Acts; excessive overtime; insufficient sanitary provision.

In 1894, there were four female inspectors, each writing their own reports. This system of individual reports incorporated into the Chief Inspector's Annual Report was continued until 1897, although Abraham was appointed as Superintending Lady

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<sup>427</sup> Annual Report 1893, pp. 10-14.

Inspector in 1896. When Anderson was appointed Principal Lady Inspector on the retirement of Abraham in 1897, the new Principal collated a specific report from the lady inspectors, in the same way as the Chief Inspector did for the men's department. This was included as a completely separate report within the Annual Report, thus separating further the work of the women's department from that of the men. It gave the women's department a greater autonomy, and Anderson's position a greater influence and was characteristic of her leadership. Throughout her career as Principal, Anderson was keen to promote the department as a discrete entity and her inspectors as respected *tours de force*. In his introduction to the 1894 report, Sprague Oram expressed his appreciation to Anderson, for a *précis* of the factory laws in France which she had added, and where she emphasised the French regulations with respect to sanitation and to ventilation, and to the restrictions placed on the labour of women and children.<sup>428</sup> In her brief analysis of the French system, Anderson was fuelling the demand for information on foreign systems that were required during this period of intense debate on the level of welfare legislative intervention. The following year, she provided a report on the protection of labour in industry in the Austrian Empire.<sup>429</sup> The French had excluded both women and children from a large number of unhealthy or dangerous trades and Anderson argued that, whilst it was admirable to exclude children and young persons from such trades, with due care and regulation, women could work as safely as men, and the prominence should be placed on improving safety levels for workers of both sexes. In France, unlike England, regulations were prohibitive rather than regulatory.<sup>430</sup>

The 1891 Factory Act had raised the age of employment for children from ten to twelve. Abraham suggested that this be raised further, citing the New York Factory Laws which had prohibited the employment of children under the age of fourteen, with beneficial results.<sup>431</sup> She also wanted improvements in the provision of fire escapes and complained of insufficient heating.<sup>432</sup> Overtime, the requirement of certificates of fitness for work in workshops and insufficient sanitary provision, particularly in the dangerous

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<sup>428</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1894, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895) p. 6.

<sup>429</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1895, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896) pp. 188-255.

<sup>430</sup> Annual Report, 1894, p. 33.

<sup>431</sup> Annual Report, 1894, p. 13.

<sup>432</sup> Annual Report, 1894, pp. 16-17.

trades were also referred to by all the women inspectors. They investigated contraventions of current legislation and made suggestions for the improvement in legislative protection.

By 1894, the four female inspectors were covering enormous distances and a vast number of trades. Their reports reveal the breadth of their investigations and there are suggestions for improvements throughout. The daily life for these early inspectors was varied and demanding. For example, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1897 was a typical day for Lucy Deane. She began the day by writing six letters, including letters to Adelaide Anderson, Rose Squire, Mary Paterson and her ex-chief, Sprague Oram.<sup>433</sup> She then inspected in Whitechapel, visited the East End Children's hospital in Shadwell to inquire about the details of an accident where a child's hand had been hurt in one of the machines in a toy factory. She then made a visit to the London Hospital and went from there to visit the mother of the injured child, who reported that the hand was still too badly hurt for the child to return to work for another three days, although the accident had taken place on January 16<sup>th</sup>. Deane made the comparison with another accident, where the factory occupiers had alleged the accident "too slight to report" and yet the wound was still bad, drawing attention to flaws in the system of registration of accidents, obligatory under the 1895 Factory Act.<sup>434</sup> Details of the injured hand were then sent to Abraham and she completed her day by visiting the Whitechapel Salvation Army Women's Shelter, although she does not give the reason for the visit.<sup>435</sup>

Such a day was typical for all four women, and this strenuous workload continued every day, often until well into the evening. They checked on overtime and contraventions of the factory acts in factories and workshops. Office work was often done during the day, (days being set aside for the purpose), but administrative work was also done in the evenings and on Sundays. The cases they investigated were meticulously followed up: for example, Deane sent a special report on the toy factory accident to the newly married May Abraham, now May Tennant on 12<sup>th</sup> March, and went with the mother for a

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<sup>433</sup> Sprague Oram had retired in 1896 and was succeeded by Dr. Arthur Whitelegge.

<sup>434</sup> Factory and Workshops, A Bill to amend and extend the law relating to factories and workshops, (1895, 329), [58 & 59 Vict], Clause 20, p. 9.

<sup>435</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/18, pp. 1-2.

further visit to the East London Hospital on the following day.<sup>436</sup> Whether such visits were the norm is difficult to ascertain, but several were recorded.

## 2. Prosecutions.

Prosecutions of employers for contravening the factory acts were a significant part of the work from the very earliest days and the women inspectors rapidly became expert in the law, although they had no previous experience.<sup>437</sup> Anderson recalled her anxiety when, several weeks after appointment, she was required to prosecute an employer for the illegal employment of girls, despite never having entered a police court. An in depth knowledge of the factory acts was indispensable when giving evidence in a court of law. Anderson recalled using Clause 17 of the 1878 Act to 'make an order in addition to imposing a penalty on an occupier for failure to keep his factory in conformity with the Act'.<sup>438</sup> In the early days, all prosecutions had to be referred to the Chief Inspector for clearance. In the men's department, all prosecutions were referred for authorization to the superintending inspectors in any district. However, in 1896, Abraham was appointed as Superintending Lady Inspector, and for a short time, until her retirement in 1897, prosecutions could be referred to her. This gave the women's department greater credibility and independent status but caused friction amongst the men. When Anderson was chosen to succeed Abraham, pressure was exerted to change the title from Superintending to Principal Lady Inspector. This was not merely a semantic argument but a downgrading of her position because the right to authorise prosecution was removed. All authorisations for prosecutions were returned to the Chief Inspector, Spague Oram's successor, Arthur Whitelegge. This move reflected the resentment of some of the men and the reluctance of Whitelegge to antagonise them. The women had become successful prosecutors and were angered and frustrated by the decision.

Prosecutions were beset with difficulties. Finding witnesses who were prepared to testify against an employer was the most difficult task. Terrified of losing their livelihoods, witnesses were often intimidated by employers or by foremen. Obtaining witness statements could also be difficult; the inspector often had to insist on

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<sup>436</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/18, p. 4.

<sup>437</sup> *Factory Inspectorships (Qualifications, &c)*, (London: HMSO, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1891). Although factory inspectors were examined on the details of the factory acts from 1878, the education acts of 1876 and 1880 and the Protection of Children Act, 1889, there was no legal knowledge required.

<sup>438</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 201-202.

interviewing without the presence of the employer. Workers who lived on the premises, for example, those in shops working illegally long hours were very vulnerable to pressure from their employers. However, the women inspectors quickly gained legal expertise, and they had considerable success: of the ninety two cases pursued in 1897 for example, eighty six resulted in conviction.<sup>439</sup> Only two of these cases involved contraventions of the Truck Acts but Anderson pointed out in her report that the 1897 Truck Act, tightening restrictions, had only recently come into operation. By 1899, twenty two out of twenty seven prosecutions under the 1897 Truck Act were successful.<sup>440</sup> The most prosecutions for one offence in both of these years was the employment of young people without a certificate of fitness to work, required under Clause 26 of the 1895 Factory Act. Of a total of sixty four cases, only one prosecution was unsuccessful. By 1902, there were 265 prosecutions in total, of which 255 were successful.<sup>441</sup> The number of truck prosecutions dropped again in this year to seven, six of them successful. The work of the women inspectors was particularly effective in this area.

The women quickly became skilled in court. At one of Deane's prosecutions in 1895, a Mr. Crabtree, an assistant inspector in the men's department was present to 'see how she did it!'<sup>442</sup> The prosecution of a Mrs. Moore in March 1895 was just such an example. Although Deane did not make it clear exactly what the defendant's misdemeanour was, it is an example of her method. Arriving at the station in Horncastle, Deane was immediately informed that she should see her witnesses if she did not want them to let her down. They had been intimidated by the defendant Mrs. Moore, who would not allow Deane to meet with them at the local inn. Deane then declared that she would see them alone on the factory premises as was her right and, in spite of the protests from Mrs. Moore, she did so. She 'heartened them up' and they 'stuck to me like bricks', she wrote. The lawyer, whom Deane referred to as an 'awful little cad' continually shouted at her to keep quiet or to 'hold her tongue' whenever she spoke or objected, so much so that it was remarked upon in court. He was so

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<sup>439</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1897, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898) p. 95.

<sup>440</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1899, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1900), p. 247.

<sup>441</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1902, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1903) p. 192-193.

<sup>442</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/11, p. 27.

incompetent, Deane continued, that he bungled the case, and her work made easy. She was successful in her prosecution.<sup>443</sup>

Frequently, the inspectors were asked for help where employment did not come under the factory acts, as in the case of clerical workers, who were required to work excessively long hours with no restrictions. Night work in shops also came in this category. Squire's account of a prosecution in 1901 showed her acquired legal skill. This was the case of *Fuller v. Squire* (1901 2 K. B. 209), in which the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Alvestone, held her to be correct in arguing that the process of packing sweets in cardboard boxes with elaborate ribbons and arranging them both inside and outside so as to make them attractive was within the term "adapting for sale" and therefore under the Factory Act, where the process was carried on in a retail shop beyond shop hours. It was not just wrapping the goods for sale, as the employers had argued. The defendants were well-known makers and retailers of expensive sweets, and at Christmas the shop assistants worked at night preparing the boxes of chocolates ordered by customers during the day to make luxurious and very beautiful Christmas presents.<sup>444</sup>

Squire used this success, which was evidently a well staged performance, to demonstrate the long hours worked by shop employees and hence the need to regulate hours in shops as well as in factories. The working week for women and girls had been limited to 74 hours, including mealtimes, under the 1892 Shop Hours Act although in many shops women no longer worked more than 60 hours.<sup>445</sup> That Squire was successful in this prosecution underlined just how long these women must have been working.

Protective legislation had long been a contentious issue among feminists and liberal progressives (see chapter 1). For Squire, women workers themselves did not always see the benefits of protective legislation. For example, she described the obstructive behaviour sometimes exhibited by the workers themselves and their reluctance to take the long term view until persuaded about the advantages. The example she gave was in a shirt and collar factory in the West Country, where it was the custom to give out

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<sup>443</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/10, p. 8.

<sup>444</sup> Squire, pp. 72-73.

<sup>445</sup> See Collet's investigation of shop hours for the Royal Commission on Labour in the previous chapter.

home work at the end of the working day.<sup>446</sup> Adelaide Anderson argued that the practice was rooted in ‘starvation wages’, and was an ‘insidious mode of “sweating”’.<sup>447</sup> It meant that the employer could evade the hours of work regulations and this was found to be harmful to the girls’ health. Factory inspectors watching the factories for signs of contravening the Factory Act were often jeered at and ridiculed by the workers they were aiming to help. Squire related that she would admonish them for their ‘childish behaviour’, before discussing the value of the Factory Acts with them. Apparently this resulted in cheers at the end of the ‘sermon’ and a greater understanding of the legislative benefits resulted.<sup>448</sup> In the early years of the women’s factory inspectorate, the inspectors would give lectures on the Factory Acts to girls’ clubs and to social workers, so that workers would understand the benefits they offered. This task was later taken over by the young Women’s Christian Association and other women’s groups.<sup>449</sup>

Squire also referred to working conditions improved by the factory inspectors, not through legislation but through advice and experience. The 1895 Factory Act required workers to work two very long shifts of five hours without a break. These shifts, in all factories, were found to be particularly onerous for women, who had often left home having had little or no breakfast. More enlightened employers introduced a short break when light refreshment was served. As might be expected, this was found to improve the workers’ concentration and production levels improved. Research had been carried out on industrial fatigue, on behalf of the factory department, before the war.<sup>450</sup> It was common for the women inspectors to offer this advice. Squire wrote of constantly advising employers of the advantages, some of whom reluctantly agreed to adopt it for a short time and quickly realized how advantageous it was both for employed and employer.<sup>451</sup> This was recognised across industry during the First World War, after which hours of work shortened ineradicably.

### **3. Laundries.**

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<sup>446</sup> This was prohibited under the 1901 Factory Act , Section 31.

<sup>447</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 30.

<sup>448</sup> Squire, pp. 73-74

<sup>449</sup> Squire, p. 75.

<sup>450</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation to Another*, p. 162.

<sup>451</sup> Squire, pp. 75-76.

Laundries were not covered by sanitary or factory legislation in 1893, when the first women entered the factory inspectorate. Employees worked 70-80 hours per week. Rose Squire and Lucy Deane first inspected laundries as sanitary inspectors. Squire wrote of North Kensington, her area of inspection: 'Every little house in a network of mean streets, in some respects almost rural in character, was a hand laundry.'<sup>452</sup> Steam laundries were rare and the work was carried out in the back room of the houses, with children playing in the dirty linen. The ironing was done in the living rooms and all the windows were kept closed in order to dry the clothes more quickly. Rheumatism and ulcerated legs were common amongst laundry workers. Sanitary inspectors were unable to do anything about the long hours and hastily taken meals about which the women laundry workers complained, but they were able to suggest improvements on hygiene and ventilation and were able to enforce these if necessary.<sup>453</sup>

The early years of the women's inspectorate revealed the terrible conditions within the industry: both Paterson and Abraham reported on concerns such as excessive hours worked in many laundries, lack of ventilation, gas leaks from faulty irons, insufficient waterclosets and poor sanitation generally.<sup>454</sup> Regulation of hours for laundries was a complex issue: there was opposition to any regulation from within the trade. However, in 1895, the Factory Act was finally applied to laundries. Hours were regulated: for children, ten hours; young persons, twelve hours and for women, fourteen hours; in any one week, children could work no more than thirty hours and women and young persons, sixty hours. Breaks every five hours were mandatory. Steam laundries were required to make safety provisions.<sup>455</sup> This prevented the occasions where women had been required to work all night after a day's work during busy times. The fourteen hours day was questioned by some of the women workers, who thought that it was still prohibitively long to work when standing in hot and steamy conditions.<sup>456</sup> However, it was not until 1903 that this was further regulated.

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<sup>452</sup> Squire, p. 22.

<sup>453</sup> Squire, pp. 22-23.

<sup>454</sup> Reports of H. M. Inspectors of Factories as to Hours of Work, Dangerous Machinery, and Sanitary Condition, [C.7418], (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1894), Laundry Reports, 1893, pp.3-10.

<sup>455</sup> Factory and Workshops, A Bill to amend and extend the law relating to factories and workshops, (1895, 329), [58 & 59 Vict], Clause 22, pp. 9-11.

<sup>456</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 32-33.

The women inspectors were from the start particularly interested in complaints from the women workers about the dangers and accidents in the workplace. They began to gather data and investigate any connection between accidents and conditions, for example long hours or poor lighting. Fencing machinery prevented accidents, and so could conscientious supervision. The 1895 Act empowered the inspectors and facilitated improvements. From January 1<sup>st</sup> 1896, it became obligatory for employers to record accidents and to send the data to the factory inspectorate. For Anderson, however, knowledge of the machinery and the way in which it operated was vital. She understood the need for the women inspectors to gain such mechanical knowledge, as many of the men inspectors had. She recommended to the Home Office that details of all accidents involving women workers be passed to the women inspectors for investigation. This allowed for the study of the machinery used and, according to Hilda Martindale, laid the foundation by which the women inspectors were able to recommend future changes.<sup>457</sup>

The ability to gain such knowledge was further facilitated in 1898, when the women inspectors were given charge of a 'special district' with a high proportion of both steam and hand powered laundries. In depth investigation made it possible for them to look at the industry as a whole; investigating workers complaints, having discussions with laundry engineers and studying safety appliances. For Anderson, this could ameliorate deficiencies in the women's engineering training.<sup>458</sup> The result of such work was made available to both the women's and the men's department. It impacted in the industry as a whole, with the development of guards around the more dangerous machinery.<sup>459</sup> Anderson systematically recorded all reports by a certifying surgeon to the Chief Inspector on accidents in laundries from every part of the country, to monitor the greatest dangers and the results appeared in the 1902 Annual Report.<sup>460</sup> These records were continued: in the first few years, the numbers of recorded accidents rose but this was attributed to improvements in the recording system. After 1908, in spite of an increase in employment in factory laundries, accidents began to decline.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation to Another*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>458</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 141.

<sup>459</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>460</sup> Annual Report, 1902, pp. 162-167.

<sup>461</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p.143, Annual Report, 1902, p.168.

Carbonic oxide (carbon monoxide) poisoning caused by gas leaks through faulty fittings in the ironing machinery, were a lethal hazard in the hand laundries. There were many complaints to the women inspectors about this and in one instance at least, Anderson recorded, two girls were found to be very gravely ill. The employer was prosecuted for failing to notify the authorities of the existence of the laundry and for using a faulty gas iron fitment. This resulted not only in a conviction, but a special penalty on account of injury to health through neglect of the provisions of the 1901 Factory Act.<sup>462</sup>

Anderson identified serious safety concerns in the course of her investigations: the number of serious accidents that had remained unreported; the serious effects of some accidents that had been reported as minor (a problem noted in other industries), and the youth of many of the workers who had suffered from these accidents. She became convinced that proper fencing, reasonable working hours and the employment of older workers would reduce the accident rate considerably.<sup>463</sup> She did not confine herself to data alone but also paid attention to the human effects of the injuries received. She discovered, by following up instances of injury described as, for example: 'Fingers of the left hand lacerated and burnt – slight' that the following year the 'slightly' injured young worker had had a finger amputated and, following thirteen months of pain and loss of earnings, had a second finger amputated. This rendered the girl unemployable.<sup>464</sup> There was no compensation.

The value of the early investigative work on laundries undertaken by the women inspectors was appreciated by the women workers. Anderson wrote in 1895, when laundries were brought under the jurisdiction of the Factory Act:

I have certainly been astonished by the spontaneous, heartfelt expressions of gratitude and thankfulness from the young laundresses for the anticipated benefits of legislation on their behalf, and the quieter hope of coming good amongst the older women. I have not found yet among workers a trace of the antipathy to regulations which has been rather widely supposed to exist. Some young ironers, who had been working for some days from 6 a.m. to 12 p.m. (with intervals), at the

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<sup>462</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 127,

<sup>463</sup> Annual Report, 1902, p. 162.

<sup>464</sup> Annual Report, 1902, p.166.

time I spoke to them remarked to me 'A lady asked us why we did not refuse to work such long hours, but what did she know!'<sup>465</sup>

Women laundry workers worked long hours through economic necessity. For Anderson, protective legislation could alleviate these ills.

#### **4. Truck (payment in goods) and Fines: The Gombeen Men and Women**

**'The question is,' said Nixon, looking round with a magisterial air, 'what is wages? I say, tayn't sugar, tayn't tea, tayn't bacon. I don't think it's candles; but of this I be sure, tayn't waistcoats.'**<sup>466</sup>

The first Truck Act was passed in 1831, but it was the Truck Act of 1887 that first brought the problem of payment in goods under the jurisdiction of the Factory Inspectors, giving them the power to enforce the payment of labour in money wages.<sup>467</sup> A further Truck Act in 1897 made deductions from wages illegal unless agreed with workers beforehand, and regulated the fines system. These acts sent the inspectors into the factories and workplaces to ensure the terms were adhered to.

Injustices imposed on workers by middle men or agents, the so-called 'gombeen men' and 'gombeen women' in Ireland, as well as other exploitative employers were recounted by Rose Squire, Lucy Deane and Adelaide Anderson and require analysis here, as they primarily affected women in the sweated trades in particular and inflicted hardship on some of the most vulnerable outworkers.<sup>468</sup> There were many instances of the payment of workers in goods rather than wages across industry in England, although it was less common than the imposition of unduly harsh fines, widespread both in factories and in homework. Instances of truck violation were to be found in other areas of Britain, for example, in Somerset and in Cornwall. However, it was in Ireland, Squire wrote, where the practice was at its worst. Women working in remote rural areas knitting socks and stockings would be given wool from shopkeepers who then paid them only in tea. Desperately in need of money, the tea was their only recompense,

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<sup>465</sup> Annual Report, 1895, p. 123.

<sup>466</sup> Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1984), pp. 179-180. Rose Squire uses this quotation in her book.

<sup>467</sup> The word 'truck' means barter, and an Act of 1831 had first been passed to prohibit payments, in certain trades, in goods rather than money wages.

<sup>468</sup> Gombeen men or gombeen women were originally usurers or moneylenders. In this instance they were the middle-men who were responsible for paying in goods the workers might not need and controlling the whole system through fear.

from which the shopkeepers, who were also agents for the local industries, made great profits. Complaints reached the government, but unfortunately little could be done as the workers themselves were so frightened of these 'gombeen men', who would threaten the workers with no work at all if they gave evidence. As a consequence, workers would speak to no authority figure.

Both Lucy Deane and Rose Squire were sent to Ireland to investigate the system. Lucy Deane travelled to Dublin on the night mail on April 20<sup>th</sup> 1896 with May Abraham and the Liberal politician H.J. Tennant (whom Abraham later married). Once in Ireland she had visited factories and workshops in Dublin, Belfast and other parts of Ireland. A year later, on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1897, she returned to Ireland. Contraventions of the Truck Acts still needed investigation but she was having problems finding people willing to speak. Deane wrote that there were many complaints of violations of the Truck Acts but the women were too frightened to give details.<sup>469</sup>

Details of these investigations are given in the Annual Reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories and in the Report of the Truck Committee 1908, but Deane's and Squire's own accounts breathe freshness, and drama into stories. Back in Ireland in October 1897, Deane investigated the handkerchief finishing industry, where outworkers were common. The finishing of handkerchiefs often fell foul of the Truck Act. One witness said that she generally got paid in goods and often received a 'docket' or 'ticket' to make up the value of the work completed in goods. This outworker promised to save a 'ticket' to show Deane, but in such a climate of fear, promises were often unreliable.<sup>470</sup> This enquiry had to be conducted in secret, with witnesses who could be trusted to keep quiet, for the workers feared for their livelihoods.<sup>471</sup>

Deane spent most of the second half of 1897 in Ireland investigating this exploitative practice. Through late October and November of that year, she continued her efforts to prosecute a woman called Mrs. Boyle, under the terms of the 1897 Truck Act. Mrs. Boyle was responsible for running a large business exploiting the most vulnerable outworkers. It was a long and arduous investigation. Visiting a school in Ardara, County Donegal, she had met the schoolmistress, Miss Tierney, whose students were given

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<sup>469</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/19, p.31.

<sup>470</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/19, p. 35.

<sup>471</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/19, p. 36.

'sprigging' to take home.<sup>472</sup> Miss Tierney had taken her to meet Anne Mooney, a skilful sprigger, who worked for Mrs. Boyle. Anne Mooney told her she was paid in goods and often received a 'ticket' to make up the value, a clear contravention of the Act. Mooney promised to try and get a ticket as evidence for Deane. Deane had been shown a 'bona fide ticket' before by a worker before, which had shown the worker to have been given goods worth 9s 6d (47½p). The woman's earnings of 6s 11d (34½p) had been subtracted and she had been left with a debt of 2s 7d (13p), which would then be deducted from her next wages. Deane offered to pay the 2s 7d to retain this evidence but such was the culture of fear that the worker refused. A ticket from Anne Mooney therefore, would be valuable evidence.

Deane continued her investigation, travelling either by bike or on foot, so as not to attract too much attention, often in very inclement weather. She collated enough evidence to prosecute but witnesses were fearful to give evidence.<sup>473</sup> On one occasion, a worker took 4s 6d (22½p) worth of work to Mrs Boyle, and was persuaded to accept a pair of elastic sided boots as payment, even though they were unwanted.<sup>474</sup> Deane commented on this incident in her contribution to the Annual Report of that year:

A pair of thin elastic-sided boots, which constituted the 'wages' paid to a worker - who according to the practice of the country generally went barefooted- were, for a long time, objects of longing to me as articles of evidence. "Sure, and what should the likes of meself be after suchlike ilegance? 'tis a poke of meal, or the money to pay the 'cess' that I'm after wanting," was the complaint made to me by the unwilling owner of this splendour.<sup>475</sup>

Mrs. Boyle was not only the agent employed to supply work to the outworkers, but she owned the shop where the 'tickets' which were issued in lieu of money wages could be exchanged. Although Mrs. Boyle was particularly exploitative, such methods were frequently employed in Ireland. These areas were remote and difficult to monitor.

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<sup>472</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/20, pp. 34-35. Sprigging was work done to embroider handkerchiefs and finish them. It could be skilled work and Deane was persuaded by Miss Tierney that such work was in their interests as it provided them with a trade.

<sup>473</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, pp.

<sup>474</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, p. 7.

<sup>475</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1897, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898), p. 109.

Furthermore, Deane was told that the goods in Mrs Boyle's shop were always more expensive if purchased with a ticket than with cash.<sup>476</sup>

Deane had been reporting to Anderson throughout these investigations.<sup>477</sup> The role of Principal Lady Inspector, to which Anderson had been appointed that year, had been fundamentally altered. As a result Anderson now had to refer all prosecutions to the Chief Inspector of Factories, rather than having the authority to sanction them herself. Initially optimistic about a prosecution, Anderson met with the Chief, Arthur Whitelegge, to discuss prosecution. After this meeting she felt prosecution unlikely because of the unreliability of the witnesses. Deane had planned to pressure the firms using Boyle as their agent with prosecution but received the disappointing news from Anderson that she was not allowed to do so and therefore, for the time being any plans for prosecution would have to be abandoned.<sup>478</sup>

Lucy Deane did not take no for an answer and continued her enquiries, which took most of October and November 1897. The next ticket brought a similar difficulty. The worker was reluctant to hand it to her and said that she would consult her husband. In a follow-up visit to the worker and her husband, both refused to give her the ticket: the husband said he was not afraid of Boyle but would not for £100 have his neighbour think of him as an "informer". Here can be seen the crux of the matter in Ireland, and why it was so difficult to address. The workers were aware of the exploitative nature of the practice and were resentful, but in these small localised areas existing alongside each other was vital to their survival and they feared exclusion from the support networks on which they depended. It made such abusive behaviour more complex and entrenched. Deane commented that she was made to feel she was the illegal conspirator rather than Boyle.

Deane became increasingly disheartened. Stalwart efforts to do her job appeared to be thwarted at every turn. She wrote despairingly:

Am depressed and appalled at the extraordinary feebleness & terrorism of this country, the want of truth and independence, the terror of all high and low of

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<sup>476</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, p. 10.

<sup>477</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, p. 13.

<sup>478</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, p. 16.

appearing or being unpopular, the utter disregard for law & justice, terrible rates of corruption of the magistrates.<sup>479</sup>

Then a supporter, a Mr. Lyons, suggested an alternative plan of campaign and the story became more dramatic. Deane was advised to import an outside witness to visit the truck shop and report her findings.<sup>480</sup> As a plant, Deane decided to bring in a colleague as it was unlikely that anyone local would be brave enough to do this. Deane wired Anderson to ask her if she could approach Mary Paterson, with whom she had worked closely in Stoke among the potteries. Deane was aghast when Anderson volunteered to come herself, for she would bring with her the weight of officialdom and call for caution and due process, rather than the more devious routes to achieve success that Deane and Paterson might wish to employ. There followed two days of departmental discussion, whilst Deane had further meetings with potential witnesses, often providing them with work herself in case they were to be 'boycotted' for speaking out.<sup>481</sup> After two days, Anderson decided against coming and Deane and Paterson's scheme was sanctioned.

In late November, Deane met Mary Paterson at Strabane, County Tyrone where they had a long discussion on how to pursue this investigation. It was decided that Paterson was to gather evidence for Deane by visiting truck-shops in disguise. At this point the diary assumes an air of melodrama. The two women travelled separately in the train, Deane in first class and Paterson in third. After dark, Deane picked Paterson up as a 'tired country girl' and took her to Ardara but put her down outside the town to walk in with her bundle. Paterson accomplished her job with great success. She gained enough evidence of infringements of the act when she visited Boyle's shop for Deane to be able to write four prosecution reports and send them to Anderson. Unfortunately, Paterson, when Deane met up with her at the end of the mission was found to be very unwell and Deane had to take her home and nurse her back to health for several days before she could leave Ireland.<sup>482</sup>

In the end, Deane was able to provide witnesses brave enough to give evidence and the result was a successful conviction, ironically without the need of Mary Paterson's

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<sup>479</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, p. 23.

<sup>480</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, p. 23.

<sup>481</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, p. 30.

<sup>482</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/21, p. 40.

evidence.<sup>483</sup> Deane's determination and hard work in earning the trust of local residents and workers was worth it. Mrs. Boyle was brought to justice. In the long term this exploitative system began to break down, but other equally invidious contraventions, perhaps more likely to result in prosecution, could not be investigated because of the time spent on this one case. The need to prioritise might have been considered as an expedient.

However, Rose Squire was sent 'undercover' to investigate truck violations in Ireland again, arriving in Fintown, a small village in County Donegal, in 1899. Her account gives further insight into how the system operated, the fear surrounding it and the way in which sufficient evidence was collected to instigate proceedings against the agents who operated within it. Arriving in Ireland for her clandestine investigations, Squire's first impressions were of the desolation surrounding her, 'stretches of wild moorland and rock and the long, long track of road leading nowhere.'<sup>484</sup> However, she was soon picked up by her driver, Coffey, in a cart she referred to as a 'jaunting car'. These two spent a great deal of time together in the course the next few weeks and she was very appreciative of his company.<sup>485</sup> The only guest arriving unexpectedly at the inn aroused curiosity among the locals, in an area where local people lived in small 'townlands' or hamlets or in scattered cabins. Did she fish or paint? Was she an artist or did she have a camera? Squire had a camera, which she failed to master, and she was interested in Ireland and her people but she was trained to listen, rather than to talk, and to avoid politics.<sup>486</sup> Eventually, the local people decided that she must be a novelist, in Ireland to do research for a new book.<sup>487</sup> She took care not to disillusion them.

Squire lived and worked for the duration of this enquiry some miles from Dungloe in County Donegal and quickly began her task of gathering evidence. Adelaide Anderson had previously visited this district and had ascertained enough to realize that an investigation was merited and Squire's task was to find out as much as she could for the Home Office.<sup>488</sup> Her account, like Deane's, provides a glimpse into the life of the rural poor. It also shows the determination needed to build up the evidence in order to

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<sup>483</sup> Annual Report, 1897, p. 108.

<sup>484</sup> Squire, pp 80-81.

<sup>485</sup> Squire, pp.81-82.

<sup>486</sup> Squire, p. 85.

<sup>487</sup> Squire, pp.83-84.

<sup>488</sup> Squire, p. 83.

effectively prosecute, although such hard work did not always bring the results it deserved.

Squire described a system that had developed whereby a few had become wealthy by exploiting the poor. There was little industry in the area; every summer many of the men went to Scotland to work in the harvesting and throughout the year the women knitted stockings. The yarn was supplied by the shopkeepers of the area and some of the women had to walk distances of twenty miles to collect it. They did not have footwear. These women, endlessly knitting, were ready to chat to a lone English lady about their lives and the oppression of the gombeen man. They told her they never received wages but just tea and sugar, and the tea was a pretty poor quality:

The visitor had always to partake of the aforesaid tea lest she should seem to be devoid of manners, but such tea, kept in perpetuity on the side of the fire in a basin half full of leaves, to which fresh water is now and then added, is an acquired taste. Potatoes in their skins from the black pot slung over the peat fire I could always relish, but “a taste of herring” grilled on a fork over the fire, without bread or salt or potatoes, is hard to appreciate in the middle of the afternoon.<sup>489</sup>

Squire also talked to the clergy and to the ‘charming’ men of the Royal Irish Constabulary and she gradually built up a picture of the situation, with the names of the shopkeepers involved.

Squire then returned to England for a few weeks to prepare her cases. She returned to Ireland no longer in disguise but in her role as H.M. Inspector of Factories. She began her prosecutions at the Court of Petty Sessions in Dungloe. Three of the main offenders were successfully prosecuted during November and December of 1899 for the illegal payment of wages other than in money. The prosecution of the fourth and chief offender was more problematic and was further complicated by the extra charge of ‘obstructing the inspector in the execution of her duty’. This case went eventually to the Court of the Queen’s Bench in Dublin in June, 1900, where the Irish Solicitor general appeared for

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<sup>489</sup> Squire, pp. 86-87.

the Crown and Mr. Tim Healy for the defendant.<sup>490</sup> The case was lost, a real disappointment for Squire.

However, Squire wrote, in the long term the outcome benefitted all the workers and the entire district.<sup>491</sup> She argued that the Truck system in Ireland had received a serious set back through the publicity afforded by her investigations and subsequent prosecutions and workers were emboldened to ask for money wages, and more likely to succeed.<sup>492</sup> There were twenty seven prosecutions for truck violations in 1899, most in Ireland. Of those, twenty two were successful. The difficulties experienced by the inspectors, wrote Anderson, 'all show that the struggle has been from the outset one for the elementary maintenance of respect for law.'<sup>493</sup>

In the short term, however, the reaction to Squire, when she had returned to Ireland as a member of the inspectorate, caused her some distress. Witnesses were too fearful to give evidence and those who were known to have spoken to her were prevented from obtaining further work or credit from the shopkeepers. She found it difficult to secure any mode of transport other than the faithful Coffey and at one stage had to be placed under police protection.<sup>494</sup> Furthermore, the investigations in Donegal, undertaken to give home workers the protection provided by the Truck Acts took an inordinate amount of time. With such a small staff, Anderson wrote in her 1899 Report, such an investigation could not be repeated. However, once embarked upon, every effort was made to bring it to a successful conclusion.<sup>495</sup>

##### **5. Hazardous substances: working in the Dangerous Trades.**

From the 1880s, legislation sought to ameliorate conditions in certain trades which were considered harmful to health, for example, pottery and match-making. In 1891 the Secretary of State at the Home Office was empowered to draw up special rules in

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<sup>490</sup> Squire, p. 88. Timothy Healy Q.C., was a politician and later first governor-general of the Irish Free State.

<sup>491</sup> Squire, p. 89.

<sup>492</sup> Squire, p. 97.

<sup>493</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1900, p. 247.

<sup>494</sup> Squire, pp. 89-90.

<sup>495</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1900, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1901), p. 238.

areas of industry where he considered processes to be dangerous or harmful.<sup>496</sup> Investigation of the 'dangerous trades' was a significant part of the work of the women inspectors from the start. Both Anderson and Squire addressed the issue in detail, describing the progress of reform in these trades and the part played by the women inspectors. Departmental committees were set up from 1892 onwards, Anderson explained; outside medical expertise had to be brought in as at that time there was none in the department itself. One of the first two women inspectors, May Abraham, was also appointed to the Dangerous Trades Committee from 1895-1899. The first set of 'special rules' instigated in 1892 to address the issues of industrial poisoning were found to be woefully inadequate in the case of lead poisoning, as Deane and Paterson discovered (see below) but further, more extensive, special rules were introduced from 1895.<sup>497</sup> Medical practitioners had, by law, to inform the Home Office of any cases of industrial poisoning as a result of the 1895 Factory Act, and the special rules were continually extended and strengthened. The 1895 Act prohibited the use of lead or arsenic from the tinning or enamelling of cookware for example, and employment in industries injurious to health.<sup>498</sup> In 1896, Dr. Arthur Whitelegge had been appointed as the Chief Inspector of Factories and in 1898 Dr. Thomas Legge was appointed the first Medical Inspector. From that point onwards, Squire wrote, the scientific study of industrial disease and preventative methods were actively pursued within the department as a whole.<sup>499</sup>

Serious cases of industrial disease were often highlighted by vigilance on the part of the women inspectors, who inspected the factories, visited the homes of those affected, the infirmaries and questioned the doctors. Thorough investigation would prove essential in gaining a complete picture of the nature and progress of any industrial disease. Squire maintained that was only by personal contact with those affected that the department could be kept fully informed of the extent and effects of these diseases among the workforce or the extent to which injury was caused by working in various

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<sup>496</sup> B.L. Hutchins and A. Harrison, D.Sc., *A History of Factory Legislation*, (London: P.S.King & Son, 1911), pp. 201-202.

<sup>497</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 100.

<sup>498</sup> A Bill to amend and extend the Law relating to Factories and Workshops, 1895, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895), Clauses 25 and 26, p. 10.

<sup>499</sup> Squire, p, 51.

trades.<sup>500</sup> In such instances, the peripatetic nature of the factory inspectors' work enabled a clearer overall picture of any one industry to emerge.

The dangers of lead poisoning in the manufacture of pottery were well known by the early 1890s although the assumption at this time was that its effects might be ameliorated but not eliminated. Women were employed as 'china scourers', during which process the inhalation of dust caused a respiratory disease known as 'potters' rot'. Women were also employed as painters and dippers of china, and absorbed lead through the skin. Lucy Deane began an investigation of the potteries in Staffordshire on April 10<sup>th</sup> 1897. First she visited the Staffordshire Infirmary in Stoke with Mary Paterson. Here the Matron took them to the ward to see four young women who were suffering from lead poisoning. The first, Eliza Whittaker, aged 21, worked as a majolica painter in Hanley. She was employed in the production of cheap pottery and had worked in the factory for four years. She had been ill previously with lead poisoning for seventeen weeks but had seen no doctor. She had returned to work for a month or two but was then ill at home again for nine weeks before being taken to the infirmary. By this time she was quite paralysed and suffered from severe stomach pains. Her mother had worked in the factory for twenty four years, as had all her relatives but they had not suffered. Eliza had always wiped her hands on her overall as there were no towels in the factory. The matron considered her prognosis to be fatal.

Gertrude Lambert, the second young pottery worker with lead poisoning in the infirmary, aged 17, was a dipping hand. This meant she cleaned the pottery. Her mother and family also worked in the factory but had never been affected. Gertrude was suffering from partial paralysis and blindness due to lead poisoning. At the factory there was a lavatory but no towels and so she, too, wiped her hands on her own overalls. She had been in the infirmary for twelve weeks. The third patient was Jane Pendleton, aged 20 and married. She had just been brought in, suffering from a high fever and partial paralysis. She was half conscious only and was too ill to speak other than to say that she worked in the dipping area. The final patient they saw was Cicely Worthing, also a married woman. She had only worked in lead, in the dipping area for a few months, but her father had worked there for twenty two years and suffered from chronic lead poisoning. Cicely had partial paralysis and her eyesight was affected. The

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<sup>500</sup> Squire, pp. 52-53.

two inspectors made an appointment to see the doctor, Dr. Allardyce, the following morning and on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April they revisited the infirmary.

Allardyce's judgement, based on his own experience of lead poisoning was that there had been no diminution in the number of cases since the introduction of the Special Rules, and he had seen many more severe cases. Recently he had seen three cases of blindness due to lead, one of temporary insanity and some of convulsions. He recommended the prohibition of the employment of young people in dangerous processes until they were 18 or 20 years as he thought that young people were more susceptible to convulsions. A very large number of outpatients showed symptoms of lead poisoning, but no record was kept of those, he added. Records were kept only the severe cases taken into the infirmary. He sent the statistical evidence on the in-cases for the last 10 years on the following day.<sup>501</sup>

The women inspectors were very concerned about the detrimental effects of lead poisoning on the health of married women and the high level of infant mortality in particular. The Annual Report of 1897, stated that, out of the 77 married woman suffering from lead poisoning during the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 1897, 15 were childless and suffered no miscarriages; 8 had 21 still-born children, 35 had 90 miscarriages, and of these, 15 had no child born; 36 had 101 living children, of whom 61 were still alive, the great majority of the 40 dead succumbed to convulsions in infancy. They blamed the employers directly, for not providing sufficient sanitary conveniences and found some factories totally inadequate. One such factory was closed and the work relocated to a properly equipped workplace.<sup>502</sup> Dr. Thomas Oliver referred to Deane and Paterson's statistical evidence in his major investigation of lead poisoning in *Dangerous Trades*, published in 1902.<sup>503</sup> The long-term results of these wide-ranging investigations will be explored in the next chapter.

Lead poisoning was one of many dangerous trades investigated in the early years of the women's factory inspectorate. Match making was another equally notorious occupation. During inspection of the lucifer match industry, Squire had described the

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<sup>501</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/9/18, pp. 22-25.

<sup>502</sup> Annual Report, 1897, pp.101-102.

<sup>503</sup> Thomas Oliver, *Dangerous Trades*, (USA: General Books, LLC., 2009), p.214. A physician, Oliver made a particular study of the effects of lead poisoning from the glazes used in the production of pottery. He also served on the Dangerous Trades Committee. His survey of the 'dangerous trades' was published in 1902.

terrible results of exposure to the phosphorus mixture in 1897. She found the workplaces there the most unpleasant she had come across and the workers some of the poorest. Three times as many women were employed in the trade as men, many of them were young girls under 18 years of age and piecework rates were very low. Squire recalled watching the workers fumbling around with great speed to cram as many matches into the boxes as possible. When the boxes were overfilled, they ignited and were dropped on the floor, and the fumes were inhaled. The mix into which the matches were dipped was spread on a plate and included white or yellow phosphorus, which was poisonous. Consequently many of the young women were poisoned by inhaling phosphorus fumes, of which the main symptom was necrosis of the jawbone, commonly known as 'phossy jaw'. It caused the inflammation and gradual decay of the jawbone, amongst other symptoms:

Some of the sufferers had toothless gums. One woman had completely lost the lower jaw, a young girl in an earlier stage of the disease was constantly in great pain while the suppurating jaw bone was gradually decaying. The difficulty of taking food, and the prolonged suffering and the resulting disfigurement made the disease a particularly distressing one.<sup>504</sup>

Some employers paid a small amount to the victims, which Squire referred to as 'hush money'. The result of Squire's investigation was that the medical experts in the department, with other scientific experts, made a long and exhaustive study of the effects of phosphorus poisoning, resulting in enforced structural changes in the factories to remove the fumes. Personal cleanliness, the provision of soap and towels, medical examination and dental care of workers were introduced in the larger factories and caused those who could not afford to comply to be closed down. Squire added that these new regulations led eventually to improved methods of manufacture, in this case resulting in the substitution of phosphorus with harmless alternatives.<sup>505</sup> In an appendix to her report of 1897, Anderson criticised England's slowness to introduce safety methods: 'England is one of the few important industrial countries which have not advanced further in the prohibition of youthful labour in match factories than the

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<sup>504</sup> Squire, pp. 56-57.

<sup>505</sup> Squire, p. 58.

exclusion of a child (from one of the processes only).<sup>506</sup> It was not until January 1910 that it became illegal to make or import these matches.<sup>507</sup>

## **6. The Structure of the Women's Inspectorate and Working Relationships.**

The early women inspectors of factories had a vast task: they were expected to cover women's trades and industries across Britain, responding to complaints from employees and undertaking the investigation of specific industries on the instructions of the Chief Inspector. They travelled enormous distances, often staying in uncomfortable hotels and they carried all their paperwork with them.<sup>508</sup> Furthermore, the expectation was that they would improve the quality of the factory inspectorate as a whole, exerting a positive influence on the men's department. George Cave, Conservative politician and Lord Chancellor, in the foreword to Anderson's memoir, wrote of the early days, 'it is a chronicle of a steady and dogged campaign, of a few defeats and many victories.'<sup>509</sup> It was also a story of development: the women's department was unstructured in 1893 and over the next ten years, it expanded and reorganised.

Lucy Deane's diary provides a detailed, private account of the earliest years of the women's department. Until 1900 the peripatetic structure of the women's inspectorate and the question of salary were still open for debate. For example, in January 1895, May Abraham was thoroughly dissatisfied with proposals from the Chief Inspector, Sprague Oram regarding the structure of the department, with all four women inspectors continuing to work peripatetically. This structure had been arranged with Herbert Asquith, then Home Secretary, but Abraham preferred that she and Deane should have a joint district in London and Mary Paterson, together with Adelaide Anderson, should be based in Glasgow. (Mary Paterson lived in Glasgow and was based there already, rarely meeting her colleagues in London.) Based in two districts, Abraham suggested the women would then visit the provinces on receipt of complaints. This scheme, she argued, would allow room for the appointment of more women inspectors. Abraham was also unhappy about the salaries that the women were receiving: Deane recalled that Abraham also wanted better regulations as regards the women inspectors pay and promotional opportunities. At that point their salaries were

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<sup>506</sup> Annual Report, 1897, p. 102.

<sup>507</sup> Squire, p. 58.

<sup>508</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>509</sup> Anderson. *Women in the Factory*, p. vii.

not permitted to exceed £300 per annum, whereas Clara Collet at the Board of Trade earned £500 and Miss Mason at the Local Government Board, £350.<sup>510</sup>

The proposed regulations were the topic of conversation over dinner at 'Frascati's' restaurant, in February 1895.<sup>511</sup> Deane's view was that the Chief Inspector, Sprague Oram depended upon the male inspectors' standards being raised by the women. The peripatetic structure of their department brought them into close contact with many of the men, where their influence could be better felt, rather than Abraham and Deane's proposals. What had emerged in this discussion was that the men's inspectorate was considered inadequate at least in some instances by both Sprague Oram and Asquith and that Sprague Oram expected the women to raise standards, a view which Anderson endorsed. She had greater confidence in the capabilities of the women to facilitate change within the men's department and she continued to demonstrate such assurance in all aspects of her work. In the event, the new regulations went ahead. Deane wrote the only difference was that Abraham was given seniority with the title of Secretary of the Female Inspectors' Department.<sup>512</sup> This title was to cause considerable discussion and not a small amount of friction in the coming months. The events of early 1895 demonstrated the status of these women within the department and the expectation by Sprague Oram that they would instigate change across the department accounts for the antagonism they experienced from some male inspectors.

There were other meetings and conferences, often held at each other's homes: one was held in Portman Square, at the home of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Adelaide Anderson's aunt.<sup>513</sup> These meetings were to discuss recent work, proposed changes in legislation and the design of an office system that would facilitate the cross-referencing of each other's work. In May, 1895, Abraham, Paterson and Deane met at the Home Office to discuss amendments to the proposed factory bill, and their plans to meet at regular intervals. Deane also suggested a 'female departmental file' where they could store all the notes of visits made for reference purposes: such a file would enable them to see what previous instructions had been given, what the conditions of work had been

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<sup>510</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/9, pp. 1-3.

<sup>511</sup> George 'R' Sims, *Living London*, (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1902), p.303. Sims called Frascati's a winter garden, where dining was among palm trees. It was obviously a smart restaurant, and the meals, according to Sims, were prolonged affairs. Although he does not say so, it was probably in Oxford Street.

<sup>512</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/9, p. 28.

<sup>513</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/11, p. 13.

and any other information that would be helpful in further investigations. The suggestion was approved and a further structure to improve efficiency was in place.<sup>514</sup> However, not all was smooth running: Abraham later told Deane that the Chief, Sprague Oram did not consider her suggestion of a regular conference should be made official. This meant that expenses incurred would be their own and they would be considered 'on leave', whereas Deane's intention was that such conferences should be 'office days'.<sup>515</sup> Nevertheless, the conferences went ahead, the first being held on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1895.

The discussion at this first meeting included the insecurity they felt about the women's department itself and the likelihood of further appointments. All the women felt the position of the department was tenuous and was threatened by political change. They believed little was actually known about their work and July 1895 was a particularly challenging month; both the Chief Inspector and the Home Secretary, equally supportive of the women's inspectorate, were about to leave. Sprague Oram was to retire and Asquith ousted as a result of a Conservative victory in the election. Deane worried that the new political appointments would cripple the women's department.<sup>516</sup> In the event, although the new Home Secretary, Matthew White Ridley, was less sympathetic to the women's department, their position remained secure.

The women were equally concerned about the appointment of further women inspectors. They agreed unanimously that only working women candidates should be selected but recognised tact was essential in this period of political change. Their suggestion was four juniors attached to the department, and a clerk for Abraham. What actually happened was that Rose Squire was appointed in 1896 and Anna Tracey the following year.<sup>517</sup>

Abraham was in a position of seniority within the women's department at the end of 1895. However, her title of Secretary of the Female Department was under discussion in the early months of 1896 because it bore no relation to the titles used in men's department, where the men were organised in districts under a superintending

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<sup>514</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/11, p. 19.

<sup>515</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/12, p. 3.

<sup>516</sup> Sprague Oram was retiring, and a change of government brought a Conservative government under Lord Salisbury back to power. As a result, Asquith was replaced by Sir Matthew White Ridley.

<sup>517</sup> Little is known about the early life of Miss Anna Tracey, except that she was born in Dartmouth, Devon, the daughter of a vicar, and, according to her obituary in the Times, she had travelled widely before her appointment on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1897.

inspector. Sprague Oram asked Anderson early in 1896 whether the women, as a department, would approve of Abraham being made Superintending Inspector instead of Secretary. Deane recorded this as being an 'excellent plan', but Abraham herself appeared averse to the idea. Deane pointed out that the title would place the whole female department in a stronger and more equal position in its dealings with the rest of the department. The women were not a sub-section of the men's department, but the second half of a single department: to establish this, parity in hierarchical structure was important. Superintendents in the men's department could sanction prosecutions and therefore this capability would now apply to her. Prosecutions need no longer be referred to the Chief. Deane emphasised that this was possibly the only time the women were likely to achieve this advantage and it would considerably strengthen the women's department. Deane's caution was well-grounded and Abraham's retirement in 1897 saw this advantage rescinded.<sup>518</sup>

However, the discussion did not end there: Anderson had received a letter from Mary Paterson, who was rather doubtful about the superintendentship of Abraham. Anderson telegraphed her to say that she would meet her and talk it over the following week in Lanarkshire.<sup>519</sup> Paterson's disquiet was obviously taken seriously by the other women, although it is not clear whether it was Abraham herself or the new title which was worrying Paterson. Both the other women disagreed with her analysis of the situation.<sup>520</sup> Accordingly, Deane and Anderson travelled privately to Preston in Lancashire to confer with Paterson on the subject of the female superintendentship. (Such conferences were common in these cases of disagreement and resulted in a sense of unity within the department which is apparent in all these records.) After a prolonged discussion, they were agreed on all fundamental issues. Paterson had been keen on 'keeping in with' the new Chief and had therefore hesitated about the female superintendentship lest he was against it. As a result, they wrote to Sprague Oram pending his retirement:

Sir,

We understand that you are shortly about to retire from Her Majesty's Factory Department. In view of a change which may possibly follow in this, we wish to

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<sup>518</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/14, pp. 22-23.

<sup>519</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/14, p. 26.

<sup>520</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/14, p. 31-32.

submit for consideration our opinion that advantages in increased efficiency would accrue to our department if it were organised under the superintendence of the senior female inspector.<sup>521</sup>

All three then signed the letter and Deane travelled to London and obtained Rose Squire's signature at Ealing. The women were right to be apprehensive: they were unpopular among many of the male inspectors and an unsupportive chief would make their status uncertain. Furthermore, Deane recorded since the successor for Sprague Oram was far from settled, it was not clear who his successor might be. It was not until Sprague Oram's final day at the Home Office that he informed the women May Abraham would, indeed, be made Superintendent of the women's department.<sup>522</sup> On March 19<sup>th</sup>, they heard officially of the appointment and also that Dr. Arthur Whitelegge, Medical Officer of Health for the West Riding of Yorkshire had been appointed Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops. Squire wrote enthusiastically in 1927 that this appointment, which was followed in 1898 by that of Dr. Thomas Legge as the first Medical Inspector of Factories meant: 'From that time onwards, under their direction, the study of industrial disease and its prevention was scientifically pursued with patient persistence, and the rest is known to all the world.'<sup>523</sup> However, at this time, they were not sure of the impact on their department of this appointment.

At an 'adieu conference' with Sprague Oram, in which he confirmed Abraham's title of Superintendent of their department, he added that men and women inspectors were no longer to visit towns together since it had been a cause of conflict among the inspectors and undermined the authority of the women's department. Deane thought the reason for the separation of visits was because of complaints from the men, but if the women were to be considered of equal status in the department, it would be necessary for them to adopt the same procedure.<sup>524</sup> The women remained uneasy about antagonism from the men's department.

The women's concern was not unfounded. In mid-April 1896, as Deane was to have crossed with Abraham to Ireland, she received a letter from Abraham with the news that all the male inspectors were furious and attempting to nullify her appointment as

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<sup>521</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/14, pp. 33-34.

<sup>522</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/14, p. 41.

<sup>523</sup> Squire, p. 51.

<sup>524</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/14, p. 42.

superintending inspector. Furthermore, they were challenging the women inspectors' power to prosecute with only Abraham's approval. Paterson had sent Abraham a warning letter and, on closer investigation, the latter had unearthed a considerable amount of underhand dealing amongst the men. Deane and Abraham went straight to Sprague Oram's house to confer with him, and he took it seriously enough to go immediately to Kenelm Digby, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office. The trip to Ireland was delayed for a few days.<sup>525</sup> An interview with the factory inspector Whateley Cooke-Taylor followed, in which he assured them that he was very enthusiastic about the women's department, but that the feeling against the women among many of the men was bitter.<sup>526</sup> Aggravation amongst the men continued however, as did examples of some of the men's ineptitude. Visiting laundries in St. Leonards, Deane found the district inspector, Mr. Pearson, had inspected but given the workers no instructions as to how to fill various new forms and had failed to visit the workrooms at all. He had also told them that each person was required to work for sixty hours under the terms of the 1895 Factory Act, whereas, in reality, these varied according to age and sex.<sup>527</sup> Deane had to answer endless questions about holidays, work in meal times and other issues from uninformed workers when she eventually arrived there in April 1896.<sup>528</sup>

There were other incidents, as Deane explained in her diary in January 1895. Inspecting Whitehall's factory in Nottingham with the district inspector, Captain Bevan, Deane noted appalling sanitation and ventilation, but remained silent as Captain Bevan did not remark on it. Both of these issues addressed in the 1891 Factory Act, were often contravened.<sup>529</sup> However, she asked the foreman about opening the windows at mealtimes in front of Bevan. At that point Captain Bevan apparently left to do some shopping and she continued to inspect. He asked her to dine with him and 'almost at once burst into a furious tirade'. He had been an inspector for twenty years he told her as he accused her of undermining his authority by going into places and finding fault where he had not. It appeared that the medical officer of health had also questioned the

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<sup>525</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/15, p. 9.

<sup>526</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/15, p. 11.

<sup>527</sup> A Bill to amend and extend the Law relating to Factories and Workshops, 1895, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895), Clause 13, pp. 4-5.

<sup>528</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/15, p. 6.

<sup>529</sup> Factory and Workshop Act (1878) Amendment (No. 2), (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1891), Sanitation, Clause 3, p. 1; Ventilation, Clause 24, p. 24.

situation in that particular factory and offered to go with him to investigate, but he had refused. Bevan told her that she must always go through him and that 'Oram was a fool'. Deane's response was not to quarrel with him but to suggest that they inform the Chief of their differences and also to insist that she was not an assistant inspector and that therefore she had not exceeded her instructions. His response was that he wanted it to be a private and not an official protest.<sup>530</sup> Such an incident illustrates the tensions that could arise, the conflicts of authority and method between women and men and also just why Sprague Oram was optimistic that the women might be a 'tour de force' who would impact positively on the inspectorate as a whole. The incompetent inspector was aggrieved that another inspector, and a woman equal to him in status, had by asking questions, brought his inefficiencies to others' attention. Deane continued to work with Bevan, but, on the advice of Sprague Oram, also visited inspected factories on her own. A month later she noted that Bevan had written a rude letter about her to Sprague Oram, who had written him a 'oner' back. Antagonism between them did not dissipate over time.<sup>531</sup> Deane referred to it on several other occasions.

In Anderson's memoir, there is a reference to the support enjoyed by the women's inspectorate by Parliament, whom, she said, she said, the nature and importance of the work they were doing. Anderson grasped that the high profile position the women enjoyed politically had sidelined the men. From 1898, Anderson argued that effective organisation of staff could allow experienced women inspectors to focus attention on conditions affecting women workers and assuming some of this work from the men inspectors, leaving them free to concentrate on preventable accident and injury in trades where women were either seldom or never employed.<sup>532</sup>

Antagonism was not confined to the male inspectors, factory managers were also prejudiced against women but for different reasons. Whereas the male inspectors felt threatened by the women's greater efficiency and by their influence, the factory hierarchy feared prosecution if their female employees were given the opportunity to speak freely of conditions in their trades. In Ballymena in 1896, for instance, Deane recalled one manager, on the authority of his superiors, insisting that Deane not ask the girls any questions except within his hearing. She showed him her authorisation and

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<sup>530</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/9, pp. 10-11.

<sup>531</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/9, p. 33.

<sup>532</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 196.

warned him that if he persisted she would consider his attitude to constitute obstruction. At this point he gave way, commenting that all the North Ireland firms were furious about the innovation of women inspectors. Indeed, he added, he had been visited by the inspectors Cameron and Snape for years and no inspector had ever asked the women a question except in his presence. Deane then pointed out that a woman inspector was on very different terms with the women than a man. His response to this was that there was much indignation amongst the firms about what had been said to both Deane and Abraham by the women and they wanted to be present in order to contradict the women's lies.<sup>533</sup> The necessity of the appointment of women in this position, long debated was being vindicated.

In 1896, May Abraham married the Liberal politician, H.J. Tennant. Abraham had intended to remain in post (see above), but from the beginning, the peripatetic nature of the work made life complicated for the new wife of a politician. Frequently working away from home, in Ireland or Manchester, Nottingham or Stoke, for example, sometimes for some considerable time and often in less than satisfactory accommodation meant that family life could be problematic. The difficulties the new Mrs. Tennant experienced as a married woman with a profession would remain a hurdle. The marriage bar was already in place for women in the civil service who were not in higher positions but although it did not, at this point, affect the women inspectors, Tennant's attempt to remain in post was not without tensions. Clara Collet had been severely irritated when the four highly qualified university graduates whom she appointed as her assistants at the Board of Trade left in quick succession to marry.<sup>534</sup> As a political wife May Tennant was required to put her husband's interests above her own.

By the end of May 1896, Deane in a long, private conversation with Adelaide Anderson, was told that Tennant was unable to do the work required efficiently under the present circumstances but was anxious to try to continue because the Home Office was not prepared to accept Miss Paterson, (her obvious successor) as her replacement.<sup>535</sup> Deane's solution was pragmatic: she or Anderson should do the actual work for Tennant, whilst the Superintendent merely signed the relevant papers. Both women felt

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<sup>533</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/15, pp. 26-27.

<sup>534</sup> Martindale, *Women Servants of the State*, p. 47.

<sup>535</sup> Mary Paterson, based in Scotland, had never been part of the close circle in which the other women inspectors moved, possibly because she did not have the same network of acquaintances as the other women.

that Tennant's knowledge and influence were exceptionally useful to the department, but neither of them can sensibly have considered this a permanent measure. Deane felt that a clerk, an office and an honorary position for Mrs. Tennant might answer the problem, but this was only an expedient and there was no attempt to address the issue of reconciling marriage with a career.

By March 1897, Deane was, indeed, assuming office work for Tennant.<sup>536</sup> The women inspectors feared that the post of Superintending Inspector, hard-fought for and fragile, would not stand the test of change. White Ridley, the new Home Secretary was practically indifferent to the women inspectors. They were not his interest as they had been Asquith's. The new Chief, Dr. Whitelegge, Tennant argued, was eager to keep in with the men's department.<sup>537</sup> Again, the women's department was threatened by fluctuations in circumstance and in personnel. The situation was temporarily settled, because no further reference was made to it until December of that year, when a further issue was raised; a discussion between the trade unionist and social reformer, Gertrude Tuckwell and Deane highlighted a question over the future of Tennant's connexion with labour issues now that she was married.<sup>538</sup> The inference here was a possible conflict of interests, not unlikely, given her husband's position as a Liberal MP.<sup>539</sup> Shortly afterwards, an 'office day' with Tennant was cut short by the latter's desire to help her husband with his speech on the Employers Liability Bill at the House, an indication of a conflict of interests. Deane's tone indicated her annoyance, but it did not prevent her from sending Tennant the statistics on lead poisoning she had prepared, for Tennant's husband's amendment to the Workman's Compensation Bill.<sup>540</sup> In the event, Tennant retired at the end of May 1897, almost eight months pregnant.

The vexed question of a successor and the title of superintendent proved a sticking point within the department, as the women had suspected it would. Later in 1897, whilst she was back in Ireland, Deane received a letter from Anderson with the 'sad news' of the reconstruction of the department and her (Anderson's) appointment as Principal,

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<sup>536</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/18, p. 15.

<sup>537</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/16, p. 8.

<sup>538</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/16, p. 37.

<sup>539</sup> H.J. Tennant was a new Liberal MP, who had been appointed **chair of a departmental committee** to investigate the 'dangerous trades', the committee where he met May Abraham. His sister was Margot Tennant, married to Herbert Asquith.

<sup>540</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/18, p. 38-40.

not Superintending Inspector.<sup>541</sup> The implications of this soon became apparent in a circular letter received shortly afterwards, detailing the changes. This letter removed from the new Principal the power to sanction prosecutions, an issue that had incensed the male inspectorate. Furthermore, it removed from all the female inspectors the power of enforcing structural alterations such as ventilation, one of the issues that had so enraged Captain Bevan.<sup>542</sup> After Anderson's appointment, the women agreed on three main points: firstly that the District Inspectors must bear their fair share of the added clerical work these changes would involve; secondly they asked for a definition of the term 'structural alterations' as they were unsure whether such a term would cover, for example, the sashes of windows being made to open and thirdly, they resolved to be meticulous about keeping full notes of 'conferences' with the District Inspectors and copies of everything. The last word was underlined in Deane's text.<sup>543</sup> Clearly, distrust between the women inspectors and the men was not to be resolved in the near future.

The women factory inspectors were in regular contact with each other, writing or wiring, meeting for 'conferences', lunching and dining together to discuss work and often spending the night at each others' houses. Their social lives were, probably inevitably, interwoven with their work interests. Deane recorded their working lives together in detail even noting the letter Adelaide Anderson wrote asking her to call her Adelaide.<sup>544</sup> They had learned to ride bicycles at the same time: Deane was having lessons in November 1895, and on 26<sup>th</sup> of that month, they had an 'office day', when Deane, Anderson and Paterson all went together to the bicycle show at the Agricultural Hall.<sup>545</sup> Mary Paterson was the most isolated of the group, but she did join the others socially and for investigative work, particularly alongside Lucy Deane. For example, they worked together investigating the instances of lead poisoning in the potteries in 1897, and Paterson had aided Deane's investigation of the infamous Mrs. Boyle. However, she was not considered the right candidate to succeed May Tennant, although she had been appointed at the same time. Why this decision was taken is not known.

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<sup>541</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/19, p. 35.

<sup>542</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/19, p. 36.

<sup>543</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/20, pp. 3-4.

<sup>544</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/16, p. 21.

<sup>545</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/13, p. 20.

Deane and Paterson travelled together to London, also in 1897, combining the christening of May Tennant's child with a meeting of the Local Government Women's Association.<sup>546</sup> Deane's diary also gives inadvertent indicators of change: the inspectors frequently wired or telegraphed information to each other, to the Chief or to their families, but the first (and only reference in Deane's diary) to a telephone message was on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1897.<sup>547</sup>

## **7. Conclusion.**

The early women inspectors visited countless factories all over the British Isles. In their first year, May Abraham visited over fifty two separate towns, often investigating many more than one factory in each area and Mary Paterson visited thirty towns across Britain, as well as visiting the fish curing stations throughout Scotland and the north of England. The work often involved writing reports on specific industries throughout the entire area. The workload for the other two inspectors, appointed in 1894, was similar. Together that year, they visited 2,358 factories, where they found sanitary defects in over one third. They visited 4,590 workshops and preliminary visits to laundries amounted to 4,500.<sup>548</sup> Such a punitive workload did not discourage them. The initial impact of these first women was on some of the industries under their investigation; laundries, lead poisoning in the pottery industry, contraventions of the Truck Acts, particularly in Ireland, the dressmaking and millinery trades. These were industries employing large numbers of women and were recognised as those in which factory inspection was most needed.

In 1895, the Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops contained a joint report from all four women inspectors.<sup>549</sup> In the same report, Adelaide Anderson provided a full report on the Factory Regulations in Germany and the Protection of Labour Industry in the Austrian Empire.<sup>550</sup> This report gives an overall picture of the work that four women undertook. In 1897, Anderson and Deane were on leave, and travelled abroad together, stopping first at Bruges and then going on to Brussels, where they attended the first meeting of the 'International Congress de Legislation de Travail'.

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<sup>546</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/19, p. 20.

<sup>547</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/17, p. 37. This was eighteen months after the trunk telephone system was opened to the public.

<sup>548</sup> Annual Report, 1895, pp. 99-100.

<sup>549</sup> Annual Report, 1895, pp. 99-124.

<sup>550</sup> Annual Report, 1895, pp. 136-216.

At this conference, it was recognised that state intervention to regulate labour and to protect the labourer was a fundamental principle.<sup>551</sup> The conference went on for four days, during which time Anderson was one of the speakers.<sup>552</sup> Speaking on the registration of home workers, and the powers given to inspectors to enforce the laws on sanitary conditions in rooms where work takes place, she argued that, in a democracy, the extension of the powers of the factory inspectorate is accepted as an expression of the national will and that whilst not all homeworkers are in favour of legislation, those in allied industries were.<sup>553</sup> This was an important conference, and Anderson, a fluent French and German speaker, was a valued contributor.

The four women factory inspectors in the first three years laid the foundations of a stable, structurally sound and valued department, through their meticulous reporting and constant reinforcement of the legislation already on the statute book, alongside their suggestions for improvement by stressing areas of weakness. They wrote numerous reports on such diverse industries as fur-pulling, rag-sorting, laundry work, lead manufacture, bronzing in lithographic work and sanitary conditions. They were encouraged by success. Although some of their time, particularly in the early days, was spent negotiating their way through the difficulties of a hostile and often unhelpful male inspectorate and the internal machinations, retrospectively that obstruction was to be forgotten. Deane's early diary was a daily account of the frustrations she often experienced from the hierarchy and from male colleagues. Squire's memoir, written for publication, is more conciliatory. Martindale wrote that Asquith's experimental appointments in 1894, opened a new profession for women, dependent on the calibre of candidates employed. There were many who considered the women should have been employed in a subordinate position to that of the men.<sup>554</sup> In fact, they were employed rather to raise the level of the inspectorate.

There was no marriage restriction in the civil service in 1893, when the first women factory inspectors were appointed. In 1894, however, the requirement to retire on marriage was introduced for women in the clerical grades of the Post Office. It was

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<sup>551</sup> A. H. Blomefield, review, 'Congrès International du Travail Tenu à Bruxelles du 27 au 30 Septembre, 1897. Rapports et Compte Rendu Analytique des Séances: La Répression du Travail en Chambre, Alfred Schwiedland', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 32 (Dec., 1898), p. 521.

<sup>552</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/20, pp. 12-13.

<sup>553</sup> Blomefield, p. 522.

<sup>554</sup> Martindale, *Women Servants of the State*, p. 54.

intended that this should be adopted across the service. May Tennant had been reluctant to give up her role as Superintendent in 1896, fearing that she would not be replaced by a post at par.<sup>555</sup> However, pressures meant that she retired before the birth of her first child. These difficulties were unsatisfactorily resolved for many decades when the marriage bar was extended within the civil service and in all professions. Deane's diary revealed a response to a contemporary dilemma that was both prophetic and insightful:

Such is woman! it's no good their trying to do any Public work unless they are ugly or old or unhappy. She will do good in one way to (the) Inspectorate by this match but after a year when social duties & her husband's friends & politics and Babies all crowd in she'll have to drop the Inspectorate & for this year's influence she will sell all the years of steady work and influence which she might give.<sup>556</sup>

Deane was to marry herself in 1911, and both she and May Tennant continued to work strenuously and successfully in an advisory capacity for many years, but only on a voluntary basis. They were never to have the opportunity of a professional post again. This was a major defeat for the educated professional woman.

To evaluate the early work of these first women factory inspectors presents difficulties: legislative intervention in the form of the 1895 Factory Act, the Truck Acts and the inclusion of the laundries within the legislative umbrella and the greater inclusion of medical practitioners in the area of occupational health were, in conjunction with the appointment of women factory inspectors, part of a programme of state initiatives to protect all workers. Contemporary accounts often depicted them as 'missionaries', provided by the state to protect women workers from industrial disease and exploitation.<sup>557</sup> Certainly, they saw themselves as agents of improvement. The early years of the women's inspectorate were a period of quixotic investigation, but as the nineteenth century closed, one saw the transition to a more secure department and a greater degree of professionalism is apparent, but not equality and only for single women. Adelaide Anderson's tenure as Principal Lady Inspector saw greater stability, growth and the further development of the department. Helen Jones has argued that the greatest contribution of the women factory inspectors was to create a credible place

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<sup>555</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/1/16, p. 8.

<sup>556</sup> LAS, MSS.69/1/9/10.

<sup>557</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 86: in this, Martindale is quoting from the *Daily News*, where the women are described as introducing the 'human element' to industrial reform.

for middle class professional women in the civil service.<sup>558</sup> In chapter five I will argue that this is to under-estimate their role in informing the public consciousness of the inequalities and injustice inherent in the lives of working women in factories and workshops.

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<sup>558</sup> Helen Jones, 'Women Health Workers: The Case of the First Factory Inspectors in Britain', *Social History of Medicine*, 1988, 1 (2), pp. 165-181.

## **Chapter Five: Women Servants of the State: the expansion and development of the Women's Factory Inspectorate, 1902-1921.**

**'There was a dominating impulse towards relieving the hardships and sufferings of working women', *Dame Adelaide Anderson, 1922.***

Writing in 1922, Adelaide Anderson attributed the creation of the women's factory inspectorate to the efforts of women workers themselves, who had, from 1878, demanded women inspectors to investigate their needs and rectify the poor conditions under which they laboured in factories and workshops throughout Britain. The first appointees in the 1890s had strong political support from the Liberal Government and the Home Secretary, Herbert Asquith. At a meeting of the National Liberal Federation in 1893, Asquith had said: 'I hope that I may be able ..... to gratify the desires of our lady friends for female inspection.'<sup>559</sup> However, for the first women inspectors, Anderson argued, a political will for social reform, pressure from the women's unions and from the women themselves had been their strongest motivational factor.<sup>560</sup> The Women's Trade Union League under its president, Emilia Dilke, had been a strong source of support.<sup>561</sup> They had campaigned for equality of hours with men and against low wages for women. Dilke had urged that women should enter the factory inspectorate to serve in the trades where women were employed for it was in women's trades there was felt to be the greatest need.<sup>562</sup> The wish to alleviate distress in the workplace runs through the factory inspectors' reports, and the women's memoirs; the wish, through the work of inspection and legislation, to lessen dread of poverty and unemployment which prevented working women themselves from articulating their grievances for fear of reprisals.

The first women factory inspectors, in their heroic 'Quixotic' phase, had broken new ground through improvised working methods. By the 1900s, Anderson was established as Principal Lady Inspector, entrance was through examination, higher education was required for all applicants and the women inspectors had greater experience in the field. The department was more secure. Working methods were settling down, and the

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<sup>559</sup> As quoted in: Adelaide Mary Anderson, *Women in the Factory, an Administrative Adventure, 1893-1921*, (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 10.

<sup>560</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 2.

<sup>561</sup> May Abraham, one of the first two women factory inspectors appointed in 1893 had been Dilke's secretary.

<sup>562</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 11.

vision of the state as an ally of social progress gave a stronger sense of purpose. Women factory inspectors were able, through experience, to make a valuable contribution to the enforcement of legislation which improved the lives of working women, in a variety of industries. This was particularly the case in those industries which came under the heading 'dangerous trades'; laundries; the sweated trades and home workers. Their reports highlighted poor conditions and poor practices for the first time. Their professional expertise and effective prosecutions supported the needs of working women on the shop floor and encouraged and empowered women through the dissemination of information on legislation to protect women workers and to dispel fear of reprisals. The extent to which they initiated legislative change is more difficult to gauge, but as civil servants they could exert pressure on successive governments through their recommendations in the annual reports; contributions to government committees, both as members and as witnesses and through Anderson's contribution to the political narrative through her continued comparative studies of working practices and legislative initiatives in, for example, France and Austria.

The first Chief Inspector of Factories to have a medical background was Sir Arthur Whitelegge. It was from his appointment in 1896 that a greater understanding of what should be required under the 'Special Rules' system developed. From the beginning, women inspectors had been designated to help the enforcement of 'special rules', which were specifically designed to protect employees from the dangerous processes involved in manufacturing in industries like the potteries.<sup>563</sup> Whitelegge's medical background and the appointment in 1898 of Dr. Thomas Legge as the medical inspector to the Inspectorate helped to further knowledge of what was required under the special regulations in the 'dangerous trades'.<sup>564</sup> The need for a greater expertise amongst all inspectors had been highlighted by Squire. From the early days of the women's inspectorate she had argued for further specialisation in both the men and the women's departments, and stronger links between both departments and scientific and medical experts.<sup>565</sup> The women had begun to acquire more technological expertise, particularly through their investigations in the laundry industry. The greater

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<sup>563</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 83. The 'special rules' followed the recommendation of the Dangerous Trades Committee, under the chairmanship of H.J. Tennant. The committee, set up by the Home Secretary, produced its report four years later.

<sup>564</sup> Dr. Thomas Morison Legge (1863-1932) was an important addition to the department. He has served on the Royal Commission on Tuberculosis and was to spend his career in the field of occupational health.

<sup>565</sup> Squire, pp. 53-54.

mechanisation within the industry at this period necessarily involved the input of the women inspectors, who studied these developments and their implications for the workers as they occurred. Anderson argued that the early twentieth century saw the application of knowledge to the protection and care of workers in danger from industrial disease or injury.<sup>566</sup>

The department of women factory inspectors was still small. By 1901 there were eight lady inspectors in total, including the Principal, compared with 126 inspectors in the men's department, of whom five were superintending inspectors.<sup>567</sup> At this point there was no prospect of promotion in the women's department. As Anderson pointed out in her 1900 annual report, 'no material encouragement lightens or rewards strenuous work.'<sup>568</sup> By this time Mary Paterson, Lucy Deane and Rose Squire had been joined by Anna Tracey, Emily Sadler, Mabel Vines and, in 1902, Hilda Martindale. Little is known in detail about the lives and training of the new appointees other than Martindale, although Anna Tracey, like Anderson, had been employed as a clerk to the Royal Commission on Labour.<sup>569</sup> She joined the department in September 1897 and rose to the level of Senior Lady Inspector.<sup>570</sup> Emily Sadler, Tracey's close colleague, with whom she lived for much of her working career, also rose to be a Senior Lady Inspector. Mabel Vines, appointed in 1899, had been a sanitary inspector for the St. Pancras Vestry since 1897 and previously a health lecturer at the Trowbridge Centre for Women.<sup>571</sup> Far more is known about these women's professional lives through the Chief Inspector's annual reports. Martindale had been appointed temporarily in October 1901, but became a permanent member of staff in 1902. All four women became career civil servants. Martindale was to remain in the department for the next thirty three years of a career that would last for thirty seven. Her own memoir appears in her book, *From One Generation To Another*. It provides valuable insight into the difficulties

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<sup>566</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 97.

<sup>567</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1902, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1903), p. iii.

<sup>568</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1900, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1901), p. 348.

<sup>569</sup> Geoffrey Drage, an inspector on the commission, has employed university women and given them training as clerks, so it may be assumed that Tracey, like Anderson, was university educated.

<sup>570</sup> Emily Sadler, 'Miss Anna Tracey', Obituary, *The Times*, 7 November, 1939, p. 10.

<sup>571</sup> 'Women Sanitary Inspectors', *Daily News*, 23 July, 1897, Issue 16013. See also, for previous occupations of all four women: *Factory Inspectors: Returns of the Names and Previous Occupations of Professions of the Inspectors*, (London HMSO: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1907).

and successes encountered by the women inspectors during this period.<sup>572</sup> Structural changes in the women's department and a larger workforce meant that the possibility of residence in the area of work was now feasible. This signalled a different approach to the work of a woman inspector and marked the end of the 'pioneer' stage which was the focus of chapter four.

The early days of the women's department, where the women inspectors venturing into new territories to establish themselves as a credible professional body met with some antagonism from the men's department, was hardly surprising given the high level of political support women received and men's fear of displacement by professional women. The women had had a more popular image.<sup>573</sup> Criticism of the male inspectors' work could not have fostered harmony between the men and their female colleagues. The women inspectors had acknowledged their lack of technological expertise compared with that of many of the men traditionally recruited from sectors of industry, often as employers or as engineers.<sup>574</sup> The men were far more familiar with the internal structures of the factory in some instances than the women but this could result in a more accommodating and less critical approach towards employers. Some male inspectors therefore found the women's reforming zeal both irritating and intrusive. However, from the mid 1900s onwards tensions between the two departments became less pronounced.<sup>575</sup> Hilda Martindale, for example, found relationships with her male colleagues very equable when she was working in Ireland between 1905 and 1912.<sup>576</sup>

The women inspectors were willing to mediate on behalf of the women in the workplace, a skill that was appreciated by the workers and recognised by the inspectors themselves as a tactic to be used in preference to prosecution wherever it was expedient to do so. Negotiation with employers could also be used effectively when there was no recourse through legislation available. Squire wrote of success in discussions with employers about the improvement to output, for example, if the five

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<sup>572</sup> Hilda Martindale, *From One Generation To Another, 1839-1944*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1944). This memoir charts the lives of Louisa Martindale, and her two daughters, Louisa Martindale, the gynaecologist, and Hilda herself.

<sup>573</sup> Mr. McKenna, 'Class II', in *Hansard*, HC Deb 29 July 1898, vol. 63, cc450-569, p. 26 Of 47.

<sup>574</sup> Factory Inspectors: Returns of the Names and Previous Occupations of Professions of the Inspectors

<sup>575</sup> Certainly, it does not emerge as such an issue in the women's memoirs from this point, although unfavourable comparisons were still made: in 1904, John Burns (1858-1943), the labour leader and politician, remarked in the House that the women inspectors did much better work than the men: Mr. John Burns, 'Class II', in *Hansard*, HC Deb 4 August 1904, vol. 139, cc1002-51, p. 8 of 21.

<sup>576</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 92.

hour shifts permitted by law were broken up and short rests and meal breaks were allowed. This meant the women were less tired and both the quality and quantity of output improved.<sup>577</sup> During the 1914-1918 war, employers themselves discovered that shorter hours and longer rest periods improved output.<sup>578</sup> Women factory inspectors were also effective prosecutors, with a high conviction rate. Between 1898 and 1914, women inspectors prosecuted 4,962 cases and secured convictions in 4,715 instances.<sup>579</sup> Martindale felt that her success at the Petty Sessions in Ireland had spread knowledge of the law, particularly against truck violations.<sup>580</sup> After the War, when the legal profession was opened up to women, a number of the younger women factory inspectors were amongst the first women to take advantage of the opportunity to train as lawyers.<sup>581</sup>

For Anderson and the other female inspectors, the exploration of the tensions between worker and employer was key to much of their work and they viewed mediation as a fundamental facilitator for change in the individual workplace. They favoured 'gentle arguments and reasoning' where possible. Anderson bemoaned the absence in many factories of any woman in a position of authority. Working women had little or no promotional opportunities within the factory. Furthermore, she argued, despite protective legislation, women still worked far longer hours than many men, particularly in industries where men had been effectively unionised. Anderson advocated a strong union presence. She reported lack of decent sanitation and hygiene, even at the most basic level, often to the point where it was severely detrimental to health. This was especially important in the dangerous trades, for example, the deadly capacity of lead poisoning in the pottery industry described in chapter four. Finally, Anderson condemned the low wages and also, for pieceworkers, the uncertainty of wages, often in conjunction with the levying of fines and deductions which meant women living well below the poverty level.<sup>582</sup>

The poor, often incompetent and occasionally barbaric supervision of women by men was one area about which the women inspectors complained frequently yet could do

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<sup>577</sup> Squire, pp. 75-76.

<sup>578</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1914, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1915), pp. 40-41.

<sup>579</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 209.

<sup>580</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>581</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 209.

<sup>582</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 24-25.

least to rectify. Anderson described an incompetent foreman who had turned a fire-hose on the women workers under his supervision during a disciplinary incident. This striking illustration of abuse of power was her first contribution to the Chief Factory Inspector's Report in 1895. It was a cold March day, and the water used was filthy. Anderson examined forty of the women as they were let out to walk home, some of them a distance of several miles. They were soaking wet. This was a case in which nothing could be done except to appeal to the employer on moral grounds, and to emphasise the inhumanity of this action.<sup>583</sup> Anderson's judgement and tactics in such instances provide a suitable yardstick against which to measure the progress and effectiveness of the women's inspectorate in the years immediately before the First World War.

This chapter will assess the development of the women's inspectorate between 1902 and 1914. It will focus on the impact of the women inspectors on the department as a whole and on the working environment for women. Historian H.V. Emy has referred to a philosophical shift from social reform to social reconstruction throughout wider culture by 1909. The liberal state was now regarded by some progressives as a constructive force not only to impose the principle of equality through legislation where appropriate, but to utilise society's resources for the benefit of the majority.<sup>584</sup> We have seen this shift at the Board of Trade with Hubert Llewellyn Smith and Clara Collet (see chapter three). This chapter will chart the narratives of the women's department in the context of such a change.

### **1. 'One of the greatest public services rendered by women': the expansion and development of the women's factory inspectorate.**

The effectiveness of the women's department can be gauged by its continued expansion through the years up to 1921. In 1900 the structure of the women's department was still fluid. There were seven women inspectors in a department that would continue to be led by Adelaide Anderson until her retirement on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1921.<sup>585</sup> By 1907, the number of women inspectors had risen to twelve.<sup>586</sup> The last two

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<sup>583</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1895, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896), p. 119.

<sup>584</sup> H.V. Emy, *Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, 1892-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 216.

<sup>585</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 14.

of these, Irene Whitworth and Isobel Meiklejohn, both university educated women like Anderson herself, were selected from three candidates in competitive examination. Thus an element of competition had been introduced, a lack of which had been one of the objections to women inspectors from the men. In the men's department, competition rather than recommendation had always been the case. By 1910 there were seventeen women on the team, including six senior lady inspectors each with supervisory roles.<sup>587</sup> By 1912, this had effectively been reduced to fourteen for much of the year through prolonged sick leave and retirements, although by the end of the year they were fully staffed, with both two junior vacancies being filled by university women.<sup>588</sup> In 1913, a rather more buoyant Anderson reported that the numbers had risen to nineteen, with no ill-health, and such staffing levels meant made 'some further development in the vast field of work practicable.'<sup>589</sup>

In 1899, the first major restructuring of the department had created two special districts where the women's industries would come directly under the jurisdiction of the women inspectors: Ireland and the West Metropolitan district in the capital. Ireland had presented particular problems and inspection had proved difficult, as we have seen, particularly with regard to the outworkers' abuse through the contravention of truck legislation. Gaining the trust of these workers was a long and arduous process and follow up visits were often, through necessity, delayed. Furthermore, the flax and linen making industries, shirt and collar making, laundries and the tobacco industry employed large numbers of women in the north of Ireland and all required the attention of the women inspectors.<sup>590</sup> Three women inspectors had been deployed to Ireland for much of 1899, particularly to try and enforce the legislation against truck violations. There were fewer factories in the south of Ireland and therefore most of the women employed were out workers. Furthermore, Ireland, Anderson argued was the area most responsible for the exploitation of child labour, particularly in the flax industry.<sup>591</sup> Much

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<sup>586</sup> Factory Inspectors: Returns of the Names and Previous Occupations of Professions of the Inspectors, pp. 6-7.

<sup>587</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1910, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1911), p. 109.

<sup>588</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1912, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1913), p. 113.

<sup>589</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1913, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1914), p. 69.

<sup>590</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 91.

<sup>591</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 173-177.

time was spent in travel, often through inclement weather. Frequent returns to London to report back and prepare cases for prosecution was also time consuming. Given the size of the women's department, it meant that important work elsewhere was necessarily curtailed.<sup>592</sup> To be effective in Ireland, therefore, a resident woman inspector was deemed essential. Hilda Martindale was the first such inspector, appointed to the post in 1905, and her ability to build a degree of trust with the workers and a greater knowledge of the area would prove to be more successful in the long term.

Lucy Deane assumed charge of the women's industries in the West Metropolitan District in 1899, taking over from the male district inspector. The area covered four thousand women's workplaces, including factory and workshop laundries, court dressmakers and milliners. Section 39 of the 1895 Factory Act required that every workshop should provide an inspector with the name and place of the workshop, nature of the work and the name of the owner or occupier.<sup>593</sup> These premises needed to be efficiently registered, so that the details were easily referenced by the inspectors. In preparation for this, Anderson had spent time in Paris, studying the French method of registration. It was difficult to extrapolate information using the British method which was found to be cumbersome and complicated. In the French capital, they had had twenty years of inspection experience by women inspectors and the system employed was found to be easier and more efficient. As a result the French system was adapted for British use and the fixed ledgers were replaced by a card index system. Different trades were colour coded and filed in alphabetical order in streets and grouped in sanitary areas e.g. Kensington or Westminster. Each card contained general information and the results of biennial inspections on the lined side and correspondence and any prosecution details on the reverse. However, as Anderson pointed out, no such improvements could mask the fact that there was just too much work for such a small team.<sup>594</sup>

In 1908, further reorganisation involved the creation of new centres in the major industrial regions of Manchester and Glasgow, where women inspectors were to work

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<sup>592</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1899, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1900), p. 238.

<sup>593</sup> 1895(153). *Factories and Workshops: A Bill to amend and extend the Law relating to Factories and Workshops 1901*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1906), Section 39, p. 14.

<sup>594</sup> Annual Report, 1899, p. 239.

under a senior woman. Promotion was now possible within the department. Newly defined duties of the women inspectors included the investigation of complaints and enquiry into incidents of industrial poisoning.<sup>595</sup> By this time there were fifteen inspectors working under Anderson in the women's department, of whom six were senior inspectors. One, Mary Paterson, had been promoted to Deputy Principal and Rose Squire was now a senior inspector. In 1908, Lucy Deane, also a senior inspector, retired through ill health but in the same year, Anna Tracey, Emily Sadler, Mabel Vines and Hilda Martindale had all been promoted to senior rank. It was during this year that the largest addition to the staffing within the women's department took place. Mary Paterson, until this time always rather out on a limb in Scotland, was transferred to London to run the southern areas. Offices were opened for senior women inspectors in Manchester and Belfast and, in 1909, in Birmingham. There were now four centres outside London. Rose Squire controlled the most densely populated centre in Manchester, and, from 1909, Emily Sadler was in charge of Birmingham, Mabel Vines in Glasgow and Hilda Martindale in Belfast.<sup>596</sup> In 1912, Rose Squire was promoted to Deputy Principal Lady Inspector.<sup>597</sup> This restructuring brought the women's department much more into line with that of the men.

In 1899, Dr. Thomas Oliver, and Professor Thorpe, Principal of the Government Laboratory had published a report showing how lead poisoning could be ameliorated by the production of a lead-free glaze.<sup>598</sup> 'Raw lead' or carbonate of lead, a dangerous ingredient, was not indispensable in glazes or in colours which had to be fired; lead-free substitutes were now available. This was a significant change in perception; until this point, investigations had focused on amelioration, rather than prevention. A draft proposal of a new set of Special Rules was drawn up but there were several sticking points for the manufacturers and arbitration followed.<sup>599</sup> This began in November 1901

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<sup>595</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>596</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1908, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1909), p. 120.

<sup>597</sup> This was following the appointment of Mary Paterson as one of the first national insurance commissioners for Scotland, after the National Insurance Act was passed in 1911. She held this post until her retirement in 1919.

<sup>598</sup> Professor T.E. Thorpe, LL.D., F.R.S. and Professor Thomas Oliver, M.D., F.R.C.P., *Report on The Employment of Compounds of Lead in the Manufacture of Pottery, and their influence upon the Health of the Workpeople, with Suggestions as to the Means which might be Adopted to Counteract their Evil Effects*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1899).

<sup>599</sup> Special Rules and Requirements were introduced under the Factory and Workshop Act 1891, to protect those working in a factory or workshop that was known to have machinery or employ processes

and resulted in all but one of these new rules being accepted, to become operative immediately, with a period of up to eighteen months given to measure their impact on the workplace and the numbers affected with lead poisoning. This time was also to allow the manufacturers to come up with an insurance package to support those affected. Arbitration was resumed in 1903 and a compromise was finally reached. After the new rules were accepted, the greater part of Martindale's work centred on the pottery industry, with her clerical work being done in London and remaining under the supervision of Anderson as Principal Lady Inspector, but working alongside the district inspector. These factory inspections were often popular with the workers and Martindale wrote that women welcomed their visits, both in the factory and in their homes.<sup>600</sup>

Hilda Martindale's work encapsulated these changes within the women's department. Martindale had not intended to pursue a career in the Women's Factory Inspectorate. She had studied for a year under Dr. Thomas Legge at Bedford College in Baker Street, London, one of four students. Martindale had worked with the Charity Organisation Society (COS), Dr. Barnado's Homes and for one month in 1897, as a travelling inspector for the Children's Country Holiday Fund. Her work at the Paddington branch of the COS one or two days a week in the late 1890s, gave her valuable experience in case work and the need for accuracy in recording detailed enquiries.<sup>601</sup> Her particular interest was children in care and she had planned a career in social work with a focus on looked-after children. At a meeting of the State Children's Association, at which she gave a paper, she met Adelaide Anderson, who was looking for a temporary inspector to fill Lucy Deane's post while the latter was in South Africa. Anderson asked her to apply. The child in industry was not a small problem, Martindale wrote in 1901:

In the textile factories of the United Kingdom over 32,000 children from 12 years of age were being employed on the half-time system; in addition, many thousands of children of 13 years of age (with certain limited educational qualifications) and young persons of 14 years and upwards, were employed full-time – 60 hours a

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that could be dangerous or injurious to health. They provided for the chief inspector to enforce or adopt special measures deemed suitable to ameliorate such dangers or injuries. They continued under the 1901 Act.

<sup>600</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 83-86.

<sup>601</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 68.

week – as industrial workers in non-textile factories and workshops. The number of children engaged in their own homes on some of the sweated trades of those days could not be counted.<sup>602</sup>

Martindale did not lose the contact with child care. Although she knew little of industrial conditions or protective legislation on her appointment, both children and working mothers were employed in factories. Martindale was an Associate of the Royal Sanitary Institute and she had been a student at Bedford College, where she achieved the Bedford College Hygiene Certificate.<sup>603</sup> Like most of the women inspectors, she came from a social reform background. She summarised her own initial strengths as being an ability to deal with people, experience in investigation, and the capacity to face antagonism in an impersonal way.<sup>604</sup>

Martindale's first task on her appointment in 1901 was to become familiar with the Factory Acts and the methods used to implement them in factories and workshops. The Factories and Workshops Act of 1901 had raised the age of employment for children to twelve, and also had introduced changes in the legislation regarding the education of children and to ensure that certificates of fitness were issued to children before they could be employed. Martindale was right in deciding that working with children and working as a factory inspector were not mutually exclusive occupations. Her career was launched in the workshops of West London, but she was soon visiting other industries all over the country as well. In the spring of 1903, she began a comprehensive investigation of women's work in the potteries. During that year she visited factories in Staffordshire, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Herefordshire, Buckinghamshire and Essex and works in Worcester, Liverpool, Birkenhead, St. Helen's and South London.<sup>605</sup> We have seen the effects of lead poisoning in this industry, where many of the sufferers were women. Martindale described these symptoms as severe abdominal pains, blindness, wristdrop and still births.<sup>606</sup> Chronic asthma and bronchitis or 'potters' rot' were also widespread in other processes in the same industry. Owners were obliged, under the special rules to notify the medical

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<sup>602</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 73.

<sup>603</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 65.

<sup>604</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 73.

<sup>605</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1903, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1904), p. 195.

<sup>606</sup> Wrist drop, or plumbism, caused by lead poisoning, is the inability to extend the hands or the fingers due to paralysis of the forearm.

officer of such cases, and there were 113 such reports in 1901, 100 in 1903 and 109 in 1904, although many still went unreported.<sup>607</sup> The effects on women's reproductive capacity were of particular concern to successive governments.

In 1904, as a result of direct instructions from the secretary of state, and with a hint of displeasure as she had not been consulted, Anderson wrote in her annual report in 1904 that Martindale was assigned to the Potteries full-time.<sup>608</sup> Martindale reported that in that year, she had visited every factory in England where women were employed under the special rules for china and earthenware with the exception of those in Newcastle and one in Birmingham. She had also completed many home visits and inspected some factories and workshops that did not come under the special rules.<sup>609</sup> During these inspections, where the focus was on lead poisoning, another aspect of factory life had grabbed her attention, one that she considered had gone unnoticed for too long; the 'unskilled' job of carrying clay. This was very heavy work and most often employed boys and girls from the age of thirteen years. Martindale realised that regulation would have to be bylaw, and made detailed notes of various cases, for example, a girl of fourteen years, weighing 82 pounds, carrying upstairs a piece of clay weighing 67 pounds. These children carried an average of 3-4 lumps of clay per hour, although Martindale did not note for what distance.<sup>610</sup> Rose Squire, investigating the tin plate works in South Wales, the Manchester cotton warehouses and the glass factories in Sunderland had also highlighted this problem and recorded young girls of thirteen or fourteen carrying weights of up to 120 pounds.<sup>611</sup> Such heavy loads were also found in brick works, aerated water works and fruit preserving factories.<sup>612</sup> These problems had gone virtually unreported before the work of the women inspectors drew attention to them. In Clause 3 of the Employment of Children Act 1903, children (a child was defined as a person under fourteen), were prevented from carrying weights likely to

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<sup>607</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 83.

<sup>608</sup> Adelaide Anderson was always reluctant to relinquish what she considered any control of her department. This will be observed later as more women became resident outside London.

<sup>609</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1904, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1905), p. 230.

<sup>610</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>611</sup> Squire, pp. 60-61.

<sup>612</sup> Squire, p. 62.

injure their health, and after this time, the women inspectors were able to prosecute such cases.<sup>613</sup>

## 2. An English Inspector in Ireland, 1905-1912.

Early in 1905 Hilda Martindale read an article in her morning paper. It focused on a response in Parliament the previous day by the Conservative Home Secretary, Aretas Akers-Douglas to a question on the nature and duration of Martindale's work in the Potteries. His reply was that she was shortly be posted to Ireland, taking up residence there and only spending one third of her time in the Potteries. The article stunned Martindale as this was the first she had heard about her new appointment and she noted wryly in her memoir: 'This came as a surprise, but it was only a forerunner of the surprises that came to me later in my official life.'<sup>614</sup> There was obviously very little consultation in the appointment process, but Akers-Douglas had at last been in a position to accede to pressure from the Irish MPs for the appointment of a permanent female inspector in Ireland. As early as January 1894, Thomas Sexton, the Irish Nationalist and MP for North Kerry, had asked the Home Secretary whether, with fifty thousand female employees in the textile industry in Belfast, there was to be a permanent appointment. Sexton considered such an appointment essential.<sup>615</sup> This had been followed up by a similar question from Michael Austin, MP for Limerick West but at this time there had not been sufficient numbers of women factory inspectors for a woman to be permanently based in Ireland.

Martindale was initially unhappy about the change. She knew little about Ireland, had no particular interest in Irish politics and felt ill-prepared. For the next three and a half years, she remained semi-peripatetic; resident in Ireland for a large proportion of the year and still working at the Potteries. She described moving from hotel to hotel, often on a Sunday, with no office or assistant, mostly living in the Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin or the Midland Station Hotel in Belfast.<sup>616</sup> This was clearly an unsatisfactory way of life as she had to carry all her baggage and paperwork in leather boxes and needed to send anything she required to be typed back to London. It left very little time for

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<sup>613</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp.131-135.

<sup>614</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>615</sup> Mr. Michael Sexton, 'Factory Inspection in the Belfast Linen Trade', in *Hansard*, HC Deb 11 January 1894, vol. 20, cc1336-7.

<sup>616</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 92.

relaxation as this was spent travelling across Ireland, on average about 10,000 miles a year, often in adverse conditions and without the benefits of a motor car. Her memoir charts her progress from her initial reluctance to her later enjoyment of the work and her appreciation of the beauty of her surroundings and her admiration for the workers. She never lost contact with the industrial conditions in what was to become Northern Ireland, and formed a firm friendship with Brigid Stafford, who later became the Chief Inspector of Factories under the Government of the Irish Free State.<sup>617</sup>

Hilda Martindale's account of her long service in the women's inspectorate in Ireland (she was there from 1905 until 1912), is part of a significant chapter in the history of the early women inspectors. Together with the work of Deane and Squire (chapter four), we can trace well defined progress. Deane and Squire, working in Ireland as peripatetic inspectors in the 1890s found difficulties in effecting any permanent change in a rural community, particularly with regard to truck violations, when there were necessarily long gaps when the inspectors had to return to England to pursue other work. This contrasts with the more consistent approach Martindale was able to adopt through residence in Ireland, and the greater level of trust she was able to establish both with workers and, occasionally, with employers. After a challenging first three years, in 1908 she established herself in a house in Belfast with her faithful housekeeper, Jemima Norton, who moved from London with her. Jemima Norton was an excellent cook and a great conversationalist, so was a favourite with Martindale's many visitors. Martindale acquired a dog and began a more settled existence.<sup>618</sup>

These years saw a change, at least in part, from the insidious systems of 'gombeening', described in the previous chapter, the high interest credit workers were forced to accept, the heavy fines imposed on workers for minor misdemeanours and the deductions taken from wages for such things as spoiled work.<sup>619</sup> For instance, Martindale reported on the case of four women outworkers who were making nightdresses, for which they were paid 2s 6d a dozen. They all made the same mistake in the preparation of the nightdresses, so they were each fined 2s, receiving only 6d in

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<sup>617</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 146.

<sup>618</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 147. Martindale wrote a short biography of Jemima Norton with a photograph: Hilda Martindale, O.B.E, 'A Servant of the Old School', *Some Victorian Portraits and Others*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1948), pp. 98-105.

<sup>619</sup> Gombeen, Anglo-Irish extraction, means moneylender. These men and women paid workers in goods or 'tickets, redeemable only in one shop, which they owned, or where they had an interest and where they gave credit at very high interest levels.

pay. This was a clear contravention of the 1831 Truck Act.<sup>620</sup> Prosecutions following such instances were not always successful. Mary Paterson attended the court proceedings in 1908 with Martindale, where witnesses had been intimidated into refusing to give evidence. Frustrating though this must have been, nevertheless Paterson believed that the prosecution was justified for the newspaper publicity. Such reporting, she argued, meant a greater knowledge of the Truck Acts generally and made employers consider the outcomes.<sup>621</sup> The women inspectors became known locally as experts on the Truck Acts and gave evidence for the Departmental Committee on Truck in 1908.<sup>622</sup> In 1908, there were twenty four prosecutions against truck violations, of which twenty two were successful.<sup>623</sup>

Martindale's close knowledge of local trades and insights given by local people enabled her to identify and report on other poor working conditions. For instance, a local doctor had noted among his young female patients, symptoms of swollen glands and rotting teeth which he linked to the method of continual label licking in a factory. On investigation, Martindale found the manager maintained that licking was the speediest and most effective way of attaching labels rather than the prescribed method of using water, to dampen them. Such a problem could then be easily rectified. Furthermore, in another factory young girls were forced to stand whilst packing patent medicines from 8am until 1pm and again from 2pm until 7pm without a break. She had no power to insist that seating be provided, but her reports drew attention to the work and the strain of standing for very long periods of time.<sup>624</sup> Close contacts with local experts gave Martindale a clear insight into problems that she might not have observed herself and further underlined the importance of a resident female inspector.

By 1908, Martindale was promoted to Senior Lady Inspector. (Both she and Anderson remarked on the term 'lady' and that she had now changed from 'female').<sup>625</sup> Martindale, although resident in Belfast, was still travelling widely across Ireland. The laundry industry was of particular concern to her; hours were long and difficult to monitor for the inspectors. Excessive heat, gas fumes and unfenced machinery were

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<sup>620</sup> Annual Report, 1908, p. 159.

<sup>621</sup> Annual Report, 1908, p. 162.

<sup>622</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 139.

<sup>623</sup> Annual Report, 1908, p. 162.

<sup>624</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 122.

<sup>625</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 92.

often found in laundries. Adelaide Anderson had long realized the laundry industry's importance both in the employment of women and its development from the private house to the larger factory, where initially protection from the increasingly complex machinery was non-existent. Anderson also realized that the laundry industry would give women inspectors the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge of engineering in general, knowledge which many of the men inspectors already had. Such knowledge was to prove invaluable. The laundry industry had been the subject of a parliamentary report in 1893, which had recommended protective legislation not introduced until the Factory Act of 1901.<sup>626</sup> The 1901 Act made a special case for laundries, distinguishing them from other factories, particularly in hours of work.

Martindale and her assistant in Ireland set about an in depth study of the mechanics of the laundry industry. They contacted manufacturers and entered into discussion with them about the types and nature of the fencing needed to protect the workers against accident. They became acknowledged experts on laundry machinery, which came to be recognised by both the employers' associations and by their male colleagues. Many laundries in convents and religious houses, common in Ireland were not included at all in the 1901 Act. It was soon realised that these, too, needed to come under legislative protection. Martindale, with a colleague, visited fifty seven such institutions and found a variety of situations. One example of good practice particularly impressed Martindale: one nun confessed a passion for the mechanics of the industry and explained that her preferred reading was 'The Vulcan', a magazine on engineering.<sup>627</sup> However, most were less enlightened and Martindale found many of her visits depressing. For example, in one orphanage, girls as young as nine were working nine hour days and eight on Saturdays. The women inspectors could take no action as these laundries were not regulated under the 1901 Factory Act. However, in 1905 Martindale and her colleagues prepared a full and detailed report on those institutions in Ireland and Scotland which accepted voluntary inspection; some refused. In an appendix on the financial position of such laundries, the women inspectors proved that many such institutions were supported financially by the income they derived from their laundries. It

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<sup>626</sup> This report, under the leadership of R.E. Sprague Oram, had included evidence from both the first women inspectors, May Abraham and Mary Paterson.

<sup>627</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 93-95.

was a damning report in most instances.<sup>628</sup> As a result, in 1906, the Factory and Workshop Act of 1901 was amended to bring laundries completely under the 1901 Act and to include the laundries of prisons, industrial schools and those of religious or charitable institutions, albeit with one or two provisos.<sup>629</sup> Letters received from workers reflected how much the effort of the women inspectors was both demanded and also appreciated.<sup>630</sup>

Martindale had had mixed success with prosecutions in Ireland. She became accustomed to disappointing verdicts, she remarked in her memoir.<sup>631</sup> Two cases in textile mills illustrate the scientific knowledge which was increasingly necessary to prosecute successfully. In the first, the temperature of the working environment was at 46°F and not 60°F as it should have been. The defendants used evidence from the Prison Board in Ireland to maintain the temperature should not exceed 58°F or drop below 45°. Although 45° seems pretty cold, the majority of the magistrates agreed with the Prison Board and Martindale lost her case. In the second case, therefore, she was not optimistic of winning, expecting that the first judgement could well jeopardise the second, where the temperature varied between 45° and 54°F. In this case she employed the expertise of her colleague, Irene Whitworth, who had a scientific background. There was a subtle difference between the two cases in that, in the first no heating had been employed whereas in the second, gas jets had interfered with the air quality. Whitworth took samples for analysis in the government laboratory and the results showed too high a level of carbon dioxide present. The case was delayed for a month and Martindale used the time to collate evidence from doctors, district nurses and even the clergy to support her argument that working in such conditions was damaging to health. The case became rather a cause célèbre in the town, with many hostile to Martindale's case as they feared the closure of the factory if she was successful. Although she had been certain conditions were unacceptable, Dr. Legge, medical officer for the factory inspectorate, examined 56 women working in one room and found 52 of them to be anaemic as a result of their working environment.

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<sup>628</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1905, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1906), pp. 256-265.

<sup>629</sup> 1906 (116). *Factory and Workshop: A Bill to amend the Factory and Workshop Act 1901*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1906), Sections 50-52, pp. 16-17.

<sup>630</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 98-99. Martindale reprints examples of these letters here.

<sup>631</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p.102.

Martindale also took into court the death certificates of four previously healthy girls, whose cause of death was consumption, evidence brought to light by doctors in the town. The factory could become 'a hot-bed of consumption and disease,' she told a packed court and made a successful prosecution.<sup>632</sup>

There were other causes for concern in the textile factories: Martindale's work in Ireland on the employment of children began with those young people working over long hours in flax factories in Antrim and Down. Of the 50,688 employees, 13,691 were under eighteen and of those, 4,144 were half-timers aged between 12 and 14.<sup>633</sup> Most of these workers were engaged in spinning and weaving. Martindale began by confining her research to the effects of working in the flax mills, utilising data from the certifying surgeons and social workers who worked to ameliorate the effects of poverty and distress. She also made many home visits and noticed that many children of factory workers came into the mills at a disadvantage. They had frequently been looked after by elderly women who 'minded' them until they reached school age and these children saw very little of their mothers. They were often malnourished when they began work in the mills as doffers or cagers. They were employed in rooms frequently in temperatures of 70°-80°F, where the atmosphere was saturated because of the need to keep the yarn wet for the spinning process. They wore little clothing and no shoes although by law they were required to wear waterproof aprons. Generally, half-timers were employed for one day out of two, usually from 6.30am until 6pm which did not contravene the law but was a twelve hour day, followed by a school day. Teachers reported to Martindale that these children were habitually very tired in school and did not spend their recreation period running around with other children. One head teacher, who kept in touch with pupils after they had left school, reported that few of them lived beyond thirty years. A report published by the Belfast Health Committee in 1908 found that in young people of 15-20 years, the death rate in Ireland was double that in Manchester, in spite of the infant mortality rate being lower.<sup>634</sup> Poor working conditions were severely damaging the health of children already disadvantaged by poor nutrition and limited physical development as well as illiteracy or poor literacy standards.

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<sup>632</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 104-106.

<sup>633</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 110.

<sup>634</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 112.

Poverty in this area made parents and guardians dependent on the young person's earnings. In Belfast, for example, only 69% of children attended school, and many half-timers went into the factory at the end of the school day as well. The Factory Act of 1901 had stated that no young person should be employed for longer than seven days without a certifying surgeon confirming she/he to be fit to work. However, when this certificate was refused, some parents were known to immediately apply to other mills. One grandfather was particularly hostile when Martindale had his consumptive granddaughter re-examined as she was unfit to work. He and his adult son appeared at her office in an attempt to intimidate her and followed this up with a letter in which they threatened her life. There were many other such children, and Martindale made random home visits to several part-timers, to check on health issues. Here, she found one child partially sighted through ophthalmia, a severe inflammation of the eye, one child who had lost an eye in an accident at the mill, one severely underweight and other conditions which rendered them unfit for work. However, public tolerance of the situation was shifting and Martindale noted that her annual reports were regularly quoted in the Irish newspapers and she was often asked to speak on her work.<sup>635</sup> 'Rousing' public opinion, she knew was part of her work.

In 1911, Martindale was asked to speak at the Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute, held in Belfast. She prepared a report by contacting the employers who had introduced improvements beyond what was required under the factory acts. She described improvements in these factories. Some innovations were extensions of the existing regulations like the introduction of an eight hour day rather than twelve hours. Others had appointed inspectors to oversee health and safety issues and some firms had discontinued the system of fines and deductions, and introduced other methods of ensuring good work. Martindale could see the end of Truck violations. Furthermore, welfare work had extended, with better sanitary provision, improved meals and dental clinics had been introduced in some factories.<sup>636</sup> When she returned to England in 1912, she felt she had achieved some degree of success. However, in her address on Hygiene and Industrial Employment made to the Congress in Belfast that year, (the year of the National Health Insurance Act), she also spoke of the women she had encountered who had returned to jobs that involved hard manual labour and long

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<sup>635</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, pp. 113-118.

<sup>636</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation to Another*, pp. 143-144.

periods of standing within ten days or less of their confinement and commented: 'no women would return to work within the month if it were not poverty which compelled her to do so'.<sup>637</sup>

### **3. Pressure for change: the work of the women's department to 1914.**

Hilda Martindale's investigations into the conditions of child workers in the mills and other factories fuelled the contemporary concern over the circumstances for working mothers with infants and young children. We have seen this concern reflected in Clara Collet's analyses of married women's work. Such investigation would take up much of the time of the women inspectors throughout this period (see below). Martindale observed that many mothers seemed to be unfamiliar with child-rearing, having been mill workers themselves since childhood. Most returned to the factory as soon as possible after delivery. Many working mothers in Ireland were the sole breadwinners for the family, their husbands either having emigrated in search of employment, or unemployed. The 1901 Factory Act stated that no factory owner should knowingly employ a woman or girl for at least four weeks after she had given birth, but the word 'knowingly' was open to misuse. One woman worker in a textile mill Martindale questioned stated quite categorically that she had no children. A home visit revealed that the woman had five children under the age of six. Her husband had been out of work for seven months and, as Martindale lamented, there were no maternity benefits; her earnings were the only source of income for the family. Another factory worker, confined on the Wednesday, was back at work on the following Tuesday. She gave the reason for her absence as a cold.<sup>638</sup> Little could be done to support such women but Martindale did have some isolated success stories. One enlightened managing director employed 1500 women and children in his mill. He told Martindale he was impressed with her ideas and with her help he engaged an educated woman trained in hygiene and health to implement the regulations in his factory. Among the changes introduced were weekly doctors' visits for pregnant women, a laundry for the weekly washing of the women's shawls and the public baths reserved for half-timers on several afternoons each week so that the children could have a hot bath.<sup>639</sup> These instances might not have been common, but they do emphasise both the changing attitudes amongst some

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<sup>637</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 162.

<sup>638</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 120.

<sup>639</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation To Another*, p. 120.

employers and also the value of methodical inspection by a woman inspector based in the area, readily available for concrete help and practical advice.

From 1904 onwards, women inspectors had, as part of their brief, to specifically focus on issues of women with young children. It was in this area that women inspectors were assumed to be at their most effective. In the 1907 Chief Inspector's Report, the first attempt was made to quantify the level of employment of married women in industry. In textile factories, 24.1% were married, 71.8% were single and 4.1% were widowed. In non-textile factories 16.3% were married, 79.3% were single and 4.4% were widowed. In power-driven laundries, 28% of women were married.<sup>640</sup> These figures were necessarily flawed, however, as the returns were voluntary. The issue was reported in all of the Chief Inspector's reports in the five years which preceded what Anderson referred to as the 'modest relief that came for maternity' through the National Health Insurance Act of 1911.<sup>641</sup> The concern was with women with children, the working conditions for pregnant women and those with babies and the re-employment of newly delivered mothers within the terms of the 1901 Factory Act. As we have seen, the law stated that women should not 'knowingly' be re-employed within four weeks after confinement, but it was common to seek employment in other factories, which made monitoring problematic. However, there were also cases of deliberate contravention of the act: for example, during 1904, 24 complaints about illegal employment within four weeks of childbirth were received by the women inspectors, of which all 24 were investigated. 22 were upheld and 2 were either not traced or not upheld.<sup>642</sup> Such low figures mask the suffering described in Anderson's narrative:

The occupier of a factory had not "knowingly" re-employed a mother within the four weeks' limit; the woman's husband, a carter, had been out of work seven weeks before the confinement, and the Guardians gave relief in money and kind for fourteen days after the birth. The third week they refused an application for the continuance of the relief, and the woman returned to her employment – her husband being still workless. ....Ultimately, when due care has been secured for the poorest child-bearing woman, the tale of their past suffering and neglect will seem a terrible and incredible thing.<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>640</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 161.

<sup>641</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>642</sup> Annual Report, 1904, p. 237.

<sup>643</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 162-163.

The employment of small children, to which E.P. Thompson has referred as, 'one of the most shameful events in our history', had caused growing concern by the mid nineteenth century and under the Factory Act of 1878, no child under ten years was to be employed.<sup>644</sup> This was raised to twelve years in 1901, under a Factory Act which restricted the employment of children to no more than 36 hours a week in factories and workshops. The Act also ensured meal breaks and limited hours to eight daily, to be worked in two shifts, so that no child should work longer than four hours at a stretch. In the 1906 amendment bill, a certificate of fitness was extended to all workshops and no child under 13 was to be employed in factories and workshops, with the exception being those already employed. Furthermore, a privacy clause was added to ensure medical examinations were conducted confidentially. An amendment to the regulations for dangerous trades ensured fresh air and the introduction of measures to deal with dust inhalation. The 1918 Education Act raised the school leaving age to 14 and children of school age disappeared from the factories, although the women factory inspectors were critical of the fact that school leavers between 14 and 16 were still considered able to stand the strain of a full working day.<sup>645</sup> In 1920, the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act finally prohibited the employment of children in any industrial undertaking. The definition of the term 'child' was any person under the age of fourteen years.<sup>646</sup> Martindale wrote that her data on child labour, collated in Ireland was significant in the framing of this act. Child labour, of course, was not confined to Ireland. In her 1904 Annual Report, Anderson had arranged for Mary Paterson to continue her enquiry into the employment of children after they had been rejected by the certifying surgeon as being fit for work. The results showed that children were often re-employed in heavy workshop and other occupations.<sup>647</sup> Paterson's findings appeared in the Annual Report in 1905. In Birmingham and Bradford for example, by far the most common reason for rejection for work was 'uncleanliness', which in most cases meant having what Paterson referred to as a 'verminous head' (head lice). Other reasons included inflammation of the eyes, common amongst mill workers, deafness and cases of ringworm, bladder disease and adenoidal difficulties. Most interesting, however, was the result of rejection. Paterson recorded that most

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<sup>644</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Penguin, 1982), p.349.

<sup>645</sup> Squire, p.141.

<sup>646</sup> Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children Act, 1920, [10711Geo. 5.], (London: H.M.S.O. 1920), Clause 4, p. 5.

<sup>647</sup> Annual Report, 1904, p. 271.

cases appeared to be regarded more as suspension until an improvement was recorded. In many cases, the attention of the parents was drawn to defects that might otherwise have passed unnoticed. In one case of a boy with bladder disease, the employer found treatment for him and he quickly recovered. Certification was sometimes dependent on certain criteria. For example, a surgeon might grant a certificate to a young person with an eye problem only if the child did not work 'in a dusty process'. Home visits were made by the women factory inspectors to help the parents. Furthermore, Rose Squire reported progress in Birmingham in 1906, where the Local Authority had given stamped addressed postcards to the certifying surgeon, who informed the Medical Officer of Health about cases of head lice. The young people were subsequently visited by health visitors, to advise on treatment.<sup>648</sup>

In 1906, Mary Macarthur, the secretary of the Women's Trade Union League and women's rights campaigner, became President of the National Federation of Women Workers, the first general union for women workers. The WTUL was open to all women in unorganised trades and had two main objectives; firstly to get women organised and secondly, to press for a fixed minimum wage for women working in the sweated trades. A report on the sweating system, first stimulating the debate had been published in 1890, by a select committee of the House of Lords.<sup>649</sup> The first attempt to legislate to fix a minimum wage had been in 1900, and pressure from women trade unionists and the liberal press had continued since. Public opinion on the whole issue of the sweated industries was fuelled further following the Sweated Industries Exhibition in 1906. The object of this exhibition was to confront the public with the conditions of labour and rates of pay suffered by so many, so that a serious consideration of a permanent remedy to this system could be found.<sup>650</sup>

The work of the factory inspectors was used to illustrate the problem and examples of their reports on the sweated industries are found in Gertrude Tuckwell's preface to the exhibition handbook: 'In the making of women's clothes by starving women in this town ... deductions reduce to insignificance any wage that starts by being fair', wrote one factory inspector. Mabel Vines' report on outwork, included in the handbook, described the conditions in which many workers lived and worked: 'In some instances, one room

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<sup>648</sup> Annual Report, 1905, pp. 317-319.

<sup>649</sup> Sarah Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, (London: Davis-Poynter, 1980), p. 63.

<sup>650</sup> Richard Mudie-Smith, compiler, *Handbook of The "Daily News" Sweated Industries' Exhibition, May 1906*, (London: Burt & Sons, 1906), p. 12.

has to serve manifold use of bath room, laundry, drying ground, kitchen, scullery, bed room, living room, sick room, workshop, and, it may be, mortuary as well.<sup>651</sup> Government sponsored investigation into the effects of legislation in Australia and the Select Committee on Homework was set up in 1907. Clara Collet and several of the women factory inspectors including Rose Squire (see chapter three) gave evidence to the Select Committee. Here, the growing appreciation of the women factory inspectors and their knowledge of the poor conditions of the workers was one factor instrumental in engendering legislative change.

The Labour politician, Arthur Henderson introduced the Sweated Industries Bill of 1907, to establish wages boards that would have the power to fix minimum rates of pay for workers in particular trades; tailoring, dressmaking and shirt making in the first instance. Power was to be given to the Home Secretary to extend the provision beyond those trades initially included. This bill proposed to assign to the factory inspectors the enforcement of the bill under the terms of the 1901 Factory Act 'within their districts'.<sup>652</sup> The work would necessarily become the responsibility of the women inspectors as the trades involved employed mostly women workers. The final Trade Boards Act was not passed until 1909, establishing minimum wages in four different trades; ready-made and bespoke tailoring, paper box making, machine-made lace and net finishing and hammered, dollied or tommied chain-making, not confined only to the sweated trades, but all heavily reliant on women workers.<sup>653</sup> For the women factory inspectors, Anderson argued, this act linked closely with their work on enforcing the Truck Acts and protecting women piece-workers under Section 30 of the 1901 Factory Act. It had the added effect of eradicating many of the deductions and fines which had penalised low paid workers.<sup>654</sup>

In April 1906 the Truck Committee was set up to consider the adequacy of the Truck Acts and collate evidence on the practice of lodging employees at their place of work. This practise placed employees in a difficult position if they wished to complain and could be open to abuse. Its members included the senior civil servant, Malcolm

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<sup>651</sup> *Handbook of The "Daily News" Sweated Industries' Exhibition, May 1906*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>652</sup> *Sweated Industries: A Bill to improve the Conditions of Employment, including the establishment of a Legal Minimum Wage, of Persons employed in Certain Industries*, 15 February 1907, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1907).

<sup>653</sup> Sweated trades were those where workers laboured for over long hours in unregulated conditions for very little pay.

<sup>654</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 61.

Delevingne and May Tennant, one of the first two women inspectors, with extensive experience of truck violations. The Truck Act of 1887 had given to the factory inspectorate the power to enforce its terms and the Truck Act of 1896 had regulated fines and deductions making them illegal unless previously agreed with the workers. As we have seen, contraventions of these acts had taken up a disproportionate amount of the women factory inspectors' time. Of the thirteen legal cases conducted since the 1896 Truck Act, five had been prosecuted by women factory inspectors, four of those by Rose Squire and one by Lucy Deane.<sup>655</sup> The women inspectors had also been responsible for taking five out of the six appeals on behalf of the factory inspectorate, to the High Court, on points of law.<sup>656</sup>

The Committee's report took three years to compile and was finally published in 1908. The women inspectors' evidence was wide-reaching and gave a comprehensive picture of the abuses of truck and the need for legislative reform.<sup>657</sup> May Tennant, together with the Labour M.P. Stephen Walsh, disagreed with other members of the committee on the issue of fines and deductions, which they thought should be abolished. They produced a minority report, supported by evidence from the women factory inspectors, Lucy Deane, Mary Paterson and Rose Squire, as well the trade unionist, Gertrude Tuckwell. Squire argued that fines were quite unnecessary if there were effective foremen and forewomen who were able to maintain discipline by their own influence. Evidence from the workers endorsed this, claiming that the system produced bitterness and resentment.<sup>658</sup> However, both the Chief Factory Inspector, Dr. Whitelegge and Adelaide Anderson supported the fine system as a deterrent but qualified this with the proviso that the fine levied should bear some ratio to earnings and not be wholly disproportionate.<sup>659</sup> Despite these differences and although it took until 1940 to finally legislate against the fines system, the worst excesses, observable in large fines and deductions were diminished after the report's publication and this was largely due to the persistence of the women factory inspectors, the comprehensive nature of their reports and the detail of their evidence.

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<sup>655</sup> Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts: *Report of the Truck Committee*, Vol. I – Report and Appendices, 1908 [Cd. 4442], (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1908), p. 105.

<sup>656</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>657</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 60.

<sup>658</sup> Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts: [Cd. 4442], p. 84.

<sup>659</sup> Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts: [Cd. 4442], p. 29.

The National Health Insurance Act of 1911 exemplified the change from social reform to social reconstruction, where the state is the provider of support for its poorer citizens and a conduit through which society's resources could be used for the well-being of the majority. It signalled the establishment of a new method of social welfare provision in Britain, although many of the poorest were still excluded from its benefits, including low income women.<sup>660</sup> In 1909, at the time of the budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George made known the Government's intention to introduce legislation to deal with sickness, invalidity and unemployment. The Act provided health insurance for all workers over sixteen earning under £160 per annum and all manual workers were compelled to join the scheme. Each worker paid 4d per week, to which the employer added 3d and the government 2d. These contributions provided medical attendance from a doctor; sickness benefit of 10s for insured men and 7s 6d for insured women for the first thirteen weeks of sickness, 5s for the next thirteen weeks and a disability benefit of 5s thereafter. Maternity benefit of thirty shillings was paid directly to the insured man's wife, who would receive thirty shillings more if she was also insured. The insurance also covered treatment in a sanatorium in cases of tuberculosis. On December 16<sup>th</sup> 1911, the act became law. The hardship endured by poor working mothers had been reported by Anderson in the annual reports every year from 1907 until 1911, and she referred to this misery in her memoir, quoting one woman who said, 'Could I remain at home for more than a fortnight with five children under six years of age starving at home?'<sup>661</sup> Martindale wrote of the earliest collective help for mothers that came with the National Insurance Act, with 'modest relief' for maternity, and that the women inspectors saw the 'fruits of their labour in legislation which helped the working woman in her hour of need.'<sup>662</sup>

To what extent the women factory inspectors directly influenced this legislation is difficult to quantify. As Jose Harris has argued, the connection between the physical health of the citizen and the national well-being was a constant theme of debate in the Edwardian period, in all political circles.<sup>663</sup> Furthermore, such legislative innovation was not confined to Britain: Robert F. Foerster, writing in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* in February 1912, called the act, and the comparable one in Germany, 'a

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<sup>660</sup> The Poor Law was, however, only officially abolished in 1929, and its legacy of shame would live on in the minds of the poor for many more years.

<sup>661</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 162.

<sup>662</sup> Martindale, *One Generation to Another*, p. 121.

<sup>663</sup> Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 60.

new social epoch'.<sup>664</sup> What both Clara Collet at the Board of Trade, and the women factory inspectors, together with the women's trade unions, did achieve was to bring the detail into the public arena: Collet through her statistical analyses and the women inspectors through their systematic investigation and the annual reports.

Civil servant, Sir Robert Morant was appointed Chairman of the English Insurance Commission by the Chancellor, David Lloyd George in 1911 and was given the task of appointing staff, with the clear brief that the selection should 'avoid a political character and shall not be dominated by the Government of the day'.<sup>665</sup> Hilda Martindale recalled that he brought to the Commission a belief in women's abilities and therefore for the first time women were to be seen working equally alongside men to bring this legislation into operation.<sup>666</sup> As a result, it was recommended that staff positions might be filled from members of the existing Civil Service, women as well as men, or from those with the required specialist experience. Four women Insurance Commissioners were appointed to serve on the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish Commission respectively. With a background in social reform, Mona Wilson was appointed as a National Insurance Commissioner. She received the same salary of £1000 per annum as her male colleagues, becoming the first woman to receive equal pay and the highest paid woman in the civil service. In 1912, Mary Paterson left the Factory Inspectorate to take up a new position as one of the first National Health Insurance Commissioners for Scotland. Whereas in England, women working for the Commission were organized in a very similar way to the women's factory department, in Scotland what Martindale referred to as 'a more advanced policy' was set up: women and men worked alongside one another and differences of gender were not recognised. Martindale noted that the women's services were soon recognised as highly valuable. In a report on the administration of the National Health Insurance Act, they were specifically praised.<sup>667</sup>

#### **4. The wider field: secondment to other sectors of public service widens women's spheres of interest.**

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<sup>664</sup> Robert F. Foerster, 'The British National Insurance Act', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Feb., 1912), p. 276.

<sup>665</sup> *The Insurance Commission for National Health (England): Copy of Papers relating to Staff*, 1911 [Cd. 6000], (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1911), p. 2. Permanent Secretary at the Board of Education, Morant had resigned from this position in November 1911, to take up his new appointment.

<sup>666</sup> Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, p.64.

<sup>667</sup> Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, pp. 64- 65.

Recognition of the professionalism and effectiveness of the women inspectors meant that, from early on in the twentieth century, women inspectors were seconded to other departments within the service. In 1901, Lucy Deane was one of the six women appointed by the government to investigate the appalling conditions exposed by Emily Hobhouse in the concentration camps in South Africa during the second Boer War.<sup>668</sup> By the middle of 1901, there was increasing public concern about the living conditions for the Boer and black African women and children living in the so-called 'centres of refuge' or concentration camps in South Africa. Hobhouse's account of her horrific experiences appeared in *Report of a Visit to the Camps of Women and Children in the Cape and Orange River Colonies*. Initially, her claims had been heavily criticised by the government, but in August 1901, an all women commission was set up to investigate the conditions under the chairmanship of Millicent Fawcett. Lucy Deane and Dr. Jane Waterston, a resident of Cape Town and the only woman doctor in South Africa also served on the Commission. None of the appointees were actively against the war and the government was hoping for a favourable report or at least one that would contradict Hobhouse's criticisms and exonerate its decisions.

Members of the commission travelled and lived on board a train for most of the time, visiting and inspecting the camps as they journeyed. Deane wrote that the policy of creating the camps was a huge mistake that only ignorant army officers could have committed. The concentration camps had succeeded in making the people hate the British and that it was a 'huge object-lesson to the world in what not to do!' The British government, Deane wrote, with the help of an inept army hierarchy, had simply recreated thirty three of the worst London slums in South Africa. Children died from infectious diseases and women, incarcerated in an attempt to stop them from helping their husbands in the war, died in their thousands. Deane considered that anyone but a British general would have realised this immediately, because the British were unable to feed or to house them properly.<sup>669</sup> They had exacerbated the death rate and the cost of the camps, which housed 150,000 Boers, was £7,000 per month.<sup>670</sup> Deane was not

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<sup>668</sup> Emily Hobhouse had become a member of the South African Conciliation Committee in 1899 and organized protest against the war. The results of the British scorched earth policy had driven many Boer women and children into refuge camps. These were later termed 'concentration camps'.

<sup>669</sup> Warwick University, Modern Records Office, LAS, MSS. 69/2/10, p. 110, my page numbering throughout.

<sup>670</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/2/11, p. 1.

influenced by political expedients and worked to produce an impartial and frank report that would cause the government to reflect.

Lucy Deane got on well with her fellow committee members at the beginning of the tour of the camps but later differences began to show. When the committee was beginning to collate its findings and discuss the content of the report she described herself as 'one against five' because she considered the report to be 'white washy'.<sup>671</sup> Deane had tackled the assignment in a similar way to that of factory inspection. Her letters to her sister reflect her expertise and approach. For example, in her description of the working of a huge search light in operation, she was very quick point out that the flywheel was 'utterly unguarded'.<sup>672</sup> She was less conciliatory than her colleagues and it was largely at her insistence that the report included criticisms of the operation of the camps system at all. Deane felt that to produce a minority report of one would have no weight at all so she used coercion and compromise and managed to get almost all her main points included. She ensured that all the recommendations for improvements were incorporated, and hoped that the need for these improvements would reveal the dreadful conditions. She failed at first in her efforts to have the issue of rations included and, for Deane, this was vital; malnutrition was one of the main causes of the high death rates. Again, compromise was expedient; she got her amended rations but without the comment she wanted to add in the report. She wrote that she hoped a discerning public could read a sub-text! The depths of her disagreement are reflected in her letters and, for her, a necessary compromise had been reached.<sup>673</sup> The final report insisted that rations should be increased. It also requested more nurses be sent and stated that this disaster could have been ameliorated with improved hygiene. The final report confirmed all of Hobhouse's findings.

In 1906, Rose Squire was seconded by the Home Office to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law as a 'Special Investigator'. The Royal Commission on the Poor Law and the Relief of Distress, 1905-1909 was chaired by the Conservative politician, Lord George Hamilton and set up to investigate the whole question of the law on the relief of poverty and also to inquire into the way in which distress was relieved outside the Poor Law with respect to unemployment. It had to consider what changes to the Poor Law

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<sup>671</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/2/10, p. 106.

<sup>672</sup> LAS, MSS.69/2/10, p. 59.

<sup>673</sup> LAS, MSS. 69/2/10, p. 109.

might be deemed necessary. The scope of such an investigation was enormous. Squire and her colleague Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland were to examine 'the relation of industrial and sanitary conditions to pauperism'.<sup>674</sup>

Steel-Maitland and Squire identified seven diseases that led to pauperism: phthisis and other tubercular conditions; bronchitis and pneumonia; rheumatism and gout; cancer; heart disease; ulcerated legs and syphilis.<sup>675</sup> Links between poverty, overcrowding and disease had been recognised for eighty years and the local sanitary authorities had powers to regulate the notification and isolation of infectious disease. The growth of Poor Law hospitals had been effective in the isolation and prevention of tuberculosis in many instances.<sup>676</sup> The Squire Steel-Maitland report made a strong argument for government intervention because preventative legislation against pauperising diseases had been successful. The Public Health Act, for example, regulated water supplies and sewage removal, and deaths from typhus had been considerably reduced through the enactment of various public health measures. However, phthisis remained a threat to many, preventable but not prevented.<sup>677</sup> There are observable parallels with Squire's descriptions of her investigations for the Home Office. She wrote of two main examples; tuberculosis and fibroid phthisis, a tubercular condition caused by the inhalation of clay dust and known as 'gannister disease'.<sup>678</sup> Tuberculosis (TB) often caused destitution because of the debilitating effect it often had on the wage earner, propelling the family into primary long-term poverty. The investigation linked several trades and working conditions to this disease. TB was less prevalent in the trades which fell under the Factory Acts but trades outside its reach, such as metalliferous mining, were still in need of legislation.

The reason Squire and Steel-Maitland thought it so important to pay attention to the gannister and tin-mining industries was the heavy toll on Poor Law Relief in particular

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<sup>674</sup> Rose E. Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service, An Industrial Retrospect*, (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1927), pp. 114-115. Later to become a Conservative politician, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland had an interest in social policy.

<sup>675</sup> Phthisis meant to waste away. Phthisis and gannister disease were the terms used in industry for tubercular disease of the lungs or pulmonary consumption.

<sup>676</sup> Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, p. 59.

<sup>677</sup> Mr. A.D. Steel-Maitland and Miss Rose E. Squire, *The Relation of Industrial and Sanitary Conditions to Pauperism, Report*, Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress, Appendix Volume XVI, (London: H.M.S.O., 1909), p. 18.

<sup>678</sup> Gannister (ganister) was a hard siliceous stone found in the Yorkshire coal mines and used for lining furnaces.

areas of Yorkshire and Cornwall. Gannister rock was used in lining the Bessemer steel furnaces, and miners were exposed to the hard siliceous dust which caused severe damage to the lungs. Fibroid phthisis was specific to this trade and, as a result, there were a disproportionate number of widows and children to support in these areas. A Home Office enquiry in 1900 had resulted in a number of Special Rules being introduced in 1905. However, adherence to these rules was a different issue as Squire and Steel-Maitland were to discover. For example, few miners wore respirators. Squire noted one man who, when asked what the respirator was for, replied: 'to put over your mouth when the inspector comes round'.<sup>679</sup> He might have been joking, but the respirators were not being worn.

Ignorance was one reason why protective measures were not used, Squire discovered, fitness for purpose another. Miners were in constant danger of the inhalation of dust when using a machine drill to extract the ore. The use of a water spray had been brought in under the special rules, as a means of prevention, but it was also not being used. Squire's approach to her work was that she had to experience the conditions under which a respirator should be used to understand the whole picture, therefore she went down the deepest tin mine in Cornwall. Women were not allowed to work in mines and she was informed later that she should not have ventured down herself, but the managers did not stop her, and Squire did not consult before she went. Examples of Squire's 'joyous adventures' were explored in the last chapter, but her description of her descent into the tin mine is the most vivid of all her experiences:

Dressed as miners in drill suits and bowler hats stiffened as hard as rock to resist any hard knocks to which our heads might otherwise be exposed, we descended in an awful chute in which each person lies as in a coffin, and being warned not to raise head or hand lest the shaft face should remove it, we sped in darkness down and down into the earth. The mine is over 3,000 feet deep-our chute only took us part of the way. When we emerged from our "cases" we were each supplied with a candle stuck in a ball of clay, and we were shown how, having moistened this in the stream of water trickling down the sides and floor of the passage in which we stood, to stick it on to the front of the bowler hat. This left our hands free, and for the next period of time-was it ten minutes or ten years?- one by one we followed each other down a ladder lying on the vertical side of the rock. The little flicker of candle flame only served to make the darkness more profound, one foot after another felt for and

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<sup>679</sup> Squire, pp. 125-126.

found the next rung, and with hands grasping the sides of the ladder for dear life, the only sound the rush of water beside us, I proceeded, a man being above me and one or more below me on the ladder. At length we reached another resting-place, and after walking along a gallery where men were working in the flitting lights and shadows, we once more made a descent. This was less steep than before, and with loose stones beneath us grinding under our feet, grasping a rope hand-over-hand, slipping and sliding, we arrived, dusty and hand-sore, at the bottom and found ourselves in a wide roadway. Thenceforward for an hour or two we traversed roads of varying width, sometimes hurrying into alcoves cut in the rock, while blasting took place, and the noise of the explosion first seemed to hit one on the chest and then reverberating through the cavernous depths died away. Sometimes we took refuge again for the passage of train-loads of material, the trucks shambling their way along the noisy rails. Here and there groups of figures loomed into sight, and the manager thoughtfully called out at times: "I am bringing a lady to see you," as the unprecedented presence of a woman was not suggested by my appearance, which was rather that of a lad! The heat was terrific, and being very damp was very trying. My clothing was soon saturated and the miners had discarded all but the minimum. A minute dust covered face and hands and lined the mouth. Where the rock drill was at work the dust present everywhere was intensified....When our party emerged once more into the light of day we were scarcely recognisable, and to me at least, until I had bathed and donned dry garments life seemed not worth living!<sup>680</sup>

She had ventured into the dreadful conditions in which the men worked. When she asked about the water spray the men demonstrated that the hose was actually too short to reach the place where the drill was working. What's more, the demonstration showed that the men's unwillingness to use it also stemmed from the fact that drilling in the roof overhead resulted in the water from the spray falling directly on the men underneath, which they found very uncomfortable. Squire stressed the point that the design and use of such equipment needed knowledge of the conditions of the men's work, as well as intelligence. The experience left her with an immense admiration for the workers.<sup>681</sup>

For Squire the examination of evidence and the investigation of industries as a special investigator into working conditions as they affected poor law relief and pauperism was

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<sup>680</sup> Squire, pp. 128-130.

<sup>681</sup> Squire, pp. 127-128.

familiar work to that at the factory inspectorate. Her own contribution in the partnership with Steel Maitland, she believed, was a close knowledge and experience of industrial conditions and of the lives of working people.<sup>682</sup> They investigated the factors which caused poverty; low wages, sickness and the debilitating nature of some diseases that contributed to poverty, demoralisation, premature ageing and lack of education.<sup>683</sup> Their main conclusion was that the key cause of industrial poverty was casual and irregular employment, for which little had been done. Inadequate housing had been ameliorated to an extent with sanitary reform, unhealthy and dangerous trades had been improved through the Special Rules and exhausting conditions of employment were gradually improved through legislative measures to reduce hours.<sup>684</sup> Casual labour, however, involving the least skilled of the workforce, was mostly found in large industrial centres and was most in need of reform. Their report, however, failed to offer any proposals as to what reforms might be appropriate.<sup>685</sup> This was not the case in other areas. For example, the report was clear in its suggestions for the alleviation of distress in the dangerous and unhealthy trades, where Squire and Steel-Maitland proposed a system of compulsory provision for workers against sickness, and further suggested that this should not be provision of compensation but rather a system of joint insurance.<sup>686</sup> This was the system adopted in the National Health Insurance Act in 1911.

## 5. Conclusion.

The women's department had changed since the early days. The personal involvement and crusading spirit of Rose Squire or Lucy Deane had been tempered by a more methodical approach exemplified by Hilda Martindale. The change was influenced by Adelaide Anderson herself, always a judicious and measured authority. The women's factory inspectorate was secure, with a rising number of inspectors and an acknowledged expertise. Anderson wrote in 1913:

The promise lies in the fact that the movement to secure better conditions is not confined to any one class or group. The women and girls at last begin to press their

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<sup>682</sup> Squire, p. 118.

<sup>683</sup> Steel-Maitland and Squire, *The Relation of Industrial and Sanitary Conditions to Pauperism*, p.3.

<sup>684</sup> Steel-Maitland and Squire, *The Relation of Industrial and Sanitary Conditions to Pauperism*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>685</sup> Steel-Maitland and Squire, *The Relation of Industrial and Sanitary Conditions to Pauperism*, pp. 178-180.

<sup>686</sup> Steel-Maitland and Squire, *The Relation of Industrial and Sanitary Conditions to Pauperism*, p. 181.

claims for a better life.....not only be increasing appeals to Inspectors.....but also by criticism of the limitations of the law and by fresh courage in organising and voicing their need to the employers. Employers are initiating reforms not only as outstanding individuals and firms, but are beginning to do so, at last, by associated action and effort...<sup>687</sup>

For Anderson, the achievements of the women factory inspectors were in the increased assurance of women workers, a confidence that empowered them to challenge their working conditions and the legislation that shaped those conditions. Furthermore, women factory inspectors had, as we have seen, persuaded some employers of the advantages in taking a care over the welfare of their workers, and of how this could enhance production and output. The work of the women inspectors, exemplified in prosecution successes, negotiating skills and their impact on new legislation made them invaluable as the monitoring agents of reform.

The number of prosecutions continued to rise throughout this period, with 208 in 1900, with a success rate of 93.8%.<sup>688</sup> In 1908 there were 392 prosecutions, with a success rate of 94.9%.<sup>689</sup> By 1913, the numbers had levelled, with 374 prosecutions and a success rate of 97.9%. By 1913, Anderson stated that her aim was not to prosecute those factories where owners were prepared to comply voluntarily and where there were no serious cases of negligence, a further example of her intention to negotiate and reason rather than use punitive action.<sup>690</sup> The women factory inspectors' persistence and success in the prosecution of truck violations led to a gradual demise of the system which had caused such hardship particularly in the south of Ireland. By 1913, there were 121 complaints concerning truck violations, of which only 6 related to payment in kind. The number of complaints made had significantly increased; in an atmosphere of fear and distrust, fewer complaints are made. The women inspectors investigated more complaints as workers felt more secure. For example, in 1900 there were 506 complaints compared to 2,014 by 1913.<sup>691</sup>

In the laundry industry, the women's expertise had led to under greater legislative protection in the 1901 Factory Act. Anderson had, from the beginning, realized the

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<sup>687</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>688</sup> Annual Report, 1900, p. 357.

<sup>689</sup> Annual Report, 1908, p. 161.

<sup>690</sup> Annual Report, 1913, p. 109.

<sup>691</sup> Annual Reports for 1900 and 1913, p. 354 and p. 74 respectively.

importance of bringing the laundry industry under the same legislative protection as all factories and workshops, as the industry became increasingly mechanised.<sup>692</sup> The nature of the industrial injuries suffered by workers illustrates the importance of rigorous adherence to safety measures for the women workers; throughout this period, horrific accidents resulting in scalping or amputation were regularly recorded. A detailed knowledge and understanding of the mechanical processes involved was essential in ensuring that preventative measures like fencing were fit for purpose.

The investigative work of the women inspectors in the dangerous industries provided an essential source of information. The first medical officer to the inspectorate had been appointed in 1898 but the first woman inspector in the medical inspectorate was appointed only in 1921. Anderson argued that, particularly in the early years of the women's inspectorate, hospital records failed to enter appropriate data on women's illness and mortality, specifically on marital status and occupational history. This failure impeded the acquisition of knowledge on the causes of industrial disease. The women factory inspectors' methodology, including close investigation and recording of individual cases both inside the factory and outside, provided data on injuries or deaths in the dangerous trades, for example, lead poisoning, phosphorus necrosis or mercury poisoning.<sup>693</sup>

Helen Jones has argued that the main achievement of the women factory inspectors was not to impact on the lives of working women, but merely to contribute to the changing perceptions of the middle-class woman's professional ability.<sup>694</sup> Although the women's success in increasing the awareness of the value of middle-class professional women in the workplace was greatly beneficial in the long term and should not be under-estimated, I would argue that the work of the women factory inspectors was a contributory factor in effecting improvements. They proved themselves effective prosecutors, despite no legal training.<sup>695</sup> They had empowered women by giving them a greater understanding of workers' rights. The women's department had grown under Anderson's leadership, and, with fewer inspectors working peripatetically, they had

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<sup>692</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation to Another*, pp. 92-94.

<sup>693</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 96.

<sup>694</sup> Helen Jones, 'Women Health Workers: The Case of the First Factory Inspectors in Britain', *Social History of Medicine*, 1988, 1 (2), pp. 165-181.

<sup>695</sup> The women's success in the courtroom would lead to several young women factory inspectors training for the Bar as soon as they were legally able to do so.

been able to establish themselves in particular areas or divisions and become familiar with the locality and develop a local knowledge that enabled them to liaise more effectively with doctors and welfare workers to support their work. Many of their suggestions were adopted by employers in the long-term. For example, the women inspectors had argued the advantages of working shorter shifts to improve output, as production was less affected by worker fatigue. This policy was widely accepted during the war years. From the start, the women had been meticulous in the gathering of data on accidents in any particular workplace, for future reference. In the laundries, for example, such records were used to extrapolate information on the possible causes of accidents, like fatigue.

In the years leading up to the First World War, women working at the Board of Trade and in the Home Office in positions of equality and autonomy that had not been seen before and, after the war, would not be replicated for many years. By the outbreak of war in 1914 women inspectors might have been expected to feel that they had contributed positively to the improvements being made in conditions of women employed in industry, and their contemporaries would have concurred. In the following chapter, although the women made a vital contribution to the war effort, the continued success of the women's department did not lead to greater opportunities for more women in the civil service.

## Chapter Six.

### The Ethos and Politics of Women's Equality in Industry and the Civil Service, 1914-1919.

#### 1. The impact of the First World War on women in industry and in the factory inspectorate.

The 1912-1914 Royal Commission on the Civil Service (the MacDonnell Commission) had recommended extending the employment opportunities for women within the civil service. The position for women at the Board of Trade and the National Health Commission were mentioned separately in the Commission's report, 'With respect to the method of appointment and tenure of office, there is nothing to differentiate these situations from similar situations held by persons of the other sex.'<sup>696</sup> Clara Collet and Mona Wilson were two such women. Women in the higher grades could not be blamed for thinking that equality of opportunity, and even pay and conditions of employment, were not far away. The women factory inspectors were acknowledged as the effective facilitators of improved conditions for women workers in industry. Herbert Asquith, Prime Minister since 1908, wrote in 1914: 'I think we should look towards the extension of the Women's Inspectorate as one of the best securities for a healthy condition of things.'<sup>697</sup>

The outbreak of war in August 1914 resulted immediately in a vast expansion of armaments factories as well as factories to supply uniforms and equipment for the growing numbers of men in the armed forces. After conscription was introduced in 1916, this process was further accelerated whilst the number of men workers was further reduced. The way in which women responded to the crisis, both those already in industry and those who were recruited as part of the war effort is well documented.<sup>698</sup> Women's war work changed public opinion and their labour was seen as a service to the national welfare. Propaganda posters often portrayed women workers as national heroines. Adelaide Anderson argued that it was no longer doing women a favour

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<sup>696</sup> Royal Commission on the Civil Service: Fourth Report of the Commissioners, [Cd. 7338], (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), p. 88.

<sup>697</sup> H.H. Asquith, quoted in Mary Drake McFeely, *Lady Inspectors, The Campaign for a Better Workplace 1893-1921*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 124.

<sup>698</sup> See, for example, Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls, Women Workers in World War 1*, (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 1998).

merely to employ them but that their work was a service to the nation in time of crisis.<sup>699</sup> The work of the women inspectors in turn was affected and they found themselves transferring their skills from the specialised work of women's industries to the supervision of women's new role as industrial producers for national needs. This chapter will examine the impact of the war on the work of women civil servants supporting women workers in industry in the face of cataclysmic changes. It will also consider the long term effects of the war on the professional progress for women, specifically on those women in the civil service who, in the light of pre-war optimism, might have expected a broadening of the opportunities open to them.

In March 1915, the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) introduced the replacement of women into positions in industry previously occupied by men. Referred to as 'dilution' by academia and the trades unions, this was the replacement of skilled workers by semi-skilled or unskilled labour, an enormous undertaking requiring considerable re-organisation as industrial production met the requirements of war. After conscription was introduced in 1916, the process of substituting unskilled women for unskilled men began.<sup>700</sup> In both situations, women were a vital part of this industrial change, acquiring new skills rapidly in concentrated training courses. Some women began working in heavy industry for the first time, taking on the jobs or parts of the jobs assigned to men. Furthermore, many factories and workshops adapted products and the skills required to produce them. For example, textile factories began to produce uniforms, armaments factories hugely expanded to meet demand for shells, machine guns and tanks, and dressmakers moved into factories to produce knapsacks.

The Factory Acts were suspended for the duration of the war, so women munitions workers worked night shifts and 12-hour shifts, although young girls under sixteen were not allowed to work at night. Often these very young women were employed in heavy industries like preserving, laundries, textiles or brickworks as greater numbers of women workers were employed in munitions, often working night shifts. There was a resurgence of the illegal employment of children during the war and this resulted in a large number of prosecutions. The Chief Inspector's annual report in 1917 gave instances of these; on one occasion the excuse given was that the pressure of work

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<sup>699</sup> Adelaide Anderson, *Women in the Factory, an Administrative Adventure, 1893 to 1921*, (London: John Murray, 1922), p. 85.

<sup>700</sup> Thom, p. 58.

had led the management to overlook the age of their employees. The factory inspector, Mabel Vines prosecuted the case successfully, the Sheriff stating that no-one could be so busy that they were unable to tell the difference between a thirteen year old and one of eighteen. The 1917 report emphasised the need for watchfulness to avoid the employment of young children near dangerous machinery, in particular.<sup>701</sup>

For the women inspectors, alongside the remaining men, the work was challenging. They advised other organisations like the women welfare officers and the local advisory committees, who were concerned with welfare outside the factories as vast numbers of women joined the workforce: 382,000 between July 1914 and July 1915, and a further 563,000 the following year.<sup>702</sup> By the time the Ministry of National Service was set up in 1916, the work of placing substitute women into factories was already planned and the substitution was then largely carried out by the factory inspectorate. Anderson wrote that they were able to perform this huge task by disseminating information and advice to other groups of workers: the women welfare officers and the dilution officers of the Ministry of Munitions; the superintendents of women's labour in munitions factories and the local advisory committees.<sup>703</sup>

Hilda Martindale attributed the success of the extension of war-time dilution and substitution by women workers to the factory department. She recalled the women inspectors' surprise at first seeing women perform what had been traditionally seen as men's work.<sup>704</sup> The Chief Inspector's 1915 annual report described the trade conferences that were held to facilitate the substitution of women workers to release men for active service; factory inspectors' advice was invaluable in this process.<sup>705</sup> In conjunction with the Board of Trade, the Home Office prepared pamphlets in twenty five different industries detailing the processes whereby the replacement of enlisted men with substitute women had had been achieved. The women inspectors helped prepare these pamphlets and gave evidence to the Women's Employment (Substitution)

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<sup>701</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1917, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1918), p. 16.

<sup>702</sup> Thom, p. 61.

<sup>703</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 237. Trinitrotoluene, known as TNT, was the high explosive used in the production of shells.

<sup>704</sup> Hilda Martindale C.B.E., *One Generation to Another 1839-1944*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1944), p. 155.

<sup>705</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1915, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1916), pp. 4-5.

Committee set up to consider issues of health and welfare, and women's pay.<sup>706</sup> However, Martindale wrote with regret that there was not more dilution in the higher posts in industry. There was no increase in the number of women managers or forewomen despite the employment of so many more women, with only isolated exceptions. In one factory she visited, for example, two hundred men and thirty women were employed using heavy machinery, managed entirely by one young woman.<sup>707</sup>

The factory inspectorate was crucial in the process of facilitating the supply of arms, ammunition, equipment and clothing for the military authorities. It was uniquely placed to do so. The inspectors knew where to locate materials and where the factories suitable for mass production were to be found. After the introduction of conscription, with the rapid expansion of factories and the employment of women in even greater numbers, the pressure on the women inspectors grew as 43 male inspectors were doing essential work in other areas and 45 were serving in the armed services.<sup>708</sup> There were, as in other areas, temporary additions to the department. These were appointed to the women's section, so that the majority of the work was being performed by women for the duration of the latter part of the war. However, the number of women inspectors actually increased by less than ten, and the technical knowledge of the permanent inspectors remained invaluable.

By 1914, there had already been a marked success in the reduction of industrial poisoning (chapter five). Women factory inspectors were able to use their experience and knowledge of the newly acquired methods of control as they prepared to protect workers from increased risks of new kinds of industrial poisoning. For example, the rapid development of aircraft and munitions manufacture was responsible for cases of toxic jaundice caused by TNT poisoning. Anderson wrote that the Factory Department was able to supply the Ministry of Munitions with a body of evidence and example of the 'special rules' for them to develop their own protective measures.<sup>709</sup>

In September 1915, Rose Squire was appointed to the newly established Health of Munitions Workers Committee, to consider the enlistment of women to engineering and

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<sup>706</sup> Martindale, *One Generation to Another*, p. 155 and Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 237.

<sup>707</sup> Martindale, *One Generation to Another*, p. 157.

<sup>708</sup> Rose E. Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service*, (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1927), p. 171-172.

<sup>709</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 128-129.

the production of weapons for the war effort.<sup>710</sup> The remit was to 'consider and advise on questions of industrial fatigue, hours of labour, and other matters affecting the personal health and physical efficiency of workers in munitions factories and workshops'.<sup>711</sup> Effectively, the committee was charged with facilitating the production of munitions and equipment for the war effort whilst maintaining the health and safety of the workers on the home front. It was no mean task. The committee investigated welfare supervision, hours of labour, the employment of women, sickness and accidents. Beginning with Sunday labour, welfare supervision and industrial canteens, there was no time to wait for the results of their work to be acted upon so, as each issue was investigated and discussed, an interim report was immediately issued. For example, the investigation of the effects of fatigue gave scientific credence to what the factory inspectors and many manufacturers had concluded about hours of work and the beneficial effects of regular breaks. Twenty one white papers were produced between 1915 and 1918 and it was these that were incorporated into the final report, published in 1918. These reports demonstrated, for example, that good seating, lighting, washrooms and canteens were all valuable in improving output.<sup>712</sup> Again, women factory inspectors had argued the value of such improvements for a long time.

Adelaide Anderson's work on the dangerous trades, the employment of women, welfare and legal proceedings, as well as her annual reports show a breadth of vision and she was well known for her grasp of new opportunities whenever possible. For example, during the First World War, it was Anderson who pushed for a home help service, despite some opposition from colleagues. After the Second World War, with hindsight, Martindale was able to see the extent of this vision.<sup>713</sup> Martindale's own work expanded during the war and she was closely involved with both employers and workers in the negotiation of the terms and conditions of women's war work. In 1918, she became Anderson's deputy during the period of Rose Squire's secondment and then senior lady inspector for the south-east. Early in 1918, Rose Squire had been released from the Home Office to direct the women's welfare staff at the Ministry of Munitions.<sup>714</sup> Squire

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<sup>710</sup> Set up by the then Minister of Munitions, David Lloyd George and the Home Office, the committee was chaired by Sir George Newman, medical officer of health. Other committee members included Sir Gerald Bellhouse, Deputy Chief Inspector of Factories and May Tennant.

<sup>711</sup> Quoted in: *British Medical Journal*, 1915 December 11, 2(2867), pp. 863-864.

<sup>712</sup> Thom, p.38.

<sup>713</sup> Hilda Martindale, *Some Victorian Portraits*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1948), p. 49.

<sup>714</sup> May Tennant was at this time, advisor to the Welfare Department at the Ministry of Munitions.

wrote that the Home Office was reluctant to release her and that she was reluctant to go. She considered the welfare department at the Ministry of Munitions to be flawed and she doubted that anyone could correct what she considered the critical error of setting up a separate organisation to deal with industrial conditions. However, after a confidential interview with Winston Churchill, by then Minister of Munitions, she spent the next two years as director of the women's welfare department on a task which she considered the most difficult that a woman civil servant had yet undertaken.<sup>715</sup> Her role was to liaise between the welfare department at the Ministry of Munitions and the Home Office. It involved the support and training of a large number of women welfare officers who were totally inexperienced in the field.<sup>716</sup> They required training to ensure that those women working in the very dangerous conditions of the munitions factories adhered to the regulations developed to protect against explosion. Everyone, including the inspectors heeded these; for example, the removal of all hair pins and the wearing of rubber shoes. Such precautions did not always prevent tragedies but, for Squire, the greatest danger to the workforce was TNT poisoning.

At any one time during the war, 50,000 workers were employed filling shells, 100,000 being employed as factory fillers throughout the war. The majority of these workers were women. The links between TNT and deaths from toxic jaundice were quickly made, largely because these links had already been made with other industrial poisons like those used in the dyeing industry.<sup>717</sup> The factory inspectors were familiar with these poisons. Toxic jaundice was made a notifiable disease in 1916; henceforward women became reluctant to work filling shells, so the need for preventative action was required to keep up production levels. Respirators and protective clothing were introduced but there was little medical evidence to support the protective value of respirators, although they did have the effect of shifting the responsibility for safety from the government to the individual worker.<sup>718</sup> Special regulations did not prevent the danger although Squire maintained that constant vigilance did ameliorate it to an extent.<sup>719</sup> Anderson's figures supported her view. In 1916, there were 206 cases reported, of which 57 were fatal; in

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<sup>715</sup> Although Squire did not regret her decision, she felt it militated against her further promotion within the Home Office.

<sup>716</sup> Squire, pp. 178-180.

<sup>717</sup> Thom, p. 123.

<sup>718</sup> Thom, p. 129.

<sup>719</sup> Squire, pp. 182-183.

1917, there were 190 cases, of which 44 were fatal but in 1918, 34 cases were reported, of which ten were fatal.<sup>720</sup>

When the Armistice was declared in November 1918 the process of demobilisation began, not just for the home coming soldiers but also for the army of female industrial workers. The women's welfare staff, directed by Rose Squire, had the responsibility of preparing the women for release and to ameliorate the effects of unemployment. They had been preparing for this for some weeks and were no longer a part of the Ministry of Munitions but had become 'in a few days' a branch of the new Department of Demobilisation and Resettlement. 113,000 women were dismissed in the first fortnight and this situation continued for some time. It soon became clear that, as Squire put it; 'Four years of war work had left the young womanhood of the country without any trade in their hands for peace-time needs.' The war pledges given by the government to the trades unions, Squire wrote, meant that women employed in engineering and other trades usually considered men's trades were to be dismissed and found alternative employment in 'women's trades'. However, very few could be re-employed in these trades partly because of a shortage of raw materials.<sup>721</sup> Whilst the Health of Munitions Workers Committee had fuelled the debate on the nature of the healthy worker, as Deborah Thom has argued, it happened at the end of the war, when opportunities for women in the workplace were rapidly diminishing.<sup>722</sup> The first demobilisations for women began before the end of the war, and married women were quickly encouraged to return to the home. In one munitions factory alone, 4,162 women were discharged before the end of December 1918.<sup>723</sup> In February 1919, Squire became director of women's training at the Ministry of Labour. Her objective, in consultation with employers and welfare supervisors (she makes no reference to employees), was to train former service employees and munitions workers for peacetime employment. The only occupation readily available to them was domestic service. For women who had experienced greater freedom in the workplace during the war years domestic service was unpopular. It was, Squire wrote, considered 'distasteful' by the demobilised women.<sup>724</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 306-307.

<sup>721</sup> Squire, pp. 189-191.

<sup>722</sup> Thom, p. 10.

<sup>723</sup> Squire, p. 191.

<sup>724</sup> Squire, p. 192.

An advisory committee was set up with labour representatives including Mary Macarthur and Margaret Bondfield, and improved conditions for domestic service were discussed. Training centres were set up, with some trainees, according to Squire, saying they had no idea housework could be so interesting! Many, however, were not quite so easily pleased. The work of the Women's Training Branch was the retraining of women for other industrial roles, and seventy seven courses were set up in London and the main cities, retraining 3,248 women in industries like clothing, laundry work and food. They were most successful in tailoring and dressmaking, where workers appeared most enthusiastic about the work.<sup>725</sup> However, there was an inevitable contraction of women's labour as industries like munitions were no longer required. Furthermore, in demobilising the female workforce, the government were ensuring the fulfilment of its pledges to the unions. By June 1919, 90 per cent of the women employees in munitions factories had been discharged, many of whom did not want to go. Unemployment was to be a constant feature of the post-war years and many working women returned reluctantly to the home.

By 1918, considerable progress had been made in the improvement of industrial conditions for women and children. Hilda Martindale argued that higher output in the munitions industry during the war had brought to the public's notice two important facts: firstly that increased output cannot be achieved merely by increasing the hours worked by the employee; secondly, that improvements in production depend on improved conditions for workers. This was because conditions during the war had encouraged interest in the woman industrial worker: the reports of the Health and Munitions Committee reinforced that interest. Thousands of women had entered the factories and both long hours and risk taking had been an expectation. Martindale and other women inspectors argued that long hours alone did not improve output and during the war years employers were prepared to experiment. Government departments had instituted enquiries into the effects of long working hours and the advantages and disadvantages of shift systems. As a consequence, shorter working periods and longer time for rest had been trialled. Shorter hours were one major effect of war on industry, with working weeks generally reduced from 60 hours to between 44 and 48 hours. Simultaneously, voluntary welfare work schemes were being enacted and legislation had had the effect

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<sup>725</sup> Squire, pp. 195-196.

of making welfare compulsory in some groups of factories.<sup>726</sup> The women inspectors had emphasised the importance of negotiation and mediation with employers to experiment and achieve improved outcomes without the need for legislation before the war; they considered it one of their most useful contributions. The war had greatly exacerbated this need and more employers were now ready to try different tactics to improve output. The success of this experimentation had meant that these improvements continued to be adopted into the post war period.

The war affected the civil service as it did elsewhere. Dorothy Evans, the secretary of the National Association of Women Civil Servants, argued that the period preceding the 1914-1918 war was a period of visible progress for women, as they continued to demand greater economic independence.<sup>727</sup> Nevertheless, in 1914 the employment of women in the civil service as a whole was still limited to women's perceived areas of expertise; the Home Office, the Board of Trade or the Post Office, in departments that were engaged with women's issues or in the lower grades, for example, as typists. Hilda Martindale estimated that at the outbreak of war, 65,000 women were employed within the service, of whom 58,000 were in the Post Office, in non-clerical grades. The employment of women was hugely accelerated 'for the duration' and by July 1919, this number had risen to 170,000, and women were employed in all departments and in work alongside men.<sup>728</sup> The reasons for this growth are obvious; men were increasingly volunteering for military service and after conscription was introduced in 1916, the recruitment of men in the civil service virtually ceased. At the same time, new ministries were created, notably the Ministry of Munitions, to administer the needs of a country at war.

Hundreds of women were recruited into the War Office, the Treasury, the Board of Agriculture, the Foreign Office and other departments during the war. They worked as administrators, as private secretaries, as officers in charge of registers.<sup>729</sup> The Labour Department at the Board of Trade employed women officials in the labour exchanges,

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<sup>726</sup> Hilda Martindale, O.B.E., 'Industrial Conditions and Legislation', in G.E. Gates, M.A., ed., *Woman's Year Book 1923-1924*, (London: Women Publishers, Limited), pp.358-359.

<sup>727</sup> Dorothy Evans, M.A., *Women and the Civil Service; A History of the Development of the Employment of Women in the Civil Service, and a Guide to Present-Day Opportunities*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1934), p. 17.

<sup>728</sup> Hilda Martindale C.B.E., *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 75.

<sup>729</sup> Martindale, *Women Servants of the State*, pp. 77-79.

to deal with the growing demand for women workers, in the establishment of new training schemes and advisory employment committees. After 1916, more university women were admitted to the higher grades of the civil service. In 1915, Frances Durham, for example, was appointed Chief Woman Inspector of the Employment Department at the Board of Trade, (from 1917 the Ministry of Labour).<sup>730</sup> *The Times* later accredited her as being, during the war, 'largely responsible for directing women's services in the Army, on munitions, and on the land.'<sup>731</sup> For Rose Squire and the other women factory inspectors, the 1914-1918 war changed everything within the department and outside. All plans for new developments buckled in the face of the war, Squire wrote.<sup>732</sup> The number of women inspectors in the factory department rose to thirty during the war and, to prevent dual inspection of factories there was a far greater exchange with men in those factories which did not employ largely male or female workforces. This meant the work was mostly shared between the men and the women and the old divisions of influence were blurred.<sup>733</sup>

The government had adopted the Whitley Council system in 1917, to tackle the problem of increasing industrial unrest and in 1919 the Reorganisation Committee of the National Whitley Council was established to consider the options.<sup>734</sup> Under this committee, the position of women within the civil service was defined. Dorothy Evans' synopsis of the committee's recommendations questioned the extraordinary premise stated by the committee, that by including women in the civil service they were 'breaking new ground'.<sup>735</sup> Women had been employed for almost fifty years at this point and therefore, were scarcely 'breaking new ground'. The committee's recommendations were that there should be separate sections for men and for women and promotional opportunities should be separate for each sex. Furthermore, the committee suggested that women should be given opportunities to prove their

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<sup>730</sup> A Girton graduate, after several years with the University Settlement in Southwark, Durham had a background in social and welfare work. From 1907, she had organized technical classes for women and trade schools and had been a member of the consultative committee at the Board of Education.

<sup>731</sup> 'Miss F.H. Durham', *The Times*, Dec 19, 1933, p. 14; Issue 46631; col. E. Durham became assistant secretary and remained at the Ministry of Labour until her retirement in 1933.

<sup>732</sup> Squire, pp. 169-170.

<sup>733</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>734</sup> Evans, pp. 32-33. The Whitley Council, also known as the Joint Industrial Council, named after J.H. Whitley, who had recommended their formation. Originally a series of councils, they later developed into wage negotiating bodies. The principle was extended and applied to non-industrial bodies as well. In 1919, the National Whitley Council was created for the entire civil service.

<sup>735</sup> Evans, p. 34.

administrative ability; hardly necessary as women had been proving their administrative ability for some time and could reasonably consider it proven. Aggregation of work as between the sexes was not recommended but rather suggested to the departments.

The Reorganisation Committee of the National Whitley Council was also to consider the status and salaries of women within the service. Pay was to be equal on entry and up to a point on each scale, but the disparity grew as men received larger increments further up the pay scale. Overall, the maximum pay for men was one third above that of women. Senior women would be most affected by these changes: Mona Wilson's appointment in 1911 on equal pay would not be replicated until the 1960s, and then only in certain posts. In the executive and administrative grades, women were not even to be admitted by examination, but, for a period of five years, through a selection process.<sup>736</sup> Recommendations in the MacDonnell Commission before the war and the various war-time committees together with the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act (SDR) after the war, all of which had explored issues of gender equality which would impact on the civil service had led women civil servants to expect more from the Reorganisation Report.

Women in the higher grades were supported by a group to whom Evans referred as 'friends outside the service', and by she meant the influential networks within which these élite women had always moved. These 'friends' were keen to see the women having the same opportunities as the men and, as a result, in 1920 the House of Commons laid down by resolution that women should have equal prospects, albeit with the proviso that ex-servicemen should be considered first.<sup>737</sup> It was unsuccessful and in the event, little was to be achieved in the immediate post-war years to effect greater openings for women in the higher grades of the civil service.

In the New Year's Honours List of 1918, Adelaide Anderson was awarded the CBE and Rose Squire, the OBE, as recognition of their war work. In 1919, Frances Durham was awarded the CBE for her work in organising the recruitment of women for war work and war services.<sup>738</sup> Squire returned to the Home Office in 1920, as a principal. She was the first woman to hold an administrative post in the Home Office. Anderson was awarded

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<sup>736</sup> Evans, p. 35.

<sup>737</sup> Evans, p. 40.

<sup>738</sup> Girton College Register, (Cambridge: Privately Printed For Girton College, 1948), p.73.

the DBE in 1921, the year of her retirement.<sup>739</sup> These women belonged to a group of powerful civil servants who helped to shape much of twentieth century social policy. The expectations for the future for women in the civil service appeared certain. The women had every reason to be optimistic: they had performed well and their performance had been recognised. The answer to the question of whether or not such optimism was well placed lies in the aftermath of the 1914-1918 war.

## **2. Post-war politics and partial franchise.**

The Representation of the People Act 1918 was a compromise solution that had been negotiated in the latter years of the war by the National Council for Adult Suffrage with the support both of the Labour Party and Lloyd George, who was not always a supporter of the women's cause but always a pragmatist. Electoral reform was crucial to Lloyd George because a general election was imminent at the end of the war and he wanted to ensure that men in the armed forces would not be disenfranchised.<sup>740</sup> Asquith, the pre-war anti-suffragist was no longer Prime Minister and anyway, it was known that he had come round to the women's cause on the eve of war. This change of heart probably came before the war but, as Martin Pugh argues, the war allowed him to shift his position without losing face.<sup>741</sup> The Representation of the People Act can be seen as both an acceptance of women's suffrage per se and recognition of women's war service. It had been passed by a comfortable majority in the House of Commons (387 for to 57 against) and the voting figures reveal an overwhelming majority throughout all political parties.<sup>742</sup> It was also passed by the Upper House. Lord Curzon, Leader of the House and also President of the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage was one of a strong group of lords who might have been expected to oppose the bill there, but Curzon did not wish to clash with the Commons and signalled that he would not oppose its passage through the Lords. According to Ray Strachey, the Bill's overwhelming support in the Commons resulted in Curzon advising the Lords that it would be: 'precipitating a conflict from which your Lordships would not emerge with

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<sup>739</sup> Girton College Register, p. 24.

<sup>740</sup> Martin Pugh, *Lloyd George*, (Harlow: Longman Group UK Ltd, 1988), p.120.

<sup>741</sup> Martin Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-1918*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978) pp. 147-148.

<sup>742</sup> Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-1918*, Appendix 3, p.188.

credit'.<sup>743</sup> He therefore abstained. Strachey suggested that this volte-face at the last minute was unexpected from the President of the League, although Brian Harrison has observed that Curzon had made his decision known to the League committee three weeks before the vote. His influence on the vote is a matter for speculation: Mrs. Humphrey Ward, (prominent anti-suffragist and fellow member of the League) maintained that it caused about thirty voters to shift allegiance, whereas Curzon argued that there were only twelve other abstentions and the majority was large enough for the final vote to have been unaffected.<sup>744</sup> However, his position as Leader of the House, and his earlier vehement condemnation of women's suffrage could have been far more influential than he was willing to recognise. The Bill passed through the Lords, with 134 peers voting for it, 71 against and 13 abstentions, a large majority. It has often been argued that the extension of the franchise was a result of the tremendous hard work women contributed in the war effort, but as Labour women pointed out at the time, many of the women who gave so much were still excluded.<sup>745</sup> Sylvia Pankhurst, however, argued that: 'the memory of the old militancy, and the certainty of its recurrence if the claims of the women were set aside, was a much stronger factor in overcoming the reluctance of those who would again have postponed the settlement.'<sup>746</sup> For Curzon, a conflict between the Lords and the Commons which might bring with it the risk of provoking a recurrence of women's military tactics was not one on which he wished to embark. Curzon's position would certainly reinforce the view that suffragette militancy had won the battle pre-war. Many of the women's organisations expected full enfranchisement to follow quickly.

The 1918 Act enfranchised women over thirty who were not subject to legal incapacity and who met minimum property qualifications. It was followed by the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act, which enabled women to enter Parliament. This Bill had reached the Statute Book by November 1918 and, as Ray Strachey recalled, took women rather by surprise. Political parties had very little time in which to select

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<sup>743</sup> Ray Strachey, *The Cause: A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain*, (London: Virago Ltd, 1979), p.366.

<sup>744</sup> Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1978), p.219.

<sup>745</sup> Deidre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women Between the Wars, 1918-1939*, London: Pandora, 1989), p.133.

<sup>746</sup> Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, (London: Virago, 1988), p. 607.

candidates as the general election was held three weeks later.<sup>747</sup> In spite of this, several women, including Christabel Pankhurst and Mary Macarthur, stood for Parliament, albeit without success. Constance Markiewicz, sister of the suffragist Eva Gore-Booth and a prominent Sinn Feiner and in prison at the time of the election, was the only woman elected. She (like all Sinn Fein MPs) refused to take her seat. Christabel Pankhurst had stood in Smethwick and lost by only 775 votes. She had stood for the Women's Party, which she had founded with her mother after the dissolution of the WSPU in 1917 and which was highly supportive of the war effort. Thus she was billed in much of the election literature as the 'Patriotic Candidate', and her jingoistic agenda espoused harsh reparations for Germany, limits to the work of trade unions and opposition to Irish Home Rule.<sup>748</sup> Her relative success, therefore, might have been influenced by the populist nature of her agenda. Mary Macarthur had stood for Labour in Stourbridge, Worcestershire. She campaigned as Mary Macarthur but her returning officer had insisted on calling her by her married name, Mrs. W. C. Anderson, which might have confused the voters and affected the result.<sup>749</sup> Strachey and others attributed women's failure in the election to lack of time to be made known to the electorate, and the association of suffrage with pacifism. Known pacifists lost their seats in 1918.

The January 1918 Representation of the People Act more than doubled the size of the electorate, and now included six million women. This was still only a partial franchise: women were not politically equal to men. The Act had abolished all property qualifications for men, who could vote from the age of 21, with the exception of conscientious objectors who were prevented from voting for a period of five years. Women, were eligible aged over thirty and able to meet minimum property qualifications. Failure to meet those property qualifications excluded two million women who were over thirty: for example, shop assistants and domestic servants who 'lived in' were denied the vote.<sup>750</sup> Women aged 21 and over did not win the vote for a further ten years, until the Representation of the People Act of 1928. Perhaps the serious restrictions evident here should have heralded the limitations yet to come. Women's

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<sup>747</sup> Strachey, p.368.

<sup>748</sup> Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement on Britain, 1914-1959*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1992), pp 44-45.

<sup>749</sup> Angela V John, 'Macarthur, Mary Reid, 1880-1921', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Sept. 2004, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30411>].

<sup>750</sup> Strachey. p.357.

organisations began to lobby for franchise extension immediately, placing this demand at the top of their political agendas. However they had to continue lobbying for the next decade, stepping up the pressure particularly between 1925 and the end of 1927, after the Conservative victory at the polls in 1924. Women had been promised full enfranchisement in the run up to that election, but the Conservative government reneged on that promise. Full enfranchisement would not be given without further struggle.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1919, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Bill (hereafter the SDR) was passed by Parliament:

A person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage (it declared) from the exercise of any public function, or from being appointed to or holding any civil or judicial office or post, or from entering or assuming or carrying on any civil profession or vocation, or for admission to any incorporated society (whether incorporated by Royal Charter or otherwise)...<sup>751</sup>

It was designed, 'to amend the law with respect to disqualifications on account of sex', and had been introduced in response to the national government's defeat over an earlier bill.<sup>752</sup> The earlier Emancipation Bill had been tabled by the Labour Party in April 1919. It was intended to remove discriminatory procedures against women by equalising the franchise, opening the legal professions and making all levels of the civil service open to women. Its three terms were radical and unequivocal: no woman should be disqualified by sex or marriage from holding any civil or judicial office; any special franchises in the Representation of the People Act should be amended and women should be given complete parity with men; no woman should be disqualified by sex or marriage from sitting in the House of Lords in her own right. As Cheryl Law points out, it had a difficult passage through the Commons and its second reading was not achieved without opposition, primarily from Coalition Unionists.<sup>753</sup>

Thanks to strong lobbying from the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations (SJCIWO) and the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship

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<sup>751</sup> Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, [9&10 GEO. 5.], *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online* <<http://0-papers.chadwick.co.uk.catalogue.ulurls.lon.ac.uk..>

<sup>752</sup> Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*.

<sup>753</sup> Cheryl Law, *Suffrage and Power: The Women's Movement, 1918-1928*, (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2000), pp.185-186.

(NUSEC) the bill passed its third reading on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1919 and went to the Lords.<sup>754</sup> The strength of their joint lobbying power resulted in a defeat for the Coalition Government over the Emancipation Bill and a success for the Opposition, who were delighted, as indeed were the women's groups who had lobbied for its success. Now on its way to the Lords, success seemed assured. The need for greater co-operation amongst related women's groups was recognised by the Women's Labour League. Several Organisations responded, including the National Federation of Women Workers, and the Women's Co-operative Guild. One of its objectives was to initiate joint propaganda campaigns with the rest of the women's movement in areas of common concern. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) had been the non-militant face of women's suffrage before the war, supporting constitutional reform, although some individual feminists had been members both of the WSPU and the NUWSS. With the achievement of partial suffrage, the NUWSS had changed its name to National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship in 1919 and now was at the forefront of continued pressure for an equal franchise.

Once the Emancipation Bill reached the Lords, however, moves were implemented to obstruct its passage further.<sup>755</sup> It was still being debated in the Lords, when on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1919 the Government introduced its own bill, the SDR Bill, quoted above, which was intended to sabotage the Emancipation Bill. The SDR Bill of 1919 was from the start, merely a compromise. Once the Government's Bill got its second reading on 14<sup>th</sup> August, the Emancipation Bill was rejected in the Lords. Although the introduction of a similar bill whilst the Emancipation Bill was still in the Lords might be deemed unusual, it was quite legitimate. There is no general rule or custom which restrains the presentation of two or more bills relating to the same subject and containing similar provisions. Therefore there was nothing to prevent the government from tabling its own bill and once it got a second reading it is also not surprising that the private members

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<sup>754</sup> The Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations had been founded in February 1916.

<sup>755</sup> Strachey, p.375.

bill should be rejected by the Lords.<sup>756</sup> It was in fact, rejected by the Lords on the grounds that the SDR Bill could be amended to do the same job.<sup>757</sup>

The SDR Bill was specifically designed by the government to prevent radical changes that the Emancipation Bill would have produced, which included the equalisation of the franchise. It very nearly failed in its purpose: the amendments tabled in debate, as the Lords had predicted, essentially transformed the bill back into the Emancipation Bill. When, in August 1919 it appeared that the SDR Bill would go to the Lords with these amendments, the government, in desperation, resorted to filibustering just before the summer recess and successfully scuppered the very bill it had introduced. As Ray Strachey, (on behalf of the London Society for Women's Service) put it:

Once again, by means of Parliamentary chicanery, the Government pledge to women has been broken. The whole record of the Government on the question is as murky as it can be, and is a chapter of mistakes ending today with a cowardly defeat and a final discreditable blunder.<sup>758</sup>

Sarah Boston refers to the Bill as 'the one concession made to them, (women)'.<sup>759</sup> I would argue that it should be viewed as a calculated and successful attempt by the Coalition Government, defeated on the Emancipation Bill, to deliberately impede the extension of the franchise to which the Commons had shown a commitment, not solely in its support of the Emancipation Bill but also in the tabling of the amendments to the SDR Bill which would have produced the same effect. Women's groups continued to lobby throughout the summer, but when the SDR was put before the House of Commons in the autumn of 1919, the impetus amongst the women's supporters was lost and the bill was passed in its original form.

The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Bill of 1919 opened higher education and the professions to women, and enabled them to sit as jurors, albeit within limitations, and to become magistrates. It opened the legal profession to women and thirty years after its introduction, nearly a quarter of all JPs were women. Indeed, in 1920, Mary Macarthur

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<sup>756</sup> Erskine May, *Parliamentary Practice: The Law, Privilege, Proceeding and Usage of Parliament*, 23<sup>rd</sup> Edition, (Trowbridge: The Cromwell Press Ltd, 2004), p.578.

<sup>757</sup> Women's Emancipation Bill, 'HL Deb. 24 July 1919 vol 35 cc1045-51', *Hansard*, 24 July 1919, <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1919/jul/24/womens-emanciation-bill>, (para. 11 of 13).

<sup>758</sup> Ray Strachey, *The Times*, Saturday, Aug 16, 1919, p.7, Issue 42180, col E, <<http://0-infotrac.galegroup.com.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk>.

<sup>759</sup> Sarah Boston, *Women Workers ad the Trade Union Movement*, (London: Davis-Poynter, 1980), p. 134.

and Lucy Deane Streatfeild became two of the first women magistrates; Mary Paterson was a JP in Edinburgh during the 1920s. Although the act significantly widened the parameters of women's citizenship, these were not professional positions but a continuation of women's voluntary work. Such appointments were merely an extension of the process begun in 1890, with the election of the first woman Poor Law guardian and continued in 1900 London Borough Councils (Women's Disabilities Bill), which enabled women to serve as aldermen and councillors. Anne Logan, whilst acknowledging these restrictions, has argued strongly for its success within the criminal justice system.<sup>760</sup> Logan's argument that the SDR Act's 'rather negative portrayal' by some historians has meant that it has been undervalued is perhaps overstated.<sup>761</sup> Although the importance of its impact with the appointment of women as magistrates should not be underestimated, women had less success within the legal profession itself; Helena Normanton was the first woman to be called to the bar in 1922 but it was not until 1948 that two women, Normanton and Rose Heilbron, took silk.<sup>762</sup> The impact of the SDR differed for different groups of women: for women in the civil service it was particularly harsh. As Helen Glew has shown, the women's civil service unions fought determined campaigns to end the marriage bar and to promote pay and promotional parity throughout this period.<sup>763</sup>

The SDR was therefore restrictive and disappointed contemporary feminists: it failed to stop the imposition of the marriage bar or to allow Lady Rhondda to take her place in the House of Lords, despite the fact that it stated: 'A person shall not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function, including that of sitting and voting in the House of Lords..'. The armed forces, the Church, and the Stock Exchange remained closed to women and limits were placed on government employment in that civil service admission for women was still prescriptive. Furthermore, the proviso, added in debate, 'giving power to reserve to men any branch of or posts in the Civil Service in any of his Majesty's possessions overseas or in any foreign country', became an effective instrument for the subsequent exclusion of women from the higher levels of the service, in any department that was remotely connected to any aspect of

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<sup>760</sup> Anne Logan, 'In Search of Equal Citizenship: the campaign for women magistrates in England and Wales, 1910-1939', *Women's History Review*, Vol. 16, No.4, (September 2007), 501-518, (pp.501-3).

<sup>761</sup> Logan, p.503.

<sup>762</sup> Normanton, a former suffragette, was a fervent campaigner for women's rights.

<sup>763</sup> Glew, Helen Rayleen, *Women's Employment in the General Post Office, 1914-1939*, (Institute of Historical Research, 2010), Chapter 4.

overseas policy. The reason for this particular prohibition was a mystery to women at the time. Hilda Martindale argued that women had shown enthusiasm for service overseas for many years as, for instance, doctors, educationalists or nurses. Women had an aptitude for languages and the personal qualities necessary for positions in the Foreign Service were common to both sexes. Women had been sent as delegates to conferences such as the International Labour Conference at Geneva.<sup>764</sup> Indeed, women had served on numerous commissions overseas. The all woman Fawcett Commission in South Africa was just such as example, notably with the appointment of the civil servant and factory inspector, Lucy Deane to its number in 1902 (previous chapter). It was just such expertise that Martindale maintained made women eminently suited to serve overseas.

Finally, although the Act gave power to the universities to admit women to membership or 'any degree, right, or privilege therein or in connection thereof', the additional term 'as they shall think fit' did not make it incumbent on them to do so.<sup>765</sup> The Act had no bite: it was flawed from the point of view of feminists who wanted equality of opportunity in education, training and the professions; it was open to various interpretations by successive governments. It can also be seen as a successful attempt by the Coalition Government to limit the extension of the franchise to women: an exercise in 'damage limitation'. The question here, particularly with respect to those women in the civil service who had a proven track record of efficiency, is why the government saw the extension of opportunities for women as something that needed to be avoided? The answers to that question can be found in the conclusions of the committees considering the role of women in the political climate in the immediate post-war period, with the challenges of post-war dislocation to consider.

### **3. Reconstruction and the implications for women in the workplace.**

So what was the government ideology which was influencing this equivocal legislation? The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act had been introduced in the wake of the recommendations of several important committees, most under the auspices of the Ministry for Reconstruction, set up by the Lloyd George government in 1917 and led by

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<sup>764</sup> Martindale, *Woman Servants of the State*, pp.187-189.

<sup>765</sup> Sex Disqualification (Removal) Bill.

Christopher Addison (1869-1951).<sup>766</sup> The aim of this ministry was to provide for the needs of the population in the aftermath of the Great War. Demobilisation; the needs of the family fractured by four years of war; poverty and poor nutrition; poor housing and high unemployment arguably were to become more politically vital issues than feminism in the post-war political climate. The immediate need to prioritise those men returning from the front and a fear of the conservatism of women voters led to an unwillingness to extend the franchise further. These anxieties were reflected in the investigations and conclusions of the committees set up to advise on post-war policy making.

Fourteen areas of investigation and eighty seven committees were set up between 1917 and 1919. Of the 210 members of these committees, twenty were women, just under ten per cent. Beatrice Webb sat on four of these committees, Mona Wilson on two.<sup>767</sup> This chapter will consider the investigations of five of these committees. Three were Ministry of Reconstruction Committees: the Report on Women's Employment (1919), the Women's Advisory Committee Report and the Report of the Machinery of Government Committee (1918). The conclusions of two other committees under different departments are also relevant to this study: the Report of the War Cabinet Committee on 'Women in Industry' (1919) and the Treasury's 'Civil Service: Recruitment after the War' (1919) Committee. For the purposes of this chapter, the two committees addressing the position of women in the workplace: the War Cabinet Report on Women in Industry and the Ministry of Reconstruction Report on Women's Employment will be discussed first. These committees present a more general approach to women in the workplace after the 1914-1918 War but are indicators of the major issues of national concern.

Both of these committees had been charged with the investigation of the position of women in the workplace in the aftermath of the war and the degree of access to employment women should have in relation to men. Was this employment to be on

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<sup>766</sup> Christopher Addison had graduated from St. Bartholomew's Hospital in 1892 and had become an anatomist of some renown. Always interested in radical politics, whilst working at Charing Cross Hospital he developed an enduring concern for the deprivation he encountered in London's East End. He had been elected as Liberal MP for Hoxton in 1910 and left medicine to pursue a political career. With acknowledged administrative ability, he was appointed Minister of Munitions in 1916 and in 1917, Minister for Reconstruction.

<sup>767</sup> With the exception of the Civil War Workers' Committee, all the women sat on committees investigating labour and employment, public administration, housing or education.

equal terms or should women be confined to certain areas where it was considered their skills could best be utilised? The ambivalence of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act can be attributed to some degree to the conflicting conclusions of these committees. Some of the major philosophical issues of concern to feminists long before the war had found voice within these reports and these concerns would not be resolved in the near future. For example, their conclusions revealed over-riding concerns about the health and well-being of the nation's women and children and brought the importance of women as wives and mothers in potential or even direct conflict with the development of their economic independence in the workplace and this conflict undermined the findings of both reports.

The Women's Employment Committee, under the Ministry of Reconstruction had twenty five members, including secretaries (one woman and one man), and the committee was chaired by John Waller Hills, a member of the Munitions Council.<sup>768</sup> Twelve of the twenty five members of this committee were women, (more than on any of the other committees) and they included five of the women who are the subjects of this thesis: Adelaide Anderson and Mary Paterson at the Home Office; Clara Collet and Frances Durham at the Ministry of Labour and Mona Wilson at the Ministry of Reconstruction. Also included was Gertrude Tuckwell, President of the Women's Trade Union League from 1905 until 1918 and Susan Lawrence, a Fabian and member of the Central Committee on Women's Employment.<sup>769</sup>

The Women's Employment Committee had originally been a sub-committee of the 1916 Reconstruction Committee but achieved full committee status after the appointment of Addison in 1917.<sup>770</sup> Its terms of reference were to consider the experiences gained by the employment of women in clerical, agricultural, commercial and industrial work during the war and the conditions that should continue after the war.<sup>771</sup> It also made recommendations regarding the National Factories set up during the war to produce shells and build aircraft. As many thousands of women were employed in these

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<sup>768</sup> Elected Conservative MP for Durham City in 1906, Hills was also an important member of the National Anti-Sweating League and it had been his private members bill in 1908 that had pre-empted the Trade Boards Act 1909.

<sup>769</sup> In 1923, Susan Lawrence was elected MP for East Ham North and so became one of the first three female Labour MPs.

<sup>770</sup> The Ministry of Reconstruction: Report of the Women's Employment Committee, 1918, [Cd. 9239], in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*, p.3.

<sup>771</sup> Women's Employment Committee, p.3.

factories, the future of the factories affected the future of many women's employment. The Employment Committee's 'general principle' stated at the very beginning of its Report and underpinning all its findings was,

...that the only differentiation between men and women which can be justified is such as has its basis in the need of preserving women's powers unimpaired for those primary activities which are connected with the family and the home.<sup>772</sup>

This basic premise, prevalent throughout its findings, was reflective of the national concern for the health of its mothers and children. It could be used to undermine or exclude women workers after the war. When the committee completed its report in March 1917, it recommended that the Trade Boards should be extended as was deemed necessary, that these Trade Boards should regulate home workers and that home work should not be encouraged in any trade unless wage levels could be guaranteed to be adequate; the wartime relaxation of the Factory Acts should cease at the end of the war; welfare work should continue and the work of the factory inspector should be more that of an expert advisor; unionisation was to be encouraged; training courses should be established and shop workers should have the same protection as factory workers.<sup>773</sup> Amongst these conclusions, under the section entitled 'Employment of Married Women', the committee stated:

While it is recognized that under existing conditions very many married women must leave their homes and go to work, it is hoped that every inducement, direct and indirect, will be given to keep mothers at home. Particularly it is hoped that the excessive employment of women, which obtained during the war, will cease at its termination.<sup>774</sup>

So, although specific elements of this report were supportive of increased opportunities for women, these 'exceptions' would allow a variety of interpretations. With regard to women in the civil service it concluded that all clerical posts in local government should be available to both women and men, and whilst this committee did not want to

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<sup>772</sup> Women's Employment Committee, p.7.

<sup>773</sup> Women's Employment Committee, pp. 67-71.

<sup>774</sup> Women's Employment Committee, p.51.

prejudge the conclusions of the Committee on Women in Industry, they did argue that the starting salary should be the same for women as for men.<sup>775</sup>

All committee members were signatories to the final report so there was a consensus of agreement on the findings. Some dissenting notes were added at the end of the report, however. The civil servant, Malcolm Delevingne, and the factory inspectors, Arthur Whitelegge and Adelaide Anderson pointed out that some of the proposals under the title, 'The Employment of Married Women', needed further assessment and should be referred to a committee of enquiry. They were uneasy about the suggestion of limiting hours per week for women with no reference to those of men, for example, (page 29, paragraph 56). They also suggested that the issues of 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' should be considered as a separate issue under a Government Committee.<sup>776</sup> In their opinion, superannuation in the civil service was outside the competence of the committee and therefore they refrained from offering an opinion. A dissenting note written by Clara Collet, also referred to the section on 'Equal Pay for Equal Work', but her criticism was on the sub-paragraph on piece work, (page 22, paragraph 48), where she disagreed with the proposal that the piece price plus a guaranteed rate awarded mostly to men (although gained by women working in munitions), should continue and argued that women should be paid the same piece rates as men. However, women should not be forced to maintain the same output and should not be paid the same for a constantly smaller output. This is an interesting point: effectively, she is proposing equality in piece work rates absent in the report itself. A dissenting note by Frances Durham, Mary Paterson and Mona Wilson argued that the conclusions of the committee on women civil servants' gratuity on marriage (referred to on page 57 of the report), were not justifiable through lack of sufficient facts.<sup>777</sup> With the exception of Collet, all these dissensions originate from a perceived lack of data rather than an intrinsic disagreement.

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<sup>775</sup> Women's Employment Committee, p.24, para. 50.

<sup>776</sup> Women's Employment Committee, p. 22-23.

<sup>777</sup> Women's Employment Committee, pp. 74-75.

The War Cabinet Report on Women in Industry (WCC), April 1919, was chaired by James Atkin, a law lord with a reputation, after a series of cases on the Workmen's Compensation Act, for being an 'employee's judge'.<sup>778</sup> The remit of the committee was:

To investigate and report upon the relationship which should be maintained between the wages of women and men, having regard to the interests of both, as well as to the value of their work. The recommendations should have in view the necessity of output during the war, and the progress and well-being of industry in the future.<sup>779</sup>

Two of the eight committee members were women, Dr. Janet Campbell and Beatrice Webb.<sup>780</sup> Janet Campbell had been the first woman medical officer of health at the Board of Education, appointed in 1907.<sup>781</sup> She did not have experience of industrial conditions and therefore her role on this committee must have been to consider the effects of industrial work on the health of mothers and their children. The question of 'equal pay for equal work' was under scrutiny by the committee.<sup>782</sup> In the report's chapter six, the committee deliberated over three aspects: firstly, occupations which were specific either to women or to men, for example, milliners or coalminers; secondly, occupations where the delineations were clearly defined between the roles of men and women, for example, winders and warp dressers in the woollen trade and thirdly occupations in which women and men were both employed, without demarcation of labour. In the first group, it was felt impossible to draw a conclusion between the comparative values of workers. If pay levels were similar in areas where women and

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<sup>778</sup> Geoffrey Lewis, 'Atkin, James Richard, Baron Atkin (1867-1944)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept. 2004, online edn, Jan 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30492>].

<sup>779</sup> *Report of the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry, 1919* [Cmd. 135, 167], (London: H.M.S.O., 1919), House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, p.242.

<sup>780</sup> Webb had received a telegram from the Prime Minister asking her to chair this committee, one of several of which she was a member, only to be told the following day that there had been a clerical error and all members of the committee had been sent the same letter! Webb's comment was simply: 'It remained to be added that we all accepted the position with dignified good humour': Beatrice Webb, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, Vol. Three, 1905-1924: The Power to Alter Things*, Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, eds., (London: Virago Press, 1984), p.313.

<sup>781</sup> During the First World War, Campbell had been primarily concerned with the health and welfare of mothers and children, and in 1917 she had written a report for the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, set up in 1913 to investigate areas of public concern and to influence policy and practice, in the interest of social justice. Her report for them was on the physical welfare of mothers and children in 1917. She had also worked on government and international committees and would be appointed senior medical officer in charge of maternity and child welfare in 1919.

<sup>782</sup> War Cabinet Committee, p.435.

men both worked, this would draw labour from exclusively female occupations. The shortage then felt in the latter would automatically raise the pay in those occupations. The issue of equal pay emerged more clearly in the second and third groups. Here, the objection was that equal pay for equal work would lower the standard of men's pay or keep men out of employment by undercutting their rates. Although the members wanted to extend women's employment in principle, there should be no risk to men's employment or rates of pay involved. Key was the adoption of 'Pay in Proportion to Efficient Output', which most of the committee argued would increase the employment of women in times of economic growth whilst leaving the man the advantage which would allow him to maintain his standard of living for both himself and his family.<sup>783</sup> Webb failed to agree on the basic principle (see below).

Part of the remit of this committee was to investigate the health of women in industry particularly to the ways in which the conditions in the workplace could be prejudicial to the health of mothers and children. Dr. Janet Campbell's memorandum, a lengthy addition to the body of the report, stated that:

Further investigation is necessary, by scientific methods, into the physical effects of employment upon girls and women, having regard for their personal health, their capacity for motherhood, and the health and welfare of their children.<sup>784</sup>

This concern had been a principle of legislation since 1842. The report makes particular reference to the questioning of several witnesses with regard to Campbell's 'special investigation'. The results of that investigation were contained in her memorandum, but the various recommendations she made were included in the body of the report.<sup>785</sup> The report was completed in September 1918 and in many ways it appeared progressive. For instance, it adopted the principle of 'equal pay for equal work', but only in the sense that pay should be in proportion to efficient output.<sup>786</sup> In other words, as Jane Lewis has pointed out, the 'Majority' of the War Cabinet had recommended equal pay in proportion to output, or rather equal piece rates but not equal time rates.<sup>787</sup>

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<sup>783</sup> War Cabinet Committee, p. 187-188, paras. 214 & 215.

<sup>784</sup> War Cabinet Committee, p.253.

<sup>785</sup> War Cabinet Committee, p.3, para. 7.

<sup>786</sup> War Cabinet Committee, p. 189.

<sup>787</sup> Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950*, (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd, 1984), p.203.

Beatrice Webb failed to agree with the interpretation of the committee's terms of reference altogether. In Part I of her Minority Report, she summarised what she perceived as the errors of principle underpinning the remit of the Committee on 'Women in Industry':

What the Committee was charged to investigate and to report upon was not the wages and other conditions of the employment of women, any more than the wages and other conditions of employment of men – still less the terms upon which either men or women should be permitted to remain in industry, but “the relation which should be maintained” between them, “having regard to the interests of both, as well as to the value of their work.....and the progress and well-being of industry in the future.” The reference carefully avoids, in its terms, any implication of inequality. To concentrate the whole attention of the readers of the Report upon the employment of women, past, present and future, and upon their physiological and social needs, without any corresponding survey of the employment of men, and of their physiological and social needs, is to assume, perhaps inadvertently, that industry is normally a function of the male, and that women, like non-adults, are only to be permitted to work for wages at special hours, for special rates of wages, under special supervision and subject to special supervision by the Legislature. I cannot accept this assumption.<sup>788</sup>

In this analysis of the error in the committee's investigation, Webb provides a cogent interpretation of the ethos that underpinned all legislation involving women in the post-war period.

These differences indicated the issues which would continue to inform not only post-war political opinion but also 'old feminism' versus 'new feminism'. They had been expressed by Eleanor Rathbone in 1917.<sup>789</sup> Rathbone had written widely on issues of labour and the conditions for women and children and had been arguing the case for family allowances since 1908. By 1918, Rathbone, who coined the term 'new feminism', became President of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and divided opinion within the NUWSS, (in March 1919, the NUWSS changed its name to the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC). Although the divisions were never clear-cut, those who focused on the issues of the franchise and equal rights

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<sup>788</sup> War Cabinet Committee, p. 257.

<sup>789</sup> Eleanor F. Rathbone, 'The Remuneration of Women's Services', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 27, No.105 (Mar., 1917), pp. 55-68.

were referred to as 'old feminists', whilst Rathbone's emphasis on social reform and particularly the centrality of motherhood, had shifted feminist thought from equality issues to familial ones.<sup>790</sup> Rathbone focused on the differences between women and men and what was distinctive about the conditions of women and their needs as mothers, workers and citizens. Within the deliberations of the WCC and the differences between Campbell and Webb the conflict between population policy and equality can be observed. Webb, Campbell and Rathbone were all influential feminists. Their different emphases were part of the feminist agenda and reflect the diverse and complex issues facing women.

The three committees of greatest concern to women within the civil service were: the Ministry of Reconstruction's Report of the Machinery of Government Committee, under the Chairmanship of Viscount Haldane (hereafter referred to as the Haldane Committee); the Treasury's Civil Service: Recruitment After War Committee, under the Chairmanship of Viscount Gladstone (hereafter referred to as the Gladstone Committee) and the Women's Advisory Committee, a sub-committee appointed under the auspices of the Ministry of Reconstruction, and chaired by Lucy Deane Streatfeild. These committees impacted more directly upon women in the civil service. The first two were set up in 1917 and the third in 1918.<sup>791</sup>

The Haldane Committee reported in September 1918, and the Gladstone Committee reported in April 1919. The differences in timing were significant. The two committees reflected the differing political perspectives which were to shape the career opportunities for women in the civil service in the inter-war years. The Haldane Committee's terms of reference were wider than those of the Gladstone Committee. It had to investigate the responsibilities of the departments within the civil service and to advise on improvements.<sup>792</sup> Members of this committee included Robert Morant, the eminent civil servant and educationalist and J.H. Thomas, trade unionist and Labour

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<sup>790</sup> Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 178.

<sup>791</sup> Lord Richard Haldane was an eminent progressive Liberal, supporter of the enfranchisement of women and member of the Fabian Society, (see chapter two) who had been Lord Chancellor from 1912 until 1916. Lord Herbert Gladstone was the son of the former Liberal Prime Minister. Although a supporter of women's suffrage, as Liberal Home Secretary during the Suffragettes' militant campaign, whilst initially appearing as moderate in his approach, in 1909, he had actually ordered the hunger strikers to be force-fed! Lucy Deane had retired from the factory inspectorate in 1908 because of ill health but continued to work in a voluntary capacity. Deane was also an active suffrage campaigner.

<sup>792</sup> Report of the Machinery of Government Committee, [CD. 9230], 1918, p.4.

MP.<sup>793</sup> The only woman on the Haldane Committee was Beatrice Webb.<sup>794</sup> Beatrice Webb brought to the committee her own considerable expertise. The atmosphere of the working environment appeared rather cosy in Webb's diary: 'It is a pleasant sport; we sit twice a week over tea and muffins in Haldane's comfortable dining room discussing the theory and practice of government.'<sup>795</sup> Both Haldane and Morant were close friends of Webb. Susan Pedersen has argued persuasively that the most reasoned proposals emerged from the Haldane Committee.<sup>796</sup>

Within its deliberations on departmental organisation, the Haldane Committee was specifically required to discuss the employment of women in the civil service. They reported in favour of extending the 'range and variety' of the duties given to women in practically all departments.<sup>797</sup> The committee had also been charged to consider whether women should have equal access to work as men or whether there should be a level of restriction in some areas. Beatrice Webb's opinion was concisely expressed in the 'Women in Industry' report (quoted above), where she argued for an equal rate for the job, regardless of the sex of the worker. Haldane's Committee stated unequivocally that they considered it not to be in the public interest to exclude women from the Class One examination or indeed any other examination that was usually entered by competition.<sup>798</sup> The view taken was that the failure to employ women in the administrative grades of the departments had deprived the public service of an immense amount of knowledge, experience and fresh ideas, some of which would have exceeded even the most able men in the civil service.<sup>799</sup> The report leaves no doubt as

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<sup>793</sup> Robert Morant was chairman of the National Insurance Commission for England. With a background at the London School of Economics and the Toynbee Hall Settlement, he was known as a brilliant administrator.

<sup>794</sup> Beatrice Webb was also a member of the Local Government Board Committee under the Ministry of reconstruction, (Robert Morant was also a member), the National registration Committee, under the Local Government Board and the Advisory Housing Panel, again under the Ministry of Reconstruction.

<sup>795</sup> Margaret I. Cole, ed., *Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1912-1924*, (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1952), p.98.

<sup>796</sup> Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France 1914-1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.120. Her surprise that these findings should come from an all male committee is misplaced, however. The membership of this committee did not include Sidney Webb, as Pedersen states, but rather Mrs. Sidney Webb. This mistake is significant in that, as a member of the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry, Webb had rejected the foundation on which the majority of members had based their findings and written her own 'Minority' report in which she had advocated a single rate for the job.

<sup>797</sup> Report of the Machinery of Government Committee, p.12.

<sup>798</sup> Martindale, p.83.

<sup>799</sup> Report of the Machinery of Government Committee, p.14.

to the value of the work done by women both before and during the war and the committee's perception of the future of women within the civil service. Unfortunately, the political tide was changing rapidly as men were demobilised and very little credence was given to its proposals. It was the Gladstone Committee that appeared to reflect political reality.

The Gladstone Committee was chaired by Lord Gladstone and presented its report in April 1919. This was an all male committee, made up of senior civil servants representing different departments of the service: the Treasury; the Post Office; the Board of Education; the Ministry of Labour and the Civil Service Commission. It was a committee to consider recruitment criteria and the committee could be perceived as partisan. Charged with a consideration of the extension of the employment of women within the Civil Service, no women sat on the committee. So when it presented its report four months after the Haldane report, the findings were dramatically different. The terms of reference had been very specific and included: the possibility of appointments to the Intermediate Class by selection from eligible demobilised officers and men who had completed their schooling; the modification of the normal rules of competition, including age limits, to allow demobilised men the same opportunities for entry and promotion they would have had prior to the war; to consider the ways in which men from the forces discharged through ill health could be employed in suitable clerical and administrative posts; the possibility of keeping a proportion of the women who had been temporarily employed in the places of men released to enter the military, subject to the prior claims of the men returning and the direction in which the experiences gained by departments in the employment of women during wartime could be utilised to extend that employment of women after the war.<sup>800</sup>

The terms here suggest little room for manoeuvre: they are very prescriptive and the difference in outcome should not be regarded with a great deal of surprise. The timing of the presentation of the committee's conclusions is crucial; the war was over and demobilisation was under way. Public sympathy was with the returning soldiers and their interests came first. The sixth point made here is particularly plain and the wording

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<sup>800</sup> Final Report (Dated 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1919), of the Committee appointed by the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty's Treasury with regard to Recruitment for the Civil Service after the War, [Cmd 164], *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*, p.192.

outlines the restrictions to come. Meta Zimmeck presents a forceful argument as to the reason for this shift in thinking:

Demobilisation pitted three groups against each other – or rather it injected a new group, ex-servicemen, into the on-going struggle between élite men and aspirant women for the implementation of a programme of equal opportunities and hence control of the Civil Service.<sup>801</sup>

Certainly, within the terms of the Gladstone Committee, opportunities for all three groups are under consideration. Zimmeck suggests that the tension between those she terms as ‘the élite man’ and ‘the aspirant woman’ had been present before the First World War. By ‘élite man’, she means a privileged family background, public school and Oxbridge education and which characterises most men in higher positions in the civil service. The majority of the Gladstone Committee did.<sup>802</sup> The civil service attracted some able and ambitious, or ‘aspirant’ women, who also came from such privileged backgrounds, partly because of the restrictions present in so many other professions to which they might have aspired. Zimmeck argues that the Treasury, which was itself the bastion of the male élite, considered that women’s rightful place was subordinate to that of men and not as ‘commanding Queen bees’.<sup>803</sup> This may well have been the case within the Treasury, but the assumption that battle lines were so precisely drawn between these two opposing groups across the civil service, as we have seen, is a simplification. Senior civil servants like Warren Fisher, permanent secretary to the Treasury in 1919, were positive in their efforts to promote career opportunities for women within the service.<sup>804</sup> Furthermore, the Royal Commission on the Civil Service (1912-1914), under the chairmanship of Lord MacDonnell recommended the expansion of the employment of women, particularly in the higher grades. Indeed, some members of the MacDonnell Commission who had signed the Majority Report had dissented from the areas that specified the role ascribed to women, suggesting that it ‘lagged behind

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<sup>801</sup> Meta Zimmeck ‘“Get out and get under”: the impact of demobilisation on the Civil Service, 1918-1932’, in *The White-Blouse Revolution: Female Office Workers since 1870*, Gregory Anderson, ed, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.89.

<sup>802</sup> Thomas Headlam, ‘Heath, Sir Thomas Little 1861-1940), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn, Jan 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33793>].

<sup>803</sup> Zimmeck, ‘Get out and get under’ pp. 89-90.

<sup>804</sup> Geoffrey K. Fry, ‘Fisher, Sir (Norman Fenwick) Warren (1879-1948), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept. 2004, online edn, Jan 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33144>].

the times'.<sup>805</sup> The divisions are not as clear as Zimmeck suggests. The MacDonnell Commission had shown some of Zimmeck's 'élite' men to be supportive of the aspirations of similarly élite women. The Gladstone Committee was to be less accommodating.

The conclusions drawn by the Gladstone Committee were predictable given the terms of reference, the ideological differences present prior to the war and its timing, right in the middle of demobilisation after the war. The committee pointed out that very few women had been involved in administrative work and that women were not able to stand the workload as well as men. These two points are not, of course mutually inclusive. It wrote that:

Neither experience of contemporary departments nor the experience of business houses is sufficient to decide whether it would be conducive to efficiency in permanent departments to place men under the control of women.<sup>806</sup>

This is a new principle; authority and not sex is the underlying issue here. The committee is arguing that women should not be placed in positions whereby they would be managing men.<sup>807</sup> It went on to support this analysis by suggesting that there was insufficient proof to show women were at the present time capable of completing with equal efficiency tasks of responsibility assigned to men, except in the branches for which they were especially qualified.<sup>808</sup>

The third and final report concerned with women in the civil service was the Women's Advisory Committee. Appointed in 1918 to 'consider the position after the war of women holding temporary appointments in Government Departments', the committee reported in January 1919. Deane and another committee member, Elizabeth Haldane had been the two women appointed to the Royal Commission on the Civil Service in 1912.<sup>809</sup> The committee had seven women members and two men. Its terms of reference were:

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<sup>805</sup> Royal Commission on the Civil Service: Fourth Report of the Commissioners, p.114-115.

<sup>806</sup> Committee on the Recruitment for the Civil Service, p. 11.

<sup>807</sup> This, of course, is exactly what did happen in the factory inspectorate after the amalgamation of the women's department with that of the men in 1921.

<sup>808</sup> Martindale, *Women Servants of the State*, p.84.

<sup>809</sup> Elizabeth Haldane was a prominent public servant and sister to the politician Richard, Viscount Haldane, chair of the Report on the Machinery of Government.

To consider what immediate action should be taken to deal with the problem created by the approaching termination of engagements of large numbers of women holding temporary appointments, of an administrative as well as a clerical nature, in Government Departments, having regard especially to the possible openings for women in the permanent Civil Service.<sup>810</sup>

Of the sixteen recommendations that the committee made, the fourth stated: 'That women be admitted by the same examinations and at the same age as men to the Junior Clerical, Senior Clerical and Administrative Classes which were recommended by the Royal Commission on the Civil Service.' and the thirteenth stated: 'That throughout the service women should receive equal opportunities of promotion with men, and equal rates of pay.'<sup>811</sup> It also suggested that the women who had been employed during the war should be eligible for permanent positions similar to those offered returning members of the armed services, on the understanding that a lack of military experience should be offset by positive merit.<sup>812</sup> The findings of this committee were largely ignored.

The Haldane Committee and the Gladstone Committee produced conflicting conclusions with regard to the future of women's employment in the civil service. There is indisputable evidence that women were given fewer opportunities for furthering their career prospects within the service in the post-war period. It seems most likely that the difference in outcome can partly be explained by the precise terms of reference. The Haldane Committee set up before the Gladstone Committee and chaired by a sympathiser for the women's cause, was only in part concerned with recruitment. Its terms of reference required a consideration of all aspects of how Government functions should be improved.

However, the terms of reference of the Gladstone Committee reveal a different agenda, which can be seen specifically within Term 6, which refers to the future employment of women and states that this should be: 'subject to the prior claim to re-installation of the men returning to their Departments on demobilisation.'<sup>813</sup> With the remit solely of

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<sup>810</sup> Women's Advisory Committee: Report of the Sub-Committee appointed to consider the position after the war of women holding temporary appointments in government departments, [Cmd. 199] 1919, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*, p. 2.

<sup>811</sup> Women's Advisory Committee: Report of the Sub-Committee, p. 7.

<sup>812</sup> Women's Advisory Committee: Report of the Sub-Committee, p. 7.

<sup>813</sup> Recruitment after the War Committee, p.2.

recruitment, the Gladstone Committee's priority was men returning from the front. At a time when so many families had been bereaved, this committee's agenda reflected the view of many, including women.

#### **4. Post-war politics: an uncertain future for women civil servants.**

Why was it that the findings of the Haldane Committee were largely ignored by the Coalition Government whereas the Gladstone Report was more favourably received, and its conclusions mirrored in reconstruction legislation? Firstly, the government's pledges to the unions during the war influenced the terms of reference of the Gladstone Committee, which was, after all, a Treasury committee and were explicitly stated in the Restoration of Pre-War Practices (No. 2) Bill, passed by the Commons on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1919. This was designed to honour the war-time pledges made in the Treasury Agreement of March 1915. In this agreement, the trade unions voluntarily agreed to give up strike action and commit to the dilution of labour as a response to the shell shortage crisis. This was initially a voluntary action but was shortly afterwards made binding in the Munitions of War Act 1915 which had resulted in considerable industrial unrest. In its first clause, the bill made its intent perfectly clear:

Where, in any establishment to which this Act applies, any rule, practice or custom obtaining before the war in any industry or branch of an industry (hereinafter referred to as a trade practice) has, during and in consequence of the present war, been departed from, the owner of that establishment shall be under an obligation, at the expiration of one month from the date when such notice as is hereinafter mentioned is served on him, to restore or permit the restoration of the trade practice so previously obtaining.<sup>814</sup>

Both the timing and the content of Restoration of Pre-War Practices Bill were central to the Government's desire to curtail the extension not just of the franchise but also of the work opportunities available to women in order to prioritise demobilised men. The date of the Gladstone Committee's final report was 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1919, whereas that of the Haldane Committee was December 1918. The difference here is significant: whatever the differences in position and ethos of their respective memberships, in a fluid political climate, the Gladstone Committee report came at the right time, when the need to honour war-time pledges to the unions and to support demobilised men was paramount

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<sup>814</sup> Restoration of Pre-War Practices (No. 2) Bill, [Bill 67], in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online*, p. 823.

not just to the Coalition Government but also in the minds of many of the general public. So many families had suffered loss and soldiers had sacrificed so much that the women's contribution was quickly forgotten.

By its very title, this bill made the Coalition Government's priorities very clear and those priorities were; skilled men and demobilised soldiers. There was no place for extending the employment opportunities for women. The timing is striking. It was passed just days before the Gladstone Committee presented its findings. Having made these pledges to the unions, the Gladstone Committee Report supported the Pre-War Practices (No 2) Bill. It was also in the same month that the Labour Party had tabled the Emancipation Bill, discussed above. If the Emancipation Bill had reached the statute book it would have been extremely difficult for the Government to have met their commitments to the unions.

Secondly, Beatrice Webb's analysis of the flaws in the terms of reference for the Committee for Women in Industry, quoted above, underpinned the whole. She had questioned the interpretation of the terms of that committee, by stating that its remit was **not** the wages and conditions of employment of women, but rather the relation that should be maintained between men and women in the workplace. Webb argued that women were not regarded as having a normal work function but were permitted to work, by dispensation, in a monitored and protected environment. The difference of emphasis is fundamental: should women workers be considered as workers or as potential wives and mothers?

Thirdly, the division between 'old' feminism, with its emphasis on women's economic independence and 'new' feminism, stressing the needs of women and children within the family resulted in radically different approaches towards the 'woman question' in the 1920s and 1930s. The different emphasis of Janet Campbell and Beatrice Webb in the report on 'Women in Industry' is one of economic dependence. This dichotomy between the needs of mothers and potential mothers in Campbell's brief, versus Webb's advocacy of a single rate for the job and equality feminism became an increasingly heated debate amongst feminists and within the Labour movement and in government through the 1920s. It has never been satisfactorily resolved.

Fourthly, the post-war slump in munitions industries followed by economic depression in the 1930s with high levels of unemployment among skilled men in many industries

meant that any good intentions of the post-war legislators gave way under political expediency. Unemployed soldiers crowding the streets and the industrial areas of large towns and cities took precedence over equality of opportunity for women and men in industry in the minds of government and policy makers throughout the economic depression of the late 1920s, into the 1930s.

Carol Dyhouse has argued that the post-war advances for women in the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act were mere illusion. Although the SDR stated that neither sex nor marriage should disqualify women from appointments or the professions, it proved totally ineffective as from the 1920s on married women were being dismissed from their posts in spite of feminist dissent and by 1923, many trades and professions in London had introduced the marriage bar.<sup>815</sup> However, on the evidence of its passage through both the House of Commons and the House of Lords in the summer of 1919, the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919, whilst being ineffectual for women as Dyhouse has suggested, suited Lloyd George and the coalition very well. It was not designed to give women equality but rather to ensure that the Government's political agenda could continue uninterrupted. An extension of the franchise at this juncture would have given the vote to the young, single women who would have provided the greatest threat to the job market. Indeed, as Pugh has argued, the Government feared that the 'flapper vote' could be used to defend women's position in industry and therefore move further away from the traditional roles of marriage and motherhood.<sup>816</sup> The government had made a concerted effort to undermine the House of Commons in its efforts to further enfranchise women in the summer of 1919.

The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act seriously impeded the progress women had made so far within the higher echelons of the civil service. Adelaide Anderson was already the Principal Woman Inspector of Factories and Clara Collet Senior Investigator for Women's Industries at the Board of Trade before 1914. In 1911, Mona Wilson had been appointed to the National Insurance Commission, on an annual salary of £1000, equal to that of her male colleagues. By 1907, 11 out of 117 factory inspectors were women. Although women still were not entering the civil service through open competition, the expectation would have been among supporters of women's equality

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<sup>815</sup> Carol Dyhouse, *Feminism and the Family in England 1880-1939*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p.79.

<sup>816</sup> Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1959*, pp. 41-42

that these opportunities would be considerably extended in the aftermath of the war, particularly as women had played such a significant part in the service war effort. For example, Hilda Martindale, who was employed in the Factory Department from 1901 until 1933, where she became Senior Lady Inspector in 1912 and one of three Deputy Chief Inspectors from 1925, had worked closely throughout the war with the Ministry of Munitions' Health of Munitions Workers Committee; Mona Wilson had been seconded in 1917 to the Ministry of Reconstruction, where she was the first woman assistant secretary; Frances Durham had, according to a brief article that appeared in *The Times* after her death in 1948, been 'largely responsible' for the organisation of women's services in the army, munitions and agriculture.<sup>817</sup> Mona Wilson retired from the civil service in 1919. Adelaide Anderson retired in 1921, when the success of her leadership of the women's branch of the factory inspectorate led to its amalgamation with the men's department, a move of which she disapproved. However, improvements in the professional opportunities for women in the civil service did not come during the inter-war years. The reverse was true; the Treasury, for example, made the marriage bar unconditional for all women in the higher ranks from 1918.<sup>818</sup> Until that time, it had been in place for women in the lower grades only.

Martindale provided a penetrating contemporary analysis as to why women encountered difficulties as a result of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act:

'(The Act) had laid down that a women was not disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function. In 1921 the Treasury was advised that this meant "that the woman is not under an inherent disability from holding certain posts because she is a woman or because she is married. In other words the appointment of a woman or a married woman to these posts, if made, would not be invalid. It is quite another thing to say that a woman is **entitled** to be appointed to or to hold any of the specified posts on exactly the same terms as if she were a man, and this in fact is precisely what the Act refrains from saying.'<sup>819</sup>

Although the Act itself did remove disqualification through sex, such ambiguities of terminology meant that, in the political climate of the post-war era, women were

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<sup>817</sup> 'Miss F. H. Durham', *The Times*, Tuesday, Dec 19, 1933; p. 14; Issue 46631; col E, <<http://archive.timesonline.co.uk>, [accessed 14 January 2009].

<sup>818</sup> Meta Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919-1939', *The Historical Journal*, 27, 4, (1984), p. 905.

<sup>819</sup> Martindale, *Women Servants of the State*, pp 99-100.

increasingly prevented from reaching the promotional positions they might have expected. The Gladstone Committee's conclusion that there was no proof that women were capable of performing with the same efficiency as men, the government's need to re-instate and employ demobilised soldiers and the continued imposition of the marriage bar made it increasingly difficult. Further studies since have reiterated Martindale's judgment. Meta Zimmeck has argued persuasively that the civil service, headed by the Treasury, made a concerted effort to exclude women throughout the inter-war years. They particularly focused on women in the administrative grades because these women were in the position to exercise real power. They were, as we have seen, the social equals of men in the first division. They had been to the same universities and had been involved in the same philanthropic work. They were also successful in their jobs. This meant that they were in a position to challenge the hierarchical structure of the civil service itself.<sup>820</sup> The marriage bar is one example of the way in which restrictions were imposed. The post-war political environment contextualises the decisions of the Reorganisation Committee of the National Whitley Council discussed earlier.

Helen Jones has argued similarly on the effect of the impact of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in employment practice. She reinforces Martindale's contemporary analysis, emphasising that the environment was both hostile and reactionary in its attitude to women at work and continually failed to protect married women's right to work.<sup>821</sup> The return of men from the war and high unemployment meant that those women who were already in post found their positions at best, tenuous. Those women who were applying to join the service were excluded from the selection process until 1925 and the difficulties after this point resulted in many being discouraged from even submitting applications. The formation of the Council of Women Civil Servants in 1920, open to women from the administrative, executive and professional grades, was an attempt to redress the balance in an increasingly antagonistic environment. As Zimmeck has argued, women in the civil service had a particularly harsh deal as civil service departments had to reflect government thinking. Therefore civil service women were victims of both public opinion and government policy.<sup>822</sup> Adelaide Anderson wrote

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<sup>820</sup> Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919-1939', pp. 904-905.

<sup>821</sup> Helen Jones, *Women in British Public Life, 1914-1950*, (Harlow: Pearson's Education Ltd, 2000), p.53.

<sup>822</sup> Zimmeck, 'Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women', p.901.

in 1921 that it was not easy, after the war, 'to recall the full measure of pride expressed by the nation in what the women did for it in time of need.....increasing unemployment in 1921 has dimmed the memory of their achievements.'<sup>823</sup> This memory lapse might also have affected those women in the civil service in the pre-war years.

In the late Victorian/Edwardian period, women were able to enter a limited number of professions like the civil service. This was the result, largely of the continued pressure for education, training and the suffrage mounted by the women's movements but also the influence of liberal progressivism in late Victorian/Edwardian politics (chapter two). There was increased pressure on the government to grant women's suffrage and the 'new woman' was challenging the way in which many Victorians had proscribed the woman's 'sphere'. Greater access to higher education was crucial in the broadening of parameters for women and opening the professions to them, including the civil service. However, as I have argued, the post-war period granted only partial franchise to women and the effects of demobilisation impacted on professional working women and on women industrial workers similarly, and served to erode much of the progress already made and to delay further progress for some years. Brian Harrison was right to argue that the disappointment amongst post-war feminists is suggestive of the progress made earlier and subsequent scholarship, in focusing on this disappointment has led to some areas of change during the Edwardian period being forgotten in its wake. This is especially so in the civil service, where historians have produced excellent studies on the latter period. There was, however, highly important work achieved by a small number of pre-war women within the civil service the influence of whom has been undervalued.<sup>824</sup>

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<sup>823</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 224.

<sup>824</sup> Brian Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries: Portraits of British Feminists between the Wars*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.9.

## Chapter Seven.

### Conclusion: An Assessment of the Legacy of Women Civil Servants at the Board of Trade and the Home Office, 1919.

*'If anything conclusive could be inferred from experience, it would be that the things which women are not allowed to do are the very ones for which they are peculiarly qualified.'* John Stuart Mill.<sup>825</sup>

#### 1. Professional achievements, 1893-1919.

By 1919, women had been working in the higher grades of the civil service at the Board of Trade (by now the Ministry of Labour) and within the Home Office as factory inspectors, for nearly thirty years. However, the post-war reaction against women's employment in skilled and professional trades has obfuscated their achievements. Returning soldiers were the national priority in the aftermath of war, not the women 'dilutees' or replacements for men. Within the post-war political environment new administrative appointments became less likely, while the continuation of the marriage bar barred many highly qualified and talented women who wished to join the Service. The marriage bar had been introduced for women in the lower grades of the Service in 1894 but was not made compulsory for women in the higher grades until 1918, although it was the norm. By 1903 the marriage bar had been generally adopted throughout the Service. The 1912-14 Royal Commission on the Civil Service (the MacDonnell Commission) affirmed the current position of retirement on marriage with a

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<sup>825</sup> Quoted in: Hilda Martindale, *Women Servants of the State, 1870-1938*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 187.

gratuity, despite the loss of highly trained and experienced officers, as 'the responsibilities of married life are normally incompatible with the devotion of a woman's whole-time and unimpaired energy to the Public Service.'<sup>826</sup> Able and suitable women were made to choose: to remain in post and be denied the opportunity of marriage or to resign on marriage and be forced back to the voluntarist sector. The Tomlin Commission on the Civil Service in 1931 was still in favour of retaining the marriage bar. Probably as a result of these restrictions, the next generation of able and talented senior women often adopted less orthodox private lives.<sup>827</sup> Sacrifices were undoubtedly made: the eminent civil servant, Dame Evelyn Sharp for example, said in an interview in 1966 that she wished she had been a man, then she would have been able to have a career and marriage too.<sup>828</sup> The marriage bar was not formally abolished in the Service until 15<sup>th</sup> October 1946.

This first generation of civil servants were influential and groundbreaking, not only as some of the first women in the civil service in the higher grades, but as innovators in the investigation of women employed in industry and workshops throughout Britain and Ireland. Women Factory Inspectors raised the profile and therefore the influence of the factory inspectorate as a whole. Clara Collet's statistical work on women in industry influenced future discourse for at least two generations. She was a respected and innovative economist. She foregrounded many of the feminist debates of the twentieth century: pay equality; retirement on marriage; discrimination on the grounds of sex; age inequality. At a point when the status of professional women, both economically and socially, was undefined Collet was the first to address these issues and her work was not replicated for many decades.

Clara Collet retired from the Civil Service in 1921, the year in which the women's factory department amalgamated with that of the men. Adelaide Anderson also retired in 1921. Hilda Martindale was appointed Superintending Inspector, with men working beneath her. This was a new experience and one with which the post-war committees had expressed antipathy. As one subordinate male remarked, 'I am in the horrible

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<sup>826</sup> Royal Commission on the Civil Service: Fourth Report of the Commissioners, [Cd. 7338], (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), p. 90.

<sup>827</sup> See Dame Alix Meynell, *Public Servant, Private Woman; An Autobiography*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1988), chapters 10 and 15.

<sup>828</sup> 'Dame Evelyn Shines in a Man's World', *The Times*, 18 February 1966, p. 7.

position of having to work under a woman – yourself.<sup>829</sup> However, he soon recovered from the shock and became a loyal colleague. In 1925, Martindale became Deputy Chief Inspector, in the joined-up department. Isabel Taylor, entering the factory inspectorate in 1909, was appointed Deputy Chief Inspector in 1933, after the promotion of Hilda Martindale to the Treasury. Frances Durham, alongside Isabel Dickson at the Board of Education, were the first two women to reach the rank of assistant secretary and were survivors, with Martindale, of the era of post-war optimism, a confidence that would dissolve by the end of the 1920s.

These women civil servants had engaged with the comparative study of alternative systems of industrial reform established not just in Europe, but further afield. Adelaide Anderson, for example, in her early days in the inspectorate, wrote an article on the Joint Associations of Employers and Employed in France and Belgium. In this she explored the association (*syndicat mixte*) to consider its advantages in reconciling conflicting industrial differences. Anderson argued that such organisations would not work in England: large manufacturing industries would need first to equalise the strength between the employer and the employed. Such organisations could only develop where rates of wages and hours had been established.<sup>830</sup> The women factory inspectors supported this aim throughout their work. In 1899 Anderson published a comparative article on truck legislation in England and on the continent. At this time both Anderson and Lucy Deane were in the thick of negotiating the murky area of truck violation in Ireland (chapter 4) and before a woman inspector was appointed to a permanent position there (chapter 5). In this paper Anderson argued that Britain was ahead of France in controlling the abuses of truck; the country most comparable to Britain in its efforts was Germany.<sup>831</sup> Anderson's comparative reports were a frequent feature of the Chief Inspector's introduction to the annual report: her introduction of card registers to simplify administrative procedures, as observed in Paris in 1899; her translation from the German of the special rules for use in the bichromate industry, one of the dangerous trades, was used by the inspectorate as a comparison; her translation

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<sup>829</sup> Hilda Martindale, *From One Generation to Another*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1944), p. 175.

<sup>830</sup> Adelaide M. Anderson, 'Joint Associations of Employers and Employed in France and Belgium', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 20. (Dec., 1895), pp. 641-650.

<sup>831</sup> Adelaide M. Anderson, 'Truck Legislation in England and on the Continent', *Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation*, New Ser., Vol. 1, No. 3. (Dec., 1899), pp. 395-406.

of the German regulations in force in the letterpress printing works.<sup>832</sup> After the exclusion of laundries in religious or charitable institutions in the 1901 Factory Act, Anderson reported that in France, such laundries were included.<sup>833</sup> This exemption was later repealed in the Factory and Workshop Act 1907.<sup>834</sup>

Clara Collet also investigated labour conditions in other countries. In 1891, while still employed on the Royal Commission on Labour (RCL), Collet produced a paper on the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics reports into the work patterns of working women. Such studies, coupled with her work on the RCL account for her being appointed to the Board of Trade in 1893. In 1901 Collet investigated the structure of wage boards in Victoria, Australia. Closely linked with her Board of Trade work, this paper was a critical analysis of an article by W. P. Reeves, in which he gave a sympathetic summary of the report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops in Victoria, on the effect of the minimum wage legislation in that area.<sup>835</sup> Collet questioned Reeves' analysis of the statistics, his lack of comparison between the trades which came under the regulations and those which did not. She is also critical of the comparisons made in the factory reports in Victoria on the differences between factories run by European employers and those run by Chinese employers. The Chief Inspector of Factories in Victoria had said that he placed no credence on the returns submitted by Chinese employers. Clara Collet made short shrift of this discussion, pointing out that:

...few English factory inspectors ...would ...deny that European whites are equally capable of subterfuge, and are only inferior to the Chinese in the amiability which lends grace to their operations.<sup>836</sup>

Collet wrote widely on the industrial position of women for over fifty years, from 1890, until 1942. The Second World War, trade union organisation and Barbara Castle's equal pay act were the vital forces improving conditions for working women, including professional women but Collet, Anderson and their contemporaries and colleagues

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<sup>832</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1899, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1900), p. 24, p. 9 and pp. 17-18.

<sup>833</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1902, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1903), pp. v-vi.

<sup>834</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1907, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1908), p. v.

<sup>835</sup> Clara E. Collet, 'Wage Boards in Victoria' *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 44 (Dec., 1901), pp. 557-565.

<sup>836</sup> Collet, 'Wage Boards in Victoria', p. 561.

among women civil servants in those years laid the groundwork for the empirical understanding of women's employment across the manual trades.

## 2. Improvements for women in the workplace, 1893-1919.

***'The idea that it was not right, that it was unjust and sometimes even cruel for women to have no one but men to whom they could appeal against any sort of abuse, had been steadily growing in people's minds. It was an idea that appealed to everyone, both rich and poor'.*** Isabella Ford, 1896.<sup>837</sup>

Public sympathy and support developed in the early twentieth century, Adelaide Anderson argued in 1907, so that legislation improving the working conditions of women in industry was supported not only by the workers themselves and sympathetic social policy makers, but also some employers.<sup>838</sup> This was an important shift. Industrial opposition, thinking that further government control threatened its interests, had changed in its very nature and factory reform had modified from top down reactive measures, formed to defend the weak and the poor from injury to health and morals, to a more proactive reformism from within which moved to produce a safer environment, and to take preventive measures against the causes of disease and injury in industrial life.

It was within this climate of social reform that these women civil servants were able to improve the lives of some working women and children: directly through the interventions of the factory inspectors to secure an increase in successful prosecutions and amelioration through mediation and indirectly, through Collet's work at the Board of Trade which provided statistical evidence to support the case for improved legislation. The effects of the women factory inspectors' efforts reverberated amongst the men: the exchange of knowledge and ideas in hygiene, safety and welfare improved conditions for all workers. Anderson recalled a male trade union leader to whom she was explaining the dangerous trades' regulations responding with: 'Let the Women

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<sup>837</sup>Dame Adelaide Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, (London: John Murray, 1922), pp. 8-9.

<sup>838</sup> Adelaide M. Anderson, 'Factory and Workshop Law', *Woman in Industry: From Seven Points Of View (1908)*, Gertrude M. Tuckwell, Constance Smith et al., (London: Duckworth and Co., 1908), pp. 145-150.

Inspectors come into our shops, they seem to be able to frighten employers into doing things!<sup>839</sup>

Women factory inspectors were most effective over hours of employment and shift length, health and welfare issues, truck enforcement and in the area of dangerous trades, both in lead and phosphorus poisoning. From 1895, two years after the appointment of the first two women inspectors, the factory acts begin to reflect the women's concerns: suitable sanitary conveniences; overtime restrictions for women and young people; restrictions on night employment and shift length in 1895, for example.<sup>840</sup> The 1901 Consolidation Bill also reflected the efforts of the women. The first seven clauses were exclusively concerned with health issues; hours of employment for women and children and overtime for women were the subject of eleven clauses. Part III of the bill concerned the education of children; Part IV concerned special provisions within the dangerous trades, again the greater proportion involving the employment of women and children; laundries came under the jurisdiction of the bill and efforts were made to protect those employed in home work, again principally women. These were all areas in which women were employed. During the war (1914-1918), national efficiency and supporting the war effort were the priority, it was the influence and pressure of women in the workplace in the face of catastrophe, that enforced changes in the workplace, such the eight hour day and shorter shifts, and these changes were not reversed after the war for women or men in the workplace.

Rose Squire's closing paragraph in her memoir refers to the personal pride she felt at her influence on the Factories Act 1926 and her disappointment at having retired shortly before it reached the statute books. (She retired in January 1926.) She had been in post when the factories bill was first debated; much of the content covers the protection of women and children.<sup>841</sup> The bill prohibited the employment of children in the factory; guaranteed a 48 hour week, exclusive of meals and rest periods; it limited the lengths of shifts for women and children to four and a half hours before a rest or meal was obligatory; no meals were to be taken in the room in which the work took

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<sup>839</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>840</sup> 1895(329). *Factories and Workshops: A Bill to amend and extend the Law relating to Factories and Workshops 1895*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895), Section 35, p. 16 and Sections 14 and 15, pp. 6-7.

<sup>841</sup> Rose E. Squire, *Thirty Years in the Public Service*, (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1927), p. 234.

place.<sup>842</sup> In addition, inspectors were now empowered to require a certificate of capacity for work, and to serve notice on a proprietor if they considered the health of the young person in jeopardy through the work with which he/she was engaged, necessitating a further medical examination and the issue of a further medical certificate.<sup>843</sup>

Other clauses that would have satisfied the early women inspectors included: power given to the district councils to enforce sanitary improvements; the prohibition of the lifting of weights so heavy as to cause injury and greater protection to women and young people against the dangers of working in lead processes.<sup>844</sup> Work with which the women had been engaged since they were first appointed to the inspectorate is reflected in its clauses. These issues had been constantly reported by Adelaide Anderson in the annual reports, highlighted by Hutchins and Harrison in 1911.<sup>845</sup>

As we have seen, the role of the woman factory inspector had diversified as it developed. From the earliest days, women inspectors did not merely function as health, safety and employment inspectors but education inspectors as well. Not only were they dealing with the enforcement of the law on the proprietors but also on the parents of the youngest workers. They had to ensure the half-time system was adhered to and often to explain its value to those parents who, generally through economic need, were ignoring it. Anderson argued that the demand for women inspectors to work with women workers became more marked as scientific knowledge and the influence of economic ideas grew. The demand for centralised medical guidelines on the dangerous trades grew, and because the areas in which the women inspectors worked were so wide, they could provide a comparative knowledge of women's industrial conditions. Anderson was also responsible, with the medical officer, Thomas Legge, for an enquiry

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<sup>842</sup> Factories. A bill to consolidate, with amendments, the enactments relating to factories; and for purposes connected therewith, in *Commons Parliamentary Papers Online* <<http://0-papers.chadwick.co.uk.catalogue.ulurls.lon.ac.uk>>, Sections 71 and 72, pp. 42-44.

<sup>843</sup> Factories. A bill to consolidate, with amendments, the enactments relating to factories; and for purposes connected therewith, Section 93, p. 53.

<sup>844</sup> Factories. A bill to consolidate, with amendments, the enactments relating to factories; and for purposes connected therewith, Section 10, p. 5 and Sections 52-53, pp.28-29.

<sup>845</sup> B.L Hutchins and A. Harrison D.Sc., *A History of Factory Legislation*, (London: P.S.King & Son, 1911), pp. 253-257.

into the enamelling and tinning of metals, prior to the amendment of the existing special rules.<sup>846</sup> Their report was published in November 1907.

Adelaide Anderson, acutely aware of the divisions among feminists over protective legislation, discussed this argument in her contribution to *Women in Industry: From Seven Points of View*, in 1908. Many men's industries were able to secure the regulation of conditions through trade unions and negotiation without the intervention of the government. An investigation into the economic effects of protective legislation for women was the subject of an enquiry set up by the British Association of the Advancement of Science in 1900, Anderson wrote. The enquiry made a thorough investigation of the economic effects of regulation on women in industries where restrictions did not apply to men and found that in rates of wages and allocation of work between men and women, protective legislation was one of the least important determining factors. In addition, in the case of hours, regularisation by law in women's industries had had the added effect of improving efficiency.<sup>847</sup> Furthermore, as Hutchins and Harrison argued in 1911, restricting the hours of labour for women and children would likely also result in restrictions for adult males.<sup>848</sup> The women factory inspectors had long argued for shorter hours but it took the increased production needs of the First World War for employers to fully accept the idea.

During the war, Anderson served on the Central Advisory Committee on Women's War Employment (Industrial), the Sub-Committee on Women's Employment after the War, and worked with the Welfare Department of the Ministry of Munitions. All the Senior Women in the Inspectorate acted as advisors to local committees on women's war employment and supplied the welfare departments with special reports on the conditions and needs in controlled factories. Hilda Martindale served on the special committee appointed by the Board Control (Liquor Traffic) investigating alleged drunkenness in Birmingham and Irene Whitworth acted as joint secretary on the Sub-

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<sup>846</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1902, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1903), p. xviii.

<sup>847</sup> Adelaide M. Anderson, 'Factory and Workshop Law', *Women In industry From Seven Points Of View (1908)*, pp. 177-181.

<sup>848</sup> Hutchins and Harrison, pp. 197-198.

Committee on Women's Employment. Anderson also reported on the sanitary provision provided for women in trades in which they had not previously been employed.<sup>849</sup>

In 1892, the Royal Commission on Labour, for whom Collet had been an assistant commissioner and Anderson had been a clerk, had reported that working women rarely complained about the conditions under which they worked. The appointment of women factory inspectors in 1893 inaugurated a new era. By 1896 there were 380 recorded complaints, the number rose to over 1000 by 1904, and thereafter between 1908 and 1909, there was a 60% increase.<sup>850</sup> More than half these were in the south east, the numbers attributed to the insertion in newspapers of the individual senior woman inspector's name and address. Fewer complaints were anonymous, which suggests that employees no longer feared the sack following a complaint. Fear of dismissal had prevented so many from criticising their working conditions in the past. Anderson was hopeful that the time would come when anonymous complaints would cease altogether, prevented by the Industrial Law Indemnity Fund, which provided compensation to workers who had been victimised in the workplace.<sup>851</sup> In the event, it proved a slow process, but there were a growing number of complaints signed by groups of workers or the Women's Trade Union League and various trades unions.<sup>852</sup> Women workers were not inherently passive; they needed an effective conduit through which to express their grievances. The women inspectors provided just such an outlet.

### **3. Conclusion: A Lasting Legacy.**

Adelaide Anderson wrote that, as Home Secretary, Herbert Asquith had provided the early inspectors with a liberal starting point and a wide field of activity. She recalled that they were 'free under the early official instructions to devote the concentrated energy of heart and mind, in enthusiastic "team-work," to enquiry and action on these most urgent problems.'<sup>853</sup> This basis was maintained by later home secretaries and permanent under-secretaries. The importance of the appointment of women inspectors was

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<sup>849</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspectors of Factories and Workshops For the Year 1916, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1917-18), pp. 2-3.

<sup>850</sup> Anderson, 'Factory and Workshop Law', *Woman in Industry: From Seven Points Of View (1908)*, pp. 162-165.

<sup>851</sup> The Industrial Law Committee was formed in 1897. It maintained an indemnity fund for the benefit of workers. Members of the committee included May Tennant and Gertrude Tuckwell.

<sup>852</sup> Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for the Year 1909, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1910), p. 125.

<sup>853</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, p. 10.

acknowledged by Edward Troup as: 'the most important event on the industrial side of the Home Office in the forty years that I served in that department.'<sup>854</sup>

The factory inspectorate was successful from its inception. Clark Nardinelli has demonstrated that hard working factory inspectors and social reformers had had a powerful effect in forcing profiteering textile mill owners to obey the law from the first factory act in 1833, particularly with regard to the employment of children.<sup>855</sup> Anderson attributed the first women factory inspectors' ascribed success to two main factors. Firstly they did not work under conditions or standards already prescribed, before they had acquired an inherent understanding of the women's issues. Second, by this time, the male factory inspectors spent much of their time enforcing legislative measures to protect workers from dangerous machinery across the factories, for example, overseeing technical problems such as ensuring that fencing was properly installed in all areas of the factory where necessary. The women inspectors' role, however, quickly focused on concerns of hygiene, sanitation, dangerous processes which were specifically affecting women.<sup>856</sup> Such a division of labour was expedient when the number of men inspectors so far exceeded the number of women; with so few women inspectors the women were peripatetic and as such they were able to get an overview of the causes for concern in any one industry. The new women inspectors, moreover, entered the inspectorate at a time when public opinion was alerted to industrial injury and disease in the workplace, particularly as it affected women and children, and their work quickly received public acclaim.

Historians of the civil service have paid scant attention to the contribution of women in the pre-war years, at least up to the 1960s and 1970s. Emmeline W. Cohen had commented in 1941 that, as Hilda Martindale had already written on the contribution of women: 'the story of women Civil Servants has been well told; it would be superfluous to repeat it here.' She then gave a brief résumé of the post-war position.<sup>857</sup> Reprinted in 1965, Cohen's text was not updated. R.K. Kelsall, writing in 1955, was more thorough, although the emphasis in his chapter on women in the administrative class is on the

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<sup>854</sup> Squire, p. 5. The senior civil servant, Sir Edward Troup, was permanent under-secretary for the Home Office between 1908 and 1922.

<sup>855</sup> Clark Nardinelli, 'Child Labor and the Factory Acts', *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec., 1980), p. 741.

<sup>856</sup> Anderson, *Women in the Factory*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>857</sup> Emmeline W. Cohen, *The Growth of the British Civil Service, 1780-1939*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965), pp. 188-189.

post-war years, and mentions only Hilda Martindale and Frances Durham.<sup>858</sup> A brief paragraph on the earlier period refers mostly to the department of education; only one sentence appears on the appointment of women in the factory inspectorate, and one sentence on Clara Collet, which was again a reference to Martindale's book. No attempt was made to assess the quality of their work.<sup>859</sup> E.N. Gladden barely mentioned women in his account of the development of the civil service, except for a brief reference to the marriage bar, and references to women serving on various commissions.<sup>860</sup> B.V. Humphreys was more nuanced in his account of the clerical unions, but does not evaluate individual performances.<sup>861</sup>

In 1988, Mary Drake McFeely's study of the early days of the women's factory inspectorate traces a meticulous picture of their work in the early, pioneering days but it does not contextualise this work against the social reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>862</sup> Rosemary O'Day's essay on the social investigation undertaken by Clara Collet and Beatrice Webb gives a fulsome report on Collet's work with Charles Booth. She agrees that Collet's investigative work was thorough and 'creative'; knowledgeable and highly critical of her sources. However, she then goes on to say she was so skilful as an investigator that she was 'snapped up' by the Board of Trade as a Senior Investigator, on the recommendation of Charles Booth in 1903.<sup>863</sup> Collet's early years in the Civil Service (1893-1903) are barely mentioned. Furthermore, I would argue that her promotion owed more to her work first ten years at the Board of Trade and her numerous investigative articles on women's work than it did to the recommendation of Charles Booth. O'Day rightly argues however, and we have

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<sup>858</sup> Frances Durham was born in 1873 and Girton educated; she had won the Alexander Medal, 1899, the first to be awarded this medal, later awarded to Rose Graham, J.E. Neale, S.B. Chrimes and S.T. Bindoff; between 1900-1907, she was honorary secretary of the registry and apprenticeship committee of the Women's University Settlement in Southwark; she became inspector and organizer of the technical classes for women under the London County Council. In 1915, she entered the Board of Trade and was transferred to the Ministry of Labour in 1917, where she rose to the rank of assistant secretary.

<sup>859</sup> R.K. Kelsall, *Higher Civil Servants in Britain, from 1870 to the Present Day*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1955), Chapter Nine.

<sup>860</sup> E.N. Gladden, *Civil Services of the United Kingdom, 1853-1970*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967).

<sup>861</sup> B.V. Humphreys, *Clerical Unions in the Civil Service*, (Oxford: Blackwell & Mott, 1958).

<sup>862</sup> Mary Drake McFeely, *Lady Inspectors: The Campaign for a Better Workplace 1893-1921*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988).

<sup>863</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 'Women and social investigation: Clara Collet and Beatrice Webb', *Retrieved Riches: Social Investigation in Britain, 1840-1914*, David Englander and Rosemary O'Day, eds., (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), pp. 192-193.

seen, it was Collet's statistics on working women between 1890 and 1942, a period of over fifty years that inform present day discourse on women's lives.<sup>864</sup>

The continuation of the marriage bar, compulsory for all women in the Civil Service from 1918 until 1946, and post war restrictions on promotion continued to be obstructive. The expectations women might have looked forward to as a result of the Sex Discrimination (Removal) Act (1919), and the various Reconstruction Committees recommendations did not materialise. Dorothy Evans argued that the Reorganization Report of the National Whitley Council damaged the position for women in the higher grades most of all. Set up in 1919, it was to reorganise recruitment, grades and promotions throughout the Civil Service. The position of women within the Service was a focal point of its deliberations.<sup>865</sup> In the event, special arrangements were established to recruit demobilised men with the right educational background and during 1919 and 1920, 250 men entered the administrative grades in this way. Non-military candidates were also appointed through the same procedures, and the women were disappointed by further restrictions.<sup>866</sup> Humphreys wrote that the Reorganization Report was bitterly fought by the Federation of Women Civil Servants, with the civil servant M.L. Cale arguing vociferously against the acceptance of separate treatment and unequal pay for women.<sup>867</sup> The post-war priority was given to returning soldiers. Treasury agreements across the engineering and munitions trades permeated the professions. The expected legacy of the first generation of senior women civil servants was therefore significantly impeded.

The women who are the subjects of this study were exceptional. Anderson for instance, a lateral thinker was not always sympathetic towards her women colleagues. A young member of staff once confessed not understanding her point, to which Anderson replied: 'I can quite understand that. I am so complex and you are so simple.'<sup>868</sup> However, as Martindale pointed out, the women's factory inspectorate was led by; 'a pioneer and a whole-hearted feminist', whose determination and fighting spirit saw a more comprehensive body of legislation than might otherwise have been the case.<sup>869</sup>

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<sup>864</sup> O'Day, 'Women and social investigation: Clara Collet and Beatrice Webb', p. 177.

<sup>865</sup> Evans, pp. 32-34.

<sup>866</sup> Evans, pp. 37- 40.

<sup>867</sup> Humphreys, p. 120.

<sup>868</sup> Martindale, *From One Generation to Another*, p. 49.

<sup>869</sup> Hilda Martindale, *Some Victorian Portraits*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 49.

These women were, at least in part, responsible for the establishment of the civil service as a desirable career for women. As they reached retirement, it was acknowledged that they had proved their worth as pioneers in the field. This is reflected both in the Royal Commission in 1914 and, following their equally impressive performances during the First World War, in the enquiries undertaken by the Reconstruction Committees.

Rose Squire commented in 1927 that:

It is amusing to recall in passing that we women inspectors were officially known first as female inspectors, then as lady inspectors, and finally as women inspectors. The change in convention as the years went by perhaps reflects the change that has taken place in the women's position in the Civil Service in that period!<sup>870</sup>

These women belonged to a generation of civil servants who shaped much of twentieth century social policy, and to a group of women who powerfully influenced the careers of their successors. Overlooked by civil service historiography, the reforms they advocated through the Factory Acts, through comparative studies on European industrial reforms, through the amassing of evidence on social issues about women which proved fundamental to the debates and developments surrounding late nineteenth and early twentieth century social reform. Their investigative expertise and statistical skills contributed to the inter-war welfare policies which prefigured the creation of the welfare state. To ignore the women pioneers is to undervalue this key contribution. These women should take their place alongside economists and social reformers including the Webbs and William Beveridge and by senior male colleagues in the civil service including Malcolm Delevingne, Edward Troup and Hubert Llewellyn Smith. Jose Harris has argued that the centralised public welfare system emergent after the Second World War in Britain would not have been predicted a century earlier, when a more localised and voluntary system might have been imagined, compared with continental neighbours.<sup>871</sup> It could however, have been envisaged after the First World War. Women in the administrative classes of the Civil Service played a significant part in that development.

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<sup>870</sup> Squire, p. 39.

<sup>871</sup> Jose Harris, 'Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy', *Before Beveridge, Welfare before the Welfare State*, David Gladstone, ed., (London: I.E.A. Health and Welfare Unit, 1999), p. 43.

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