From Peace to Development: a Re-Constitution of British Women's International Politics, c. 1945 – 1975

By

Sophie Skelton

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Abstract

This thesis aims to make clear British women's experiences of the international between 1945 and 1975. It analyses how international development came to feature at the centre of British women's organisations international programme by the late 1950s.

The origins of this process date back to the immediate post-war years. Inspired by a new sense of duty and internationalism, British women's organisations embraced the new international institutions that had formed as a result of War with a newfound sense of purpose, one which allowed them to join new organisational partners. In the late 1940s, world peace was taken up by a broad spectrum of British women's organisations as a potentially powerful means of bringing women together from diverse political, social and cultural backgrounds to co-operate on both national and international levels.

The failure of peace to unite women across social and political lines in the face of the 'red scare' in the early 1950s forced British women to look for an 'apolitical' means of promoting human relations. The UN technocratic approach positioned international development as the convenient space for British women to act out these new post-war international commitments. However, the results of this new international priority within Britain were informed directly by histories of imperial power which left assumptions about priorities and Western superiority uncontested until the 1980s.

Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

For clarity, organisations are referred to inter-changeably by their abbreviation and full title throughout this thesis.

ACWW	Associated Countrywomen of the World
BFBPW	British Federation of Business and Professional Women
CHR	UN Commission on Human Rights
CSW	UN Commission on the Status of Women
DD2	UN Second Development Decade
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
FFHC	Freedom from Hunger Campaign
IAW	International Alliance of Women
ICW	International Council of Women
IWDC	International Women's Day Committee
LNU	League of Nations Union
MWA	Married Women's Association
NAW	National Assembly of Women
NCW	National Council of Women
NUTG	National Union of Townswomen's Guilds
NWCA	National Women's Citizens Association
SJCWWO	Standing Joint Council of Working Women's Organisations
SPG	Six Point Group
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VCOAD	Voluntary Committee for Overseas Aid and Development
WAC UNA	Women's Advisory Council to the United Nations Association
WCG	Women's Cooperative Guild
WFL	Women's Freedom League
WFW	Women for Westminster
WGPW	Women's Group on Public Welfare
WI	Women's Institute
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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Introduction

From Peace to Development: a Reconstitution of Women's International Politics, c.1945 - 1975

In April 1945 the International Alliance of Women (IAW), one of three major transnational women's organisations, sent two observers to the San Francisco Conference that founded the United Nations (UN). Their subsequent reports to the Executive of the IAW emphasised the limited role accorded to women and concluded that the conditions of international politics were 'still far, far from satisfactory'.[1] Concerted effort was required by transnational organisations such as theirs to ensure that women were granted their 'proper' place in the multitude of committees which, they believed, would shape the future global social, economic and political order. Never before, they argued, had the efforts of individual women in their affiliated societies been so important and so necessary. Many of the women activists in international women's organisations at this time had learnt first-hand before the war of the difficulties in securing international measures to protect women's status, when women as a group were excluded from those very bodies responsible for internationally binding legislation. What was needed then, according to the IAW, was a clear and persistent campaign to ensure the real participation of women and their interests in these new transnational bodies, so that they might take an equal role in the reconstruction of global stability following the devastating effects of the Second World War. Arguably, it is this sentiment that characterised the international program of both transnational and British women's organisations in the immediate post-war period.

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[1] Women's Library (Hereafter WL), 7MCA/C FL 438, International Alliance of Women (IAW), Letter from Margery Corbett Ashby to Members of the IAW, 11th August1946; WL, 7MCA/C FL 438, IAW, 'Reminiscences of the San Francisco Conference that Founded the United Nations', Bertha Lutz, October 1947

This thesis will show that the immediate post-war period saw an increase in activity in the international sphere on behalf of a broad spectrum of both transnational and British women's organisations. It will argue that the years 1945 – 1975 saw the culmination of a process that served to re-constitute women's international politics. This process began in 1945 in the original search to claim a new international role for politically organised women; a role which would allow them to act within the international political process rather than lingering on the periphery as they had with the League of Nations. Initially these efforts were diverse; British women's organisations in particular were keen to take advantage of the new opportunities available for international work and cross-organisational collaboration afforded by the end of the Second World War. By the late 1940s, the volume of international activity had convinced a minority of British women's organisations of the necessity for a central, organised international focus which drew on both historical and contemporary connections. Taking inspiration from their international parent bodies, world peace was utilised by British women's organisations as a means of appealing to women across political and social lines. Leading members hoped that this would facilitate a new, broad based movement of women inspired directly by the new post-war international spirit.

However by the 1950s, international women's organisations decided to deliberately replace world peace with international development as their main international focus in direct response to the challenges of the contemporary political climate. The link between world peace and Communism directly challenged the founding principle of non-partisanship to which the majority of transnational and British women's organisations subscribed. Accusations of political bias and personal divisions in addition to unfavourable media attention risked both organisational cohesion and status. In this sense, by the 1950s, these organisations chose to deliberately marginalise the potentially divisive and politically loaded questions that had provided a focus for them in earlier periods. The issue

of peace proved too complicated amidst the backdrop of Cold War suspicions about the legitimacy of Left-leaning organisations, the Soviet 'peace offensive' and the emergence of new one-party nation states.

Their programs were re-packaged under the politically neutral, technocratic and 'safe' development agenda in order that these organisations might avoid controversy and criticism, both from within their own membership and further afield. High ranking members had chosen the issue as an organisational focus specifically because it was not, in the words of the IAW Secretary in 1954, 'political in the same sense as peace is'.[2] Historians and sociologists of the women's movement and international development have tended to focus on the 1970s as the period in which connections between women's status and development were more explicitly drawn.[3] Instead, this study will attempt to show how women's involvement in the issue of development was driven initially from a deliberately depoliticised trajectory in the 1950s. The history of women and development is as much about de-politicisation in the 1950s as it was about re-politicisation in the 1970s. The decision to embrace international development on the one hand helped these organisations to establish themselves as legitimate NGOs within the system of international government, a priority since the San Francisco conference in April 1945. On the other hand, it forced them into a narrower and arguably more limited agenda which did not necessarily allow room for an effective critique of women's position within society.

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[2] WL, 2IAW/1/B 003, IAW, Report on the International Committee Conference, London June 24 – 27, 1954

[3] E. Friedman, 'Women's Human Rights: the Emergence of a Movement' in J. Peters & A. Wolper (eds.), *Women's Rights as Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives,* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 19; M. A. Chen, 'Engendering world conferences: the international women's movement and the UN' in *Third World Quarterly,* 16 (3) (1995), p. 478; D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN: A Sixty Year Quest for Equality and Justice,* (Bloomington: Stanford University Press, 2005)

Raising the living conditions of those in the poorest areas was a 'safe' subject that drew on older colonial and philanthropic Western female traditions in ways which did not threaten their non-party organisational status or risk the support of their national affiliated societies in the same manner that peace had. To improve women's living standards and economic prospects in the South allowed these organisations to bypass potentially divisive issues as well as conflicting interpretations as to the nature of women's rights. Before the 1950s, tensions between those who felt women's rights should be considered under the broader umbrella of 'human rights' and those who felt they needed separate consideration had played out both internationally and domestically within Britain.

The decision to embrace international development enabled these women's organisations to cement their place in the official UN structure but it also contributed towards their transformation. Development acted as a means of legitimising these organisations at an international level – no longer were they merely forums for discussion, deciding policy for national affiliates to then take up individually as they had been before the war. By the 1970s the largest transnational women's organisations such as the IAW, the International Council of Women (ICW) and the Association of Countrywomen of the World (ACWW) were all running UNESCO sponsored and autonomous development projects throughout the world and were in their view, fully integrated into official UN deliberations and policy making.[4] By making the deliberate decision to avoid controversial political issues these organisations hoped to integrate themselves more fully in the systems of international government as socio-political actors. Issues defined by the politics of the period as 'risky' simply could not offer them the same chance at legitimacy.

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[4] Specifically, these organisations were heavily involved in the proceedings of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

The desire to claim a new international role and to transcend the divisions made visible by the contemporary political climate saw these women's organisations transform into what leading members hoped were effective vehicles for participation in international government. By building up formal relationships with intergovernmental bodies, by claiming a new role as 'information providers'[5], by running and implementing technical assistance projects in Third World countries themselves, these groups began to define themselves as different international actors than their pre-war sisters. Debates about women's issues were increasingly framed within a wider discourse that centred on the primacy of human rights throughout this period. New resolutions were formulated that aimed to combat discrimination against members of the 'human family' as a whole. The decades following the 1950s saw this transformation solidify; these groups had gradually come to see themselves increasingly as NGOs, as organisations operating in a wider global context, directly linking women's status with broader social and economic trends.[6]

Internationalism in the Post-War Period

The history of women's activism following the Second World War both internationally and within Britain has been described by historians generally as a period of fragmentation, dissolution and decline. Falling membership levels, an ageing leadership and the absence of an overtly unifying agenda combined with the hostile political climate of the Cold War apparently left little room for effective collaboration. Leila Rupp's influential work on the history of women's international organisation characterised the immediate post-war period as the end of a great 'first wave' of female international activism; one which was

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[5] WL, 2IAW/1/C 004, IAW, Report of 16th Congress Naples, September 1952, p. 11

[6] N. Kardam, 'Women and Development', in P. R. Beckman & F. D'Amico (eds.), *Women, Gender, and World Politics: Perspectives, Policies, and Prospects,* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1994), pp. 141-153

seemingly 'enveloped' by the Cold War politics of the time.[7] Similarly Christine Bolt's work on internationalism and women's movements in the late 19th and 20th centuries does not spend much time examining the years immediately following the war.[8] Within Britain, historians of the women's movement have claimed that the 1940s and 1950s represent somewhat of a 'nadir' in British women's activism.[9] Martin Pugh attributes this apparent lack of activity to the high visibility and dominance of the 'Cold War, the welfare state and consumerism', all of which combined to make it harder for feminists to command the attention they had enjoyed in previous years.[10] Whilst larger primarily social organisations such as the Women's Institutes (WI) and Townswomen's Guilds did in fact thrive in the post-war climate, those organisations concerned primarily with the political fight to improve women's status suffered from a significant decline in membership and had difficulties securing funds. Certainly, the figures support this view; two of the major umbrella groups during this period saw their affiliation rates drop by a third, whilst membership of smaller groups such as the Six Point Group (SPG) fell by almost half.[11] The activity around international affairs in the post-war period then presents something of a paradox. Whilst historians have made clear the post- war 'nadir' in women's activism, they have nevertheless helped to conceal a significant development in the history of British women's international activity. Despite a decline in the membership rates of smaller organisations, involvement in international issues following the end of the Second World War spanned both political and social lines so that international priorities for the Women's

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[7] L. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: the Making of an International Women's Movement,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997)

[8] C. Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned? Race, Class and Internationalism in the American and British Women's Movements c. 1880s - 1970s,* (London: Routledge, 2004)

[9] See M. Pugh, 'Domesticity and the Decline of Feminism, 1930 – 1950' in H. Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century,* (London: 1990), pp. 144 – 166; M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914 – 1999,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 298

[10] Ibid. p. 298

[11] Ibid.

Institutes for example, were not always entirely distinct from the smaller, political women's groups.

The history of the international women's movement has tended to view the 1920s and 1930s as the more influential period of female international activism. Indeed, it is those organisations established during this influential period that form the basis of this study. The ICW was the oldest transnational women's organisation; established in 1882 it acted as the first international umbrella organisation and was designed to bring together women in individual countries first organised into separate National Councils.[12] The ICW has been characterised broadly as a somewhat conservative organisation. The establishment of the IAW in 1904 for example, was a direct consequence of the Council's unwillingness to take a stance on the issue of women's Suffrage.[13] Rupp has previously described the IAW as a more overtly political and feminist organisation that took progressive and controversial positions on issues such as prostitution, peace, equal pay, the nationality of married women and slavery during its early years.[14] There were however, many personal ties between the two organisations. The British President of the IAW from 1923 – 1946, Margery Corbett Ashby developed a close working relationship with Lady Aberdeen, President of the ICW throughout the 1920s. However after 1920, when many Western women had successfully gained the vote, the IAW began to increasingly focus on social reform so that the differences between the two organisations became much less pronounced.[15] It was during these formative years that connections between women were formulated across national boundaries, networks and coalitions were forged and initial

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[12] L. Rupp, *Worlds of Women,* p. 15

[13] A. Whittick, *Woman into Citizen,* (London: Frederick Muller, 1979)

[14] L. Rupp, *Worlds of Women,* p. 25

[15] F. de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: the Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)' in *Women's History Review,* 19 (4) (2010), p. 550

policy outlined. Since the 1920s there were many attempts at amalgamation between the two organisations; although ultimately these attempts were all unsuccessful, the subsequent collaborative work demonstrates both their similarities and connections.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was established in 1915 as a result of divisions between members of the IAW who felt that to focus on the issue of peace distracted too much attention away from the fight for women's suffrage.[16] From its conception the organisation deliberately sought out an international influence; it based its headquarters in Geneva and mirrored its structural model on the new League of Nations which it actively promoted.[17] The organisation differed from the ICW and IAW in its prioritisation of the issue of peace, its more radical stance on issues such as imperialism and finally, its willingness to co-operate with labour women's groups. The WILPF in Britain for instance, had forged a close connection with the labour Women's Co-operative Guild from its conception.[18] Indeed, this was a factor to bring the organisation under greater scrutiny than the ICW and IAW during the Cold War, both within Britain and the USA.[19]

Prior to 1945 international women's organisations tended to define themselves in terms of their capacity to provide a forum to decide and dictate future work to national affiliates,

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[16] L. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 26

[17] M. K. Meyer, 'WILPF: Organising Women for Peace in the War System' in M K. Meyer and E. Prügl (eds.), *Gender, Politics and Global Governance*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman, 1999), p. 110

[18] J. Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820,* (London: Virago Press, 1989), p. 4

[19] See G. Bussey & M. Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 1915 – 1965*, (Oxford: George Allen, 1980), p. 194; R. Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism, and the US Peace Movement, 1945 – 1963*, (New York: Information Age Publishing, 2010)

which would then work individually in their home countries to secure these mutually agreed aims.[20] As Rupp's study has shown, the majority of the work performed by transnational women's organisations in the inter-war period was largely an attempt to build a collective consciousness rather than to directly influence the international political process.[21] During this period early attempts to engage with international politics were typically unsuccessful; efforts to secure international protection for women's status were consistently thwarted throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Carol Miller's work has shown how women's rights were conceptualised during this period as a national domestic issue, a factor which often worked against the women in these international organisations.[22] Miller's work shows how the majority of League of Nations member states demonstrated a consistent reluctance to discuss issues viewed as essentially subject to domestic jurisdiction throughout the inter-war period; the status of women continued to be defined by the majority of states as a national issue, as well as by many senior League officials.[23]

During the War, many members of the international women's movement began to express their doubts as to whether their organisations still had a legitimate role to play. An aging membership combined with the breakdown of communication networks had certainly reduced their capacity to act as facilitators of opinion between women in different countries. In 1944 IAW and ICW both invited their international membership to vote to

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[20] ICW, *Women in a Changing World: the Dynamic Story of the International Council of Women since 1888,* (Routledge: London, 1966), p. 15

[21] See L. Rupp, *Worlds of Women,* p. 163; L. Rupp & V. Taylor, 'Forging Feminist Identity in an International Movement: A Collective Identity Approach to Twentieth Century Feminism' in *Signs,* 24 (2) (1999), pp. 363 – 386.

[22] See C. Miller, "Geneva – the Key to Equality": Inter-war Feminists and the League of Nations' in *Women's History Review,* 3 (2) (1994), pp. 219 – 245; C. Miller, *Lobbying the League : Women's International Organizations and the League of Nations,* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Oxford, 1992)

[23] C. Miller, '"Geneva – the Key to Equality", p. 221

decide whether or not they should continue their work into the post-war period.[24] However following the end of the War, an overall more optimistic outlook came to predominate. It was a new organisational enthusiasm, fuelled by the creation of an intergovernmental body with internationally binding powers. To these women's organisations, the UN appeared to offer them a new opportunity – a chance for them to voice their concerns to the wider international community and to stimulate action. This was an expectation made all the more real following the conferral of consultative status to the IAW, ICW and the WILPF in the late 1940s at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This positive view of the UN was summarised by Monica Whately in 1946, a member of the Executive Committee of the Six Point Group, who urged the women members of her organisation to 'look forward' to a new era in which women's rights could be codified and therefore protected by international legislation.[25]

Previously, the limited mandate accorded to the League of Nations had not allowed women's issues to be considered in full, given that individual 'rights', including women's, were not necessarily considered to be an international concern to be regulated by international standards. Sam Moyn has recently argued against the view that the post-war period saw human rights emerge as a formative feature in international politics and law. He argues instead that it was during the 1970s that the concept of human rights came to define and inspire the foundations of an international movement.[26] However, the possibilities made real by the establishment of the UN, namely, that 'supranational organisations' were now invested with the authority to set international standards for nation states regarding the treatment of its citizens, nevertheless initially excited the leaders of both transnational and British women's organisations alike. Nitza Berkovitch

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[24] WL, 2IAW/B 002, IAW, Minutes of Meeting October 1945, Geneva

[25] WL, 5SPG/B 525, SPG, Letter to Members, May 1946

[26] S. Moyn, *Last Utopia: Human Rights in History,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 7

has argued that the establishment of this new 'world polity structure' following the end of the Second World War allowed women's rights to be placed legitimately onto the world agenda for the first time. [27] This had a tremendous impact on the ways in which international women's organisation's operated. Berkovitch has identified a trend that began in the immediate post-war period that saw many international women's organisations come to pay greater attention to 'new bodies' such as the UN, and many devoted the majority of their time and energy to work co-operatively with them.[28]

This observation both characterised and shaped the activities of British and international women's organisations in the post-war period. A significant proportion had begun to see the UN as the means by which to fulfil their established aims. Indeed, in the years immediately following the Second World War, organisational literature that related to 'the international' both within Britain and internationally came to be dominated by information about the UN. To the women in these organisations, the immediate post-war period offered a new route to organisational legitimacy and had provided a new central focus. Fundamentally, it had also provided them with the opportunity to take an active role in the international political process, as consultants to the UN. Although the period may have constituted a decline in political feminism within Britain, certainly in terms of membership levels, these years nevertheless constituted a real opportunity for these organisations to legitimise their demands at an international level.

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[27] N. Berkovitch, 'The Emergence and Transformation of the International Women's Movement', in J. Boli & G. Thomas (eds.), *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organisations since 1875,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 102

[28] N. Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship: Women's Rights and International Organisations,* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 103

Given the Anglo-American dominance of the leadership of the large transnational women's organisations, this international interest quickly filtered down to British women's organisations following the end of the war. Margery Corbett Ashby was not only President of the IAW in 1946, but had also founded the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds and was an active member in many smaller, more overtly feminist organisations.[29] During the post-war period the international situation became the centre of a discourse which envisioned a pivotal role for women in post-war reconstruction on a multiplicity of levels.[30] The contemporary international condition was utilised by a number of British organisations as a hopeful means of reviving a movement which even high ranking members had begun to describe as being in decline, likening traditional Executive Committee meetings to purely 'social gatherings and sherry parties'.[31]

Dora Russell, a leading member of several British women's organisations during this period and an open Socialist, observed positively in 1946 that the end of the Second World War had in fact 'breathed new life' into a large number of British women's groups and societies. To her delight, this new impetus emphasised the primacy of international affairs and cooperation.[32] Thus, leaders of British women's organisations began to look towards the international scene as a means of securing the demands on which they had been established typically thirty years before. In her analysis of women's organisations in post-war Britain, Elizabeth Wilson has noted how women's politics had fractured to revolve around small, highly centralised and therefore often exclusionary groups that

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[29] WL, 7MCA/C FL 483, Correspondence to Teresa Billington Greig, 12th February 1946

[30] WL, 5NWC/4/A, FL171, NWCA, Minutes of Executive Committee, January 1946; 5SPG/A FL536, Pamphlet, 1947; 5WFM, WGPW, Minutes, February 1948

[31] WL, 5SPG/A FL525, Letter from Sybil Morrison to Hazel Hunkins Hallinan, 1947

[32] D. Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree: Vol.3 Challenge to the Cold War,* (London: Virago Press, 1985), p. 124

lacked grassroots support.[33] Similarly, the Birmingham Feminist History Group's definition of women's politics in the 1950s characterised it as consisting largely of single issue groups for equal pay and property rights, based 'largely around the middle class notion of the pressure group rather than the belief in building a mass movement'.[34]

To some degree this had been recognised by the leading members of some British women's organisations during the 1940s; Juanita Frances, President of the Married Women' Association (MWA) had already attempted to respond to this situation and had set up new branches to encourage localised support. Others, especially the leaders of the Six Point Group and the British arm of the WILPF, hoped that internationalism would act as a means of rousing the necessary interest of women across Britain at a grassroots level. Representatives of the WILPF saw internationalism as a new potential focus after the War; a focus which would unite the women in the multitude of different voluntary, feminist, single issue, umbrella and labour organisations at this time. Whilst many of the organisations mentioned in this study tended to disagree over what issues should take priority domestically within Britain in the post-war period, all agreed that women should have equal access to the new organs of international government. Although ultimately this 'focus' remained largely abstract, a generalised organisational commitment consistently thwarted by the politics of the period, to the women in these organisations the post-war period necessitated their participation.

Women's politics in the immediate post-war period in Britain then, was fragmented. The prevalence of small, single issue groups such as the Equal Pay Campaign Committee

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[33] E. Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Post-war Britain 1945 – 1968,* (Tavistock: London, 1980), p. 47

[34] Birmingham Feminist History Group, 'Feminism as Femininity in the 1950s?' in *Feminist Review*, 80, (2005), p.21

(EPCC), Women for Westminster (WFW)[35] and the MWA meant that the 'building of a mass movement' to work on interconnected levels and issues seemed impossible. Indeed, many women's organisations both prior to and during this period refused to work with one another on the grounds that 'duplication of effort' was both a waste of time and resources.[36] Whilst the majority placed women's issues at the centre of their organisational policy, divisions tended to focus primarily on what should take priority. To women in the Married Women's Association, equal pay was secondary to securing equal financial status within marriage. This positioning was a direct result of the organisation's conceptualisation of women's role in society and its middle class membership base; the Married Women's Association saw women's role as wife and mother as more important than the conditions of her working life. Differences in priority are reflected in the sheer number of organisations in operation at this time; estimates have claimed that there were over nine million women active in a variety of different associations during this period.[37] Whilst previous historians have made clear that the 1940s and 1950s were one of a decline in women's *political* activism overall, their still remained a great number of women active in a diverse range of organisations both internationally and within Britain. The Women's Institutes had seen their membership rise by 150,000 between the years 1947 – 1950 for example, whilst the Townswomen's Guilds saw an increase of 167,000 during the same period.[38]

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[35] Women for Westminster was established in 1943 with the aim of securing a greater number of women MPs in Parliament.

[36] WL, NCW, *Annual Report,* 1946, p. 12; NCW, *Annual Report,* 1948, p. 4

[37] H. Smith, 'The Problem of 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' in Great Britain during World War II' in *The Journal of Modern History,* 53 (4) (1981), p. 667

[38] M. Hilton et al., *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, Civil Societies and the Voluntary Sector since 1945,* (Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2012), p. 17

Historians of women's organisations in the inter-war era have noted the extent to which they were involved in processes of 'policy networking', that is, the degree to which they courted one another's interests to further a particular cause. D. J. R Grey has noted how the membership of such organisations was 'remarkably fluid', a factor which Sue Innes claims enabled them to call on support from a number of different associations with similar interests.[39] This served to create a multitude of different forms of 'networks' that were far more able to 'advance their ideas than a lone pressure group' acting independently.[40] Arguably, this context persisted into the post-war period and is evidenced by the establishment of new umbrella organisations in the 1940s despite the general reduction in membership levels of smaller, more overtly feminist groups, in addition to the continued collaborative work between smaller organisations. By the 1940s the number and range of British women's organisations presented a complex picture of overlapping and interacting aims, ideas, membership and activities. The scope and diversity of women's politics can best be illuminated by dividing the organisations mentioned in this study broadly into four categories, although inevitably there is some overlap. These categories are based largely on organisational structure, activity and ideology. The first are the large, countrywide organisations; second, the national umbrella organisation that brought together a number of different associations; third, the smaller, pressure group organisations with both feminist and socialist associations and finally, new, small, Left-leaning women's organisations established in the 1940s. The organisations in this study have been selected primarily on the basis of the availability of archival material and in an attempt to provide an accurate representation of the organisational diversity at this time.

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[39] S. Innes, 'Constructing Women's Citizenship in the Inter-war era: the Edinburgh Women's Citizens Association' in *Women's History Review,* 13 (4) (2004), p. 631

[40] D. J. R. Grey, 'Women's Policy Networks and the Infanticide Act 1922' in *Twentieth Century British History,* 21 (4), (2010), p. 451

The large, countrywide women's organisations including the National Federation of Women Institute (WI) and the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds (NUTG) were established in 1918 and 1925 respectively. The WI was established initially to organise women in rural areas, whilst the Townswomen's Guilds focussed on women in the towns. These organisations tended to be socially if not politically conservative; they saw their role primarily in terms of their ability to provide both educational and social functions. In her study, Wilson has differentiated these groups from more activist and openly feminist women's organisations. The WI and the Townswomen's Guilds were unwilling to involve themselves in political claims for women's equality; their constitutions did not stretch to the endorsement of single issue campaigns that characterised women's politics at this time.[41] Caitríona Beaumont has maintained that 'mainstream' bodies such as the NFWI and NUTG went to great lengths to dissociate themselves with both 'political and feminist' ideas in the inter-war era, instead choosing to focus their efforts on providing a space for women to enjoy activities outside the home in an environment 'free from religious and political affiliations'.[42] The broad social mandate of these two organisations was in part responsible for the significant increases in membership during the late 1940s and early 1950s. WI and Townswomen's Guilds projects aimed to promote the 'ideal of the active woman citizen' and provided instruction in appropriate forms of public and voluntary activity within the local community, alongside specialist organisations such as the National Women's Citizens Association (NWCA). The NWCA was established in 1917 and aimed to provide a separate training ground to educate women in appropriate citizenship that focussed predominately on community affairs.[43] Although all three of these organisations had demonstrated concern with international affairs since their conception, this had been limited by the restricted nature of their constitutions. This was to significantly change in the

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[41] E Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Post-war Britain 1945 – 1968*, p. 142

[42] C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens,* pp. 27 - 29

[43] C. Beaumont, 'Citizens not Feminists: the Boundary Negotiated Between Citizenship and Feminism by Mainstream Women's Organisations in England, 1928 – 39' in *Women's History Review,* 9 (2), (2000), p. 417

late 1950s following the international endorsement of development as a depoliticised site of activity that consequently transformed internationalism into a 'constitutionally appropriate' issue.

The second type of organisation was the umbrella body. These were broad based alliances that brought together a wide range of women's organisations through affiliation. Given the broad membership base, this type of organisation acted facilitated the type of networking activities mentioned by D. J. R. Grey. Significantly, they were responsible for bringing together 'middle class', mainstream and to some extent, labour women's groups during this period. The National Council of Women (NCW) was the largest of these bodies in the post-war period and drew together mainstream, voluntary, feminist and religious bodies to consult and work together on its objects, 'the removal of all disabilities of women whether legal, economic or social'.[44] Membership of the National Council had remained fairly consistent over the course of the 1920s and 1930s – in 1928 145 societies had affiliated to the organisation and individual affiliations totalled 14, 289.[45] Whilst the figures for the post-war period are absent from the records, a total of 12 new branches were set up by the organisation between 1945 – 54 bringing the national total up to 32.[46] The NCW was the British arm of its parent body, the ICW, and consequently international affairs had taken a prominent position in the work of the NCW from the time of its formation. Its structure mirrored that of the larger international body and through membership of the NCW organisational affiliates were able to claim international representation. The NCW had made clear in its organisational literature that it had political role as a 'pressure group' and the Council had lobbied the government on an array of women's issues ranging from widow's pensions, equal pay, divorce reform and property rights throughout the first half of

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[44] WL, NCW, Annual Report 1946, p. 2

[45] C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens,* p. 22

[46] D. Glick, *The National Council of Women: The First One Hundred Years 1895 – 1994,* (London: NCW, 1995), p. 261

the twentieth century.[47] Like its parent body, the NCW has generally been considered to be a conservative organisation. Indeed, the Council did take up conservative positions on a number of topics such as birth control, sex education and divorce during this period.[48] As this study will show, this organisation was the most outspoken on the issue of what it viewed as the systematic 'Communist infiltration' of the women's movement in the late 1940s. This was a factor that may have been exacerbated by the fact that historically, the Council had little if no connection with Labour women's groups despite initially having been founded as the National Union of Women Workers.[49] Rather, affiliates tended to be drawn from professional, middle class women's organisations that included teachers, civil servants, nurses and University graduates.

The second most influential 'umbrella' organisation in the immediate post-war period was the Women's Group on Public Welfare. Established in 1939, it was later to become the Women's Forum (WF) in 1971. The Group, like the NCW, encompassed a diverse range of women's organisations throughout Britain; in 1951 the organisation claimed to represent 43 individual associations that ranged from women-only unions, social clubs to religious organisations.[50] What made the organisation distinct was the power of the Group to facilitate co-operation between mainstream, middle class organisations and labour women's groups. Whilst the co-operation between labour and middle class organisations had been pivotal to the success of the Suffrage campaign, Christine Collette has noted that this level of co-operation did not continue into the immediate post-war period, as loyalty to Labour Party policy triumphed over the prioritisation of 'women's issues' such as

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid. pp. 48 - 82

[49] Ibid. p. 6

[50] For a list of WGPW member organisations see Appendix I

equal pay.[51] In her study of women's groups in the 1950s, Joyce Freeguard has observed that the Group provided a forum for discussion, for the exchange of experiences and for concerted action.[52] Moreover, as each affiliated members retained complete independence and was not required to support any activity not in line with its individual policy this allowed organisations representing all points of view to work together. Therefore, the NUTG and NFWI, both of which were constitutionally prohibited to engage or affiliate to any organisation that declared a party political policy, could work alongside the Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations (SJCWWO), that represented the Trades Union Congress. Given its diverse representation and breadth of expertise the WGPW was co-opted by the Government in the immediate post-war period to collaborate in Government sponsored reconstruction projects.[53]

Perhaps more significantly to a study of women's post-war involvement in international affairs however, was the establishment of the Women's Advisory Council (WAC) to the United Nations Association (UNA) in 1946.[54] The WAC acted as an advisory body to the UNA, a nationwide organisation which worked to publicise and generate support for the aims of the UN Charter and to educate the wider public about the scope of UN work.[55] WAC, like both the previous umbrella organisations, brought together a broad spectrum of women's organisations throughout Britain, with the specific purpose of monitoring the work of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on women's rights. The WAC was also responsible for the

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[51] C. Collette, 'Daughter of the Newer Eve: The Labour Movement and Women' in J. Fyrth (ed.), *Labour's Promised Land? Culture and Society in Labour Britain, 1945 – 1951,* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995), p. 54

[52] J. Freeguard, *Its Time for the Women of the 1950s to Stand Up and Be Counted,* p. 22

[53] WL, 5WFM/C FL 565, WGPW, Extract from the Minutes of the Planning Sub-Committee: Education on International Subjects, 15th November 1947

[54] For a list of member organisations see Appendix II

[55] F. Field, *60 Years of UNA-UK,* (London: UNA-UK, 2012), p. 4

recommendation of 'suitable' women representatives to act as British delegates to the UN and its organs, making its role central to campaigns that concerned women's international representation in the late 1940s and 1950s.[56] Historical scholarship on this organisation is virtually non-existent and the records relating to it are intermittent and sparse. However, what is clear is that it acted as an important means of bringing together representatives of a diverse range of organisations specifically for the purpose of considering international matters. Ultimately, its powers were 'advisory' and there is little to suggest anything about its political leanings, presumably in order to preserve its non-party image.

The third type of women's organisation is the smaller, centralised organisation that tended to concentrate its efforts towards one single issue at a time. Organisations such as the Six Point Group (SPG) and the Women's Freedom League (WFL) both had their roots in the Suffrage Campaign and were more willing than the WI and Townswomen's Guilds to describe themselves as explicitly feminist. The WFL had been established in 1907 as a breakaway group from the Women's Social and Political Union by Teresa Billington Greig in an attempt to distance herself from the domineering leadership of the Pankhursts before the First World War. The SPG was formed in 1921 by Lady Rhondda, an organisation dedicated to 'finishing off' the process begun by the Suffrage campaign, and aimed for equality in six key areas of women's lives – political, legal, moral, social, economic and occupational.[57] Both of these organisations had at their heart a middle class membership base and many had grown up in professional families.[58] This factor was directly reflected in their persistent campaign for married women's property rights from the 1930s to the time of their respective dissolutions in the 1961 and 1980. In 1939 the SPG

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[56] WL, 7PHS/1/ 06 001, Women's Advisory Council (WAC), Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 15th October 1951

[57] D. Spender, *There's Always Been a Women's Movement This Century,* (London: Pandora Press, 1983), p. 30

[58] B. Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries: Portraits of British Feminists Between the Wars,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 2

played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Married Women's Association (MWA), a single issue organisation whose work was dedicated solely to securing financial security for women in marriage. Despite their preoccupation with married women's rights within Britain, both the SPG and WFL had in fact demonstrated considerable interest in international affairs prior to the post-war period; the SPG had been a prominent British force in the campaign for the ratification of the Equal Rights Treaty by the League of Nations. However, both organisations often lacked the funds, branch structure and administrative power to take their campaigns against fascism in the 1930s for example, much further than central London.[59]

The SPG was one of the more activist organisations during the post-war period. It was one of the only organisations to call for direct action on issues such as equal pay and women's political representation. Its leadership was also diverse and politically to the Left. The majority of the Executive Committee were Labour supporters; two members, Leah Manning and Edith Summerskill were Labour MPs in the 1940s and Monica Whately, Chairman of the organisation in the late 1940s was an open Socialist.[60] Clare Madden, the Group's Secretary, was an open member of the Communist Party throughout the post-war period despite the intensification of popular anti-Communist sentiment. They were therefore much more willing than organisations such as the WFL for instance, to work directly with labour or Left leaning organisations in the post-war years.

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[59] J. Alberti, 'British Feminists and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s' in S. Oldfield (ed.), *This Working Day World: Women's Lives and Culture(s) in Britain, 1914 – 1945,* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), p. 121

[60] P. M. Graves, *Labour Women: Women in Working Class Politics, 1918-1939,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 130

This brings us to the fourth type of organisation mentioned in this study; newly established feminist organisations that had explicit connections with the Left. These new organisations, including the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) and the National Assembly of Women (NAW) are virtually absent from existing histories of the women's movement in post-war Britain.[61] Arguably, this is a direct result of the impact of Cold War politics on British women's activism; both organisations suffered in the 1950s from accusations of Communist infiltration and bias due in part to their heavily unionised membership base and the public discrediting of NAW's leader Monica Felton following the publication of a pamphlet criticising Britain's role in the Korean War.[62] Although Keith Laybourn has confirmed the presence of Communist women in these organisations, their influence is difficult to discern due to the limited availability of primary source material.[63] What is clear however, is that immediately after the war many British women's groups including the SPG, Married Women's Association and even the NCW were in favour of collaboration with these Left leaning organisations. The IWDC and the NAW focussed on women's rights as mothers and as workers and emphasised the importance of an international outlook. In this sense, their commitment to internationalism fit coherently with that of many other British women's organisations in the immediate post-war years.

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[61] O. Banks, *Faces of Feminism: Feminism as a Social Movement,* (Oxford: Martin Robinson, 1981)*; B. Caine, *English Feminism, 1780 – 1980,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 222 and M. Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914 – 1999,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 285

[62] Monica Felton was Chairman of the NAW in the 1950s. On publication of several pamphlets criticising Britain's role in the Korean War she was accused of treason by Parliament for consorting with the enemy abroad and for spreading enemy propaganda at home (although never prosecuted) and removed from her position in local Government, see Chapter Two. J. Mahoney, 'Civil Liberties in the Cold War: the Role of Central Government' in *The American Journal of Legal History,* 33 (1) (1989), p. 65

[63] K. Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain: Dissent, Decline and Re-Emergence 1945 – c.2000,* (Routledge: London, 2006), pp. 33 - 4

This study will examine the international activity of a broad selection of women's organisations drawn from the types mentioned above, in order to show how the contemporary international situation was utilised in an attempt to generate a new sense of enthusiasm and unity in women's politics. Leading members hoped that internationalism could unite women across political lines through the creation of new broad based organisational alliances, membership of national umbrella organisations and co-operation with newer, Left leaning organisations. The majority of the organisations examined in this study had been established during the inter-war era and were vehemently non-party and non-sectarian; this commitment to the tradition of non-partisanship continued well into the post-war period. In 1951, the Married Women's Association still felt it important to remind its members that 'our politics should not enter into our relationship as members of the MWA', but that the organisation aimed to represent all shades of political opinion.[64] This tended to be the formative feature of each organisation and was protected by constitutional provision. Such provisions were intended to ensure that party politics did not distract from the organisation's main aims and objectives but were also a means of ensuring the participation of women across the political spectrum. This aspect of organisational identity was part of a wider associational tradition in Britain during the inter war period that conceptualised the non-party voluntary association, with its ideals of inclusivity and pluralist participation, as the ideal space for political activity and importantly, as 'insulation' against contemporary currents of extremism.[65]

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[64] WL, 5MWA/C FL 565 MWA, *Woman and Citizen,* March 1951

[65] H. McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain' in *The Historical Journal,* 50 (4) (2007), p. 893

To the women in these organisations, the non-party political women's association was the ideal forum for communicating women's interests to the wider world. Not only did their organisations allow a multitude of women from different political backgrounds to come together, but they also provided a space where women could develop their political identities and gain the necessary skills required to act in a public sphere that at this time remained dominated by men.[66] This view of the non-party women's association as the most effective means of influencing international politics is made clear in correspondence from Lady Nunburnholme in 1946, a key member of the ICW as well as a leading member of national British organisations such as the NCW and Women's Freedom League:

> 'The women's organisation is our channel… women of the world look to us to guide them through and above the hazy mists and nonsense of party politics to a higher cause – an international cause, which we, as leaders of our communities of women must endeavour to fight.' [67]

In Nunburnholme's view, the non-party women's association offered women the chance to carve out a space to act in the national and international public sphere. It was their organisations, free from political bias and led by experienced women, that were the most likely to secure a new international legitimacy for women's issues. Ultimately, this form of political organisation was inherently 'British' and carried with it barely veiled notions of superiority that typically positioned British and American women as leaders and 'the rest' as followers, as Nunburnholme's assertion that women throughout the world should 'look to them' makes clear. As the period progressed this political framework came under increasing criticism from women in Latin America, Asia and Africa, who began to identify and challenge the dominance of Western women in these organisations. As early as 1946, Bertha Lutz a prominent Brazilian feminist criticised the IAW for being 'too

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[66] N. Fraser, 'Re-thinking the Public Sphere: a Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy' in *Social Text*, 25 (1990), p. 59

[67] WL, National Council of Women (NCW), Annual Report, 1946

European' and for not taking into consideration the needs of women in other countries.[68] This challenge to the existing leadership became even greater following the independence of many African states in the late 1950s and 1960s. Applications for affiliation from new one party states not only directly challenged the traditional composition of the older transnational organisations but also their non-party clause.

Historians such as Antoinette Burton, Eliza Reidi, Clare Midgley, Mrinalini Sinha and Julia Bush have all made clear the complex connections between feminism and imperialist ideology in the 19th century and inter war period. Such work has revealed multiple roles Western women played in sustaining the ideals of imperialism as well as resisting and challenging them.[69] Whilst this involved publically espousing a discourse of sisterhood that attempted to link the problems of women's status in Britain with women's lives in the colonies, in practice it often meant the positioning of colonial women as inferior and as in need of the leadership and expertise of British women. In this sense, women in the colonies constituted the 'British women's burden', a figure to be both pitied and controlled.[70] Indeed, Nunburnholme's assumptions about leadership and optimal

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[68] WL, 2IAW/B 002, IAW, Minutes of Meeting February 1946, London

[69] See A. Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and Indian Women, 1865 – 1915' in N. Chaudhuri & M. Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance,* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 137 – 157; A. Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture,* (University of North Carolina Press: North Carolina, 1994); J. Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power,* (Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 2000); C. Midgley, 'Bringing the Empire Home: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790s – 1930s' in C. Hall & S. Rose (eds.), *At Home With the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World,* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006), pp. 230 – 250; E. Reidi, 'Women, Gender and the Promotion of Empire: The Victoria League, 1901-1914' in *The Historical Journal,* 45 (3) (2002), pp. 569 – 599; M. Sinha, 'Reading Mother India: Empire, Nation and the Female Voice' in *Journal of Women's History,* 6 (2) (1994), p. 13

[70] A. Burton, *Burdens of History,* p. 16

organisational structure suggest that this context may have continued into the post-war period.

This thesis will outline how this 'imperialist legacy' influenced the activity of the women's organisations mentioned here, particularly with regards to their relationship with African and Asian women, and more specifically, the turn to development in the 1950s. The issue of development was taken up by these organisations because it was according to them, by its very nature a politically neutral cause. Behind this belief lay an assumption that characterised the women in under developed countries and more broadly, the South, as in obvious need of outside assistance and direction from women in the North. This point was not contested during this period and was used by the women in both transnational and British organisations as a way of transcending the divisions that had characterised earlier work for international representation and peace in the North. This lingering imperialist legacy played a role in the broader transformative process that fundamentally altered the organisational direction of a significant number of women's associations, a process which served to fix their international policy firmly on women in the South.

The initial entry into international development in the 1950s by both transnational and British women's organisations was informed by the legacies of direct involvement in earlier forms of colonial development, mission and philanthropy. Margaret Strobel has outlined the ways in which organised European women co-operated with colonial and religious authorities to export a distinctly gendered, racist and often impractical vision of economic and social security to women in the African and Asian colonies during the 19th and 20th centuries.[71] The establishment of non-partisan rural organisations for women had

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[71] M. Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire,* (Indiana University Press: Indianapolis, 1991)

been the extent of the British colonial developer's plans for women in the first half of the 20th century, and mainstream British women's organisations were co-opted by the Colonial Office throughout the 1940s and 1950s to assist in the development of these projects. Rather than challenging women's status within wider society, this thesis will show how the early development projects sponsored and prepared by organisations such as the IAW, ICW and later, the Women's Institutes, carried colonial Western preconceptions about the primacy of women's social role forward, by limiting their efforts to advancing women's status within the family unit. Women were the recipients of these forms of aid as housewives and mothers in ways that often ignored their multiple economic and political roles within local communities. Early development projects sponsored by international women's organisations did not attempt to conceal their gendered aspect; literacy instructors in charge of the many initial adult education projects for women run by the IAW in the 1950s deliberately used manuals on 'mothercraft' as learning materials for students to practice their new skills.[72] This history of collaboration with colonial authorities arguably facilitated the persistence of colonial terms of reference in the technical assistance projects developed by both international and British women's organisations alike. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s, following the rigorous academic analysis of the realities of the effects of development on women (Women in Development (WID)) that these assumptions gradually came to be challenged.[73]

Whilst the social realities of imperialism found expression in the turn to development in the 1950s, the contemporary political climate was the catalyst for the shift in organisational

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[72] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 49 (10), October 1955

[73] A. Fraser & I. Tinker, *Developing Power: How Women Transformed International Development,* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2004); D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN; A Sixty Year Quest for Equality and Justice;* (S. M. Rai, 'Gender and Development: Theoretical Perspectives' in N. Visvanathan et al. (eds.), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader 2nd Edition,* (London: Zed Books, 2011), pp. 28 - 37

priority. Specifically, the politics of the Cold War era posed significant problems for the women in these organisations. Recent historical literature has begun to assess the extent to which women's organisations were affected by a process of what Kristen Ghodsee has coined, the 'trickled down' politics of the post-war period.[74] Arguably, this process created fundamental divisions within the international women's movement itself and also challenged its identity through direct confrontation with its constitutional commitment to non-partisanship. Francisca de Haan has argued that women's organisation's during this period were both shaped by and helped to shape the dominant political framework of the period.[75] Previous histories have tended to assume that organisations such as the ICW and IAW were politically neutral, when in fact they played a key part in maintaining the 'dichotomous world view' that characterised the Cold War. Recent histories of women's associations within Europe and the USA have made clear the ways in which organised women engaged with the ambivalent politics of the immediate post-war period both forcibly and voluntarily. In her analysis of Italian women's organisations in the post-war period Wendy Pojmann notes how the impact of the Cold War led to fundamental divisions in the Italian women's movement that directly reflected the global political position in ways that had not been seen before.[76] Helen Laville's work has noted the ways in which a variety of American women's organisations began to see their work as a vital part of the Cold War effort over the course of the 1950s.[77] Celia Donert's recent article traces the strained relationship between Eastern European women's organisations, international women's organisations and the United Nations across multiple campaigns for

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[74] K. Ghodsee, 'Revisiting the UN Decade for Women: Brief Reflections on Feminism, Capitalism and Cold War Politics in the Early Years of the International Women's Movement' in *Women's Studies International Forum,* 33 (2010), p. 3

[75] F. de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms', p. 550

[76] W. Pojmann, 'For Mothers, Peace and Family: International (Non) Co-operation among Italian Catholic and Communist Women's Organisations During the Early Cold War' in *Gender and History,* 23 (2) (2011), p. 426

[77] H. Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organisations,* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2002), p. 9

women's rights.[78] The impact of the 'ideological contest' between East and West is made clear in these works specifically in the post-war prioritisation of world peace by European and American women's organisations alike.[79] The Cold War rhetoric that directly linked the issue of peace with Communism meant that it came to be conceptualised by Western women's organisations as a 'political' issue. Those organisations that continued to work for peace were regarded with suspicion, denounced as 'political organisations', working for an alternative and dubious cause.

Across four chapters, this thesis will show how the wider political context of the period impacted upon British women's organisations of this time. It will argue that the shift to international development was a direct attempt by leading members to organisationally distance their associations from 'politics'. Whilst some British women's organisations had historic connections to the South through their participation in colonial development, this was exacerbated and strengthened following the onset of the Cold War. More generally, Gilbert Rist has noted how over the course of the 1950s the issue of economic development was depoliticised at an international level. Rist has claimed that the presentation of development as a set of technical measures, embodied in the technical assistance programmes of the 1940s and 1950s, represented direct attempts by international agencies to place the issue outside the realms of political debate.[80] The historical literature on the political nature of international development has not typically been used to explain the shifts in international women's history. However, Rist's analysis of this process of depoliticisation had direct implications for women's organisations in search of an alternative, 'safe' international agenda during the post-war years.

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[78] C. Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe: Distangling Feminist Histories' in *Past and Present,* Supplement 8, 2013, pp. 178 - 202

[79] Ibid. p. 193

[80] G. Rist, *A History of Development: from Western Origins to Global Faith,* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 78

However, whilst loyalty to the concept of political neutrality made the issue of development in the 1950s a convenient focus for the women in these non-party organisations, it did not allow room for the articulation of explicitly feminist demands. Questions about women's status within both the local community and society as a whole, were replaced instead with technical solutions to improve her living conditions in the South in ways that did not necessarily challenge the existing social and economic order or women's place in it. International and national women's organisations undoubtedly played a key role in early development initiatives for women; a majority of projects were outsourced to these organisations by international agencies.[81] Whilst the development projects sponsored by international and British women's organisations in the 1950s and 1960s deliberately sought, unlike many others at the time, to seek out and help women in Third World Countries they also tended to draw on the presumptions laid down through earlier involvement in colonial development. The primacy of women's social role, the superiority of Western social and economic models and the continued location of poverty as cultural, rather than structural in origin, worked to undermine organisational constitutional commitments to women's equal status and more often ignored local particularities. This approach to women and development persisted into the 1980s, despite the establishment of official research centres and international structures that followed as result of the re-assessment of women's role in the developmental process in the 1970s.

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[81] M. Buvinić, 'Projects for Women in the Third World: Explaining their Misbehaviour' in *World Development*, 14 (5) (1986), p. 659

Thesis Structure

This study will attempt to situate itself in a literature that has attempted to challenge traditional understandings of women and international affairs.[82] It will argue that the post-war period offered a distinctive opportunity for organised women to re-constitute and re-shape the political space that their organisations occupied. Chapter One will explore the ways in which international affairs were taken up by transnational organisations and their British counterparts. The end of the War created new opportunities for international work, participation in state-sponsored relief work, the promotion of an international political and civil education for women and co-operation with new national bodies such as the UNA allowed these organisations to promote a grassroots participatory form of internationalism.

However, the majority of organisations took up independent projects which related to individual organisational priorities rather than attempting to formulate a generalised campaign. Involvement in international affairs and initial campaigns were often therefore unfocussed and lacked a central unity, factors which were occasionally exacerbated due to ideological differences between organisations. Despite this, the frequency of internationally-based work suggests that the immediate post-war period was far from the 'moribund' quiet landscape described by previous historians of the women's movement.[83]

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[82] See H. H. Alonso, *Peace as Woman's Issue: A History of the U.S Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights,* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), pp. 157 – 192; C. Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe'; F. de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations'; H. Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organisations*; W. Pojmann, 'For Mothers, Peace and Family'; A. Swerdlow, ' The Congress of American Women: Left Feminist Peace Politics in the Cold War' in L. K. Kerber, A. Kessler-Harris & K. Kish Sklar (eds.), *US History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays,* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 296 – 312.

[83] B. Caine, *English Feminism 1780 – 1980,* p. 222

The Chapter will ultimately argue that whilst these early years did not witness anything conducive to a united political force, they proved formative in familiarising these organisations with the international concepts they would later draw on when cementing their relationships as socio-political actors in international governance in the 1950s and 1960s. Recent historical literature on the development of NGOs in the post-war era has defined them as differentiating from more traditional forms of voluntarism; NGOs directly attempt to embed themselves in the detailed work of governments by both changing the terms of debate, their representative work and information provision.[84] During the 1940s, familiarisation with basic administrative priorities such as the necessity of a full time, professional staff as organisational representatives at the UN and an awareness of the instrumental value of ECOSOC and more particularly for these organisations, the CSW as the most effective and useful way of accessing the UN machinery, helped to cement this process.

The study will then move on in Chapter Two to examine the ways in which the international activities of women's organisations were affected by the contemporary political discourse in ways which fundamentally altered their policy direction during 1948 – 1952. Between these years, British women's organisations hoped to channel the efforts of British women's political power into a larger and more encompassing women's movement that centred on world peace. In the early post-war years, support for the issue of peace was able to transcend party political commitments in a manner that other, domestic issues could not as organisations from both ends of the political spectrum moved to declare their support for the issue and unite under newly formed umbrella groups.

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[84] M. Hilton et al. *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 20312)*, p. 15 and J. McKay & M. Hilton, 'Introduction' in N. Crowson, M. Hilton & J. McKay, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 4 - 5

The association between peace and Communism became increasingly acute following popular concern with regards to the 'Soviet Peace Offensive' in the late 1940s and 1950s. The Chapter will show how both transnational and British women's organisations systematically withdrew from the issue of peace, abandoning any hopes of establishing a legitimate new movement at this time. During this period, divisions within the international and British women's movements began to directly reflect the global political position. Within Britain, rumours that Communists had 'infiltrated' the women's movement meant that international and national affiliations became effectively an indication of individual organisational political leanings. Whereas the real impact of Communist influence on the political activities of these organisations is somewhat debatable, the posed ideological threat was evidently very real. The early 1950s saw systematic attempts to withdraw from the issue of peace by high ranking members in both transnational and British women's organisations; many deleted the word from their constitutions and re-named their 'peace committees' to something more innocuous. The notion that peace had become 'political' forced these organisations back to a narrower, 'safer' agenda, which, for British organisations, meant a temporary retreat from international affairs altogether and a return to domestic policy. For the larger transnational organisations it led to the search for a new non-controversial focus, which as Chapter Three will show, lay in the politically neutral ground occupied by international development and more specifically, technical assistance.

Chapter Three will show how technical assistance was utilised by transnational organisations in the early 1950s to provide a new international focus following the removal of peace as a legitimate site of organisation. Colette Chabbott has demonstrated that during the post-war period the ideas of world peace and the alleviation of human suffering became linked. This was a result of the inclusion and integration of education and health

into UN Charter on human rights; they were now conceptualised by the international community as fundamental principles essential for human welfare and a lasting peace.[85]

This factor was not lost on the transnational women's organisations that operated by this time, within the official UN structure. By 1954, both the IAW and ICW made deliberate decisions to work for peace 'indirectly' through closer cooperation with the UN and its agencies and more particularly, the endorsement of technical assistance programs throughout the world. Chapter Three will argue that although this process was formative in shaping a new identity for both transnational and British women's organisations, the deliberate decision to return to a 'safe political agenda' did not necessarily leave room for challenges to women's traditional status within the public and private spheres in the same way that previous inter-war campaigns had done. The Chapter will assess the extent to which these early initiatives were informed by involvement in earlier forms of colonial activity, and the ways in which these projects tended to benefit women primarily in their maternal capacities. Involvement in technical assistance did ensure that women were given an equal place as *recipients* of this aid. However, it did not enable a wider critique of the traditions, cultural practices and legislation which had historically prevented women from achieving equality in the community on the same terms as men.

The women in these organisations in the post-war period were able to build the necessary connections with international bodies such as UNESCO, CSW and ECOSOC that enabled them to later take up more significant projects in the 1970s. The Chapter will end with an examination of the culmination of support for technical assistance, the Freedom from

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[85] C. Chabbott, 'Development INGOs' in J. Boli & G. M. Thomas (eds.), *Constructing World Culture: International Non-governmental Organisations since 1875,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 232 - 233

Hunger Campaign (FFHC). The Campaign one of the first global humanitarian fundraising schemes initiated by the UN to finance agricultural projects in the developing world and was the first international development campaign to mobilise British women's organisations across the political and social spectrum on a national level.[86] The amount of money raised by British women's organisations, particularly by the Women's Institutes, was unprecedented. The FFHC cemented international development as an organisational priority for women's organisations within Britain; the popular appeal of the cause often enabled larger organisations to mobilise their entire membership towards an international cause.

Chapter Four will trace the final stage in this transformative process and will examine the international activities of British organisations after the FFHC and into the 1970s. Despite the growing body of literature regarding the inadequacies of past development projects for women that culminated in International Women's Year (IWY) in 1975, the maternalist attitudes that had shaped projects for women since the 1950s persisted in a large majority of development schemes. Thus the critiques offered by WID scholars did not find practical expression in both British and international women's organisations projects before and immediately after IWY. Development projects for women in the 1970s continued to conceive of women primarily in their reproductive roles and thus provided for them in terms of familial needs rather than social and economic advancement. Thus, practical development initiatives for women remained problematic in 1975 and were not rapidly transformed.

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[86] A. Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 40 (5) (2012), p. 879

The Chapter will provide a survey of a range of development initiatives that both British and international women's organisations invested in, including most significantly the WI. Whilst these projects were widened debate concerning women's position in the development process in their adoption of family planning schemes and small-scale agricultural projects, a large proportion continued to focus on women's domestic role. The emphasis on the well-being of the family unit continued to triumph over women's individual rights. Although by the 1970s 'development' had become a central focus for many British women's organisations international work, it would not be until the 1980s and 1990s that international and British women's organisations recognised their own project biases.

By tracing the contribution of British women's organisations to the international women's movement between the years 1945 – 1970 this thesis will argue that the post-war period witnessed a re-constitution of women's international politics. It will show that whilst the majority of both transnational and British women's organisations agreed that the post-war period offered new and important opportunities for women's effective participation in international affairs, the contemporary political climate and an enduring imperialist legacy ensured the prevention of an organisational consensus. Accusations of political bias did not just risk their international legitimacy but also directly challenged their established identity. In 1949 international development and more specifically, the 'Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance' was established as a collective international project.[87] Not coincidently, it was also around this time that the women's organisations in this study saw an opportunity to translate the broad organisational zeal that had coalesced around the issue of peace, into a less controversial and therefore, constitutionally appropriate campaign. In 1954, the former IAW peace committee remarked that although working for global peace directly was now an 'impossibility' due to the international political climate, by working through international development the organisation could

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[87] G. Rist, *The History of Development,* p. 76

work for peace 'indirectly' by improving human relations and raising the living standards of people as a whole.[88]

The prioritisation of international development was a deliberate decision made in light of the contemporary discourse which defined development as a 'common good', as a set of technical measures which therefore avoided political argument. Arguably, it also diverted the attention of these organisations away from the issues that had provided an organisational focus from them in earlier periods. Instead, they began to centre their work on improving living conditions and providing training in the South rather than on equal rights for women in the North. This transition had a number of wider implications, namely it allowed the transnational organisations to establish themselves within the processes of international government over the latter course of the period. By transcending political controversy, international development allowed even the most conservative of organisations such as the WI to engage with international affairs on the same level as those more radical, Left leaning organisations such as the SPG and IWDC. Whilst ultimately there remains much to support the argument that the period after the Second World War represents a decline in women' activism more broadly, this thesis will show that it nevertheless had important consequences for the history and direction of women's international activity in the 20th Century.

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[88] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Report on the International Committee Conference London, June 24 – 27 1954

Chapter One

The Revival of Internationalism in the Immediate Post-War Period, c.1944 – 1950

In September 1944 the Women's Group on Public Welfare (WGPW), a broad based national umbrella organisation held a conference entitled 'how can organised women make themselves felt in international affairs and reconstruction?'[1] The Conference was both an attempt to set out a clear international agenda for its member organisations and perhaps more urgently, a hopeful means of rectifying what the Group's leaders saw as a worrying sense of political and civic apathy amongst women of all social classes. The conference was part of a series of events organised by the Group all of which centred on finding new ways to guarantee women a role in international affairs in the mid-1940s. The conference in 1944 included speakers from individual organisations as well as academics and the conclusions were used to formulate the Group's international policy for the post-war period.

The organisation stressed the need for women to be 'better informed' about present day world politics and for women's organisations to view their work against a background of international affairs. The Group felt it essential that women should 'realise their international responsibility' and take their place in the numerous bodies, committees and conferences which would shape the post-war world.[2] It advocated the organisation of educational workshops and the co-opting of experts 'to train women to play their part in the new world' as well as collaborative lobbying activities to ensure their selection on relevant British

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[1] WL, 5WFM/C FL565, Women's Group on Public Welfare (WGPW), 'How can organised women make themselves felt in international affairs and reconstruction?' September 1944

[2] WL, 5WFM/A FL560, WGPW, Programme for the Immediate Post-War Period, 1944

international delegations. 46 national women's organisations attended this conference, ranging from the Women's Institutes, the Mothers' Union, the Labour Party Women's Section to the Catholic Women's League. That the Group's post-war programme was passed unanimously by all of these organisations on the first vote demonstrates the power of internationalism to unite groups across political, social and cultural lines in the mid-1940s.

That so many national women's organisations committed themselves to an internationalist programme through membership of the WGPW demonstrates the appeal of the concept in the post-war world. International work was not new to all of these organisations; many had established international connections during the inter-war years. Inter-war internationalism had focussed predominately on 'network building' and in line with broader Western patterns of constitutionalism and rights at this time, had tended to focus on securing political rights for women within individual nation states.[3] The international activity of the 1940s inevitably drew on these traditions, but was revived as a reaction to the Second World War and therefore formed in response to the new political, social and economic climate. The War afforded new opportunities for international work in ways which appealed to British women's organisations across the political and social spectrum. Such work ranged from participation in state-organised international relief work to the promotion and administration of international political and civic education for women. This new 'internationalism' was not primarily legalistic as it had been before the War, but instead aimed to ensure that the women of Britain were provided with the opportunities to learn and contribute to a new sense of internationalism through membership of these organisations.

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[3] S. L. Hoffman, 'Genealogies of Human Rights' in S. L. Hoffman, (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century,* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2011), p. 10

This new international spirit manifested itself directly in individual and inter-organisational activity, all of which specifically aimed to channel the efforts of British women's political power into a larger and more encompassing women's movement. Attempts at amalgamation, international affiliation, international resolutions and the re-writing of organisational constitutions in this period all suggest the sense of enthusiasm and hope accorded to this issue. The majority took the lead from their international parent bodies such as the International Alliance of Women (IAW) and the International Council of Women (ICW) which at this time, were concentrating their efforts on securing representation in the newly formed United Nations.

However, whilst in official administrative capacities British women's organisations appeared to have adopted similar international concerns through the passage of international resolutions, practical projects and approaches differed greatly; individual organisational concerns tended to dictate what international issue took priority. Given its historic connection to the principles of equality, campaigns for equal international political representation took precedence for the Six Point Group. For the Townswomen's Guilds and the WI, exchange and 'adoption' programmes were favoured as an accessible and social form of international education for its members.[4] Whilst the immediate post-war years saw many different types of British women's organisations attempt to carve out a new international role, there was no clear over-arching international organisational policy. Analysis of the international work of these organisations reveals clear practical and ideological divisions regarding prioritisation and importantly, the legitimacy of an international women's rights discourse as distinct from human rights. In this sense the period did not see any attempt to establish a uniform or collective effort towards any one international goal. The resulting campaigns tended to be sporadic and short-lived, particularly those executed by smaller organisations lacking a

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[4] WL, Townswomen's Guild (Hereafter TG), *The Townswoman,* Vol. 14 No.9 July 1947; National Federation of Women's Institutes (Hereafter NFWI), *Home and Country,* Vol. 28 No. 2 March 1946

national membership and necessary funds. It was not until the proposal of world peace as a central point of unity in the late 1940s that anything conducive to a united and comprehensive internationalist force was made possible.

This Chapter will examine how internationalism became part of the mainstream policy of British women's organisations after 1945. Whilst previously, in the inter war period, internationalist sentiment had tended to be expressed through support for separate international civic organisations such as the League of Nations Union (LNU), the post-war years saw British women's organisations reconfigure their policy in ways that encouraged women to see themselves as part of a larger international community. Specifically, it will look at the activities of the SPG, the Married Women's Association, the Women's Cooperative Guild (WCG), the National Council of Women (NCW), the National Women's Citizens Association (NWCA) and the Women's Freedom League (WFL) and their contribution to national umbrella organisations, namely the WGPW and the Women's Advisory Council to the newly formed United Nations Association (WAC UNA).

The first section will assess how internationalism came to inspire the policy direction of British women's organisations from 1945 onwards. Arguably, the internationalism of the post-war years encouraged the participation of groups from across the political and social spectrum through membership of cross-organisational umbrella organisations and state-sponsored consultative committees. Whilst the need for an internationally informed general public had its roots in the populist campaigns of the LNU in the inter-war period, the idea that women needed a separate and distinct 'international education' in the mid-1940s was unanimously supported by British women's organisations.[5] The need for informed female

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[5] H. McCarthy, 'The League of Nations, Public Ritual and National Identity in Britain, c. 1919 – 1956' in *History Workshop Journal,* 70 (2010), p. 112

publics was seen by these organisations generally as central to the success of this new organisational direction but also as both politically and culturally necessary.

The second section will then move on to look at how this international spirit prevailed and manifested itself directly in the practical projects of the time. It will also establish the degree to which the concept served as an effective mobilising tool for women's organisations throughout the country on both a local and national basis. Specifically, it will examine how this new enthusiasm culminated in almost unanimous support for the UN and the promotion of an international political awareness. Indeed, the UN was conceptualised as a new form of international government with unlimited scope and the central point from which to focus efforts to further women's rights. Much organisational work at this time centred on raising the profile of the UN. Many organisations such as the NCW, WI and WGPW organised UN days, held educational seminars and publicised the principles of the UN Charter. Coinciding with this type of promotional activity was a new emphasis on the necessity and universality of a female centred international education. The promotion of this new 'international mind' was taken up with vigour by both mainstream voluntary organisations such as the WI and Townswomen's Guilds as well as by smaller organisations such as the SPG and National Women's Citizens Association. By taking this international project into the towns and counties, these groups effectively legitimised the issue into organisational policy for the first time. By the end of the decade international education was established as a central aspect of the WI educational programme and was eventually formalised onto the movement's constitution in the early 1950s as a result of the early initiatives in the immediate post-war years. These attempts at 'grassroots' international political, social and economic education demonstrate the distinctive character of post-war internationalism; it became a central aspect of mainstream organisational policy rather than a distinct and separate organisational issue. Internationalism now affected the ordinary member.

Despite the prevalence of this new participatory form of internationalism amongst British women's organisations in the post-war years, there were nevertheless factors which prevented effective cross-organisational collaborative work. Whilst individual organisational agendas produced different practical foci, fundamental ideological differences caused organisational ruptures and disconnects. The third section will examine how differing organisational priorities hindered the development of an over-arching international movement as proposed by the SPG in 1944. Whilst support for practical projects was disjointed, leading members of key organisations hoped that the UN would serve as a point of unity for effective collaborative work and as the basis to form a more encompassing movement. However, the establishment of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) proved that this was not to be the case. Ideological differences regarding the nature of women's rights as distinct from human rights divided British women's organisations into a smaller 'for' camp and larger 'against' camp in ways that were not conducive to a collaborative and unified force. Thus, despite the obvious organisational zeal that internationalism inspired during these years, closer inspection reveals that practical and ideological differences served merely to reproduce similar divisions that characterised the movement in the pre-war years and had facilitated ineffective single issue campaigns. Ultimately, the Chapter will show how internationalism was utilised in the immediate post-war years by a number of British women's organisations in an attempt to generate a renewed enthusiasm for women's rights and to transcend organisational differences. Whilst this process was by no means clear cut, it nevertheless represented a new organisational direction.

The Second World War, Internationalism and the United Nations

During the inter-war period several of the women's organisations mentioned in this study had tended to concentrate their efforts on domestic issues. The National Women's Citizens Association had seen its role as predominately one of educating women in civic customs and on the political process within Britain itself. Others however, such as the WI and the NCW had a longer connection to internationalism. Pre-war international commitments were expressed through international affiliations to the ICW and the IAW and in some cases, the establishment of separate international sub-committees to deal specifically with international work. In 1926 for example, recognising the need for an additional space for international work, the WI formed an international sub-committee with a dual purpose; to foster and encourage an 'international outlook' amongst the Institutes and to co-operate wherever possible with rural women's organisations in other countries.[6] Similarly, in 1935 the NCW established a separate Standing Committee on the ICW, to concentrate on international work and to promote the exchange of information between the Council and its international parent body.[7]

A large proportion of international work done by mainstream British women's organisations during the inter-war period tended to focus on, and was limited to, the public reinforcement of the League of Nations. Helen McCarthy has shown how women's associations, in conjunction with other organisational affiliates including youth organisations, political parties and religious institutions, worked as part of the LNU to publicise or 'sell' the League to the

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[6] H. McCarthy, 'The League of Nations, Public Ritual and National Identity in Britain, c. 1919 – 1956', p. 111

[7] D. Glick, *The National Council of Women: The First One Hundred Years,* (NCW: London, 1995), p.164

British public throughout the 1920s and 1930s.[8] Through the use of local pageants and theatrical display, the aim was to secure public acceptance of this new international institution. This type of promotional activity was common during this period and appealed to women's organisations across political lines; the WI passed a resolution in 1921 which officially affirmed the organisation's 'belief' in the League and committed its national support whilst many others did in the following few years.[9] Indeed, McCarthy's work has revealed that this type of international work was extremely popular amongst organised women in the inter-war period; she states that the LNU was effectively a 'feminised grassroots movement' in the 1920s and that women dominated local branches in addition to the corporate membership.[10] However, what differentiates this type of work from post-war international activity is that it tended to be facilitated through membership of the LNU, rather than driven independently by individual women's organisations. Given the Union's broad based affiliated membership it is difficult to ascertain just how prominent women's organisations were in the day to day running of the organisation. There is evidence that some British women's organisations had not been entirely satisfied with their level of representation on this body. Recalling the 1920s at a meeting of the Executive in 1946, a number of NCW officials held the distinct impression that women's associations in general had not been 'taken seriously' by the organisation.[11]

Smaller, feminist organisations with international concerns such as the SPG had also focussed their international policy on the League of Nations in the inter-war period. The SPG

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[8] H. McCarthy, 'The League of Nations, Public Ritual and National Identity in Britain, c. 1919 – 1956', p. 111

[9] WL, 5FWI/D/2 151, NFWI, History of International Work, November 1936; B. Caine, *English Feminism 1780 – 1980,* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004), p. 217

[10] H. McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c.1918 – 48,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 187

[11] London Metropolitan Archives (Hereafter LMA), ACC/3613/1/14, NCW Minutes of Executive Committee, 20th September 1946

worked to stimulate public interest in the new international body and had made attempts, albeit unsuccessfully, to utilise it as a mechanism from which to secure international political and legal rights for women. The Equal Rights Treaty (ERT), drafted by the Group's founder Lady Rhonnda in 1926, prepared simply for the equal rights of men and women 'subject to their respective jurisdictions' in contracting states.[12] Campaigning work however, was done through its sister organisation, Equal Rights International in collaboration with the National Woman's Party of America, chaired by Alice Paul.[13] This was due in part to facilitate co-operation across the Atlantic but also to ensure that internationalism did not overshadow the Group's work as a whole. Thus, international work for many British women's organisations in the inter-war period focused predominately on the League of Nations but tended to be executed through or in collaboration with outside, specialist internationalist organisations.

The League had provided a focus for those organisations with an internationalist outlook in the 1920s and 1930s. Following the failure of the ERT to gain credence in the organisation and the international fallout from the Abyssinian Crisis however, the League did not live up to initial expectations that had been embodied in the multitude of new organisational resolutions of the 1920s. The onset of War saw the League collapse completely and its geographical scope served to destroy many of the transnational networks built up so carefully by the ICW and IAW in the years preceding the conflict. The pre-war international structures that had provided a focus for British women's organisations were thus destroyed, although the belief in the importance of international government was not. The spirit of internationalism that emerged in 1945 was a direct reaction to the effects of the Second

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[12] C. Miller, "Geneva – the key to equality": inter-war feminists and the League of Nations' in *Women's History Review,* 3 (2) (1994), p. 121

[13] P. Pfeiffer, ''A Whisper in the Assembly of Nations' United States' Participation in the International Movement for Women's Rights from the League of Nations to the United Nations' in *Women's Studies International Forum,* 8 (5) (1985), p. 462

World War as the contemporary political, social and economic climate afforded opportunities for new forms of international work. Whilst in the inter-war years international work was typically done within the confines of small, separate 'sub-committees' or through specialist outside organisations; by 1946 internationalism was driving major policy decisions in a large proportion of British women's organisations. For mainstream organisations such as the WI and the Townswomen's Guilds this meant involving the whole of their membership up and down the country in educational and relief projects, whilst for smaller organisations such as the SPG and Married Women's Association it resulted in organisational reconstitution.

The need to 'concern themselves' more comprehensively with international affairs was a direct response to the horror and devastation of the Second World War. The years between 1945-8 saw a flurry of international activity as attempts were made to define and set out the parameters of internationalist involvement. In contrast to earlier periods an internationalist outlook was now increasingly viewed as a political necessity, if not inescapable. Many British women's organisations viewed it as imperative that ordinary women should have a degree of international awareness. At the 1946 WI Annual General Meeting Lady Megan Lloyd George, an MP and member of the WI Executive Committee, couched this new focus in terms of responsibility. George claimed that as survivors of the War, as 'citizens in a free democracy' and as members of a national movement, women had both a personal and collective obligation to organise around foreign affairs.[14] Similarly, in 1945 the Townswomen's Guilds urged its members as responsible citizens to make themselves 'knowledgeable' about wider international issues.[15] To smaller organisations such as the SPG in 1947, international affairs were now considered to represent 'the most important side' of its work. Leading members of the SPG hoped to reinvent the organisation as a

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[14] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 28 (7) (1946), Annual General Meeting, 'Foreign Affairs and the WIs'

[15] WL, NUTG, *The Townswoman,* 13 (1), October 1945

progressive and internationalist organisation following the end of the Second World War and leaders were keen to re-establish this aspect of the organisation's work as soon as possible.[16] At the Group's Annual General Meeting in 1947 it was suggested that the organisation re-constitute itself with a new international framework, both as a response to the contemporary social and political climate and as a possible way of attracting new members.[17] Throughout the mid-1940s leading members of the organisation including Monica Whately and Dora Russell attempted several times to outsource national, domestic work to its organisational offshoots, the Married Women's Association and Women for Westminster. They instead proposed that international work should become the sole purpose of the organisation.[18]

Following the revival of the work of the IAW, ICW and the WILPF after the end of the War, this new 'international spirit' culminated in almost unanimous support for the UN. We have seen how the League of Nations inspired some international work from both mainstream and feminist women's organisations in the inter war period; the majority had viewed the concept of international government as beneficial despite its limitations. Support for the post-war version of international governance was driven from a different trajectory and produced a multitude of responses. The UN was viewed by British women's organisations as significant for two reasons. Firstly, the UN Charter had for the first time prepared for the protection of human rights without distinction as to race, sex, nationality, or religion, and as Helen Laville has argued, represented the first step towards the legitimisation of women's rights as an

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[16] WL, 5SPG/C FL526, SPG, Letter from Monica Whately to Edith Summerskill, 17th December 1947

[17] WL, 5SPGA FL525, SPG Annual General Meeting, 3rd May 1948

[18] 5SPG/A FL542, SPG Minutes 1948; 5SPG/C FL526, Letter from Monica Whately to Edith Summerskill, 17th December 1947

area of international action.[19] Although historians such as Sam Moyn have argued that human rights did not in fact inspire any new international movements in the 1940s, both British and international women's organisations viewed the Charter as embodying similar principles to their own.[20] In December 1945 Margery Corbett Ashby, an Executive Committee member of the IAW and founder of the Townswomen's Guilds, organised a conference on the newly founded UN and invited 30 organisations ranging from the WI to the Married Women's Association to attend. The conference passed a Declaration that was subsequently sent to the Government that urged that the 'first obligation…in the new world order should be to secure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'.[21] This new support for the UN was driven by a belief in the egalitarian potential of the all-encompassing concept of human rights and more specifically, the indivisibility of human and women's rights. In the immediate post-war period, a large majority of British women's organisations demonstrated overwhelming support for the principles of the UN Charter. The Women's Freedom League believed that the notion of human rights symbolised the beginning of 'a new era'.[22] Human rights were, for the NCW, something that British women's organisations had been fighting for since their conception; human rights were synonymous with equality and recognised the inherent value of all nationalities, races, cultures and sexes.[23] The new parameters for international action set out by the Charter encouraged many British women's organisations to look upon the UN with a new sense of organisational enthusiasm.

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[19] H. Laville, 'A New Era in International Women's Rights? American Women's Organisations and the Establishment of the UN Commission on the Status of Women' in *Journal of Women's History,* 20 (4) (2008), p. 35

[20] S. Moyn, *Last Utopia: Human Rights in History,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 7

[21] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, International Sub-Committee Minutes, December 1945

[22] Ibid.

[23] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 21 (12), December 1949

Secondly, the Charter had also empowered the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN the ability to consult with non-governmental organisations on matters with which they had special knowledge and competence.[24] This differed significantly from the League of Nations that had been the preserve of official national representatives and precluded the contribution of NGOs. Prior to the War, international women's organisations had had to work extremely hard to have their views represented even at a limited level on this international body. Even when they had managed to place their interests on the League's agenda they did not reap any legislative rewards.[25] By 1948, 83 non-governmental organisations were accorded consultative status with ECOSOC and its functional commissions. The long history of women's international activism for equal rights had meant that the large transnational women's organisations were well placed to take advantage of this new role. The ICW, IAW and WILPF all received consultative status 'B' with ECOSOC in the years following the end of the Second World War. National bodies such as the SPG and NCW failed in their attempt to secure consultative status for themselves but through membership of larger bodies, British women's organisations were able to claim international representation.[26]

Consultative status granted international organisations the opportunity to send their representatives, Consultants, to the meetings of ECOSOC and its Commissions and gave them the freedom to participate in the Council's activities and deliberations. Both the IAW and ICW took steps during this period to ensure that their new international responsibilities were adequately managed through new administrative procedures and the employment of a full time specialist staff. The ICW appointed new 'Liaison Officers' to monitor the work of the UN in areas that concerned the organisation or any of their national affiliates and they were

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[24] A. Whittick, *Woman into Citizen,* (London: Frederick Muller, 1979), p. 163

[25] C. Miller, '"Geneva – the key to equality": Inter-war feminists and the league of nations' in *Women's History Review,* 3 (2) (1994), pp. 219 - 245

[26] WL, 5SPG/A 525, Executive Committee Minutes, May 1948; NCW, *Annual Report 1946 -7,* p. 4

expected to act as representatives of the Council at relevant meetings and conferences.[27] In addition to the Liaison Officers, new specialised Consultants were employed with the task of drafting and submitting all evidence and research to the ECOSOC on relevant matters. It was also the duty of the Liaison Officer to keep in constant contact with representatives from other NGOs involved with UN procedures and networking activities were considered as a priority for the ICW at this time. Similarly, in February 1947 the IAW decided to employ three permanent representatives to ECOSOC in order to ensure that the Alliance was able to monitor and prepare for all proceedings relating to women.[28] The impact of the UN on the structural operations of international organisations was distinct by 1947; by this time, the Alliance's organisational programme consisted almost entirely of consultative work with the UN both within ECOSOC and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).[29] This new prioritisation of the UN combined with the creation of new administrative structures, illustrates the ways in which these organisations attempted to formalise themselves into the new post-war institutional framework, therefore paving the way for later work.

In the immediate post-war years the records of the large transnational women's organisations reveal that the ICW, IAW and WILPF all saw the UN as the key to securing social, economic and political change. Nitza Berkovitch has argued that this was not a sentiment unique to women's organisations in the post-war era; the new authority accorded to world-polity organisations corresponded directly with the rapid proliferation of international

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[27] WL, 5ICW/B/14 13, ICW, *Report of the Triennial Council Meeting: Athens, Greece,* (ICW: Athens, 1951)

[28] WL, 2IAW, Minutes of Meeting, Stockholm, February 1947

[29] 2IAW/B/1 003, Minutes of Meeting May 1947, Stockholm; Minutes of a Meeting of International Committee, Rome May 1948

organisations dealing with human rights more broadly.[30] To these organisations, the UN embodied both new hope and possibilities in a post-war world. The ICW anticipated that it would facilitate the growth of an international women's community in ways that the League of Nations had not.[31] The benefits of the new consultative role appealed to British women's organisations, particularly those with international links and helped to cement early support for the UN. Now that their international parent bodies were 'inside' the new mechanisms of international governance, British women finally had an opportunity to, in the words of the SPG Secretary, 'have our message heard'.[32] To the NCW, the consultative relationship was one of the 'greatest innovations' of the new UN. Whilst the League of Nations had been the preserve of governments and high officials, now 'ordinary people' like the women of Britain, could be represented through membership of international NGOs.[33]

To the majority of British women's organisations the UN represented the key to future global political, social and economic security and it was hoped that offering their support would strengthen claims for the internationalisation of women's rights. The principles of the UN Charter and human rights were viewed as synonymous with those of the women's movement. The NCW concluded in 1946 that its international parent body the ICW had in fact been working for 'human rights' since its conception in 1888.[34] Between 1945–8 a vast proportion of British women's organisations passed at least one resolution that declared support for the new international body. Whilst some of these, such as the resolution passed by the National Women's Citizens Association in September 1947 that committed the

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[30] N. Berkovitch, 'The Emergence and Transformation of the International Women's Movement' in J. Boli & G. Thomas (eds.), *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organisations since 1875,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 117

[31] WL, 5ICW/C/02, ICW, Letter to Board Members, March 1948

[32] WL, 5SPG/B 525, SPG, Newsletter, May 1946

[33] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 19 (1) (1946)

[34] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 19 (6) (1947)

organisation to uphold the principles of human rights, tended to be expressions of a generalised commitment and did not always lead to concerted and organised action, others expressed practical support for the UN through membership of the new UNA. The UNA was the successor organisation to the LNU and national membership totalled around 80,000 in the post-war years in multiple branches throughout the country.[35] The organisation's main aim was to coordinate work to raise public awareness about the activities of the UN and to help generate popular support for the principles of the UN Charter.[36] This type of educational and promotional work appealed to women's organisations across the political and organisational spectrum. The WI had been a significant presence in the LNU throughout the 1920s and the Institute continued to support the idea of international governance following the end of the Second World War. In 1946 the WI passed a resolution which committed the organisation to 'contribute to the success of the UN in any way possible' and pledged to encourage the study of the international body in the wider localities and counties. Indeed, a large proportion of the early WI 'international schools' focussed almost exclusively on informing women about the operations of the various UN organs.[37]

In 1947, the WI became a member of the Women's Advisory Council to the UNA along with 25 other women's organisations ranging from the NCW, the Women's Freedom League, to the Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations (SJCWWO).[38] The records relating to this organisation are sparse and it has not been given much attention by historians; the WAC was only mentioned briefly in a recent 60 year history of the UNA in reference to 1975 following the WAC's role in preparations for International Women's Year.[39]

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[35] C. Moores, 'From Civil Liberties to Human Rights? British Civil Liberties Activism and Universal Human Rights' in *Contemporary European History,* 21 (2) (2012), p. 178

[36] F. Field, *60 Years of UNA-UK,* p. 4

[37] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 28: 7 (1946)

[38] WL, 7PHS/1/6 1, UNA WAC, Minutes of the Executive Committee, February 1949

[39] F. Field, *60 Years of UNA,* p. 15

Whilst McCarthy has claimed that the UNA was significantly less able to command the popular attention the LNU had managed in the 1920s, the records of individual British women's organisations reveal that membership was an organisational priority from 1946 onwards. To the NCW, the work of the UN was considered to be 'vitally important to every woman as mother, housewife, leaders of public opinion', and branches were encouraged to assist in any way possible with local UNA events from 1946.[40] The 1946 NCW Annual Report details the various preparations made to provide comprehensive assistance to the UNA both locally and nationally, including the selection of representatives and local officers.[41] The specific aim of the Women's Committee was to monitor all UN proceedings that related to women, and to bring together women from throughout the country with a long experience and 'expert knowledge of women's questions'.[42] The WAC facilitated a range of collaborative organisational activity, ranging from the organisation of 'UN information days' by the nationwide branches of the NCW in 1947 to the 'international day schools' run locally and centrally by the WI. Local branches of the NCW also took over responsibility for national UNA awareness projects between 1946 – 9 where there were no corresponding local UNA branches and published details of the campaign in its monthly journal. Coventry, Leicester, Cambridge and Birmingham NCWs all ran and organised UN Weeks in their cities in October 1946 in conjunction with the UNA.[43]

Promotional activity, including the organisation of local events, tended to be completed by those organisations with larger branch structures. Thus smaller organisations such as the SPG, Women's Freedom League and Married Women's Association were not able to contribute to UNA publicity campaigns in the same way, although both the Women's

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[40] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 19 (1) (1946)

[41] WL, NCW, 51st Annual Report, 1946

[42] WL, 7PHS/1/6 1 UNA WAC, Joint Meeting of Representatives of the Standing Conference on the Economic and Social work of the UK, and the Women's Advisory Council of the UNA, March 1950

[43] LMA, ACC/3613/1/14, NCW, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 20th September 1946

Freedom League and the Married Women's Association ran regular pieces on the organisation in their monthly journals from 1947 onwards.[44] Rather, these organisations drew on their egalitarian legacies – both the SPG and Women's Freedom League had been founded on the principles of equal rights for men and women – to focus their efforts to ensure that women were adequately represented at all levels of the UN. The SPG had, since its formation, fought for the equal political rights of women and had been involved in a multitude of campaigns before the War that centred on increasing women's visibility in Parliament, the most radical being the promotion of the Coupled Vote system. The proposed new voting system prepared for the complete overhaul of the British political procedure through alterations to traditional electoral boundaries and recommended that each constituency elect two candidates, male and female.[45] Given this campaigning legacy, it is perhaps somewhat natural that these organisations saw equal international political representation as the next logical campaigning step.

Concern regarding women's underrepresentation at the UN was shared by the larger transnational women's organisations at this time; women's participation in the various committees of the UN was viewed as imperative to political, economic and social equality. Margaret Galey has shown that women's place was almost invisible in the first few years of the UN's operation. Despite the contribution of several notable women in the General Assembly (GA) delegations, their numbers rarely exceeded five per cent of the total. Fewer even still sat on the ECOSOC and the Trusteeship Council, and they were virtually absent

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[44] See WL, 7TBG/1 239, MWA, *Wife and Citizen,* 7 (1) (1946); *Wife and Citizen,* 7 (5) (1946); *Wife and Citizen,* 7 (7) (1946); *Wife and Citizen,* 9 (2) (1948); *Wife and Citizen,* 9 (6) (1948), *Wife and Citizen,* 9 (8), (1948), *Wife and Citizen,* 9 (9) (1948); WFL, *The Women's Bulletin,* 16, July 1948; *The Women's Bulletin,* 19, October 1948

[45] WL, 5SPG/F 531, SPG, The Coupled Vote or Getting Women into Parliament: A Memorandum Issued by the SPG, 1949; 5SPG/J 538, SPG Letter to Members 1951; 5SPG/F 533, SPG, Six Point Weekend Conference, 29th October 1950

from the Security Council and the International Court of Justice.[46] Glenda Sluga's work on the international history of women and world citizenship has made clear the gradual sense of disillusionment experienced by international feminist organisations, particularly the WILPF, regarding women's representation at the UN Secretariat over the course of the 1940s.[47] In a 1946 edition of the IAW's monthly journal, the organisation observed that although five women attended the first GA meeting as part of several national delegations, including Eleanor Roosevelt from the USA and Ellen Wilkinson from Britain, they seemed 'lost in so male an Assembly'.[48] To the Alliance, this was a 'disappointment to those who believe that women must take an equal share in the responsibility of planning for the future' and it denied women the recognition of their part in the war effort and of their potential role in post-war reconstruction.[49] In 1947, the ICW officially demanded 'a greater and more active participation of qualified women in the government of the respective countries' and protested in its literature against the lack of women members in the various committees of the UN.[50] Both the Alliance and the ICW called upon their national affiliates to monitor the situation in their respective countries and to apply pressure to their national governments to ensure the effective contribution of women at the new international institution.

Equal international representation was thus viewed by both British and international women's organisations in the immediate post-war years as essential. Helen Laville has documented some of the ways that British women's organisations attempted to secure appropriate women delegates to the CSW in the early 1950s, and there are a multitude of

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[46] M. Galey, 'Women Find A Place' in A. Winslow (ed.), *Women, Politics and the United Nations,* (Greenwood Press: Westport, 1995), p. 11

[47] G. Sluga, 'Spectacular Feminism: The International History of Women, World Citizenship and Human Rights' in F. de Haan et al. (eds.), *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 44

[48] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* February 1947

[49] WL, 2IAW/B/1 003, IAW, Minutes of Meeting of International Committee Rome May 1948

[50] NCW, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 19th September 1947

references to this type of activity in the records of these organisations from the mid-1940s onwards.[51] The importance of the UN was unanimously recognised by British women's organisations; the Women's Freedom League believed that the UN would be directly responsible for the creation of the 'New World'. It was the importance and gravity of this task that made it essential to these organisations that women should contribute equally.[52] The League, with assistance from Women for Westminster, raised an organising fund of £1000 to finance the employment of a full time staff to monitor and pressure the British Government to ensure that women were appointed on international delegations to ECOSOC in 1946.[53] The Women's Freedom League's new international emphasis, expanded upon in its monthly bulletin, stressed that the new post-war international organisations should consist of a 'co-partnership' of men and women, 'without differentiation in all those spheres where they share common interests, social, economic and political'.[54] Similarly, the NCW passed multiple declarations between 1946 – 1948 that demanded the greater and more active participation of 'suitably qualified' women at the UN. In 1948 the NCW organised a consultative conference to draw up lists of suitable women to recommend for appointment by the British Government.[55] The SPG was less successful in its attempts to organise collaborative conferences; in June 1947 the organisation cancelled preparations for a cross-organisational conference on international representation due to a lack of response.[56] It did however, continue to send letters of protest to the Government on a regular basis regarding the necessity of women's full representation in the 'councils of the world'.[57] By 1947 even the

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[51] H, Laville, 'Woolly, Half-Baked and Impractical? British Responses to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women' in *Twentieth Century British History,* 23 (4) (2012), pp. 473 - 495

[52] WL, 7TBG/1 FL239, WFL, Official Statement, 1946

[53] Ibid.

[54] WL, 5TBG/1 FL239, WFL, Letter to Members, 1946 – 'Women are Asking This Question'

[55] WL, NCW, *53rd Annual Report 1948,* p. 3

[56] WL, 5SPG/J FL 538, SPG, Letter from Monica Whately to Sybil Morrison, 29th April 1947

[57] WL, 5SPG/J FL 539, SPG, Letter to Members, May 1947; Letter to Members, December 1947; Letter to Members June 1948

WI had been convinced of the negative effects of the skewed gender differences at the UN. In response to a letter from the WGPW which pointed out that there had only been one woman delegate from the United Kingdom in the previous year, the organisation wrote to the Government to draw attention to this and urged that 'women be more favourably considered' when appointments were made.[58]

Whilst some British women's organisations had demonstrated support for the idea of international government as a mediator of global conflict before the War, the widespread support for the UN in the post-war years was driven by the particularities of the wider contemporary international political system. The concept of human rights appealed to these women's organisations as the manifestation of their founding egalitarian principles; by explicitly referring to the rights of women the UN Charter appeared to legitimise their cause. In addition to this, the new consultative relationship had seemingly democratised the new systems of international governance and for the first time international women's organisations were granted access. Thus, the UN offered the dual opportunities of participation and international legitimisation. Whilst these ideas gradually came under increasing criticism in subsequent years following the obvious under representation of women at the UN and growing recognition amongst NGOs of the ineffectiveness of the consultative relationship, support for the UN was motivated specifically by these post-war developments. Recent scholarship has questioned whether human rights gained wide global currency in the immediate post-war years and it is indeed difficult to ascertain to what extent these ideas diffused through to women in the counties and towns.[59] However, it is clear that the ideas and principles of the Charter were able to appeal to women's organisations across

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[58] WL, 5FWI/D/2, NFWI, Meeting of the International Sub-Committee, 10th June 1947

[59] S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History,* p. 9; G. D. Cohen, 'The "Human Rights Revolution" at Work: Displaced Persons in Post-war Europe' in S. Ludwig Hoffman (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century,* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2011), p. 50

both political and social lines in a manner similar to the concept of a universal international education.

'Much More than Just Travel Talks': International Education

At the Conference held by the WGPW in 1944 the organisation called explicitly for the need for greater international awareness amongst women throughout Britain.[60] This was another direct response to the consequences of World War and was couched in terms of civic responsibility. The Conference explicitly set out that it was women's duty, as citizens, to be better informed about the wider international world. Not only would this ensure the prevention of future conflict, but it would allow more women the opportunity to contribute to the processes of national and international reconstruction.[61] The conference of the WGPW linked international education directly to international representation. The provision of training in international affairs was considered necessary by organisations such as the Townswomen's Guilds in 1945 to guarantee a peaceful society, but also to ensure that women were not 'left behind' politically.[62] In October 1945 the Guilds asserted the need for:

> '…every citizen to make himself or herself knowledgeable about the problems that beset the world in this new era and not to be satisfied with 'hearsay'. It is so really important that we should strive to obtain reliable information; and, having learnt the facts of the problems, we must not be afraid to express our individual conviction.'[63]

To the Conference organiser, Kathleen Courtney, deputy chairman of the UNA and former suffragist, national women's organisations were in the best position to offer such an

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[60] WL, 5WFM/C FL565, Women's Group on Public Welfare (WGPW), 'How can organised women make themselves felt in international affairs and reconstruction?' September 1944

[61] WL, 5WFM/A FL560, WGPW, Programme for the Immediate Post-war Period, 1944

[62] WL, Townswomen's Guilds (Hereafter NUTG), *The Townswoman,* Vol. 13 No 1, October 1945

[63] WL, NUTG, *The Townswoman,* 13 (1) October 1945, 'Our Responsibilities in a New Era'

international education, particularly those with large membership bases and established administrative procedures. The role of the women's organisation then, was to provide and disseminate reliable international information. Only by training themselves in the nature of international politics, the WGPW 1944 conference concluded, could women take up their role in the governments of the 'new world order'.[64] The WGPW itself, as a semi-official umbrella organisation (the Group had been originally set up in 1939 in partnership with the National Council of Social Services) that brought together 'expert', specialist as well as social and civic organisations, held regular consultative meetings to produce sample curricula and to decide potential topics for study.[65]

The concept of international education was embraced by British women's organisations both large and small. Some of the projects were more ambitious than others, particularly those run by national organisations with the necessary infrastructure and funds to roll out projects nationally. Smaller organisations such as the SPG, whose lack of funds was at this point a regular source of discussion at Executive Committee meetings, included an information sheet in its monthly letter to members that detailed its international concerns and areas of interest.[66] Similarly, whilst the Married Women's Association and Women's Freedom League simply did not have the resources to run formal international 'study courses', both organisations ran an increased amount of international news in both of their monthly journals.[67]

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[64] WL, 5WFM/C FL565, WGPW, How Can Organised Women Make Themselves Felt in International Reconstruction, 1944

[65] WL, 5WFM/A 560, WGPW, Information sent to Miss Len Chaloner on WGPW post-war plans, 31/5/46

[66] WL, 5SPG/B 525, SPG, Letter to Members, February 1946; Letter to Members May 1946; Letter to Members September 1946; Letter to Members December 1946; Letter to Members, March 1947

[67] WL, 7TBG/1 239, MWA, *Wife and Citizen,* 7 (1) (1946); *Wife and Citizen,* 7 (5) (1946); *Wife and Citizen,* 7 (7) (1946); *Wife and Citizen,* 9 (2) (1948); *Wife and Citizen,* 9 (6) (1948), *Wife and Citizen,* 9

However, it was the larger, mainstream organisations such as the WI and the Townswomen's Guilds that were able to respond to the WGPW's call for universal international education most effectively. International education was considered by both the WI and the Guilds as one of the most important factors in international post-war reconstruction. Both organisations had a long history of building educational programs into their wider organisational agenda. Linda Perriton has noted how the WI carried forward the practical work of training women for citizenship both prior to and after the Second World War.[68] This had been part of a national commitment to adult education as a central part of post-war reconstruction following the end of the First World War and from the beginning the WI was envisioned as playing an integral part in the education of countrywomen. In her recent history of the WI movement, Jane Robinson has stressed that the organisation placed a broader emphasis on the necessity of adult education for women in the 1940s. The idea received further confirmation in 1946 following central approval to establish a separate WI College – Denman College, paid with funds jointly raised by the organisation itself and the Carnegie UK Trust.[69] In this sense, the WI was extremely well placed to provide the sort of universal international training envisioned by the WGPW; indeed, international education became central to the WI's post-war reconstruction efforts in the mid-1940s.

Between the period 1946 – 1949 both the WI and the Townswomen's Guilds, through their international sub-committees, began to organise and run a series of international courses, schemes and residential courses for its national membership. Indeed, by 1950 the education

(8), (1948), *Wife and Citizen,* 9 (9) (1948); WFL, *The Women's Bulletin,* (14) (1945); *The Women's Bulletin,* 1 (1946); *The Women's Bulletin,* 1 (1947); *The Women's Bulletin,* 19 (1948)

[68] L. Perriton, 'The Education of Women for Citizenship: the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the British Federation of Business and Professional Women 1930 – 1959', in *Gender and Education,* 21 (1) (2009), p. 82

[69] J. Robinson, *A Force to Be Reckoned With: A History of the Women's Institute Movement,*(London: Virago, 2012), p. 207

of 'the WI member in international matters' had become the main responsibility of the WI international sub-committee; by 1950 international affairs had affirmed its place on the agenda of the wider WI movement as a legitimate site of study.[70] International education had been formalised into the organisation's main policy at the 1946 Annual General Meeting (AGM) following the passage of a resolution which committed the organisation to 'international friendship' and to the study of UN proceedings.[71] This was later cemented at the 1954 AGM which added the 'promotion of international understanding' to the aims and objects of the movement's constitution; this amendment made the *practical* idea of educating members in international matters an integral part of WI policy. The resolution represented 'not an expansion of our international work; the expansion has already taken place. It is rather a logical step to regularise the existing situation and to bring home to every WI member her responsibility to work for international understanding'.[72] By 1954 international work was no longer reserved for the international sub-committee alone, but it now involved the movement as a whole.

The drive to 'enthuse' members about international affairs centred on the promotion of what the sub-committee and its international parent body, the Association of Countrywomen of the World (ACCW) described as 'The International Mind'. This 'International Mind' was used to demonstrate to WI women how and why they should try to adopt a new worldview.[73] The concept had grown out of the recognition that changing patterns of life, economic interdependence, the development of new communications and decolonisation to name but a few, 'must force us to think internationally on almost every subject'.[74] The recent impact of the Second World War and the impending threat of nuclear war meant that the ability to think

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[70] WL, 5FWI/D/2 151, NFWI, International Conference, 24/10/48

[71] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 28 (7), 'Foreign Affairs and the WIs'

[72] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 36 (3), March 1954, 'Resolutions for the 1954 AGM'

[73] Ibid.

[74] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 31 (4), April 1949

internationally was not just a matter of personal choice, but also a major social and political responsibility. In defining exactly what was meant by this 'international mind', the President of the ACWW explained at the NFWI AGM in 1959:

> 'The fundamental and basic characteristic of this international mind is the knowledge that whenever peace and freedom are in danger in any part of the world *your* peace and *your* freedom are always in danger…the basic fact of the international mind is knowing that we are all interdependent, that peace and freedom are indivisible.'[75]

WI members were urged to take personal responsibility for keeping themselves informed about events in the wider world, particularly with regards to politics, economics, world production and consumption, trade, population trends and monetary and fiscal policies, all of which would allow them to put this new sense of internationalism into practice.[76] The 'international mind' promoted international 'understanding' as a practical way of ensuring future global unity and peace, and this was conceptualised as one of the central duties of the voluntary association more generally. It encouraged 'patience, forbearance, tolerance and a willingness to try to see the viewpoint of others'. WI members were charged with the duty of fostering these qualities in their homes, their Institutes, their communities and in wider society.[77]

On a practical level, the international sub-committee divided its educational programme into 'personal' and 'impersonal' schemes. Personal schemes involved the exchange of visitors from a variety of different countries which aimed to promote the idea of 'international friendship and hospitality'. On average there were around 100 visitors to headquarters each year from a broad spectrum of countries, and the sub-committee worked closely with the Counties to arrange suitable visiting programmes, which typically allowed the visitor to see

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[75] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 30 (8), August 1948

[76] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 30 (7), July 1948

[77] Ibid.

various WIs 'in action'.[78] The WI was also routinely approached by local councils, education authorities, the British Council and the Victoria League, to offer hospitality to overseas students. Appeals were made to grassroots members to house these visitors for short periods of time. These proved extremely popular although it is difficult to gauge how widespread the organisation of exchange visits actually was. Indeed, in 1949 *Home and Country* announced that these exchange visits had become 'the rage', with many villages 'coming alive with ladies in colourful national costumes'.[79] Members were encouraged to learn all they could about their visitors and their country of origin; the international sub-committee firmly believed that the 'invisible links' formed by such interaction would have positive long term effects.

Another 'personal' aspect of the international education programme lay in the 'letters for friendship' scheme which had been set up prior to the war. Throughout the 1950s this scheme was expanded upon and participating members doubled between 1953 -1956 to total around 11,000.[80] Pen friend schemes provided a way of directly linking individual Institutes with similar local rural women's organisations in other countries. In 1952 the NFWI initiated a new scheme whereby similar organisations could become officially 'linked' and exchange visits between linked organisations were paid for through the ACWW. The value of these pen-friend programmes is well documented in *Home and Country,* with numerous accounts of expressions of 'amazement' and 'sympathy' as letters describing writers'

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[78] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 29 (5), May 1947

[79] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 31 (11), November 1949

[80] WL, 5FWI/D/2 155, NFWI, International Sub-Committee Minutes, 12/05/1946

'difficulties with harvest and weather, small triumphs of sisters or in her own family life' from halfway across the world were regularly read aloud in village halls across the country.[81]

'Impersonal' education initiatives took various forms. In a document entitled 'educating the WI member in international matters', the international sub-committee affirmed that its lecture tours were the most successful and productive form of international education and a majority had proved very popular. Speakers were approached on a local level but representatives from international embassies, international organisations and University lecturers were also routinely included in planned programmes. The international sub-committee also made practical use of the newly established Denman College; international day schools were regularly held at the College and totalled an average of six a year.[82] These gave Institute members the opportunity to learn about subjects such as the work of the UN and the ACWW; nuclear power; the histories of other countries; the political systems of other countries and the future direction of WI international policy. The sub-committee encouraged individual members to use these conferences and day schools as a model from which to organise separate local courses in their own communities. Indeed, in 1948 the WI initiated a new international course that trained local county leaders in methods of teaching in the hope that they would then prepare and run regular international workshops locally in the long term.[83]

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[81] See WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 38 (5), May 1956; NFWI, *Home and Country,* 31 (11), November 1949; NFWI, *Home and Country,* 31 (12), December 1959; NFWI, *Home and Country,* 30 (3), March 1948

[82] WL, 5FWI/D/2 152, NFWI, International Sub-Committee Minutes, 12/4/48; 5FWI/D/2 152, NFWI International Sub-Committee Minutes, 27/7/49 and 5FWI/D/2, NFWI, International Sub-Committee Minutes, 4/5/48

[83] WL 5FWI/D/2 151, NFWI, Minutes of the International Conference, 1947

Thus the standardisation of 'international education' in the movement's policy was complete by the early 1950s. Such international education drives aimed to get Institute members 'thinking outside their village' with the promotion of the new 'International Mind' that characterised the WI attitude to international affairs in an era of growing globalisation and political uncertainty. The International Mind was used to emphasise to ordinary members how international affairs affected them, and it also offered an opportunity for rural women to expand their priorities outside the traditional boundaries of the home. Although the extent of exposure to such ideas and programmes on the ordinary WI member is difficult to assess, it is perhaps safe to say that the average member, if not through formal schools then most definitely through *Home and Country,* had had some contact with the WI's belief in the importance of international understanding and friendship. Whilst such schemes did not mobilise the movement as a whole and were largely optional, without this educational foundation and the popularisation of the 'International Mind', later development projects may not have been taken up with such determination. The international policy of the WI in the late 1940s then, was more of a generalised attempt to get the issue onto the agenda and to equip grassroots members with the information they needed to act in and understand an increasingly inter-dependent world.

The concept of international education appealed to a variety of different British women's organisations in the immediate post-war years. The War had thrown the importance and proximity of international politics into sharp relief and many leaders recognised the need for a proactive approach to global consciousness. The idea of international education was not entirely new, the LNU had been committed to raising the standard of international understanding amongst the general population. However, the connection between education and women's international political representation was unique to the post-war era and demonstrates its significance at this time. Aided by the new developments in its adult education programme and bolstered by Government support for such initiatives, international

education became central to WI post-war policy more generally.[84] That the WI's attempts to engage its national membership with international education were relatively successful (international courses at Denman College were nearly always over-subscribed between 1946 – 8) demonstrates one of the ways in which internationalism was able to mobilise a significant proportion of the movement.

Post-War Reconstruction and Relief Work

International education schemes are an excellent example of the ways in which British women's organisations translated the new enthusiasm for internationalism into practical projects. The drive for international education had been inspired as a direct result of the effects of War which had produced new formal international political structures and had brought home the reality of global interdependence. International education was a response to these factors, one which took into consideration the relative strengths of the voluntary association. The War also afforded new official opportunities for international work within Britain in ways which drew on established and new voluntary and charitable networks. The post-war shift towards state control of international relief efforts facilitated the development of new semi-official coordinating bodies which offered larger national women's organisations the opportunity to translate their new participatory internationalism into practice.[85] The new connections that these bodies created set precedents for the level of interaction between women's organisations and the State and enabled them to participate internationally in reconstruction efforts in ways that had not been afforded to them in 1918.

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[84] J. Robinson, *A Force To Be Reckoned With: A History of the Women's Institute Movement,* p. 200

[85] J. Reinisch, 'Internationalism in Relief: The Birth (and Death) of UNRRA' in *Past and Present,* supplement 6 (2011), p. 262

The WGPW had been founded in conjunction with the National Council of Social Services (NCSS) in 1939 to consult on the social problems arising from evacuation.[86] The NCSS had been established in 1919 to bring together various voluntary and community based organisations and to develop a direct link between them and the State. The NCSS provided the Group with funds, staff and office accommodation.[87] Whilst one central aspect of the WGPW in the 1940s was to provide a meeting ground for national women's organisations, through its connections to the NCSS it was also approached by the British Government at several points during this period to consult on both domestic and international reconstruction projects. To this end, the organisation added 'post-war reconstruction' to its title and constitution in 1947.[88] Given that the Group's 'expert' membership was weighted heavily with medical, educational and civic organisations, these projects tended to pertain to the social wellbeing of women and children within Britain and later, Europe. In 1946 for example, the WGPW and NCW were both approached by the Control Commission of the Foreign Office, later to become the Women's Affairs Section of the British Military Government (WAS), to provide temporary adult education schemes for women and to help re-develop German women's organisations in the British Zone.[89] The Group was also encouraged by the Foreign Office to seek links with women in other European countries, to utilise its expert membership base to provide advice, organise educational exchanges and to promote 'adoption' schemes with women in formerly occupied countries. Throughout the late 1940s, the Group ran

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[86] WL, 5WFM/C FL566, WGPW, The WGPW and Standing Conferences of Women's Organisations, 1946

[87] E. Hogg & S. Bains, 'Changing Responsibilities and Roles of the Voluntary and Community Sector in the Welfare Mix: A Review' in *Social Policy and Society,* 10 (3) (2011), p. 343

[88] WL, 5WFM/C FL 565, WGPW, Extract from the Minutes of the Planning Sub-Committee: Education on International Subjects, 15th November 1947

[89] For a more detailed account of British women's organisations involvement in re-establishing German women's organisations after the War, see: D. Tscharntke, *Re-educating German Women: The Work of the Women's Affairs Section of the British Military Government, 1946 – 1951,* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003) and B. Smith, *The Rules of Engagement: German Women and British Occupiers, 1945 – 1949,* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: Wlifred Laurier University, 2009)

numerous annual exchanges with women from Germany, France and the Netherlands for example.[90]

For the WI, post-war international reconstruction offered the organisation the opportunity to mobilise the entire movement (that then totalled over 379,000) in addition to the promotion of grassroots international awareness.[91] From as early as 1942 the International Sub-Committee had begun to plan the ways in which the organisation could contribute to programs of post-war relief in Europe and actively sought links with other charitable, voluntary and relief organisations. In December 1942 the committee was approached by the British Red Cross regarding the formation of a new council of voluntary organisations to pool information on post-war relief work abroad and to suggest forms of collaborative action.[92] In June 1943, the WI joined the Standing Conference of Voluntary Organisations attached to the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA) and by September 1944 the WI had been promoted to full membership of COBSRA itself. COBSRA was an attempt to co-ordinate the activities of voluntary organisations interested in providing humanitarian assistance internationally, but also as Johannes-Dieter Steinert has argued, state and military interests.[93] A total of 40 British organisations joined the organisation and it facilitated the exchange of information and the co-ordination of the voluntary effort with state authorities and international institutions.[94] These new connections between the state and voluntary relief organisations were the result of widespread international recognition of the need for a carefully planned relief operation in order to avoid the mistakes of 1918; the lack

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[90] WL, 5WFM/C 565, Minutes of a Special Meeting of the International Advisory Committee, 26/7/47; 5WFM/A 560, Annual Report 1946/7; Annual Report, 1947/8; Letter to Member Organisations, 18/3/47

[91] J. Robinson, *A Force to Be Reckoned With: A History of the Women's Institute Movement,* p. 179

[92] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, Minutes of the International Sub-Committee, 10/12/42

[93] J-D Steinert, 'British Humanitarian Assistance: Wartime Planning and Post-war Realities' in *Journal of Contemporary History,* 43 (3) (2008), p. 423

[94] Ibid.

of central planning after the First World War had resulted in a high level of unnecessary death and a significant waste of resources. This shift towards state organisation and planning saw governments assume control of international relief efforts, whilst recognising through the establishment of organisations like COBSRA, the important role that voluntary organisations would play.

Thus, as part of COBSRA, the WI began to plan its relief activities in 1943 in conjunction with other voluntary agencies, particularly the British Red Cross. The WI had strong links with the wider international relief effort in the post-war period; two of its international sub-committee members also worked for the Welfare Department of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).[95] State management sometimes made it difficult for the organisation to find a central scheme with the capacity to mobilise the movement as a whole. In March 1942 the WI began to encourage its members to collect and store tinned food and aimed to distribute this throughout Europe after the war.[96] Just as preparations were being made to roll out the scheme nationally, the international sub-committee was advised that the Ministry of Economic Warfare did not approve of this proposal.[97] Alternative schemes included the collection of vegetable and fruit seeds, and through COBSRA, the WI participated in multiple collection drives for second hand clothes and food parcels.[98] The sub-committee also considered setting up a scheme for the reception and care of children from Europe after the war and monitored the work of the Council of Refugees in this capacity.

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[95] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, Minutes of the International Sub-Committee, 1/2/44

[96] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, Minutes of the International Sub-Committee, 1/6/43

[97] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, Minutes of the International Sub-Committee, 2/3/42

[98] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, International Sub-Committee Minutes, 26/6/45

The first major policy initiative with regards to post-war reconstruction was drafted at the Conference on the Post-War Relief of Europe in March 1943; the resulting Report was used to form the basis of the WI relief programme. The Conference brought together both WI Executive and County members and a number of experts, who had been asked to outline to the international sub-committee the likely state of the European countries following the end of the war and to suggest ways in which the movement could help. Dr Melville Mackenzie of the Allied Medical Advisory Committee suggested that the Women's Institute could, in their capacity as centres of handicrafts and small scale manufacturing, make equipment for children's homes. This was likely to include such things as toys, books and flower seeds. He went on to suggest the manufacture of men, women and children's clothes, maternity garments and baby clothes.[99] Mr McDougall, the Economic Advisor to the Australian Government in London, suggested that the provision of food would be the most important factor in post-war relief work. He emphasised the inadequacy of the current food production system which, he argued, needed to be increased by around 50 per cent if the world 'is to be properly fed'. In the context of post-war reconstruction, he urged the WI to do all that it could to ensure 'Freedom from Want of Food' through the intensification of food production within Britain.[100] Miss Halton of the International Sub-Committee endorsed this suggestion, and stated that 'all extra food produced here means that, when the time comes, more will be available as surplus for Europe'.[101] She encouraged Institute members to learn new handicraft skills; to make use of natural resources; perfect toy making skills and to instruct and teach others, which would equip members to make the necessary 'garments, toys and household furnishings' when the time came.[102] The Conference also affirmed an appeal to the wider membership for volunteers to assist COBSRA in Europe 'in the field'. In collaboration with other voluntary organisations such as the Save the Children Fund and the

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[99] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, Report on the Conference on the Post-War Relief of Europe, 11/3/43, p. 4

[100] Ibid. p. 6

[101] Ibid. p. 1

[102] Ibid.

Red Cross, the WI urged that fit and healthy members take part in this form of practical relief work. By the middle of 1944, the Institutes had forwarded 22 enrolment forms to COBSRA.[103]

One of the most successful relief campaigns organised by the international sub-committee was a nationwide knitting scheme.[104] The scheme helped to manufacture over a quarter of a million items of clothing during the last 18 months of war. Indeed, Inez Jenkins estimated that at the height of the scheme, Institute members were knitting '20,000 lbs' of wool a month.[105] The WI leadership considered the 'skill and ingenuity' of WI handicraft workers to be a great resource which would greatly benefit European relief efforts.[106] Through appeals to the traditional base of the movement, the organisation mobilised a large proportion of its membership and used this as a way of promoting 'the international mind'. The WI contribution to post-war reconstruction in Europe was part of a larger effort to interest its national membership in affairs outside of Britain itself. By drawing on the traditional strengths of the movement in its social, educational and practical capacities, the international sub-committee hoped to mobilise the entire movement to some degree for a cause outside of the boundaries of the traditional British village. Schemes such as knitting drives were attempts to raise public awareness about global social, economic and political conditions. The popular aspect of these schemes was also endorsed by other women's organisations at this time. At the request of the Government, the WCG joined the WI and the Women's Voluntary Service

[103] WL, 5FWI/D/2, NFWI International Sub-Committee Minutes 5/4/1944

[104] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, International Sub-Committee Minutes, 12/9/44

[105] I. Jenkins, *A History of the Women's Institute Movement in England and Wales,* (London: OUP, 1953), p. 137

[106] WL, 5FWI/D/2 151, NFWI, Minutes of the International Conference, March 11th 1946

and arranged a clothing production scheme for children in Europe for its members in 1944. By May 1945 the movement had helped to manufacture 15 tons worth of garments.[107]

Wider post-war social and political trends, particularly regarding the provision of international relief, helped to create networks which facilitated new levels of interaction between voluntary and state organisations. These networks provided new opportunities for British women's organisations to involve themselves in forms of international work with which they had limited experience. Through the work of the WGPW and the NCW a broad cross section of women's organisations from across the political spectrum could involve themselves in international exchange programs or sponsor educational efforts in Germany. The WI, through membership of COBSRA was able to collaborate for the first time with larger national agencies and organisations in the provision of international relief abroad. The involvement of its wider membership in popular schemes such as knitting drives and toy making had the additional effect of embedding internationalism more firmly into the ethos of the organisation.

Ideological Ruptures: The Commission on the Status of Women

The post-war years witnessed the emergence of a new form of internationalism amongst British women's organisations. This had been informed by an older, pre-war internationalist sentiment that prioritised the importance of international governance but was also the result of new international structures and new opportunities afforded by the contemporary social, economic and political climate. However, this new international spirit was not translated into action by women's organisations identically or consistently throughout this period. Conflicting

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[107] London School of Economics Archives (Hereafter LSE), COLL MISC 0657, WCG, Sixty-Second Annual Report, May 1944 – May 1945, p. 11

interpretations of priorities and ideological differences tended to reveal themselves in the practical work of each organisation. Whilst the egalitarian legacies of smaller organisations such as the SPG and Women's Freedom League encouraged work for women's equal representation at the UN for example, larger organisations such as the WGPW and WI were keen to exploit the new opportunities offered to them through co-operation with state-sponsored bodies in post-war reconstruction. Different priorities also resulted in a lack of collaborative work. Despite widespread agreement on the need for increased female representation at the UN for example, there were no concerted attempts at a joint or cross-organisational campaign during these years. Further, despite the involvement of both the WGPW and WI in relief operations, neither of these organisations decided to pool their resources together to pursue a common aim. This reluctance to collaborate was compounded by the fact that the majority of women's organisations at this time felt that 'duplication of effort' was both a waste of time and funds.[108] This was made clear by the NCW in 1947 in their letter of withdrawal from membership of the WGPW.[109] Barbara Caine has argued that the unwillingness of organisations to co-operate during this period was due to the prevalence of strong associational identities and the tendency in women's politics to confine campaigning work to single issues.[110]

This general indifference towards co-operation was exacerbated by ideological differences between organisations, the most prominent of which during the mid to late 1940s was the establishment of the CSW in 1947. The creation of CSW, originally a sub-commission to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), was a result of collaborative efforts by a number of women international activists. Pressure for a separate commission had been driven primarily by the recognition of the poor record that the League of Nation had had on women's rights,

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[108] See WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, Meeting of the International Sub-Committee, 10/12/42 and NCW, *Annual Report* 1947, p. 3

[109] WL, NCW, *Annual Report 1947,* p. 3

[110] B. Caine, *English Feminism 1780 – 1980,* pp. 234 - 236

and concern that the unwillingness of national governments to appoint women onto international delegations would lead to the inadequate consideration of women's rights by the CHR.[111] Women delegates to the GA, Bertha Lutz (Brazil), Minerva Bernardino (Dominican Republic) and Wu Yi-Fan proposed a new committee under the statutory CHR to work for women's rights.[112] At the first session of the CHR Eleanor Roosevelt was elected chair, and ECOSOC approved the proposal for a separate commission. Its mandate in this period was to prepare recommendations and reports on women's rights in the political, social, civil, economic and educational fields. Political aims were directed towards women's 'full assumption of all duties of true citizenship' and included her right to vote, to be elected and hold public office. Civil rights included 'every woman's right to freedom of choice in marriage and guardianship of children' and social and economic aims endeavoured to remove all 'discriminations against women which deny equal part in social life, including inequality of wages and conditions of labour and medical care for pregnant women'.[113] In a meeting held by the SPG in 1947, Jessie Street, the Australian feminist and co-founder of the CSW, gave a speech about its benefits and future work following its elevation to the status of a full UN commission. She claimed that because delegates to the UN were broadly speaking, 'almost invariably men' it meant 'few women had a chance to make themselves heard'. The CSW however, had the benefit of being able to ensure that the chief delegates to its deliberations were women.[114]

Despite widespread international support for the idea of a separate women's commission, opinion within Britain initially was mixed. Laville has examined the ways in which British women's organisations lobbied the government in the early 1950s in order to ensure the

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[111] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN: a Sixty Year Quest for Equality and Justice,* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 2005), p. 14

[112] M. Galey, *Women Find a Place,* p. 12

[113] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* Vol. XIX No. 8, April 1948, 'Status of Women'

[114] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, Report of Meeting of the SPG, December 1947

suitability of women delegates to the CSW.[115] The promotion to full Commission status carried with it the stipulation that national governments were to be made responsible for the selection of delegates. However, British women's organisations initially disagreed over the suitability of a separate commission; organisations divided into 'for' and 'against' camps based largely on the stance of their international parent bodies. Whilst the doubts of key women internationalists such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Virginia Gildersleeve at this time as to the necessity of a women's commission have been made clear, the attitudes of the large and arguably, most influential transnational women's organisations at this time have been overlooked.[116] Both the WILPF and the IAW spoke out forcefully in their literature against the establishment of a separate commission in 1946 and later, during the early years of its work. The WILPF remarked in 1947 that the CSW was not necessary. The organisation instead advocated that women's rights be considered by the CHR which should handle 'ALL cases of discrimination violating the UN charter – discrimination of race, sex, language, religion, nation, class etc.' (original emphasis). The CSW, the WILPF maintained, only served to force women's issues into a 'ghetto' that fed into women's larger 'inferiority complex' and would further reproduce inequality.[117] The WILPF took this argument further in its criticism of the phrasing of the draft version of the first article of the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 which prepared for the equal rights of men *and* women. This was explicitly rejected by the WILPF in terms that effectively summarised the nature of the debate on this issue:

> 'the moment we admit that such an additional article has to be included, we silently recognise that women are a different specimen, and they should be given these rights as charity and not as a self-evident and natural right belonging to everyone'.[118]

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[115] H. Laville, 'Woolly, Half Baked and Impractical', pp. 473 - 495

[116] See D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN,* p. 17; M. Galey, 'Forerunners in Women's Quest for Partnership' in A. Winslow (ed.), *Women, Politics and the UN,* (Greenwood Press: London, 1995), p. 7 and M. Galey, 'Women Find A Place', p. 13

[117] Women and Social Movement International Database (Hereafter WSMID), WILPF, *Twelfth International Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom,* (WILFP: Paris, 1953), p. 75

[118] Ibid. p. 76

From the outset, the IAW rejected the proposal for a separate UN women's commission. Indeed, the topic was viewed so seriously that it featured as a discussion point at every meeting of the international committee between the years 1946 – 8. The Alliance stated that the concept of separation was extremely dangerous and emphasised that it would lead to the reinforcement of the idea that women's rights were somehow different from human rights.[119] The organisation stressed instead that human rights and women's rights were indivisible.[120] It went on to urge that the large international women's organisations should approach ECOSOC directly to press for more women delegates to the CHR and encouraged their national affiliates to apply pressure on their governments to appoint more women. In the same year, to publicise its official position to its wider international membership the organisation set out the argument in its monthly journal. In a lengthy article the IAW stressed that 'now we have the magnificent preamble to the Charter "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights", do not let us women press for work in separate compartments', but rather urged its international membership to work together to ensure the application of 'universal respect for the human individual'.[121] In 1948, the work of the CSW was under way yet the IAW had still not come around to the benefits of a separate space for women in the UN. Its international committee still urged two years later that the Commission 'cuts the ground' from under the universal application of all other provisions and was redundant and dangerous.[122]

By the 1950s both the WILPF and IAW had reluctantly come to accept that the CSW was there to stay. Indeed, by the mid-1950s both organisations provided technical information and research to the Commission and often used it as a basis for policy making and official declarations. In her history of women and the UN, Devaki Jain has pointed out that historically excluded groups have sometimes benefitted from a separate space in which to

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[119] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of Meeting of International Committee Stockholm 1947

[120] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of Meeting of International Committee Interlaken August 1946

[121] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 41 (1), October 1946, p. 4

[122] WL, 2IAW/2/B 003, IAW, Minutes of Meeting of International Committee Rome May 1948

strategize before going into broader arenas, particularly in the sphere of international politics. She goes on to state that this was widely held to be the case for women by proponents of the CSW.[123] However, in the mid-1940s it was clear that a strong commitment to the idea and language of human rights prevailed over the potential benefits of the creation of a female orientated official political space. These contrasting opinions about the suitability of a separate women's rights commission played out domestically within Britain as well; a large proportion of women's organisations rejected the idea in 1946 outright. In January 1946 the NCW attended a round table conference of British women's organisations convened by the British Federation of Business and Professional Women (BFBPW) to consider the proposal for a separate commission. The conference passed a resolution in support and a letter was written to the President of the UN GA. However, the NCW explicitly refused to lend its support. Whilst in later years, as Laville's work shows, the Council did assist other organisations in openly criticising the British governments delegate selection procedure, the organisation was originally opposed to the idea of separating women's rights from human rights.[124] In the same month, the NCW assisted its parent body, the ICW, in the organisation and delivery of a deputation to Sir Ramaswami Mudiliar, Chairman of the ECOSOC. The deputation denounced the suggestion that a special Committee on women's rights should be set up, but urged for the greater co-operation of international women's organisations with the established institutions at the UN.[125] Lady Nunburnholme, a member of the Executive Committee on both NCW and the ICW asserted that it was simply 'not appropriate for women to be segregated in anything as important [as rights]'.[126]

Similarly, the Women's Freedom League wrote in its monthly journal, *The Bulletin,* a paper distributed to a wide range of women's organisations at this time, that it was the duty of the

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[123] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN,* p. 17

[124] H. Laville, 'Woolly, Half Baked and Impractical', pp. 473 - 495

[125] LMA, ACC/3613/1/14, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 15th February 1946

[126] LMA, ACC/3613/1/14, NCW, Minutes of Executive Committee, 19th July 1946

CHR to deal with the rights of women as human beings. To the Women's Freedom League, a separate commission implied that women were to be treated in a special manner. Whilst the organisation recognised the work done by the Commission members, it regretted that the 'Status of Women' had taken the place of 'equal rights for men and women'.[127] Similarly, to the National Women's Citizens Association a separate commission that only looked after 'half the human race' would be detrimental to the cause of equality. The organisation called instead for the adoption of an official policy that stipulated the equal representation of women in the CHR and would dictate the selection procedure to national governments. By March 1946 even the WI had come to the conclusion that the CSW would be inappropriate and dangerous to women's rights more generally. The international sub-committee passed a resolution rejecting the grounds for the establishment of the CSW and maintained that the rights of men and women 'should be made and remain universal' through the promotion of human rights.[128]

The SPG was one of the few British women's organisations to express whole hearted support for the CSW in addition to the BFBPW from the beginning and indeed in the early 1950s the SPG spearheaded a national campaign that appealed to the British government to reject a proposal that official meetings of the CSW be reduced from annually to biannually.[129] Rather than fostering segregation, the SPG felt that women's rights were too important to fall under the jurisdiction of an all-encompassing Human Rights Commission. 'The tendency would see women's rights subsumed and neglected,' argued Clare Madden, the organisational Secretary in 1946, 'it is well known that whenever a government's workload is high or budget slashed, consideration of women's issues is the first to go!'[130] The SPG had

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[127] WL, WFL, *The Women's Bulletin,* October 1947: 'Women and the UN', N. Spiller

[128] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI, Minutes of the International Sub-Committee, 5/3/45

[129] WL, 5SPG/A, FL 524, SPG, Report of a Meeting with Jessie Street, 1950; 5SPG/J Letter to Members, February 1952

[130] WL, 5SPG/A/ FL524, SPG Minutes 11th April 1946

close connections to several key women in CSW including Jessie Street and Alice Paul through its work with American women's organisations and its role in the establishment of international equal rights organisations including ERI and the World Woman's Party before the War. Given the organisation's historical connection to international campaigns for women's equal rights, it is perhaps not surprising that the SPG saw the CSW as beneficial to the cause. The SPG's attempts to have the Equal Right Treaty ratified by the League of Nations had been consistently thwarted in the 1920s and 1930s. A separate Commission dedicated specifically to consideration of these issues no doubt seemed like a brilliant idea. Similarly, the Married Women's Association supported the idea of a women's commission to mediate women's limited access to human rights. The organisation felt confident that the new commission would act as the vehicle by which to fulfil its aims at an international level, specifically by internationalising the rights of mothers, housewives and married women.[131]

The extent of this divided opinion between British women's organisations on the issue was made apparent at a Joint Conference held by the Women's Group on Public Welfare in October 1948. The organisation was unable to pass a resolution on the CSW as many representatives simply refused to vote on the matter. The Women's Group on Public Welfare recognised that whilst many organisations felt that the CSW would inevitably 'foster segregation instead of integration' they simultaneously liked the idea of quality international debate on women's rights.[132] Instead, the resolution was re-worded so as not to express either support or opposition but merely that CSW future proceedings should be monitored carefully.

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[131] WL, 7TBG/A FL239, MWA, *Wife and Citizen,* 9 (6), August-September 1948

[132] WL, 5WFM/A FL560, WGPW, Draft Resolution on the Status of Women at the Joint Conference, October 2nd 1948

This initial hostility to the idea of a separate women's organisation was driven by a belief in the egalitarian potential of the all-encompassing concept of human rights and the indivisibility of human and women's rights. As previously shown, in the immediate post-war period a large majority of British women's organisations demonstrated overwhelming support for the principles of the UN Charter. To stress the distinction between women's rights and human rights was therefore considered by many women in these organisations to be a step backwards, a reminder of a time before the War when women's rights were considered as an afterthought or as 'other', requiring additional and therefore separate legislation. 'Human rights will ensure that women are considered as equal recipients and beneficiaries of the effects of international and national legislation,' the NCW argued in 1947, 'we must make sure that this continues to be the case'.[133] Both the IAW and ICW had encouraged their national affiliates in 1946 to work for the 'better application of the principles of the charter' both internationally and in their respective countries.[134] The NCW and Women's Group on Public Welfare had both been responsible for the organisation of 'human rights' days in the mid-1940s and human rights used as a basis from which to decide future policy.

In later years, as with the larger transnational women's organisations, the majority of British organisations resigned themselves to the fact that the CSW was there to stay. As Laville's work reveals, many took part in efforts to ensure the women delegates to the Commission were not merely 'rubber stamps'.[135] However, their initial views on the concept in the immediate post-war years were far from positive. To supporters of the CSW, the Commission represented official recognition of the inability of the concept of human rights to deal effectively with women's rights given women's significant lack of representation at the

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[133] LMA, ACC/3613/ 4/31, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 16th April 1947

[134] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, Report of the International Committee Interlaken, 1946; ICW 5ICW/C/2, Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Officers and Conveners of the Standing Committees, October 17th 1946

[135] H. Laville, 'Woolly, Half-Baked and Impractical?' pp. 473 - 495

UN. To others however, the CSW represented an attempt to deliberately force women's rights into a separate and therefore disconnected international space. The SPG, MWA and BFBPW felt that the conceptualisation of women's rights as 'separate interests' would only facilitate the permanence of women's secondary status and directly negated the egalitarian aspects of the new UN Charter that they had initially so admired.[136]

Thus the establishment of the CSW revealed just one of the ways in which ideological differences prevented the growth and development of a unified or collective international effort during the mid-1940s. Whilst internationalism had come to occupy a more significant place on the agendas of a broad spectrum of British women's organisations, international campaigns tended to be sporadic and short lived. Whilst support for the UN and the Charter was unanimous, it tended to be expressed individually rather than collectively and the UN was not conceptualised as the basis from which to build a new, participative form of women's politics. Whilst the many organisations were involved in the work of the UNA the Association did not manage to generate the wider popular support that it had seen during the inter-war years.[137] Indeed, the SPG despaired in 1947 about the unwillingness of some smaller women's organisations to pool their resources into a more comprehensive international movement.[138] What was needed was an organisational focus with the power to transcend individual loyalties, political traditions and strong associational identities.[139] Arguably, the potential of internationalism to mobilise women from a variety of different

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[136] C. Bunch, 'Transforming Human Rights from a Feminist Perspective' in J. Peters & A. Wolper (eds.), *Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives,* (Routledge: London, 1995), p. 12

[137] H. McCarthy, 'The League of Nations, Public Ritual and National Identity in Britain, c. 1919 – 1956', p. 111

[138] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, Letter from Leah Manning to Clare Madden, 3/6/47

[139] WL, 5SPG/A FL 524, SPG Minutes, December 16th 1947

organisational backgrounds was realised during the immediate post-war period, the next step was to ensure the effective means of collaboration.

Conclusion

The immediate post-war years saw the evolution of a new spirit of internationalism that pervaded amongst a broad spectrum of British women's organisations. This new sense of international zeal was a direct response to the political, social and economic upheaval caused by the War. Significantly, it was also a consequence of the establishment of new mechanisms of international governance which for the first time had made direct reference to women's international rights.[140] Despite inter-war international legacies, this new post-war internationalism aimed to engage women throughout Britain in international affairs through membership of their organisations. Not only had the effects of War inspired a new sense of enthusiasm but it also produced new foci and practical opportunities for international work on a grassroots level. New state-sponsored relief and reconstruction agencies, as well as the establishment of the WGPW in partnership with the NCSS and the Government, provided mainstream women's organisations with the opportunity to develop links with other internationally based institutions. These new post-war international opportunities enabled organisations such as the WI and smaller organisations, through membership of the WGPW, to engage their wider membership in international work and set important precedents for later campaigns.

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[140] L. Reanda, 'Human Rights and Women's Rights: the United Nations Approach' in *Human Rights Quarterly,* 3 (1981), p. 11

The new UN Charter specifically set out the principle of equal rights for men and women in its preamble, and provided British women with a new precedent for international work. The UN thus became central to British women's organisations international work in the immediate post-war years and though ultimately to become disillusioned, it nevertheless helped to foster a new sense of international fervour. The majority of British women's organisations interpreted the new discourse of human rights as a step forward, one which legitimised the work they had now performed for several decades. Indeed, a large proportion of international work done by British women's organisations at this time can be linked in some way to the UN, all of which depicted the UN in terms of its potential to guarantee women's international rights. Training initiatives and educational campaigns were organised on the basis that this would, in the future, enable women to take their place in the governments of the world.

The immediate post-war years saw a flurry of international activity by women's organisations throughout Britain. These years saw internationalism become a central part of organisational policy in a range of associations. Efforts to educate women in international affairs had the effect of introducing internationalism to mainstream policy; by 1950 the issue had been formalised onto the WI Constitution for example. No longer was international activity the responsibility of separate organisations or sub-commissions; the post-war years saw it merge with domestic policy in new and innovative ways. However, involvement in international affairs lacked a general sense of unity. By looking at the detailed work of a broad spectrum of women's organisation it is clear that the majority of societies took up individual projects which related to individual organisational priorities. Mainstream organisations such as the NFWI and Townswomen's Guilds focussed their activity on general educational drives and relief work, precluding co-operation with smaller groups. This was further exacerbated by the reluctance of organisations at this time to pool their resources together whilst ideological disjuncture further prevented effective collaboration.

By the late 1940s organisations such as the SPG had begun to recognise the need for a central focus, one which would bring together the multiple strands of post-war international work.[141] The organisation, along with the Married Women's Association, felt that internationalism had an unrealised potential to unite women in associational life across both political and cultural lines. The ideological rupture caused by the establishment of the new Commission ruled out the possibility of a movement founded on concepts that related solely to women's international rights; many women's organisations remained unconvinced of the need to specify women's rights as distinct from human rights throughout the 1940s. Instead, as will be seen in the next Chapter, world peace was conceptualised as the means by which to build a legitimate British international women's movement. Not only did the idea of peace make sense in the post-war climate, but it was also able to draw on strong historical links to a variety of peace organisations. Connections between women and the fight for peace had long been drawn and in the post-war climate leaders of British women's organisations were able to appeal to traditional arguments of women's special stake in the issue of peace. Combined with the fight for international political representation, peace offered the opportunity for women to translate this new post-war international zeal into an effective collaborative force in ways that the schemes of the mid 1940s could not.

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[141] WL, 5SPG/A 525, SPG, Executive Committee Minutes, 15/3/48

Chapter Two

British Women's Organisations and Peace during the Cold War, c.1948 – 1953

In the spring of 1948 several leading members of the Six Point Group put forward a proposal to officially adopt a new organisational program. This new program was based on a draft manifesto produced a few months earlier by Dora Russell, a journalist and staunch Labour supporter, Leah Manning, then a Labour MP and Sybil Morrison, a pacifist and former suffragist. The manifesto entitled '2000AD and the Six Point Group' was an emotive and dramatically written plea to the women of Britain in light of the devastation of the Second World War, encouraging them to use their political power to ensure the 'realistic management of world affairs' which would, importantly to the SPG, guarantee a constructive world peace.[1] The manifesto, however, was more significant in the second section which prescribed a new set of aims for the organisation and its members, effectively revoking the original 'six points' on which it had been established – political, legal, occupational, moral, social and economic equality. Instead, the Group would work towards ensuring world peace and international co-operation, and then secondly, equality of status with men. This new prioritisation represented a significant shift in the direction of the Six Point Group and it was a shift that similarly characterised the activities of a number of different British women's organisations in the immediate post-war period. The willingness of the leaders of the SPG to transform their organisation in 1948 into one that primarily emphasised world peace demonstrates the appeal of the concept at a time that had not only witnessed world war just a few years before, but also the fragmentation and decline of politically feminist women's activism.

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[1] WL, SPG, 5SPG/E/01, '2000AD and the Six Point Group: Can the Human Race Survive Until then?', 1948

The commitment to the idea of world peace in the late 1940s grew naturally out of the renewed enthusiasm for international affairs and world politics in the immediate post-war years. The previous chapter showed how many British women's organisations became involved in a number of sporadic campaigns all of which, whilst depending greatly on individual organisational priorities, aimed to involve women in international affairs and bolster their international influence. By 1948, organisations such as the SPG and the Married Women's Association had begun to stress world peace as the 'condition on which all others depend'; that is, without the security of world peace all endeavours to improve women's international representation would prove fruitless.[2] World peace was considered by the SPG to be the necessary social and political international condition if further efforts to improve women's status were to have any chance of success. Many key members of both middle class organisations such as the SPG, the Married Women's Association and the Women's Freedom League (WFL) and labour organisations such as the Co-operative Women's Guild (WCG) had identified organisationally as pacifist since the inter-war period. Many were often historically connected to the issue through past and present membership of the WILPF and other peace organisations such as the Peace Pledge Union.[3]

However these efforts to organise around the issue of peace were ultimately thwarted by the mid-1950s, as high ranking members moved to side-line the issue amidst concern that their organisations risked becoming politically compromised. This process was both a reaction to and encouraged by a Cold War rhetoric which directly linked the issue of peace with the Left and more specifically, Communism. Fears about the likely 'Communist infiltration' of

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[2] WL, 7TBG/1 FL239, MWA, New Years Greetings to Members, 1948

[3] See J. Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820,* (London: Virago Press, 1989); N. Black, 'The Mothers' International: The Women's Co-operative Guild and Feminist Pacifism' in *Women's Studies International Forum,* 7 (6) (1984), pp. 467 – 476; D. Glick, *The National Council of Women: The First One Hundred Years,* (NCW: London, 1995); B. Caine, *English Feminism, 1780 – 1980,* (OUP: Oxford, 1997)

women's groups throughout Britain, suspicions regarding the motivation of labour women's groups and popular acceptance of the 'Soviet Peace Offensive' between 1948-1950 acted to effectively politicise the issue of peace. To work for world peace was now considered to be a political rather than moral and social crusade.

The impact of anti-communism within Britain is well documented. Steve Parsons writes that whilst anti-Communism in Britain never reached the pathological heights that it did in the USA, there were nevertheless an important series of developments which did bring about fundamental shifts in British political culture during the immediate post-war period. There were, he argues, a series of official and privately inspired measures which aimed to undermine Communism that are only recently being uncovered by historians.[4] Hugh Wilford and Andrew Defty's work on the Information Research Department, a secret section of the Foreign Office dedicated to developing a propaganda apparatus to fight the Cold War on an ideological front predominately through manipulation of the media, suggests that the domestic dimension of Britain's experience of Cold War politics was indeed acute.[5] By the end of the 1940s, British officials had employed a 'defensive offensive' political strategy to counter what they perceived as a deliberately-led Soviet propaganda campaign against Britain.[6] Through policy and propaganda the British state deliberately sought to attack the peace movement in particular, as an insidious and corrosive social force.[7] The mass media

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[4] S. Parsons, 'British McCarthyism and the Intellectuals' in J. Fryth (ed.), *Labour's Promised Land? Culture and Society in Labour Britain, 1945 – 51,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), p. 224

[5] H. Wilford, 'The Information Research Department: Britain's Secret Cold War Weapon Revealed' in *Review of International Studies,* 24 (3) (2000), pp. 353 – 369; A. Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda 1945 – 53: The Information Research Department,* (London: Routledge, 2004)

[6] R. J. Aldrich, 'Introduction' in R. J. Aldrich (ed.), *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945 – 51,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p. 4

[7] T. Shaw, 'The BBC, the State and Cold War Culture: The Case of Television's The War Game (1965)' in *English Historical Review,* CXXI (494) (2006), p. 1357

was central to this process and the IRD was responsible for supplying a large proportion of 'factual propaganda' to feed a negative public consensus on world peace. Officials based at the Department saw their efforts to undermine the British peace movement as part of a larger strategy to discredit the entire Soviet system, so that the 'pattern of official thinking and public discourse on peace' was set for much of the 1950s.[8] Accusations of treason, management of the Press, forced resignations, covert monitoring and the denial of Visa applications were some of the ways that the British Government responded to the threats of the Cold War. This anti-communist rhetoric infringed upon the public space occupied by voluntary organisations. Richard J Aldrich's work on the activities of the Cultural Relations Department in the immediate post-war period demonstrates the ways in which official anti-communist policy attached increased importance to civic associations due to the danger apparently posed by Communist 'infiltration' of these groups. The Department, a part of the British 'front-line' unit in a clandestine struggle to prevent Soviet domination, encouraged organisations to 'resist Communist encroachment' and made active use of covert anti-communist 'front' organisations in efforts to counter the Soviet threat.[9]

In this sense, the effect of the Cold War on British women's organisations can be seen as but one of the ways in which anti-Communist sentiment permeated British associational life. The events of the early 1950s illustrate how the discourses of the Cold War could engulf female public space, serving not only to undermine left-leaning organisations but also to fundamentally affect organisational policy, operation and interaction. The practices of British women's organisations were indeed vulnerable to contemporary political contexts. In response to a wider political and cultural discourse that discouraged participation with

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[8] J. Jenks, 'Fight Against Peace? Britain and the Partisans of Peace, 1948 – 54', in M. F. Hopkins et al., (eds.), *Cold War Britain, 1945 - 1964: New Perspectives,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 57

[9] R. J. Aldrich, 'Putting Culture into the Cold War: The Cultural Relations Department (CRD) and British Covert Information Warfare' in G. Scott-Smith & H. Krabbendam (eds.), *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945 – 1960,* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 112

communists and characterised the Soviet threat as imminent, the Cold War contributed to the transformation of British women's organisations.

The result was an almost complete withdrawal from the issue of peace by the early 1950s; many organisations deleted the word from their organisational material and deliberately re-positioned British women's economic, social and political rights as the primary priority. The association with Communism not only threatened organisational legitimacy but also the commitment to the maintenance of a non-partisan public space. For smaller British women's organisations such as the SPG and Married Women's Association, this process served to temporarily re-locate priority to the domestic rather than international sphere until the beginning of the 1960s.

This chapter traces this process over the course of the years 1948 – 1954 and will demonstrate how the Cold War politics of the era forced British women's organisations to abandon the issue of peace and return to a narrower and politically 'safer' domestic agenda. It will firstly examine how these groups began to specifically engage with the issue of peace in their policy, activity and rhetoric. Specifically it will look at the activities of the SPG, the Married Women's Association, the National Women's Citizens Association, the NCW, the Women's Freedom League, the British branch of the WILPF and Women's Cooperative Guild (WCG). These groups were the most heavily involved in the campaign to form a new women's peace movement and were arguably the most affected by the politics of the Cold War.

The chapter will emphasise that during the immediate post-war period, a belief in the primacy of world peace undermined the traditional 'equal rights' agendas of these

organisations. It will maintain that this commitment to the idea of peace had an ideological base, one that emphasised women's special connection to the issue based on their role primarily as mothers. Maternalism has historically been used by women as justification for involvement in peace campaigns in both the 19th and 20th centuries and appeals to women's role as 'nurturers' of the family were consistently utilised by many of the organisations in this study during the recruitment drive for a new national women's peace movement.[10]

The second section will move on to examine the impact of the Cold War on women's peace organising in Britain and how this was mirrored to some extent in the larger transnational organisations such as the IAW and ICW. The section will show how the processes of international and national affiliation gradually became the subject of intense debate and suspicion during the years of 1948 – 1950. The establishment of several new organisations during the 1940s, including the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) and the National Assembly of Women (NAW), created tensions both internationally and domestically within Britain. The WIDF's active recruitment of women in the Soviet Bloc and its open courtship of labour associations greatly worried British members, including most significantly those from the conservative NCW. Whilst initially the NAW's and the IWDC's dual commitments to world peace in addition to the rights of women as workers and mothers appealed to a broad spectrum of British women's organisations, their prioritisation of 'red causes' saw them denounced as political organisations by 1950. The situation reached its peak in 1951 when many women's organisations began to refuse to work with others on the basis of their wider organisational affiliations alone. International and national affiliations had become indicators of individual organisational political leanings.

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[10] J. Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common,* pp. 6-7

The fourth section will show how the politics of the period affected one organisation in particular, the SPG. Despite being the most enthusiastic and dedicated British women's organisation to the issue of world peace, the SPG saw its support for the issue completely collapse in 1951. Many senior high ranking members had begun to express their concern about the 'broadening of the agenda' and worried that commitment to such issues threatened the strength of the organisation through association with what were believed to be increasingly divisive political issues. Attempts to restore organisational unity re-directed the organisation back to its original 'six points' and away from the issue of peace. These events are a testament to the impact of the Cold War on women's organisations at this time. The contemporary geopolitical climate ensured that smaller British women's organisations were not to take up an international issue with similar enthusiasm for at least another eight years.

First Signs of Pro-Peace Organising, 1947 -1948

Chapter One showed how internationalism was utilised by a number of British women's organisations in the immediate post-war years in an attempt to provide an organisational focus and to bolster women's international influence more generally. This broad commitment to internationalism found its way onto a large majority of organisational constitutions and many groups had organised individual campaigns which emphasised a new international outlook.[11] However, by 1947 it was the preservation of world peace that was increasingly utilised by these organisations as a means of securing organisational unity across both cultural and political lines. In their studies of similar types of American and Italian women's organisations both Helen Laville and Wendy Pojmann have pointed to the increased sense

[11] See D. Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree,* pp. 352 – 355; 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Minutes, January 10th 1949; 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Emergency Meeting, February 8th 1950

of urgency assigned to the issue of world peace during similar periods, suggesting that this prioritisation was not unique to Britain.[12] Pojmann notes how the issue of peace was utilised by organisations including the Italian *Unione Donne Italiane* and *Centro Italiano Femminile* in an attempt to build a new, unified 'international sisterhood' that centred around disarmament and anti-militarism in a way that directly mirrors the activities of British women's organisations during the same period.[13]

World peace was also given priority at a transnational level during the post-war years. Both the IAW and ICW revived their separate peace committees to draft organisational resolutions and to manage all work that related to peace immediately following the end of the Second World War; the IAW's co-ordinating committee stressed that all their future work should be directed 'in some way' to securing world peace.[14] At its international Congress at Interlaken in 1946, the Alliance's first international resolution after the War urged the UN to take control of all sources of atomic energy.[15] Similarly, at the ICW's International Conference in 1947 a large proportion of proposed resolutions concerned the state of international relations and peace initiatives. The Council's international program began with a clear re-assertion of the ICW's 'determined protest against war and aggression in any form' and went on to 'condemn the crimes committed against humanity and against the dignity of the individual in the unsettled international conditions before, during and after the War'.[16] The ICW called directly on the women in its affiliated societies to demand that all future international disputes be

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[12] H. Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organisations,* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2002), pp. 124 – 143 and W. Pojmann, 'For Mothers, Peace and the Family: International (Non) – Cooperation among Italian Catholic and Communist Women Organisations during the Early Cold War' in *Gender & History,* 23 (2) (2011), p. 416

[13] W. Pojmann, 'For Mothers, Peace and the Family', pp. 415 - 416

[14] A. Whittick, *Woman into Citizen,* p. 155

[15] WL, 2IAW/1/C 4, IAW, *Report of the Fourteenth Congress: Interlaken August 11-16th 1946,* p. 12

[16] WL, 5ICW/B/13 13, ICW, *Report of the First Post War Conference Philadelphia: Power and Responsibilities of Freedom,* (ICW: Brussels, 1947), p. 33

settled by legitimate international courts rather than through conflict.[17] National affiliates were encouraged to engage directly with the issue of peace and the organisation urged them to provide assistance to campaigns to raise the profile of the UN within their respective countries. The ICW saw the UN as the international channel through which world peace could be effectively secured. The Council's Executive committee devised a 'Peace Plan' in 1947 which called on all national NCWs to support the 'moral authority' of the UN in all countries.[18]

Both the ICW and IAW directly linked the issue of peace with the fight for women's equal status in ways which were later reflected in the peace demands formulated by British women's organisations in the late 1940s. To the IAW, true world peace could only be guaranteed by ensuring the 'true freedom' of all individuals in every nation state. Thus equal rights for men and women were fundamental to a stable and lasting world peace. Practically, this meant ensuring that women were adequately represented politically both at national and international levels, and that they were granted 'full citizenship' on the same terms as men.[19] The ICW invoked a gendered discourse which stressed that women were better placed to work for world peace than men given their innate peaceful nature and appreciation for human life. According to the ICW, this natural inclination for world peace necessitated that women be granted equal access to the international political machinery that, in its view, would help to guarantee it.[20]

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] WL, 2IAW/1/B 003, IAW, Minutes of Meeting March 1946 London; 2IAW/1/B 003, Minutes of Meeting October 1945 Geneva

[20] WL, 2IAW/C/02, ICW, Letter to Board of Officers, May 1948

Throughout the immediate post-war years, the majority of the British organisations mentioned in this Chapter followed the lead of their international parent bodies and demonstrated a keen interest in the issue of world peace. Several including the SPG, the Married Women's Association and the WCG, passed resolutions at their Annual General Meetings which committed their organisations to pro-peace causes typically relating to disarmament and the prevention of the use of nuclear weapons.[21] In 1948 the SPG added another constitutional 'point' to its original six, which committed the organisation to help wherever possible in the 'creation of a society in which war can have no place'.[22] In the same year, the WCG announced that its international policy would in future be directed to build a 'firm foundation' for international peace by urging 'friendship between the common peoples of the world'.[23] Even the Women's Group on Public Welfare, an organisation established to work towards post-war reconstruction in Britain, passed a peace resolution in 1947 that committed the organisation to educational peace drives and possible co-operation with other organisations.[24]

In 1947 the SPG proposed to several other similar associations in written correspondence to amalgamate into an 'all-encompassing peace organisation' on the basis that national, or 'equal rights' work could be taken up by specialist women's groups. According to the Group the fight for equal pay could be dealt with by the labour and trade union movement whilst the

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[21] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Executive Committee Minutes, September 17th 1949; WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Executive Committee Minutes, December 9th 1949; 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Executive Committee Minutes, January 19th 1950; 5SPG/B FL525, SPG, Motions for Annual General Meeting, May 1949; 5MWA/3 1, MWA, Women and International Responsibility, May 1948; 7TBG/1 FL239, Pamphlet, 1949; 5WFM/C FL565, WGPW, Women and International Reconstruction, 1945; LSE, COLL MISC 0657, WCG, Sixty-Sixth Annual Report, May 1948 – April 1949, p. 17

[22] *The Daily Telegraph,* 17th July 1950

[23] LSE, COLL MISC 0657, WCG, Sixty Sixth Annual Report, 1948; COLL MISC 0657, WCG, Sixty Seventh Annual Report, 1949

[24] WL, 5WFM, WGPW, Annual Report 1947 – 1948, Action on Peace Resolution

over-lapping campaign for family allowances and women's equal economic status within marriage were already the preserve of the Married Women's Association and later, the Council of Married Women.[25] This invitation was met with mixed reaction; groups including the National Women's Citizens Association were reluctant to abandon their organisational autonomy altogether and felt that domestic issues still deserved a place on the agenda.[26] Although the prospect of amalgamation received only a lukewarm response, the formal replies expressed a desire to work unanimously to 'bring world peace to the forefront of public attention'.[27]

Despite the failure of its initial attempt to practically unite British women's organisations around the issue of peace in 1947, the SPG tried again in 1948 and invited several national organisations to affiliate to a new umbrella organisation. With the help of the British branch of the WILPF, the organisation, under the leadership of Leah Manning, established a new 'Women's Peace Movement' in July 1948 with a total of 21 affiliated women's organisations. A co-ordinating committee was set up and staffed with several well-known feminist figures of the time including Lady Pethick Lawrence, a former Suffragette and peace activist, Dame Kathleen Lonsdale, a Quaker atomic scientist and Vera Brittain, a well-known author and pacifist. [28] The original object of the movement was to provide clear direction to the fight for peace and to 'arouse women citizens to their sense of responsibility' in national and world affairs.[29] Whilst the records relating to this new 'movement' are sparse, they do reveal that the umbrella organisation was able to mobilise the WCG and that it held several meetings at

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[25] WL, 5WMA/4/2, MWA Pamphlet, 1956; WL, 5MWA/A/4, MWA, *Wife and Citizen,* Vol.8 No.7 July 1947

[26] WL, 5NWC/1/A FL171, NWCA, International Sub-Committee Minutes, 12/03/1947

[27] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Letter from Helena Normanton to Monica Whately, 1949; 5WFM/C FL565, WGPW, Draft Letter to Monica Whately of SPG, 1949

[28] J. Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common,* p. 177

[29] LSE, WILPF/2/18, WILPF, British Section Annual Report, 1948 - 1949

in House of Commons Committee rooms throughout 1949.[30] Correspondence relating to an earlier project reveals that Manning's intention had been to use this organisation to build a link between middle class organisations such as the SPG and WFL and labour women's organisations.[31] Given the lack of reference to this new 'peace movement' in the administrative records it is likely that it did not last long and was probably disbanded in subsequent years as a result of the heightening of Cold War tensions. However, the existence of the Movement reveals a broad organisational inclination to co-operate at a national level on the issue of world peace in the late 1940s.

In this sense, several British women's organisations shifted away from a purely equal rights based agenda during the late 1940s towards a broader set of priorities which emphasised the centrality of an internationalist outlook and the importance of world peace. To the SPG and Married Women's Association, world peace transcended arguments for equality between the sexes in national contexts. After the War, the Married Women's Association reminded its members that whilst 'the aims of the Association are important, we must keep a sense of proportion and realise that all our endeavours to improve society will be in vain if we are faced by world destruction'.[32] In a letter distributed to 30 national women's organisations, the Women's Freedom League insisted that the establishment of a new, secure post-war global community depended 'in the first instance… on the condition of peace' and stressed the need for this to be 'fixed into the policy of the whole women's movement'.[33] Even the WI, a primarily social movement renowned for its avoidance of controversial political statements that risked alienating its membership, acknowledged the need for world peace in the post-war years. The Institute's policy of educational talks and

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[30] WL, 5SPG/A 524, SPG, Minutes 12/9/1949

[31] WL, 5SPG/A 524, SPG Minutes 18/10/48

[32] WL, 7TBG/1 FL239, Married Women's Association (MWA), *Wife and Citizen,* Vol. 9, No. 1, January 1948 – 'Only World Government Can Bring Peace on Earth'

[33] WL, 2WFL/1 055, WFL, Minutes, May 13th 1947

exchange visits between women of different countries represented direct attempts to ensure that its members were instilled with an international outlook as a way of ensuring 'friendship and understanding' between nations.[34] This international outlook or 'international mind' emphasised the importance of world peace to global stability.[35] Whilst the WI commitment to peace did not lead to specific co-operative action or to any political demands, it does illustrate how the issue was able to captivate a broad spectrum of women's organisations in the post-war years.

'Feminine Point of View': Peace and Maternalism

By 1946 the horrors of war and, more uniquely to the period, the devastating effects of nuclear weapons, had convinced many feminists including Dora Russell, a leading member of both the SPG and the Married Women's Association, of the need to form a direct link between their organisations and the issue of peace.[36] There was a clear ideological foundation behind this increased sense of urgency which was utilised in both national and international contexts throughout the post-war period. These organisations maintained that they, as women, had a special contribution to make to the security of world peace; it was a specific 'feminine point of view' that predisposed women to an increased sense of responsibility towards the issue of peace on the grounds of their gender. To the SPG, women, by their very nature, 'were particularly bent on peace' due primarily to their roles as mothers and nurturers of the family.[37] According to this view, war was the product of the promotion and maintenance of a 'masculine attitude' which pervaded throughout the political

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[34] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 33 (7) July 1951

[35] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 33 (8), August 1951

[36] D. Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree: The Challenge to the Cold War,* (London: Virago Press, 1985), p. 117

[37] WL, 5SPG/A FL525, SPG, Annual General Meeting: Address, May 1949

system.[38] Femininity however, and more specifically motherhood, guaranteed women a greater understanding of the value and sanctity of human life and equipped her with a deeper sense of commitment and dedication to the issue of world peace.[39] The organisations in this study had a distinct solution to the problem posed by the prevalence of this 'masculine attitude' in global politics. Like the large transnational women's organisations, these groups maintained that women should be permitted to take their place in national and international governments and to organise separately around the issue of peace. This would encourage an effective 'feminisation' of both official structures and popular values and would lead to lasting world peace.[40]

This association between women, motherhood and peace was not exclusive to these organisations or to this particular historical period and is a sentiment that has been discussed at length by a number of historians both within Britain and North America. In her analysis of the Woman's Peace Party in the 1920s, Linda Schott has emphasised how ideology and membership were both sustained and shaped by the view that it was women's maternal role that 'enabled them to understand better than men the paramount value of human life'.[41] Similarly, Harriet Hyman Alonso has claimed that the link between motherhood and peace pervaded in women's pacifist thought and writing during the inter-war United States. Women's maternal role was thought to 'uniquely qualify' her to protest against war.[42] In her chronology of the connection between feminism and anti-militarism in Britain, Jill

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[38] D. Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree,* p. 352

[39] WL, 5SPG/B FL525, SPG, Minutes 8th May 1949; 5MWA/3 1, MWA, Let Women Take Their Role in International Governance, April 1947

[40] WL, 5SPG/B FL525, SPG, Minutes 8th May 1949; 5SPG/A FL524, SPG Minutes 19th June 1950, 5SPG/J FL538, SPG Newsletter October 1950; 5NWC/4/A FL171, NWCA, Minutes January 1949,

[41] L. Schott, 'The Woman's Peace Party and the Moral Basis for Women's Pacifism' in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies,* 8 (2) (1985), p. 19

[42] H. H. Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights,* (Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 1993), p. 11

Liddington notes the consistency of a 'Maternalist' feminism as the basis for women's pacifism throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.[43] Maternalism as a political strategy has been defined broadly as the specific employment of the 'language of motherhood' in order to justify specific political demands and the belief in a 'uniquely feminine value system' based around the ideals of nurturance and care.[44] Micaela Di Leonardo has pointed out that such assumptions have been typically used in ways which emphasise women's moral and ethical superiority to men. Historically, this emphasis has appeared most frequently in reference to campaigns regarding anti-militarism and peace.[45] In his analysis of Maternalism at work in British Colombia after the War, Brian Thorn has stated that one of its key tenets lay in the belief that women share a collective responsibility for protecting the world's children and this 'common capacity' unites women across political and national boundaries.[46]

Whilst women's special stake in the struggle for peace was felt by British women's organisations to be largely self-evident, the emphasis on women's difference has troubled feminist scholars for many years. In her analysis of the theoretical basis of women's peace campaigning Beatrice Carroll states that whilst the claim for women's special role as peacemakers may have been routinely employed in the past, there is a danger that such arguments could be used to infer inferiority.[47] In this sense, such an emphasis 'risks perpetuating the same notions of femininity' which have historically been used to explain

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[43] J. Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common,* p. 144

[44] M. Ladd- Taylor, 'Toward Defining Maternalism in U.S History' in *Journal of Women's History,* 5 (2) (1993), p. 110

[45] M. Di Leonardo, 'Morals, Mothers and Militarism: Anti-Militarism and Feminist Theory' in *Feminist Studies,* 11 (3) 1985, p. 602

[46] B. T. Thorn, '"Peace Is the Concern of Every Mother"': Communist and Social Democratic Women's Antiwar Activism in British Columbia, 1948–1960' in *Peace and Change,* 35 (4) (2010), p. 628

[47] B. Carroll, 'Feminism and Pacifism: Historical and Theoretical Connections' in R. R. Pierson (ed.), *Women and Peace, Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives,* (Beckenham: Croon Helm, 1987), p.3 -5

sexual difference and therefore justify unequal treatment. In her problematisation of Maternalism as a basis for feminist politics, Mary Dietz argues that 'maternal thinking' acts in ways which 'distorts the meaning of politics and political action largely by reinforcing a one-dimensional view of women as creatures of the family'.[48]

Despite these political concerns, Nancy Cott has shown how historically, arguments for women's difference *and* equality with men often existed simultaneously, with many groups using women's apparent 'special, moral and emotional qualities' as justification for equal treatment.[49] In their histories of single issue women's groups in Britain in the inter-war period, both Anne Logan and Sue Innes emphasise that utilising women's difference from men in order to fight for equal rights in the public sphere were 'not necessarily theoretical tensions' for this type of non-party women's organisation.[50] The Married Women's Association, the SPG, the WILPF and the WCG all utilised a discourse that linked women's difference from men with the fight for equality throughout this period, specifically in their prioritisation of peace. It was consistently maintained for example, that only by granting women equal access to 'the governments of the world' could women's potential be realised and a true and lasting peace be secured.[51] Such debates go to the very heart of feminist theorising in Britain at this time; the insistence on a 'feminine point of view' was also used as justification for women's rights both as housewives and as political actors in a national

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[48] M. Dietz, 'Citizenship with a Feminist Face: The Problem with Maternal Thinking' in *Political Theory,* 13 (1) (1985), p. 20

[49] N. Cott, 'Feminist Theory and Feminist Movements' in A. Oakley (ed.), *What is Feminism?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 54

[50] See S. Innes, 'Constructing Women's Citizenship in the Inter-War Period: the Edinburgh Women's Citizens' Association' in *Women's History Review,* 13 (4) (2004), pp. 621 – 647; A. Logan, 'In Search of Equal Citizenship: the Campaign for Women Magistrates in England and Wales, 1910 – 1939' in *Women's History Review,* 16 (4) (2007), pp. 501 - 518

[51] WL, 5SPG/C FL324, SPG, Letter to Members, April, 1946; 5SPG/C FL324, SPG, Newsletter, May 1949; 5SPG/A FL525, SPG, Pamphlet, 1948

context. The existence of a distinctly separate female viewpoint was recognised as fact by many of the women's organisations mentioned in this study; the topic was the subject of many cross-organisational conferences during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The feminine point of view confirmed that 'women are less violent and cruel than men', they were more 'compassionate, sympathetic and have a greater reverence for human life'.[52] Qualities that, once they had been assured greater political influence, would 'make for world peace'.

However, this is not to suggest that this gendered view of women's connection to peace with was unanimously endorsed with enthusiasm by all members of these women's organisations in the immediate post-war period. Debates about the legitimacy of Maternalism as a basis for feminist action were played out in the 1940s in ways that often led to internal dissension. Several individual members of British organisations refused to support the emerging campaign for peace on ideological grounds. Beginning at the end of the War, members such as Doreen Gorsky (the Married Women's Association and SPG) and Teresa Billington-Greig (WFL) articulated their concern about the establishment of a 'woman centred' peace movement that actively sought to accentuate women's difference from men. They worried that the emphasis on women's innate biological difference from men would prove divisive within the broader movement and posed as a distraction from the fight for equality. Patricia Knox, a member of the Executive Committee of the SPG, even threatened to resign if a passage which emphasised 'woman's special point of view' on the issue of peace was not removed from an official pamphlet.[53] She and three other high ranking members went on to stress the harmful effects of distinguishing between generalised viewpoints on the basis of gender alone and questioned '…whether there really is any special part that a woman can

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[52] O. Campbell, *The Feminine Point of View: Report of a Conference Drafted by O. Campbell,* (Williams & Norgate: London, 1952), p. 20

[53] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG Minutes of Executive Committee, April 16th 1948

play in the matter of bringing about peace'.[54] Similarly, in 1950 the Married Women's Association drew the conclusion in its monthly journal that 'the human race consists of two sexes' and that it was therefore highly 'unlikely that we shall have peace until *men* as well as women want it', and warned against the dangers of '...exaggerating women's power' with regards to the issue of peace.[55]

Doubts about women's intrinsic connection to peace and the nature of 'women's special point of view' were eventually eclipsed by arguments which explicitly utilised women's difference from men as a means of pressing for equal rights within the private and public sphere, but also as justification for the establishment of a woman centred peace movement. Many key feminists at this time went to great lengths to justify this position from scrutiny from critics within their own organisations by organising seminars and conferences where key members debated the nature of the 'feminine point of view'.[56] Centred on the premise that 'a woman's view of life is different from a man's', these conferences determined that, 'she should have equal representation in the Councils of the nation and of the World'.[57] The legacy of this sentiment has been noted by Elizabeth Wilson, who asserted that it continued to be articulated by these organisations throughout the 1960s.[58] Indeed, Dora Russell remained insistent as to its validity until her death in 1986.[59] Women's special stake in the issue of peace was used as the grounds from which to build a new peace movement that

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[54] Ibid.

[55] WL, 7TBG/1 FL239, MWA, *Wife and Citizen,* Vol. 12 No.2, January 1950

[56] WL, 5SPG/J, SPG, Letter to Members July 1948; 5SPG/A FL525, Report of Conference Proceedings, 1948; WL, 5WFM/1, WGPW, Minutes of the Organising Committee for Education Conferences, 1946 - 1948

[57] WL, 5SPG/J FL538, SPG, Letter to Members, July 1948 – Weekend Conference

[58] E Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise: Women in Post-war Britain 1945 – 1968,* (Tavistock: London, 1980), p. 179

[59] D. Spender, *The Dora Russell Reader: Fifty Seven Years of Writing and Journalism, 1925 – 1982,* (London: Pandora Press, 1983), p. 137

aimed to unite women from a variety of political and cultural backgrounds and revive a movement which many feared had become stagnant and irrelevant.

The Impact of the Cold War on Women's Peace Organisation: The WIDF and International Affiliation

Recent historiography documenting European and American women's organisations in the early years of the Cold War has acknowledged the impact that the contemporary political situation had on efforts to organise around issues ranging from peace to maternal rights. This new literature aims to highlight how the Cold War ideologies that dichotomised the international political landscape into 'East' and 'West' were internalised by the leaders and members of national women's associations. It is a testament to this fact that efforts to organise around the issue of peace failed in Britain in the late 1940s. British women's organisations were simply unable to transcend the deeply entrenched political viewpoints that characterised the Cold War at this time. In her analysis of Italian women's organisations, Pojmann points out that the Cold War ensured that groups with similar aims and objectives vehemently retained separate structures and avoided working with one another sometimes on the basis of a suspected political affiliation alone.[60] In Britain, the heightening of Cold War tensions ensured that support for the issue of peace collapsed, and also encouraged the breakdown of new broad based alliances between middle class and labour women's organisations. As middle class organisations such as the SPG and Women's Freedom League retreated from political controversy by abandoning their efforts for world peace, they also felt obliged to sever the ties with organisations which allowed or facilitated the participation of Communist women.

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[60] W. Pojmann, 'For Mothers, Peace and the Family', p.426

Peace became a major source of contention during this period predominately due to the apparent existence of what the US Government and media labelled the Soviet 'peace offensive'. As the USA and Soviet Union began to interpret one another's actions with increasing hostility, the international Communist movement turned to world peace as the central political issue from which to critique Western Governments. The first manifestation of the 'peace offensive' was a Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace held in New York in 1949; the conference served to heighten the association of 'peace' with Communist interests.[61] The Stockholm Peace Petition was launched at a meeting of the World Peace Council the following year; initiated by Communists, the Petition called for a ban on all nuclear weapons and provided further evidence to the Western powers that Communists had developed a 'concerted propaganda' campaign in the name of 'peace'.[62] These attempts to monopolise the issue of peace were viewed by Western politicians as deliberate attacks aimed to manipulate the public and undermine their political legitimacy. In this sense, the issue of peace began to be seen as directly related to Communism and the Soviet Union, a fact to which these women's organisations were not immune. In her history of the international women's movement Leila Rupp has noted how terms such as peace and anti-fascism became 'code words for Communism' in the immediate post-war world.[63] In a period of Cold War, efforts to organise around issues such as opposition to nuclear testing or the Korean War or eventually, even to declare support for peace were considered controversial. Such efforts were typically interpreted as evidence of support for Communism rather than concern for the welfare of the human race.[64] Liddington has broadly stated that a significant

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[61] R. Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream,* p. 11

[62] H. Laville, 'The Memorial Day Statement: Women's Organisations in the 'Peace Offensive' in G. S. Smith & H. Krabbendam (eds.), *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945 – 1960,* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2003), p. 194

[63] L. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement,* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1997), p. 47

[64] J. Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common,* p. 172

proportion of efforts to organise around peace in the West fell victim to Cold War divisions over the course of the 1950s.[65] This hostile atmosphere was felt acutely within Britain as Dora Russell observed in the late 1950s, writing that peace had become a 'dirty word'.[66] Similarly, Helen Whittick, a member of the Executive Committee of the National Women's Citizens Association remarked many years later that the 'fear and hatred' accorded to Communism in Britain was something she still recalled with 'utter amazement'. According to Whittick, she was forced to resign from her position as Secretary of the Association following the delivery of a speech on the issue of world peace at a cross party rally.[67]

The Cold War impacted on women's organising at an international level too. Political tensions first manifested in the ICW and IAW around the twin issues of national and international affiliation. Immediately after the war, both organisations wrestled with the question of whether it was constitutionally appropriate to accept applications for affiliation from women in Communist countries. Whilst the Executive Committee of the IAW worried that non-cooperation would encourage the creation of new international Communist women's organisations, the presence of women with potentially dangerous political agendas in the Alliance was an uncomfortable thought.[68] According to the British Mrs Spiller, (a member of the IAW Executive in addition to the WI and the National Women's Citizens Association within Britain), Communist tactics were simultaneously underhand and destructive. She concluded that to accept the membership of women from the Soviet Bloc was to 'embark on a very dangerous road' and stressed the likelihood that Communists would appropriate the Alliance for political ends whilst claiming to work for the advancement

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[65] Ibid.

[66] D. Spender, *Dora Russell Reader,* p. 129

[67] WL, 5NWC/4/A, FL 171, NWCA, Letter from Helen Whittick to Dora Russell, 14th February 1950

[68] WL, 2IAW, Minutes of Board Meeting

of women's status.[69] The organisation agreed at its Committee meeting in 1948 that women's organisations from Soviet countries could not uphold the non-party clause required by the IAW constitution. The Committee justified their decision by pointing to the fact that the majority of non-governmental organisations in the Soviet Bloc existed only with permission by the State, and that all members of such organisations were obliged to join the official Communist Party.[70] The IAW stood firm in its commitment to non-partisanship, despite initial concerns about the formation of rival international organisations in the East. De Haan's work has emphasised that the policy direction of both the IAW and ICW during this period was guided increasingly by anti-Communist sentiment. She argues that this was a direct product of their strong historic identification with a Western worldview which at this time characterised Communists as dangerous and manipulative.[71] The deliberate exclusion of women from the Soviet Bloc demonstrates that the Alliance consciously aligned itself with a Western political position, a dichotomous position produced as a result of the Cold War.

In 1945 a new international women's organisation was founded in Paris. Originally called the International Congress of Women it was later to become the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). The establishment of this new organisation caused both surprise and concern both internationally and within Britain. The new organisation's constitution centred around four key commitments that included anti-fascism, world peace, the advancement of women and the protection of children. Unlike older international women's organisations, the Federation actively encouraged affiliations from behind the iron curtain and appealed directly to working class and peasant women; by the end of 1945 the organisation had a total of 41 member organisations.[72] Historically, the organisation has

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[69] WL, 2IAW/ 1/B 3, IAW, Minutes of The Meeting of the International Committee held in Geneva, October 1945

[70] Ibid.

[71] F. De Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms', p. 553

[72] Ibid. p. 550

received notoriety for being the preserve of radical Communists and its attempts to build links with labour and socialist organisations were interpreted as a threat to Western powers throughout the 1950s.[73] The popular depiction of the WIDF as a political organisation with a hostile international agenda fundamentally shaped the ways that British women's organisations were to engage with it during these years.

Margery Corbett Ashby, former President of the IAW, attended the first session of the Federation in Paris in 1945. Whilst her report in the official IAW journal, *International Women's News,* painted the meeting as a picture of female solidarity it also notes that the presence of a 'large majority of Communists' prevented the older women's organisations from participating at the Conference in any meaningful way. This appears to have been deliberate; the programmes and personnel had been arranged before individual invitations were sent out.[74] At the following IAW Executive Committee meeting Ashby stressed the organisation's 'strong Communist element' and urged that the Alliance keep a close watch on developments in the WIDF.[75] The ICW was similarly sceptical of the new organisation. Whilst it considered that the decision to apply for national affiliation lay with individual national councils, it advised them to be wary and stressed that the ICW itself was not to be associated with the Federation.[76]

These initially tentative responses were made more acute in 1947, when the WIDF publically accused the IAW and the WILPF of being both 'reactionary and pro-fascist' and of using their international conferences to disseminate pro-fascist propaganda. Embarrassingly for the

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[73] H. H. Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue*, p. 158

[74] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 40 (4) January 1946, 'International Congress of Women'

[75] WL, 2IAW/1/B 3, IAW, Minutes of the Board Meeting, Geneva October 1945

[76] WL, ICW 5ICW/C/2, Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Officers and Conveners of the Standing Committees, October 17th 1946

WILPF this statement was made in objection to the WILPF's application for consultative status at the UN and in the official WIDF journal.[77] In response, the IAW reminded its members in *International Women's News* of the work the organisation had done to oppose fascism and Nazism and condemned the fact that the WIDF should 'waste its time attacking a democratic group of women'.[78] Such hostilities proved formative in shaping the ways that older transnational organisations engaged with the WIDF; indeed, the IAW and ICW did not begin to co-operate with the Federation on issues of mutual concern until the 1960s. As many British women's organisations were affiliated to the IAW, ICW or WILPF or all three, this negative interpretation of the Federation inevitably filtered down to affect their opinion of the new organisation.

In Britain, the formation of the WIDF was met initially with mixed reaction. This was later exacerbated in 1947 following the WIDF's public denunciation of the older transnational, Western women's organisations. The SPG, Married Women's Association and Women for Westminster (WFW) an offshoot of the SPG, affiliated to the organisation in 1945. Both the SPG and WFW sent delegates to the first Congress in Paris in November 1945, along with three other national women's organisations including the Women's Liberal Federation, the National Council of Shop Stewards and controversially, the Women's Section of the Communist Party.[79] The Chairman of the SPG Monica Whately and Secretary Clare Madden were both impressed with what they saw as a new, fresh progressive organisation that directly attempted to bring together women of all ages from all over Europe. They contrasted this with other, 'older' British women's organisations which in the same year, had refused to engage with the Federation on the grounds that it was not appropriate for an 'unknown

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[77] G. Bussey & M. Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 1915 – 1965,* (WILPF British Section: London, 1980), p. 197; WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* Vol. 41 No. 4, January 1947

[78] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* Vol. 41 No. 4, January 1947

[79] LMA, NCW, LMA/ACC/3613/1/14, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 14th December 1945

organisation to call a conference of this kind'.[80] Madden distinguished the WIDF from earlier, more traditional international organisations such as the ICW and argued that whilst women 'did indeed owe them a great debt' such organisations relied too heavily on 'a small section of middle and upper class women' who often deliberately chose to '…remain aloof and ignorant to the demands of women's changing situation'. Modern international organisations that combined the fight for women's status with, most importantly, the fight for world peace were in the SPG view, the only way forward. Headway could only be made by securing the 'active support of the great masses of working class women in industry and the home'.[81] Official SPG endorsement of the new organisation was perhaps not surprising; the SPG leadership at this time was distinctly left of centre politically and encouraged contact with working class women. Key personalities included Dora Russell, a socialist campaigner and sponsor of the Soviet initiated World Peace Council; Claire Madden, an Irish librarian and active member of Sinn Féin and the Communist Party and Leah Manning, a Labour MP, anti-fascist campaigner and former member of the '1917 club', the haunt of socialists, Fabians and authors alike.[82]

Organisations such as the Women's Freedom League and the National Women's Citizens Association however, were much more reluctant to join this new, and in their view, ambiguous international organisation. Due primarily to its un-ashamed courtship of working class interests, the Women's Freedom League questioned the Federation's political alliances and its apparent un-representative membership base. The League took further offence to criticism made by the WIDF concerning the effectiveness and ideological motivations of the IAW, an organisation to which it had been connected for many years. At a meeting of the

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[80] WL, 5SPG/B FL525, SPG, Annual Report, 1945 - 6

[81] Ibid.

[82] W. James, 'A Race Outcast from an Outcast Class: Claude McKay's experience and analysis of Britain' in B. Schwartz (ed.), *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain,* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2003), p. 73

League's Executive in 1947, officers described how the WIDF had accused the Alliance of resisting change by holding on to a limited backward agenda. The WIDF caused further insult through its suggestion that the Alliance's international policy aimed primarily to force women into their traditional gender roles in a manner similar to that of fascist policy in Germany and Italy.[83] Such statements were viewed by the League as not only false, but as evidence of an alternative and slanderous agenda.[84] The National Women's Citizens Association went further in its accusations, condemning the organisation as nothing more than a platform for 'Communist sympathisers'.[85]

However, the most outspoken critic of the new organisations was the British NCW. Like many smaller British women's groups at this time, the NCW struggled with the question of international affiliation. The records of the Council are interesting in that they reveal in detail the rationale behind the decision to steer clear of organisations such as the WIDF and newly established peace groups. The NCW observed the Paris conference that founded the WIDF with suspicion in 1945; the Council had explicitly rejected an invitation on the grounds that the conference apparently ignored existing (Western) women's organisations such as the ICW. The NCW was critical of the representative membership base given the limited amount of time given to respond.[86] Despite this initially unreceptive reaction, the Executive suggested that the Council take the time to study WIDF literature and to monitor the situation given the interest expressed by other women's organisations at this time.

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[83] M. Pojmann,' For Mothers, Peace and the Family', p. 420

[84] WL, 2WFL/1 55, Women's Freedom League (WFL), Minutes of Executive Committee, 15th April 1947

[85] WL, 5NWC/C/1/B 173, NWCA, Minutes of the Committee, 14/6/48

[86] LMA, ACC/3613/1/14, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 21st September 1945

Over the course of the year the NCW continued to consult various WIDF publications and was to eventually conclude in 1946 that the new international organisation was in fact 'based entirely on party politics'. Given the organisation's commitment to non-partisanship, the presence of Communists in the Federation was enough to preclude the NCW's involvement. The Council instead emphasised that for real 'international strength' it was essential to build upon the 'long established international women's movements' instead.[87] Lady Nunburnholme asserted that the NCW could not be associated with any organisation with political aims and suggested that the Council adopt an attitude of 'benevolent neutrality' with regards to the new organisation.[88]

The NCW's disdain for the new organisation intensified over the course of the next few years. In 1952 the Council discovered that the WIDF had inaugurated a new movement called the 'Defence of Children Movement' and had subsequently proposed a conference in Vienna of that year. The NCW used its branch structure to investigate local affiliated organisations and had discovered that this new Children's Movement could have made 'headway' in Britain. This was of grave concern to the Executive who by this point had become convinced of the widespread 'communist infiltration of British women's organisations in the name of peace particularly in the countryside' and had made this clear in annual reports.[89] Indeed, the organisation had rejected an invitation to join Leah Manning's Peace Movement in 1948 on the grounds that the issue had become 'too dangerous'.[90] The NCW urged that its affiliated organisations make careful and detailed study of the political character of the organisation through examination of the 'history, aims and methods' of the new 'Children's Movement'. It urged that branches study the organisational literature produced in *Women of the Whole World,* the organ of the WIDF, as well as that produced in

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[87] LMA/ACC/3613/1/14, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 16th January 1946
[88] Ibid.
[89] WL, NCW, *Annual Report,* 1949
[90] WL, NCW, *Annual Report,* 1948

Britain.[91] The Council claimed that whilst the Federation's British literature often appeared admiral, it was deliberately misleading as the 'violently political, anti-British and anti-American' pamphlets produced outside of Britain proved.[92]

The NCW explicitly refused to engage with the WIDF and claimed instead that the future of international women's politics lay in traditional organisations such as the ICW, contrary to the opinion of smaller women's groups such as the SPG. In response to the 'dangers' posed by the WIDF, the Council recommended that the ICW accelerate its next annual conference as soon as possible in order confirm its organisational vitality in the face of the Communist threat and to emphasise the importance of non-partisanship.[93] As concerns about the WIDF intensified over the course of the year, the Council went even further and suggested linking the ICW conference with the Liaison Committee of International Women's Organisations. The Liaison Committee was an umbrella organisation of fifteen major international women's organisations (including the ICW, International Alliance of Women, International Federation of University Women, Associated Countrywomen of the World, St Joan's Social and Political Alliance, International Co-operative Women's Guild, World Union of Women for International Concord) and had been established in 1930 as a means of ensuring collaboration between organisations that considered the League of Nations to be the focus of their campaigning work. This conference was proposed under the title of the 'Congress of Western Hemisphere Council Women' and would run as a direct Western response to the establishment of the WIDF.[94]

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[91] LMA/ACC/3613/1/19, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, March 1952

[92] WL, NCW, Annual Report, 1952

[93] LMA/ACC/3613/1/14, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, February 15th 1946

[94] LMA/ACC/3613/1/14, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, February 15th 1946

Whilst the efforts of the NCW to secure a 'Western women's supra-organisation' ultimately proved fruitless, it clearly illustrates the extent to which the Cold War had permeated women's politics in Britain by the early 1950s. The NCW's attempts to provide a visible Western response to the WIDF suggest that it viewed the Federation as politically incompatible with organisations such as theirs. By appealing to the need for a united Western women's international organisation the NCW served to directly replicate and re-produce the Cold War oppositions of the time. The NCW's equation of Communism and peace with anti-British sentiment demonstrates the extent to which the issue of peace had become a source of organisational contention. Whilst the NCW had in fact strongly supported the peace movement in the 1930s following the rise of Hitler and Mussolini to power, the organisation felt the issue to be too politically controversial in the post-war years.[95]

The international side of the NCW's work was performed by the International Standing Committee, headed by Lady Nunburnholme, also British Honorary Vice President of the ICW. Nunburnholme frequently took her concerns about the WIDF and other new and in her view, dubious peace organisations to an international level throughout this period. Indeed, she was vehemently convinced of the WIDF's ulterior motives. On Nunburnholme's advice, the ICW's International Committee issued a statement to all National Councils in June 1949 that required them to monitor peace organisations in their countries, in order that the ICW Executive could track their relationship to the WIDF and to other Communist organisations.[96] By August of that year, Nunburnholme had convinced the Executive of the ICW that closer monitoring of the National Councils was necessary. After discovering that the National Council of Pakistan had applied for membership of the WIDF, Nunburnholme urged that the

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[95] D. Glick, *The National Council of Women: The First One Hundred Years,* (NCW: London, 1995), pp. 34 - 35

[96] WL, 5ICW/B/02 003, IAW, Committee Minutes, June 1949

ICW inform the country's High Commissioner directly of this misdemeanour.[97] National Councils were no longer allowed to freely choose their individual international affiliation as they had been in earlier years. Nunburnholme was also responsible for alerting the ICW to the existence of a new, suspicious organisation, the World Organisation of Mothers of All Nations (WOMAN). WOMAN was established in the USA in 1947 by Dorothy Thompson, an American journalist in an attempt to convert women's desire for peace into a political organisation.[98] Although Laville has noted generally that this organisation remained relatively ineffectual during this period, the ICW nevertheless felt the threat to be real.[99] Not only was the establishment of this new organisation interpreted as further evidence of the encroachment of Communism into international women's politics, but members of the ICW had also grown concerned that it would threaten the international status of the older transnational women's organisations. The ICW Executive worried that the 'sentimental' and 'emotional' appeals of WOMAN and the WIDF to young women in particular, distracted attention from the work of older 'realistic' women's movements.[100]

Although de Haan has pointed out that the WIDF had a very broad membership base which united progressive groups from a variety of backgrounds, the organisation was consistently branded as being part of a hostile 'communist movement' which characterised it as both aggressive and dangerous.[101] Indeed, the Federation's consultative status with the Economic and Social Council was revoked between 1954 and 1967 on the back of such concerns at the UN. In her position as WIDF delegate at the ECOSOC deliberations which led to this decision, Dora Russell recalled 'obvious ostracism'; the British delegates ignored

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[97] WL, 5ICW/C/02, ICW, Minutes of Meeting of the Board, 24th June 1949

[98] H. Laville, *Cold War Women,* p. 145

[99] Ibid.

[100] WL, 5ICW/C/2, Representation Du Cid Aux Conferences Des Ong a Geneve 17th June 1949

[101] F. de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms', p.545

her entirely in both official and non-official capacities.[102] Whilst papers given at, particularly earlier, WIDF conferences by individual members did indeed imply sympathy for the Soviet cause and its leadership did include a number prominent Communist women,[103] the political orientation of the organisation was arguably 'much more diverse than Cold War labels allowed'.[104] Celia Donert suggests that whilst the influence of Soviet and East European regimes in the organisation should not be underestimated, the Federation should not necessarily be viewed simply as a puppet of Stalinism. By promoting new forms of political activism the WIDF attempted to build a spirit of Socialist internationalism around the world in ways that were often perceived as Communist, rather than feminist, impositions.[105]

Thus British women's organisations began increasingly to disagree on the issue of international affiliation. Membership of larger international bodies directly reflected the changes in policy and outlook which characterised the activities of British women's organisations on the domestic front. Loyalty to newer organisations such as the WIDF or to older, more traditional organisations such as the IAW or the ICW effectively revealed to the wider movement individual organisational priorities. To those that embraced the WIDF, the organisation was a refreshing alternative to the middle class Anglo-American dominated transnational women's organisations. To others, though, it represented nothing more than the encroachment of Communism into women's politics. Such disagreements heightened over the course of the late 1940s and early 1950s with some groups refusing to work with others on the basis of their international affiliations. Women for Westminster for example, refused to amalgamate and then co-operate with the SPG on international affairs and world

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[102] D. Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree Vol. 3,* p. 169

[103] WSMID, Women's International Democratic Federation, *Report of the Second Women's International Congress 1948,* (Paris: WIDF, 1948)

[104] F. de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms', p.555

[105] C. Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe: Disentangling Feminist Histories', in *Past and Present,* Supplement 8, (2013), p. 180

peace on the basis of the Group's involvement with the WIDF.[106] By 1949 leaders of the National Women's Citizens Association had also grown increasingly concerned about what they saw as the gradual association of some women's organisations with left-leaning politics. It subsequently rejected proposals to combine efforts to organise an educational peace seminar proposed by the Married Women's Association in 1949 on the grounds that the organisation had become 'too pink'.[107] Indeed, evidence of a growing 'divide' surrounding the issues of international identification, peace and Communism can also be seen further afield in Europe during this period. Whilst it was widely acknowledged that the WIDF and its Italian arm, the *Unione Donne Italiane* were not in fact official sections of the Communist Party, the leftist leanings of the organisations' leaders made it impossible for many Catholic women's groups (then the dominant majority) to continue working with them.[108]

Cold War, Peace and National Affiliation: the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC), the National Assembly of Women (NAW)

In her analysis of the 'peace offensive' in America the 1950s, Robbie Lieberman has noted how this particular Cold War rhetoric often forced organisations to dismiss others that opposed Cold War policy or allowed the participation of Communists primarily in order to secure their own organisational legitimacy.[109] This was the case within Britain in the early 1950s as new international women's organisations were increasingly denounced as politically extreme. However, suspicions about the political motivations of specific women's organisations occurred nationally within Britain as well. Two prime examples of the ways in

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[106] WL, 7TBG/1/37 FL 240, WFW, Newsletter, July 1949

[107] WL, 5NWC/4/A FL171, NWCA, Minutes of Executive Committee January 19th 1949

[108] W. Pojmann,' For Mothers, Peace and the Family', p. 419

[109] R. Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anti-Communism, and the American Peace Movement, 1945-1963,* (Charlotte: Syracuse University Press, 2010), p. 4

which Cold War ideology worked to divide women's fight for world peace within Britain can be seen in the changing relationship between the women's organisations mentioned here, and two newly formed organisations, the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) and the National Assembly of Women (NAW).

It is perhaps a testament to the impact of Cold War politics that the records relating to both of these organisations are extremely limited. De Haan notes that the majority of Western women initially associated with controversial organisations such as the WIDF in the 1950s later hid or burnt their official papers in order to prevent their association from being discovered.[110] The IWDC was established in 1943 by a number of women '…from all sections of society and of varying political views' in order to fight against fascism and build a legitimate world peace centred around the celebration of International Women's Day on or around March 8th of each year.[111] The organisation advocated a broad based programme which linked the needs and rights of women as mothers, workers and citizens but aimed primarily to build a 'broad based movement of women' throughout the world.[112] The records relating to this organisation show that in 1946 a broad spectrum of women's organisations had affiliated to the Committee, including the SPG, the Women's Freedom League, Women for Westminster and even the more mainstream National Council of Women as well as labour organisations such as the WCG.[113] Prominent individual women also lent their name to the organisation in its early years, including Edith Summerskill (Labour MP), SPG members Dora Russell, Leah Manning MP and Monica Whately, along with Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, a well-established former Suffragette, Eleanor Rathbone and entertainer

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[110] F. De Haan, *Continuing Cold War Paradigms,* p. 549

[111] See Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (Hereafter ISH), Dora Russell Papers, International Women's Day Committee, Executive Committee Minutes, 1946 and 1951

[112] WL, 7TBG/2 401, IWDC, Letter from IWDC to Teresa Billington-Grieg, 2/3/43

[113] ISH, DRP, IWDC, National Committee for Celebration of International Women's Day, Committee Members 1945

Vera Lynn.[114] However, by 1951 only the SPG had retained its connection and past spokeswomen became deliberately wary of mentioning their former endorsement of the organisation.[115] The IWDC's links to working class organisations, the presence of Communist Party members and more particularly, its emphasis on world peace made many women's groups suspicious in an era characterised by endemic rumours of Communist infiltration and the Soviet 'peace offensive'.

The WFL in particular had a very uneasy relationship with the Committee. Throughout the course of 1947 and 1948 the League disaffiliated and consequently re-affiliated a total of three times whilst its leaders attempted to decipher the true aims of this new organisation. The Committee, in a similar manner to the WIDF, had pledged itself to mobilise women from a grass roots level within the trade unions, social clubs and labour organisations, a policy in direct contrast to the highly centralised nature of the traditional women's groups mentioned here.[116] Ultimately in 1948, the organisation decided not to associate itself with the Committee after suspicions that the organisation had initiated a policy which '...reserved invitations to women belonging to associations of one political colour, to the exclusion of others' were confirmed. According to the WFL, this proved beyond all doubt the IWDC 'great party bias'.[117] In 1951, at the height of Soviet 'peace offensive', the IWDC organised a series of exchange visits with a partner organisation in the USSR, the Soviet Women's Committee, to share information and experiences.[118] Despite the IWDC's insistence on the educational value of the exchanges, the overtly complimentary reports on the condition of women's lives

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[114] ISH, DRP, IWDC, Notes for Speakers, June 1950

[115] WL, 7TBG/2 FL401, International Women's Day Committee (IWDC), Letter to Women's Organisations, February 11th 1943

[116] See 2WFL/1 55, WFL, Minutes, May 13th 1947; 2WFL/1 55, WFL, Minutes, June 30th 1947; 2WFL/1 55, WFL, Minutes, December 3rd 1947; 2WFL/1 55, WFL, Minutes, January 5th 1948 and 2WFL/1 55, WFL, Minutes, February 3rd 1948

[117] 2WFL/1 55, WFL, Minutes, January 5th 1948

[118] WL, IWDC, *We See Russia,* (IWDC: London, 1951)

in Russia did nothing to alleviate concerns about the organisation, and were viewed by other women's groups simply as evidence of the Committee's endorsement and support for the Soviet regime.[119]

The Women's Co-operative Guild had from 1946 stressed the importance of world peace to its national membership and had by 1949 taken part in various deputations to the Government in favour of issues such as disarmament, ending National Service and banning the production of nuclear weapons.[120] The Guild had joined the IWDC after the war in the hope that it would help to effectively link the issues of women's rights and peace, and could act as a means of bringing all sorts of 'religious, social, democratic' women's organisations together. By 1949 however, Guild leaders worried that whilst the organisation was very willing to entertain the views of different political parties, it was nevertheless concerned about the prevalence of Communist women at IWDC rallies and marches. Whilst still remaining a member organisation, the Guild expressed reluctance about lending its name to Committee policy and ruled that Guild speakers should not take part in future IWDC demonstrations.[121] In 1949 the WCG issued a formal statement to IWDC leaders that urged them to ensure 'neutrality in regards to politics, religion and race' which had not, in the Guild's view, 'been observed by Communists in this country'.[122] By 1952 the Guild made the decision to withdraw its support and instead established an alternative 'International Co-operative Women's Day' on the grounds that the IWDC had become too associated with the 'politics of extreme Left' following multiple attacks on the Labour Government at several public rallies.[123]

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[119] WL, IWDC, *We See Russia,* (London: IWDC, 1951), p. 1 - 3

[120] LSE, COLL MISC 0657, WCG, Sixty Seventh Annual Report, 1949; WCG, Sixty Eighth Annual Report, 1950

[121] LSE, COLL MISC 0657, WCG, Sixty Seventh Annual Report, 1949, p.22

[122] LSE, COLL MISC 0657, WCG, Sixty Seventh Annual Report, 1949, p. 23

[123] LSE, WCG, COLL MISC 0657, WCG Seventieth Annual Report, 1952, pp. 20 - 21

Indeed, the records of the Communist Party (CPGB) do reveal the presence of Communist women in the organisation and the fact that the Committee was used by them as a means of channelling their efforts for world peace.[124] Further, a London District Committee report of the CPGB that detailed the work of Communist women for peace also reports of the IWDC as if it were a corresponding branch.[125] It is difficult to discern whether there were any real attempts by Communist women to deliberately manipulate the IWDC; the limited records available do not reveal any explicit attempts at subversive activity. In his analysis of the Communist Party in the post-war years, Laybourn asserts that overlapping priorities meant that Communist women tended to 'blend in' with the wider women's movement at this time rather than drawing attention to themselves.[126] The records of the Communist Party Women's Section do reveal a sustained interest in women's status as well as issues such as equal pay and education throughout this period, in a similar manner to middle class organisations.[127] Whilst there may be no direct evidence that Communist women intended to 'infiltrate' this organisation to spread their own ideas, the hostile reactions of former member organisations and the multitude of disaffiliations suggest that their presence significantly damaged the Committee's credibility.

The National Assembly of Women, like the IWDC, was established to fight for the rights of women as mothers, as workers and as citizens. The organisation had been set up in 1944 by Tamara Rust, a Communist Party member and wife of Wogan Philips, the second Baron of Milford and the only Communist Party member to sit in the House of Lords. Rust had

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[124] Communist Party Archives (Hereafter CPA) [accessed online 1/07/12**],** CP/CENT/WOM/1/1, Report of Women's Work From the Past Year, 1949 - 1950

[125] K. Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain: Dissent, Decline and Re-Emergence,* (Routledge: London, 2006), p. 34

[126] Ibid. p. 33

[127] CPA, CP/CENT/WOM/1/1, Draft of Report to Congress: Women in Society, 1952; CP/CENT/WOM/1/1, Report of Women's Work From the Past Year, 1949 - 1950

previous experience of organising around women's rights; in 1941 she had helped to establish a series of Women's Parliaments throughout the country to work for women's social and economic equality.[128] The NAW advocated measures such as the increased provision of health services, equal pay and equal social status in addition to prioritising the issue of peace and more specifically, opposition to the use of nuclear weapons.[129] The organisation appealed specifically to women in its prioritisation of world peace and utilised a gendered Maternalism in a similar fashion to middle class organisations at this time. Women, the NAW stated in 1951, 'will do anything to protect their children from war' including fighting for their homes, their living standards and world peace.[130] Given its enthusiastic support of the WIDF in the face of wider public scepticism of all the women's groups mentioned here it was the SPG that engaged the most wholeheartedly with the NAW in the late 1940s. The Group regularly sent delegates to the Assembly's meetings and assisted with the organisation of multiple exchange visits with women from the Soviet Union.[131]

Like the IWDC, the presence of Communist women in the NAW is difficult to distinguish due to the lack of administrative records and academic work on the organisation during these years. Tricia Davies does briefly point to the National Assembly in her work on Communist Party women in the 1940s and 1950s. Davies claims that it was in fact Communist Party women that took the initiative in the organisation of a large amount of the national marches, demonstrations and petitions and that a significant proportion of the organisation's policy could in fact be directly linked 'in some way' to Party policy.[132] However, Davies insists that

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[128] C. Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary,* (I. B. Taurus & Co: London, 2000), p. 183

[129] WL, National Assembly of Women (NAW), Annual Report 1949 – 50, (London: NAW, 1950), p. 2

[130] WL, NAW, *Women act for Peace, Home and Family,* (London: NAW, 1951), p. 1-4

[131] See WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Minutes July 16th 1952; 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Minutes March 8th 1951; WL, 5SPG/A FL524, Minutes, February 12th 1950

[132] T. Davies, 'What Kind of Woman is She? Women and Communist Party Politics, 1941 – 1955' in R. Brunt and C. Rowan (eds.), *Feminism, Culture and Politics,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982), p.97

Communist women were keen to use the NAW to break down 'the barriers between the non-Party and Party women' and to encourage a diverse political membership.[133] Reflecting on her time in the organisation in an oral interview conducted by Keith Morgan for the Communist Party biographical project, Margaret Cohen was explicit about the ratio of Communist women in the Assembly, despite its organisational independence from the Party.[134] Although Dora Russell insisted emphatically in her memoirs that the organisation was *not* the women's conference of the Communist Party, she admitted that the Assembly's connections to the *Daily Worker*, a magazine published by the British Communist Party (later to become 'The Morning Star' in 1966), did not do the organisation any favours.[135] Indeed, the high visibility of Communist members in this organisation ensured that it did not receive sustained support from the broader women's movement in this period; the National Women's Citizens Association dismissed the organisation in 1949 as merely a 'Communist front' for example.[136]

In a testament to the ways in which Cold War politics permeated the British women's movement, by 1951 Parliament had come to the conclusion that both the IWDC and the NAW had 'come under Communist influence'. Earlier in the year the Director-General of the Festival of Britain issued a public statement that had associated the Festival with the IWDC amongst other national organisations. In March, the Prime Minister was questioned directly in the House of Commons about this misdemeanor. The debate concluded with a statement that urged both Houses to take extreme caution in the future not to be '…led up the garden path by such bodies' as a precaution against the increased amount of dubious organisations

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[133] Ibid. p. 98

[134] British Library (Hereafter BL), Communist Party of Great Britain Biographical Project, Margaret Cohen, Part 3

[135] D. Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree Vol. 3,* p. 124

[136] WL, 5NWC FL234, NWCA, Minutes, February 9th 1949

in Britain that deliberately sought to mislead 'reputable people'.[137] The IWDC and the NAW were now categorized as dangerous organisations, despite their commitments to women's rights. The official perception of these organisations was made clearer in 1953, following the Home Secretary's response to the NAW's request for Visas for entry to the United Kingdom on behalf of five delegates from the Soviet Union. Applications for these Visas were declined on the basis that Members believed that '…the National Assembly of Women is engaged in the Soviet inspired campaign against the policy of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation' and that the Government was not prepared '…to allow foreigners to come here to carry on this campaign under the colourable pretext of concern for the interests of women'.[138] Subsequent debate in the House of Commons was fierce; Samuel Silverman (Labour MP) used the opportunity to challenge the Conservative Government's approach to freedom of expression. He claimed that the Home Secretary was '…completely misinformed about the purpose of the National Assembly of Women which, so far as my information goes, has no connection whatever with any of the matters to which he has referred'. He went on to assert that the meeting organised by the Assembly, a national conference dedicated to anti-fascism, was in fact 'an entirely lawful meeting' and that the Government was wrong to refuse Visas 'solely on political grounds' alone. The response to this challenge provides a brilliant example of the ways in which the issue of peace and Communism were thought to be almost synonymous during this period and is perhaps worth quoting at length:

> "As regards the first question—whether I have not been misinformed about the purposes of this Assembly—I think that I can assure the House that that is not so. Perhaps I shall be believed when I say that the Chairman of the National Assembly of Women is Mrs. Monica Felton. Writing in the "*Daily Worker*" about this body on 21st February, 1953, she said, among other things: How they have worked for peace. …I think that the hon. Member will agree that that answers that question."[139]

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[137] Hansard, HC Debate 19th March 1951, Vol. 485 cc. 2095 - 6

[138] Hansard, *HC Debate 4th March 1953, Vol. 512 cc. 393-8*

[139] Hansard, *HC Debate 4th March 1953 Vol. 512 cc. 394-5*

Whether it was the organisation's contribution to the *Daily Worker*, coupled with the mention of the word 'peace' that exacerbated this hostile reaction, it is clear that commitment to the issue of peace had reached new heights of controversy. This is particularly evident given that the Women's Group on Public Welfare, an organisation that had deliberately steered clear of association with the WIDF and had by this point, dropped the issue of peace from its agenda, was able to secure Visas for women from both Poland and the Soviet Union on behalf of its exchange program just the year before.[140] Although the NAW's leader's, Monica Felton, attempted to re-assure the public in the media that the Assembly was in fact a 'democratic organisation' that worked towards women's interests as mothers and that the attack was simply 'ridiculous', the organisation was nevertheless popularly viewed as a Communist front.[141] By 1952 the Labour Party had proscribed the organisation and in 1953 Eva Redfern, a Labour Councillor in Derbyshire was forced to resign from NAW leadership and later expelled from the Party for travelling on a NAW sponsored trip to Russia.[142]

The NAW's organisational integrity suffered to a much greater degree in the early years of the 1950s than that of the IWDC. The NAW's political affiliations were not only challenged by other national women's organisations but also by the press and later, the Government. NAW's connection to the WIDF had aroused the suspicions of many British women's organisations as to its political leanings from the outset; by 1950 the Press were referring to the Federation as a Communist body.[143] Monica Felton, the NAW's leader, was an individual member of the WIDF and caused widespread public controversy following several visits to North Korea in the early 1950s. Felton's first trip was in 1951 as part of a 17 person commission sent on behalf of the WIDF to uncover the circumstances of the ordinary

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[140] WL, 5WFM/C FL565, WGPW, Minutes of Organising Committee, June 28th 1951

[141] *The Manchester Guardian,* March 5th 1953

[142] *The Times,* 30th December 1953; *The Times,* 8th February 1954

[143] See *The Manchester Guardian,* June 13th 1951; *The Observer,* June 30th 1957

population living in the country in war time conditions. Their conclusions were used by the WIDF to publish a report entitled 'Korea: We Accuse'. Distributed internationally, the report detailed a number of atrocities and abuses committed by the US Forces whilst in Korea including the torture of civilians and the use of germ warfare.[144] The report was received unanimously both in America and Britain as further evidence of the organisation's Communist sympathies and did nothing to elevate the NAW's credibility.[145]

Within Britain Felton personally published a detailed account of her travels in addition to a separate propaganda pamphlet entitled 'What I Saw in Korea', which shows her in a multitude of graphic photos viewing several mass graves of Korean civilians.[146] Felton's self-confessed aim was to uncover 'the truth', to provide the public with a full account of the 'horrors' of the war, 'atrocities' which she described as being committed in the name of the UN and the British people.[147] The pamphlet equated the savagery that had occurred in Korea to 'that of Hitler and the Jews', and claimed that both civilians and soldiers had been the victims of horrendous practices and un-relentless killing.[148] Felton concluded with an emotional plea for an end to the conflict, and claimed that the war had been 'a crime against humanity and an offence against all standards of decent human conduct'.[149] Needless to say Felton's actions were not received well by the British Government which made moves to charge her, along with several others, with treason for consorting with the enemy and for spreading enemy propaganda at home.[150] Although ultimately the prosecution fell through, primarily due to debate over the legislation regarding subversive activity during this period,

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[144] C. Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe', p. 193

[145] H. Laville, 'The Memorial Day Statement: Women's Organisations in the Peace Offensive', p. 197

[146] M. Felton, *That's Why I Went,* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1953)

[147] Ibid. p. 10

[148] *The Times,* 13th June 1951

[149] M. Felton, *What I Saw in Korea,* (1951), pp. 1 -12

[150] Hansard, HC Debate, 18 June 1951 Vol. 493 cc. 1 - 4

Felton was removed from her position as Chairman of the Stevenage Development Corporation in June 1951.[151] In the Press, Felton recognised that whilst this was a deliberate attempt to politically 'discredit' her she would continue to do all in her power to let the people of Britain 'know what savagery is being committed in the name of civilisation'.[152] On Felton's initiative the NAW was consistently vocal in its opposition to the war in Korea; in 1952 members of the organisation 'thronged for several hours' in the House of Commons whilst MPs debated the North Korean bombing, lobbying for an early armistice.[153]

Despite this public controversy Felton returned again to Korea in 1955 as a member of a British panel permitted by Korean and Chinese officials to visit several British prisoner of war camps in North Korea despite humanitarian agencies such as the International Red Cross having being barred.[154] The panel consisted of Felton and several journalists working for the *Daily Worker*, along with Jack Gaster, a member of the British Communist Party; their aim was to investigate allegations made by the Ministry of Defence regarding the torture, persecution and poor living conditions in the camps. On their return the panel published their findings in the *Daily Worker* which negated accusations of Chinese human rights abuses and instead stressed the 'progressive nature' of the camps.[155] Once again, Felton's 'treasonable' actions raised concerns in Parliament. Although the Attorney-General, under considerable pressure from several MPs to prosecute, felt the panel's actions did not warrant legal action,

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[151] J. Mahoney, 'Civil Liberties in Britain During the Cold War': the Role of Central Government' in *The American Journal of Legal History,* 33 (1) (1989), p. 65

[152] *The Manchester Guardian,* June 13 1951 and *The Manchester Guardian,* June 20 1951

[153] *The Times,* 25th June 1952

[154] *The Observer,* 27th February 1955

[155] S. P. Mackenzie, *British Prisoners of the Korean War,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 52

the panel's published findings were nevertheless viewed as 'scurrilous attacks' against Britain itself.[156]
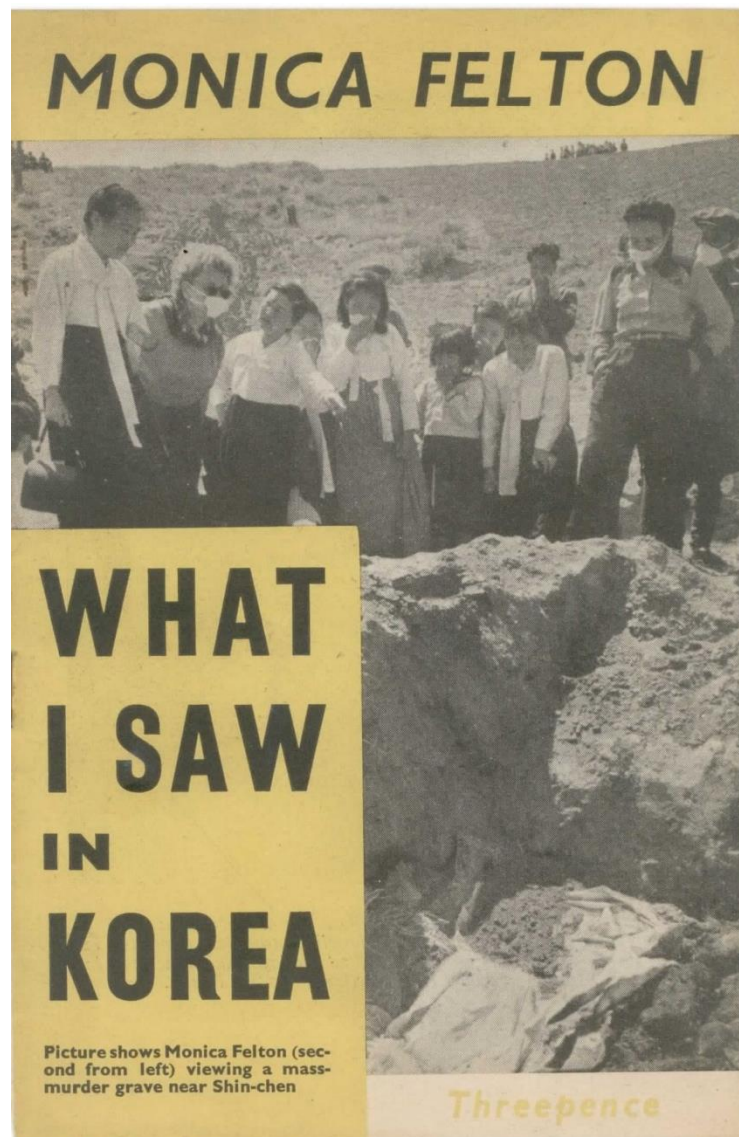

Figure 1 – The front cover of Felton's 1951 controversial self-published pamphlet detailing the findings from her trip to North Korea

What I Saw in Korea, (1951)

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[156] Hansard, *HC Debate. 7 March 1955 vol. 538 cc. 31-5*

It is clear that by the early 1950s many members of these British women's organisations, encouraged by a contemporary discourse that linked peace directly with Communism, genuinely feared that Communists were attempting to influence their established organisations in order to further their own aims. Communist women were consistently described throughout this period as 'devious agents' by the more sceptical members of middle class women's organisations. They were characterised by women like Lady Nunburnholme as deceitful, 'fooling' those around them into thinking they were working to further women's status and for world peace when in reality their priority was only to further their own political aims.[157] Public criticism of Britain's role in the Korean conflict also caused suspicion amongst the movement, and was exacerbated by the fact that organisations such as the NCW had passed a number of resolutions throughout 1950 that expressed 'strong approval' of military action in area.[158] A written dispute published in the Observer between Dora Russell, a member of the SPG as well as the NAW and the IWDC, and Henrietta Bower, a member of the NCW, clearly illustrates how this belief about the ulterior motive of Communist women shaped contemporary attitudes to Left-leaning women's organisations and women's politics more generally. In the published correspondence, Bower asserted that the link between the WIDF and a new organisation, the World Congress of Mothers (WCM), an organisation established in 1955 to work for world peace and the interests of mothers and children,[159] proved beyond all doubt that the Federation was nothing more than a vehicle for Communist propaganda. She went on in her letter to rebuke Russell's former appeals as to the political neutrality of the organisation and claimed that 'the essential part of the technique of a Communist front organisation is to surround it with a fringe of misinformed, gullible, but respectable people'.[160] Bower's concluding remarks encapsulate a sentiment now shared by a large proportion of women's organisations at this time; whilst she agreed on the primacy of

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[157] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 23 (3) November 1950, p. 22

[158] Ibid. p. 12

[159] W. Pojmann, 'For Mothers, Peace and the Family', p. 415

[160] *The Observer,* February 10th 1956

Maternalism as a basis for pacifism and non-militarism she did not, however, 'want peace at the price of Communist domination'.[161]

The Return to Equal Rights: the Six Point Group, Peace and Political Neutrality

By the early 1950s, a large majority of these women's organisations had grown increasingly concerned about the ever-growing association between the issues of peace and Communism. Even the SPG, the organisation originally the most committed to international anti-militarism and disarmament, saw its support for the issue collapse under increasing pressure from members. Many senior, high ranking members had begun to express their concern about the 'broadening of the agenda' and worried that official commitment to such issues threatened the strength of the organisation through association with what were believed to be increasingly divisive political issues.[162] In 1950 this concern regarding the infiltration of 'party politics and the issue of peace' into the organisation came to a head, resulting in a split which fundamentally altered its direction.

Throughout the year the organisation had begun to publish an increasing amount of literature which criticised the Government's use of 'irritating language and allusions regarding the Soviet Union' and the apparent 'increasing tendency' to stress both physical and psychological preparations for a Third World War.[163] This literature was produced on the initiative of three key members including Dora Russell, Lyndal Evans and Sybil Morrison, all

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[161] Ibid.

[162] WL, 5SPG/ FL524, SPG, Executive Committee Minutes, July 10th 1950

[163] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Executive Committee Minutes, August 14th 1950; 5SPG B FL525, SPG Annual Report 1949 – 1950, March 1950; 5SPG/B FL525, SPG, SPG Motions for Annual General Meeting, May 1949; 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Annual General Meeting May 1949

of whom were self-identified pacifists. In a letter sent to all Parliamentary candidates in 1950, the Group included a questionnaire which attempted to clarify the extent to which each candidate was committed to 'a positive peace policy and the end of the Cold War', rather than their commitment to equality between the sexes.[164] However, tensions erupted in July 1950 on distribution of a letter sent to all Members of Parliament which called for a withdrawal of all troops from Korea and questioned the political and moral motives of the American Government and its involvement in conflict. The letter also demanded that the Government take greater measure to press the United States to recognise the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China.[165]

Such open criticism of US and British foreign policy angered many members who insisted that such direct political comments contravened the organisation's constitution. Three members of the Executive Committee resigned, along with Edith Summerskill a long standing member who had previously served as President of the organisation. Summerskill was then a Labour Cabinet Minister and claimed that she could not be associated with such blatant criticism of Government policy. Indeed, the Prime Minister Clement Atlee was asked directly about Summerskill's connection to the SPG on the 19th July in the House of Commons in respect to the preservation of the constitutional doctrine of collective Cabinet responsibility. Atlee was forced to reassure the House that Summerskill had in fact been 'completely unaware of the contents of the document' and had been 'wrongly associated with it'.[166] The association between peace, party politics and Communism is made explicit in Summerskill's letter of resignation, in which she expressed her dismay that the organisation had been 'duped by Communists into furthering their policy'.[167] In her memoirs, Dora Russell notes how Summerskill accused her specifically of attempting to pull 'Communist wool over

[164] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Emergency Meeting for Members, February 8th 1950

[165] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Executive Committee Minutes, July 10th 1950

[166] Hansard, *HC Debate 19 July 1950 Vol. 477 cc. 2261-2*

[167] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG, Newsletter, October 1950

SPG members' eyes'.[168] Summerskill and Russell had in fact come to blows a few months earlier over this issue at a garden party organised by the Married Women's Association. After arriving in her capacity as organisational President and spotting a World Council for Peace petition installed on Russell's initiative, Summerskill threatened to leave if it was not immediately removed.[169]

Such direct criticism of the British Government and its policy on Korea worried many of the SPG's members particularly given the wider public and official reaction to Monica Felton's controversial pamphlet on the issue just months earlier. Felton's political reputation had been drastically undermined and her organisation, the NAW, was now widely considered to be a Communist front. Issuing such a controversial political statement further risked the organisation's association with Communism particularly in light of the fact that Dora Russell and Leah Manning remained individual members of the IWDC and the NAW. Similarly Leah Manning's connections to *Labour Monthly,* a magazine edited by influential Communist Party member Rajani Palme Dutt,[170] did nothing further to alleviate member's concerns.[171]

Whilst Lyndal Evans, one of the authors of the offending letter, denied Communist links, she did admit the need to restore organisational unity.[172] The structural and ideological changes that occurred within the Six Point Group after this incident are broadly representative of a process that affected many of the women's organisations mentioned here. The organisation underwent a fundamental transformation that not only re-elected the whole of the Executive

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[168] D. Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree Vol. 3,* p. 130

[169] Ibid. p. 123

[170] J. Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict: the History of the Communist Party of Great Britain,* 1951-68, (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 2003), p. 8

[171] L. Manning, 'Design For Peace' in *Labour Monthly,* July 1948, pp. 206 - 208

[172] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG Minutes, August 14th 1950 – 'Resignation of Edith Summerskill'

Committee, but also shifted its direction completely. At the emergency meeting following the incident, the new chairman Monica Whately emphasised that she was to direct future policy along the lines of a 'strictly egalitarian programme' and the organisation was henceforth going to stick explicitly 'to feminism'. Other members expressed their 'regret and concern that members of the past Executive had used the Group to promote a cause which distracted from our original tenets'.[173] Cold War tensions had apparently dampened Whately's original enthusiasm for the issue of world peace. In 1946 she had gone to many lengths to maintain links with the IWDC and had acted for a time on its Executive Committee and as an official speaker. In 1948 she had supported the addition of world peace to the SPG's working constitution in 1948.[174]

The decision of SPG leaders drop the issue of peace and withdraw from organisations such as the IWDC led to the adoption of a much narrower, equal rights organisational agenda which focussed largely on women's rights within Britain itself. Similarly, the Married Women's Association, decided to retreat from the issue of peace in 1949 in reaction to the increased concern from members that its 'appeal' was in fact 'wholly Communist in origin'.[175] Although this did not lead the Association to drop the issue of sexual difference, the Group did begin to focus much more narrowly on the relatively 'safer' and arguably more politically respectable area of equal financial partnership in marriage. Interestingly, this shift in priorities coincided with a decision by the Association to sever its links with the women's labour movement within Britain entirely. Previously the organisation had been active in attempting to court labour interests, and had even applied (un-successfully) to affiliate to the Trade Union Congress as a Housewives Trade Union several times between 1945 – 6.[176]

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[173] WL, 5SPG/A FL524, SPG Newsletter, October 1950

[174] WL, 5SPG/J FL539, SPG Newsletter, November 1950

[175] WL, 7TBG/1 FL239, MWA, *Wife and Citizen,* Vol. 9 No. 9 , January 1949

[176] WL, 5MWA/2/1, Letter to other Societies, Dr Edith Summerskill, February 1948

It is worth noting that whilst concerns about the influence of Communism were vocalised to some extent in this dispute, the majority of the women involved in this controversy maintained that their qualms stemmed largely from the deviation from the traditional, non-party status on which it had been established in 1921. Rather than being couched in an overtly anti-Communist rhetoric, complaints were articulated in a way which idealised the non-party voluntary association as the ideal space for political activity and organising. Indeed, several members had that year refused to re-join the Group on the grounds that it had become simply 'too political'.[177] In this sense, whilst Helen Laville attributes the withdrawal of American women's organisations from the issue of peace to a desire to play an active role in the promotion of national foreign policy, British women's organisations were not prepared to 'risk internal dissension' by supporting issues which breached non-party lines.[178] In her analysis of the relationship between voluntary associations and party politics in inter-war Britain, Helen McCarthy explains that the growth of non-party associations in this period created a space in British political life that allowed thousands of men and women the opportunity to participate in democratic politics without having to 'invest in a partisan identity'. In this sense, defending the idea of a 'common meeting ground' free from partisan and sectarian conflict became increasingly more important than participating or intervening in the political process.[179] A large proportion of the British women's organisations mentioned in this study were established during this same period and were similarly convinced of the connection between non-partisanship and organisational vitality. Thus as the concept of peace was forced increasingly away from political neutrality by the heightening of Cold War tensions, British women's organisations began to feel uncomfortable by association. Cross party unity was viewed as being so vital to the health of these organisations that complete withdrawal from the issue was seen as the only effective way forward.

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[177] WL, 5SPG.A FL524, SPG Minutes, April 19th 1950

[178] H. Laville, *Cold War Women,* pp. 138 - 140

[179] H. McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain' in *The Historical Journal,* 50 (4) (2007), p. 912

Whilst immediately after the Second World War the issue of peace was envisioned as a means of inspiring and uniting the women of Britain into a new and 'all encompassing' women's movement, by 1951 this had apparently failed. The introduction of party politics and the association of peace with Communism was apparently so worrying to the Married Women's Association that it completely refused to engage with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1959. The Association's leader, Juanita Frances, claimed that the issue was simply '…too controversial' and that the organisation 'never dealt with…party political matters', despite its enthusiastic endorsement of the issue a decade earlier.[180] Both Liddington and Wilson have noted the lack of an explicit overlap between CND and women's groups in this period, arguing that participation was largely an expression of a 'generalised political position' and did not lead to feminist politicisation.[181] Further, in her analysis of the Congress of American Women during the Cold War Amy Swerdlow has found that the link between feminism and peace was severed during the 1950s following the intensification of McCarthyism, and was not to be re-established until 1968 following its endorsement by the student and youth cultures.[182] In Britain, organisational agendas came to re-focus predominately on national issues in the late 1950s, namely equal pay, political representation and property rights following the removal of peace as a central organising point. Although this did anger some members, including Sybil Morrison of the Six Point Group, who claimed in 1952 that she had 'lost all hope' as to the future of the organisation, the majority were not willing to associate themselves with an apparently overtly party political issue.

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[180] WL, 5MWA/3 1, MWA, MWA and the Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament, 1959

[181] J. Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common,* p 175*.* ; E. Wilson, *Halfway to Paradise: Women in Post-war Britain,* p. 178

[182] A. Swerdlow, ' The Congress of American Women: Left Feminist Peace Politics in the Cold War' in L. K. Kerber; A. Kessler-Harris & K. Kish Sklar (eds.), *US History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays,* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 312

The controversy surrounding the issue of peace was also felt acutely at an international level too, albeit a few years later. In 1954 the IAW began to express concern about the extent to which its initiatives for world peace were actually beneficial in the current political climate. Margery Corbett Ashby, who had presided over the organisation's Peace Committee since the end of the War admitted that given the 'very difficult' international political situation 'direct work for peace' had become extremely hard.[183] Instead, she suggested that the IAW should work for peace 'indirectly' by promoting human and interracial relations. It was this new emphasis that would guide the organisation in the next few years towards the issues of international development and technical assistance. The following year, the organisation again insisted that working for peace was now impossible, given the Alliance's constitutional commitment to neutrality and the fact that 'all peace questions nowadays' had become 'so national and political' to the extent that '*any* work for peace now involves our neutrality clause in some way'.[184] In 1957, the proposal was put forward to disband the Peace Committee altogether in response to concerns that it was increasingly being used as platform for national and political views and had caused rifts between members. Although this proposal was rejected it was resolved to change the title of the peace Committee to the 'Committee for International Understanding'. The Board voted to drop the word peace as they felt it 'hampered rather than aided' the organisation's work towards global stability.[185]

Instead, the organisation's work for peace was translated into support for the United Nations (UN) and later, international development. That one of the largest transnational organisations felt obliged to disassociate itself from world peace clearly reveals how strongly its association with Communism had become, particularly given the Alliance's strong historical connection to the issue. The IAW had noted with concern throughout the early

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[183] WL, 2IAW/1/B 003, IAW, Report of the International Committee Conference, London June 24th – 27th 1954

[184] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of Board Meeting, August 20th 1956

[185] WL,2IAW/1/B 003, IAW, Minutes of International Committee Meeting, 24th – 29th July, 1957

1950s how involvement in the issue of peace had given rise to political divisions within the organisation. Like British women's organisations, it also demonstrated considerable concern about the effect that the issue of peace had on its constitutional commitment to non-partisanship.

Steve Parsons has claimed that whilst anti-Communism in Britain never reached the pathological heights that it did in the USA, there were nevertheless an important series of developments which did bring about fundamental shifts in the British political culture. There were, he argues, a series of official and privately inspired measures which aimed to undermine Communism which are only recently being uncovered by historians.[186] Accusations of treason, forced resignations and the denial of Visa applications were some of the ways that the British Government responded to the threats of the Cold War. In this sense, the effect of the Cold War on British women's organisations can be seen as but one of the ways in which anti-Communist sentiment permeated British associational life. The events of the early 1950s illustrate clearly how the discourses of the Cold War could engulf female public space, serving not only to undermine left-leaning organisations but also to fundamentally affect organisational policy, operation and organisational interactions. The Cold War effectively transformed British women's organisations such as the SPG; from the early 1950s the Group dropped the issue of world peace, reduced connections with the labour women's movement and consciously chose to abandon 'political' policy.

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[186] S. Parsons, 'British McCarthyism and the Intellectuals' in J. Fryth (ed.), *Labour's Promised Land? Culture and Society in Labour Britain, 1945 – 51,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), p. 224

Conclusion

The period 1948-1954 saw the efforts of women's organisations within Britain to organise around the issue of peace fail. Initially, organisation's such as the SPG, headed by pacifists such as Leah Manning and Dora Russell, had hoped that the issue of peace could unite a movement divided by class and opposing organisational priorities. Whilst many women's organisations at this time disagreed as to which aspect of women's lives should take priority in the fight for equal rights with men, arguably, the importance of world peace could not be disputed. Significantly, Leah Manning had envisioned that the new peace movement might help to re-build the bridges between middle class and labour women's organisations, re-establishing a relationship that had proved so successful to the Suffrage campaign. The late 1940s saw a brief flurry of activity centred around peace, as several organisations moved to officially endorse the issue through constitutional commitments and resolutions. These efforts however were fundamentally affected by the intensification of Cold War politics in the early 1950s, as the 'dichotomous' contemporary world view of the time filtered down, permeated and divided British women's organisations.

De Haan uses her article on the relationship between the WIDF and the politics of the Cold War to argue a broader and more fundamental point regarding the nature of women's international activity in the 20th Century. She argues that women's international organisations need to be analysed within a broader political framework, one that acknowledges that '…international women's organisations did not exist in a vacuum' and emphasises the necessity to explore how they were shaped by, and contributed to, the dominant political framework of the period.[187] Studies such as those by Pojmann, Laville, Donert and Swerdlow

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[187] F. de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: the case of the Women's International Democratic Federation', p. 550

represent deliberate attempts to situate women's political activity both within the history of international women's movement but also the wider history of the Cold War itself.[188] The accounts all tell a similar story of the ultimate disassociation with the issue of peace, originally conceptualised in the United States and Italy as being a potential means of uniting women across cultural, class, political and national lines. Within Britain, the pressures of Cold War politics and ultimately, loyalty to a then well-established non-partisan tradition triumphed over the immediate post-war prioritisation of peace.

Whereas the real impact of Communist influence on the political activities of these organisations is debatable due in part to the lack of archival evidence relating to such groups, the posed ideological threat was evidently very real. The legacy of Cold War politics within the international women's movement is apparent as late as 1983 as American politicians worried about the possibility that UN deliberations on the status of women may be 'hi-jacked by Socialists with an anti-capitalist agenda', deliberately issuing a warning preventing women from the US delegation from speaking to any members of the Soviet Bloc even informally.[189]

The historiography of British women's involvement in international affairs has typically been written within the context of Western women's political activity more broadly, and has largely been confined to the inter-war period and the subsequent 'second wave' period, following

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[188] W. Pojmann, 'For Mothers, Peace and the Family', pp. 415- 429; H. Laville, *Cold War Women;* C. Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe', pp. 296 – 312; pp. 178 - 202 ; A. Swerdlow, ' The Congress of American Women'

[189] K. Ghodsee, 'Revisiting the UN Decade for Women: Brief reflections on feminism, capitalism and Cold War Politics in the early years of the international women's movement' in *Women's Studies International Forum,* 33 (2010) p. 5

the UN's endorsement of the Decade for Women.[190] This chapter has attempted to fill a gap in the historical literature in which the activities of British women's organisations are seen as embracing the concept of internationalism through the issue of peace using methods that previously, had not been routinely employed. Attempts to build a new, comprehensive and perhaps most importantly 'all encompassing' women's movement represent perhaps one the first instances since the Suffrage campaign in which the unity of women across a diverse number of political and spectrums was explicitly sought. Histories of the British women's movement have attributed the decline of the women's politics from the 1940s onwards to the prevalence of single, issues groups and the inability to form an agenda which successfully interlinked and appealed to women of varying political persuasions. Initial attempts at amalgamation and the support of grass roots campaign strategies demonstrate both the desire on behalf of these women's organisations to inject life into a dwindling movement but also of the belief in the power of the concept of peace to unite women not just across Britain but throughout the world.

The divisive effect of the Cold War on British women's organisations can be seen in the temporary re-treat from international affairs. The removal of peace as a legitimate site of activity forced these organisations back to a 'safer' political agenda, one which focussed on women's rights within Britain. The issue of peace proved too controversial as its political connotations became more pronounced. By the early 1950s, to raise the issue of peace was to incite a political, rather than social and moral conversation. Thus whilst the following years saw generalised commitments to an international policy, with organisations such as the SPG, Married Women's Association and the National Women's Citizens Association passing

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[190] See L. Rupp, *Worlds of Women;* C. Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned? Race, Class and Internationalism in the American and British Women's Movements, c.1880-1970s,* (London: Routledge, 2004)

resolutions which emphasised the importance of the UN for instance, there was no central international focus for British women's organisations in the late 1950s.

At an international level, the association between peace and Communism had forced organisations such as the IAW and ICW to re-assess their commitment to the issue. By 1954 the IAW had acknowledged that it would no longer be able to work 'directly' towards peace given that the issue was widely considered to now breach its non-party rule. The solution was to work for peace 'indirectly', by engaging with a new discourse that aimed to improve the lives and living conditions of people throughout the world. The new language of 'technical assistance' offered the IAW and ICW the chance to help to secure global stability without risking their international reputation. Thus, as the large transnational organisations moved to adopt international development as an organisational focus in the mid-1950s in the wake of the controversy surrounding the issue of peace, British women's organisations temporarily re-focussed on domestic issues.

Chapter Three

A New Conception of Peace: Women's Organisations, Technical Assistance, and the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, c.1952 – 1965

In March 1965 the Women's Institutes published an image in *Home and Country* which documented the places the organisation had assisted financially through its involvement with the Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC) (Figure 2). The image is interesting for two reasons. First, the WI had raised a significant amount of money. The figure totalled nearly £180,000, an amount that had 'staggered' the women at the organisation's London headquarters earlier that year.[1] Secondly, on closer inspection of the image it becomes clear that a significant proportion of the recipient countries were in fact former colonies of the British Empire. The WI fundraising efforts in the early 1960s represented the culmination of a broader process that had seen international development come to occupy a more significant place on the agendas of both international and British women's organisations alike. The politicisation of world peace in the early 1950s forced these organisations to look for an apolitical means of securing 'international understanding' that centred primarily on the UN. The turn to international development was not only a result of the issue's emergence as an international paradigm after the Second World War, but was also informed by the legacy of European women's missionary work and direct involvement in the colonial development initiatives of the early 20th century. Thus, whilst the WI's contribution to the FFHC was an attempt to translate the organisation's commitment to 'international friendship' into practice in a period of dichotomous geopolitics, it also carried with it entrenched assumptions regarding

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[1] Women's Library, London (Hereafter WL), 5FWI/D/2 152, NFWI, Freedom from Hunger Ad Hoc Committee, 8/5/65

the global South. The language of imperialism was carried forward by the organisation's prioritisation of former colonies.
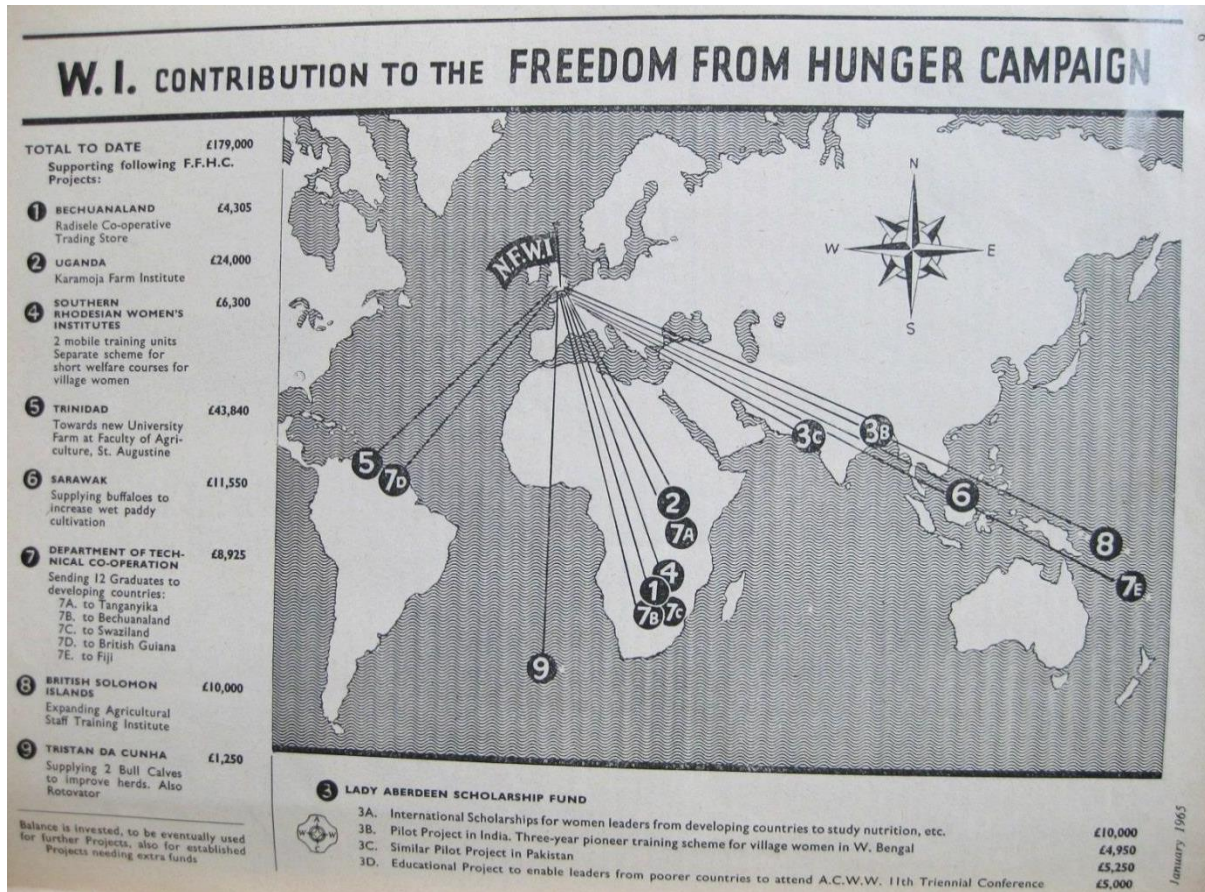
Figure 2 – An illustrated map depicting the scope of WI FFHC sponsored projects
Home and Country, 46 (3), March 1965

This Chapter will trace how the large transnational women's organisations translated their commitment to world peace into politically neutral terms over the course of the 1950s, and how this filtered down to facilitate British women's organisations involvement in the FFHC by the early 1960s. By the mid – 1950s the large transnational women's organisations had adopted 'technical assistance' as a means of working *indirectly* for world peace. The association between peace and Communism had made it increasingly difficult for British women's organisations to balance their involvement with their constitutional commitments to

non-partisanship. Contrastingly, throughout the 1950s technical assistance was conceptualised both by UN officials and development planners as distinctly 'non-political'. The provision and exchange of expertise and capital between high income and low income countries was not widely believed to be subject to either politics or national imbalances of power.[2] Thus, to the leaders of these organisations, international development would not risk the social and political integrity of these organisations in the same way that peace had.

The politicisation of peace in the late 1940s and early 1950s saw these organisations return to a subject that they had in fact long been involved in. Multiple histories of female missionary work, colonial development and imperialism have documented the ways that organised women have participated in attempts to raise the status of women in poorer countries throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.[3] These efforts were typically informed by a discourse that characterised the women in these countries as in need of the leadership and guidance of Western women. Given the involvement of British women in the colonial development project as late as the 1940s the persistence of these terms of reference was perhaps to some degree inevitable.

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[2] See G. Rist, *A History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith,* (London: Zed Books, 2002) p. 78; J. Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and Legacies of British Colonialism,* (Ohio University Press: Ohio, 2007)

[3] A. Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture,* (University of North Carolina: North Carolina Press, 1994); R. J. Plant & M. van der Klein, 'Introduction' in M. van der Klein et al. (eds.), *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century,* (New York: Berghahn, 2012), pp. 1 – 21; E. Prevost, *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole,* (OUP: Oxford, 2010; B. N. Ramusack, 'Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1965 – 1945' in *Women's Studies International Forum,* 13 (4) (1990), pp. 309 -321; E. Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire,* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991)

During the 1950s these organisations increasingly began to centre their work on improving living conditions and providing training for women in the South rather than on equal rights for women and world peace in the North. Many historians have tended to focus on the 1970s as the period in which connections between women's status and development were more explicitly drawn.[4] However, this Chapter will argue that it had in fact been an organisational priority for the IAW and ICW since the early 1950s prior to higher profile campaigns such as the FFHC and World Refugee Year in 1959. The 1950s and 1960s saw these groups attempt to establish themselves as legitimate actors in the processes of international government by directly involving themselves in technical development schemes. By acting as 'experts', conducting research, engaging with wider global trends, providing information, encouraging grassroots participation and appointing a specialised staff, these groups were able to build up the necessary connections with international bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), UNESCO and ECOSOC, which allowed them to later take up more significant and high profile projects in the 1970s.

This Chapter will firstly examine the ideological reasons behind the decision of key members to take up international development as an organisational priority and how this manifested itself practically in the activities of international women's organisations in the 1950s. More particularly, it will examine the role of the IAW and the ICW at the UN and its various commissions. This section will look at how these organisations made practical use of their consultative status at ECOSOC and of their connections to the CSW to directly highlight the role of women in technical assistance programs. Campaigns for the appointment of women to local and national Technical Assistance Boards and for the adequate consideration of women in development planning represent some of the ways in which these organisations

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[4] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN: A Sixty Year Quest for Equality and Justice,* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005) and N. Kardam, 'Women and Development' in P. R. Beckman & F. D'Amico (eds.), *Women, Gender and World Politics: Perspectives Policies and Prospects,* (Bergin & Garvey: London, 1994), pp. 141 - 154

attempted to place women into the development debate. The section will then move on to look at some of the national technical assistance projects endorsed and supported by these organisations including adult education and community leadership, but also the provision of training for women in domestic skills including nutrition, hygiene and 'mothercraft' that often mirrored the 'civilising' attempts of earlier forms of female mission and colonial administrators.[5] Whilst it is clear that these organisations did indeed attempt to carve out a space for women in the development debate at this time, it was nevertheless a distinctly gendered space that emphasised equality for women within the family rather than in society as a whole.

The second section will move on to examine how the new prioritisation of international development filtered down into the activities of British women's organisations in the 1960s. Chapter Two revealed how the majority of smaller British women's organisations had retreated from international issues to prioritise domestic equal rights by the early 1950s. However larger, mainstream organisations remained committed to internationalism throughout the 1950s. Organisations such as the WI, the Townswomen's Guilds and the National Women's Citizen's Association continued the work begun immediately after the War. Those British organisations with international connections gradually saw development trickle down through the dissemination of official publications, formal resolutions and overlapping leadership.

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[5] E. Prevost, *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole,* (OUP: Oxford, 2010); M. Adams, 'Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life: The Case of the British Southern Cameroons' in *African Studies Quarterly,* 8 (2006), p. 4; F. Manji and C. O'Coil, 'The Missionary Position: NGOs and Development in Africa' *in International Affairs*, 78 (3), p. 573

The Chapter will then move on to examine the ways in which British women's organisations engaged with international development by focussing on the WI and its international parent body, the Associated Countrywomen of the World in particular. Over the course of the 1950s the WI intensified its connections with this body as the organisation gained increasing influence at the UN. The agrarian vision of development embodied in the technical assistance programs of the 1950s and later initiatives such as FFHC enabled the participation of this transnational actor. The ACWW was consistently approached by the UN and its Commissions for information regarding rural communities and women's productive role in agriculture throughout the latter 1950s and played a key role in the early planning stages of FFHC.

Specifically, this section will examine the extent to which the development exercises of British women's organisations at this time were informed by legacies of empire. The enduring influence of imperial world views in British popular and political culture after 1945 is well established; recent literature has emphasised how ideas of Empire were translated into a developmental context both through the saturation of ex-colonial officials in the new international development machinery and the persistence of colonial terms of reference.[6] The section will examine the extent to which British women's organisations participated in colonial development in the first half of the 20th century and will assess how these activities translated into a developmental context in the 1960s. The final section will then examine the impact of the FFHC on British women's organisations involvement in international development and will explain that this acted as the culmination of the turn to development.

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[6] J. M. Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism*; A. Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses: British Involvement in the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1960 - 1970' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 40 (5) (2012), p. 892

A New Conception of Peace – Technical Assistance

By 1952 the concept of a deliberately conspired Soviet Peace Offensive had taken hold in the West and many women's organisations had already concluded that working for world peace was not only exacerbating internal divisions but also risked the political integrity of their organisations. In Britain, the NCW, SPG and Married Women's Association had all made the deliberate decision to withdraw from the issue and had severed ties with politically 'dangerous' organisations including the International Women's Day Committee and National Assembly of Women. Internationally, Margery Corbett Ashby, chairman of the IAW's peace committee announced to the Executive in 1954 that it had become 'almost impossible' to get any real work done on the issue given its politically divisive connotations. The debate on peace, she argued, was acting to 'divide' the organisation rather than providing a useful focal point for international policy.[7] Throughout the first half of the 1950s the organisation's national affiliates had begun to express concern about the link between the Alliance and certain 'political organisations', typically those endorsing world peace. In 1954 the organisation stressed that those who wanted to work 'along more political lines for peace' or to 'protest the atom bomb' should do so through separate peace societies away from the Alliance.[8] The ICW was similarly affected; by the early 1950s high ranking members of the ICW advocated a process of screening national affiliates for membership of Left-leaning suspicious organisations which prioritised the issue of peace, namely the Women's International Democratic Federation, the World Organisation of Mothers of All Nations (WOMAN) and the Defence of Children Movement.[9]

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[7] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of Board Meeting, August 20th 1956

[8] WL, 2IAW/1/C, IAW, *Report of the Seventeenth Congress: Colombo, August 17th – September 1st 1955,* p. 41

[9] WL, 5ICW/C/2, Representation Du Cid Aux Conferences Des Ong a Geneve 17th June 1949; WL, NCW, Annual Report, 1952

Members of the IAW and ICW looked on with unease at the problems faced by the WILPF at this time; the Federation's unwavering public commitment to peace in an era of polarised geopolitics had made it increasingly difficult to garner the general support it had received in earlier years. Not one other international women's organisation sponsored the Federation's world peace resolution to the UN General Assembly in 1953 much to the 'profound disappointment of the President of the organisation, Gertrude Baer.[10] At an international level, the connection to peace had begun to cause some trouble for the organisation when, during several sessions of the UN General Assembly, the Federation had become confused with the socialist women's organisation, the WIDF, and accused of spreading 'enemy propaganda' relating to the Western military treatment of civilians in Korea.[11] This had ramifications for the organisation on the domestic front as well; in the US internal distrust and the presence of the FBI in the organisation in the 1950s served simultaneously to paralyze the American branch.[12] Meanwhile in Britain, several women's organisations, including the Women's Freedom League and the National Women's Citizens Association had by 1954 advised their wider membership to steer clear of events run by the British branch of the WILPF.[13] The fate of the WILPF provided further evidence to the IAW and ICW of the need to redefine their organisational commitment to peace.

Thus, by the mid-1950s the Margery Corbett Ashby urged the IAW Executive Committee to thoroughly re-think the ways in which the IAW advocated global stability. In her view, this should be deliberately 'non-political', uncontroversial and should not risk breaching the

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[10] WSMID, WILPF, *Report of the Twelfth International Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Paris, August 4th – 8th, 1953,* (WILPF: Geneva, 1953), p. 58

[11] Ibid.

[12] H. H. Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights,* p. 60; R. Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism, and the US Peace Movement,* (Information Age: North Carolina, 2010), p. 125

[13] WL, 7TBG/1 FL239, WFL, Draft Article for Bulletin, June 1954

organisation's neutrality clause. In 1955 Nina Spiller (IAW Executive Committee member and active member of the British NWCA and the WI), suggested that 'international understanding' rather than peace better summarised the IAW's commitment to global concord and that it should be from this innocuous direction that future work could be done in this field.[14] The Board suggested that the organisation could work *indirectly* for peace by promoting human relations and raising the standard of living for people throughout the world.[15] Members concluded that this was in fact an area that the IAW could do 'extremely effective work', given its international membership base and administrative power.[16] Specifically, this new direction involved the endorsement and promotion of the UN 'Expanded Program of Technical Assistance for the Economic Development of Less Developed Countries' established in 1950.

It has been suggested that it was a socialist international women's organisation (the International Council of Social Democratic Women) which first drew attention to the issue of women and international development in 1955.[17] However, technical assistance had been an area of organisational interest for the IAW and ICW since 1951. In 1954 the Alliance extended a resolution passed two years earlier that called on its national affiliates to press for technical assistance in their own communities, and committed the organisation as a whole to find solutions to the 'problems and basic needs of people in all communities' with specific reference to the educational progress of women.[18] As the administration of all technical assistance programs was dependent on applications for aid directly from government officials, the resolution was intended to stimulate grassroots awareness of the

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[14] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of the Board Meeting at UNESCO House in Paris, 6/2/55, p. 8

[15] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of Board Meeting, August 20th 1956

[16] WL, 2IAW/1/C 005, IAW, Working Programme 1955 - 58

[17] N. Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship: Women's Rights and International Organisations,* (John Hopkins University Press: Maryland, 1999)*,* p. 141

[18] WL, 2IAW/1/C 005, IAW, Working Programme 1955 -8, p.1

new international project. Meanwhile, the ICW pledged to help raise the standard of living for those in underdeveloped areas in order to provide all people with 'a place of dignity and respect in the family of nations and the world' and called on international women's organisations to work together to ensure the benefits of technical assistance were equally shared between the sexes.[19] From as early as 1951 several ICW national affiliates had already begun to plan prospective technical assistance projects to eradicate illiteracy and to train welfare workers in Egypt and India for example.[20]

The 1970s have generally been accredited with clarifying the link between women and development in response to international recognition of the implications of a 'gender blind' approach to development.[21] Devaki Jain has pointed out how early development thought at the UN did not outline a clear strategy for women. [22] The first Development Decade from 1961 to 1970 did not mention women specifically, rather it was assumed by development planners that social and economic progress would bring about the necessary improvements to the lives of women.[23] Even the CSW was reluctant to engage wholeheartedly with the issue of development during this period; officials at the Commission questioned whether economic development actually constituted a 'women's issue' in the same sense as equal rights.[24] The establishment of official and informal organisational networks and the adoption of internationally recognised conventions in the 1970s combined with popular acceptance that previous development projects had ignored women or sometimes made their situations

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[19] WL, 5ICW/P/01 42, ICW, *International Council of Women Bulletin,* 29 (2), July 1951, p. 14

[20] Ibid. p. 13

[21] M. Ndela, 'Women and Development since Colonial Times' in W.R. Ochieng (ed.), *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya* (East African Publishers: Kenya, 2002)*,* p. 254

[22] D Jain, *Women, Development and the UN,* p. 35

[23] N. Kardam, 'Women and Development', p. 142

[24] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN,* p. 36

worse, ultimately led to the formal integration of women into UN development policy.[25] However, through technical assistance, international development had been at the centre of the international policy of the IAW and ICW from the early 1950s.

The Technical Assistance Program aimed to transmit what the UN perceived as 'expertise' to less developed countries through extensive planning and modernisation and was the culmination of the global recognition to promote 'higher standards of living' based on the principles of cooperation and multilateral aid. According to Colette Chabbott this was primarily a humanitarian effort, but also came to be conceptualised as a means of preventing the spread of Communism to unstable areas.[26] Thus, economic security was also directly connected to the political stability of undeveloped nations as well as the welfare of citizens. In Britain for example, Parliamentary debates on the issue of technical assistance in the mid-1950s frequently referred to efforts to improve levels of food production and the prevention of disease as helping to save underdeveloped countries from the 'lure of communism'.[27] Technical Assistance represented the then widespread belief that the modernisation of what were considered to be 'backward' countries could by catalysed by relatively small amounts of technology, capital and planning.[28] Unlike earlier forms of social welfare and philanthropy this new technical assistance emphasised the notions of self-help, technology and 'burden sharing' to require recipients to pay part of the costs.

[25] E. Friedman, 'Women's Human Rights: The Emergence of a Movement' in J. Peters & A. Wolper (eds.), *Women's Rights Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives,* (Routledge: New York, 1995), p. 23; M. Alter Chen, 'Engendering world conferences: the international women's movement and the UN' in *Third World Quarterly,* 16 (3) (1995), p. 478

[26] C. Chabbott, 'Development INGOs' in J. Boli & G.M. Thomas (eds.), *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organisations since 1875,* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1999), p. 233

[27] *Hansard, HC Debate, 19 June 1952 vol. 502 cc.1619;* Hansard, *HC Debate, 16 March 1955 vol. 538 cc.1395-417*

[28] E. Ekbladh, *Modernisation and the Construction of the American World Order,* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2010), p. 109

This shift to international development was facilitated by it having been culturally conceptualised at this time as existing outside the realms of political debate. James Hodge has shown how poverty had already begun to be depoliticised in the colonial development discourses of the 1940s and 1950s. Colonial developers had framed the social and economic problems, strikes and civil unrest in the colonies as products of 'endemic living conditions' and inadequate services, thereby recasting the problems of poverty as technical issues that were redeemable by large scale government planning.[29] By the 1950s these assumptions dominated development discourses; disembodied from political debate technocratic views were to prevail in ways which depoliticised international development and that denied the structural causes of poverty.[30] That international development was 'above politics' at this time directly appealed to the Executive members of the IAW in the mid – 1950s. In 1954 the International Committee agreed that the Alliance would work towards the 'greatest possible development of Technical Assistance' specifically because it was not political 'in the same sense as peace is'.[31] The Committee concluded that the organisation could contribute to the ideals of peace without 'risking the neutrality clause' by promoting human relations and working to combat poverty as the low standard of living in the South constituted a fundamental menace to global stability.[32]

The UN Technical Assistance Administration (TAA) was responsible for the administration of technical assistance and provided financial and practical assistance to nations following applications from national governments. Each request had to be justified on the grounds that

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[29] J. Hodge, *The Triumph of the Expert,* p. 263

[30] G. Rist, *A History of Development,* p. 78

[31] WL, 2IAW/1/B 003, IAW, Minutes of the International Committee Meeting, 12th – 19th September 1954

[32] WL, 2IAW/1/C 002, IAW, Minutes of Board Meeting, July 1955

proposals would have a direct bearing on the economic development of the country.[33] The TAA had another important role, the coordination of the multiple development activities of the various councils, commissions, programs and specialised agencies of the UN. The separate agencies had prior to the 1950s, organised and run separate development programs independently according to their individual international priorities.[34] Whilst the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) had focussed predominately on technological development, the UN's specialised agencies were involved in other aspects of social development. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had been involved in the provision of organised health programs to control infectious diseases such as malaria in many Southern countries.[35] UNESCO meanwhile, had concentrated its efforts on the concept of 'fundamental education', a popular schooling scheme for people throughout the world. The organisation emphasised the 'interdependence between economic and social development and education' and argued that economic progress, the cornerstone of development discourses in the 1950s, would be greatly aided by a broad programme of accessible education.[36] Thus technical assistance provision was diverse and involved the provision of social and educational programs in addition to technical instruction.

It was in this regard – the social aspects of development - that international women's organisations decided to focus their efforts in the 1950s. This was a factor that drew on the historic philanthropic and colonial connection between women and social reform; women's groups and missionaries alike had long been responsible for the training of women in aspects of hygiene, nutrition and mothercraft in ways which directly contributed to the

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[33] D. Owen, 'The United Nations Expanded Program of Technical Assistance – A Multilateral Approach' in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 323 (1959), p. 28

[34] D. Webster, 'Development Advisers in a Time of Cold War and Decolonisation: the UN Technical Assistance Administration', in *Journal of Global History,* 6 (2) (2011), p. 253

[35] D. Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission,* p. 90

[36] Ibid.

maternal imperialism of the early twentieth century.[37] However, this early prioritisation was also based on the assumption that women would benefit more from programs which emphasised their social rather than economic role. The efforts to improve the quality of life for women in under developed areas in the 1950s were not politicised as they were to be in the 1970s. The educational drives and community training programs of the 1950s did not aim to challenge women's role within the family neither did they recognise the interlinking economic, cultural and political sources of women's inequality. Rather, they were attempts to place women at the centre of the new development discourse.

The CSW's work relating to women and development in the 1950s has generally been viewed as limited and was primarily centred on promoting the inclusion and consideration of women during planning stages.[38] This type of promotional work interested both the ICW and IAW, both of which ran frequent appeals to national governments that urged them to take advantage of technical assistance schemes throughout the 1950s.[39] This was due to the potential consequences for women, and also as the amount allocated from the central technical assistance fund increased in direct proportion to the amount of money spent.[40] Throughout the 1950s, until the dissolution of the TAA in the early 1960s following the incorporation of all UN development work into the UN Development Programme, the IAW and ICW worked consistently for the inclusion of women at all stages in the planning and

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[37] R. O'Hanlon, 'Gender in the British Empire' in J. Brown & W. R .Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. IV,* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999), p. 196; E. Prevost, 'From African Missions to Global Sisterhood: The Mother's Union and Colonial Christianity, 1900 – 1930' in H. M. Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion,* (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2008), p. 247

[38] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN,* p. 35

[39] See WL, 5ICW/P/01/42, ICW, *International Women's News Bulletin,* 31 (3/4), July-October 1954, p. 7; WL, 2IAW/1/C 002, IA, Minutes of Meeting, September 1955; WL, 2IAW/1/C, IAW, *Report of the Seventeenth Congress: Colombo, August 17th – September 1st 1955,* p. 41

[40] WL, 2IAW/1/C 004, IAW, *Report of the Seventeenth Annual Congress Colombo 1955,* p. 37

administration of international development projects.[41] Whilst during the mid-1950s this work tended to focus primarily on securing women's representation in development bureaucracies and in national schemes, the latter years of the decade saw a concentration on education and the eradication of illiteracy amongst women in the poorest areas. Working independently and through co-operation largely with UNESCO, the IAW and ICW focussed their efforts on educational and community training schemes which emphasised nutrition, healthcare and hygiene. Such work would later go on to inform the larger scale development projects of the 1960s, the majority of which went on to establish educational centres, nurseries and leadership training courses for women. The period also saw increasing levels of co-operative work between these women's organisations and the specialised agencies at the UN. Both organisations had extended their full time professional international staff base and increased the number of official consultants to UNESCO, the CSW and ECOSOC.

The IAW and ICW had, along with British women's organisations, since of the end of the Second World War campaigned for the increased representation of women in the machinery of international government. By the early 1950s this campaign was extended to include the bodies responsible for awarding technical assistance aid and those involved in the planning and practical stages of assistance schemes. As early as 1952 the IAW urged its national societies to ensure that their governments include 'competent women' in their communications with the TAA and the other specialised agencies that ran technical assistance projects. The Executive Committee went on to stress the need for women to serve as professionals in the processes of transmitting 'expertise' and technical advice to under developed countries.[42] The Committee suggested that its national affiliates organise 'educational and propaganda campaigns' to make it clear that women were equally responsible for the administration of technical assistance and called for direct action where

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[41] D. Webster, 'Development Planners in an era of Cold War and Decolonisation', p. 256

[42] WL, 2IAW/1/C 4, IAW, *Report of the Sixteenth Congress: Naples, September 11th – 19th 1952,* p. 45

possible.[43] The IAW issued regular questionnaires to a cross section of affiliated societies that asked for information regarding technical assistance, including enquiries about the number of women serving on local boards in their own countries and the conclusions submitted to the CSW.[44]

Both organisations attempted to use the influence they had gained as a result of their new consultative relationship with the UN to ensure the inclusion of women in technical assistance programs. The IAW made concerted efforts throughout the 1950s to ensure that its influence did not waver at the UN. In 1958 for instance, the Alliance appointed an extra 23 members of staff on the grounds that the organisation needed to be ready to intervene on application proposals if 'women interests are neglected'.[45] Similarly, the ICW had decided to appoint professional Consultants in addition to the original Officers at the UN, whose responsibility it was to prepare and gather all official Council evidence and research presented to the ECOSOC. Such efforts arguably paid off in 1956, when after months of preparation, the UN General Assembly accepted a resolution drafted by four international women's organisations on the participation of women in community development. The resolution recommended to member states that they should encourage the full participation of women in the development of their communities, and required the Secretary-General to provide details of the methods used to achieve this in future reports to the ECOSOC.[46]

In her work on the UN and international development, Devaki Jain states that prior to the UN Development Decade the CSW, along with other UN specialised agencies including the

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[43] Ibid. p. 60

[44] See WL, 2IAW/ 1/B 003, *Report on the International Committee Conference,* June 24th 1954, p.13

[45] WL, 2IAW/1/C/4, IAW, *Report of the Eighteenth Congress: Athens, September August 25th – September 4th 1958,* p. 14

[46] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 50 (11), p. 613

International Labour Organisation (ILO) undertook several fact-finding missions relating to economic opportunities for women in the different UN member countries. The results of these findings revealed the position of women in economic development more broadly.[47] It is likely that the CSW received some of its information from large transnational women's organisations; by the late 1950s the IAW and ICW had begun to fund and undertake independent research into the impact of technical assistance on the women in its member countries. In 1955 the IAW Education Committee appealed to the Executive for more funding and staff given that 'more and more information is expected from the Alliance by UNESCO and the CSW'.[48] Arguably, as the decade progressed the IAW's emphasis regarding technical assistance shifted. Whilst in 1952 the focus had been on ensuring that women were not neglected in the consideration of development schemes, by 1958 the organisation stressed that it also had a responsibility to act if women's interests were in any way 'offended' by any aspect of the proposals. Research conducted by the organisation in 1954 for example had revealed that the majority recipients of a recent technical assistance farming project in Pakistan had been men.[49] Further, a report written by the organisational President, Ester Graff, that same year concluded that a large proportion of technical assistance funded agricultural courses did not tend to feature any women teachers or students.[50] This, the IAW stated, represented a worrying trend as the organisation considered that a 'higher standard of living' could only be constituted through the 'education and training of women farm workers and farmers' wives as of the men'.[51]. Following the 1956 Alliance Jubilee Congress (given the theme 'technical assistance especially designed to help

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[47] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN,* p. 45

[48] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 49 (10), p. 783

[49] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of the Board Meeting, June 21st, 1954

[50] WL, 2IAW/1/B 003, IAW, Report on the International Committee Conference, June 24th, 1954 p. 13

[51] Ibid.

women') the IAW presented regular reports to the Secretary-General of the CSW that monitored the number of projects that affected the status of women in member countries.[52]

Both international organisations demonstrated an early commitment to and prioritisation of educational technical assistance programs over for example, agricultural and economic schemes. In the IAW action programme published in 1954, technical assistance is largely referenced in relation to women's educational rights.[53] The plan outlined how the organisation aimed to co-operate directly with UNESCO to direct efforts to 'equal the education' of both sexes throughout the world.[54] The organisation stressed the 'special needs of women' and education and along with wider provision of professional, vocational and technical training for women, the Alliance maintained that technical assistance should be used to provide nurseries and day care centres for women whilst they attended educational classes.[55] From 1957 the Alliance assisted UNESCO through its national affiliates by opening and running educational centres, helping to train teachers, and supplying audio-visual as well as written learning aids.[56] Similarly, in 1952 the ICW outlined the necessity of an education-centred approach to international development. The Council stressed that in order for the development of a truly 'peaceful world…it is absolutely necessary and to the equal advantage of literate and illiterate countries that the citizens of all nations make united efforts through technical assistance, to combat illiteracy'.[57] In 1957 the organisation had been awarded funds from UNESCO to conduct three month study tours for

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[52] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 50 (6), p. 523

[53] WL, 2IAW/1/C 005, IAW, Working Programme 1955 -8, p.1

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid. p. 55

[56] Ibid.

[57] WL, NCW, Annual Report, 1956 – President's Address

women from Africa, Asia and South America and had also initiated a series of scholarships for the secondary education of girls in Nigeria.[58]

In 1958 the Alliance ran its first independent technical assistance program with funding awarded to it by UNESCO. The Study Course in Athens provided rural women from a broad section of member countries ranging from Ghana, the Philippines to Vietnam, with training in basic education, nutrition and home economics. The Course also attempted to familiarise the students with the operation of international relief agencies and women's voluntary societies and arranged tours of local Red Cross branches and cooperative societies.[59] In an oral interview for the National Life Stories Fawcett Collection, Amy Bush, former chairman of the Alliance's Educational Committee, recalled that it was the success of this Course that encouraged the organisation to specifically focus its development efforts on adult education for women from this point onwards.[60]

The following year UNESCO invited applications for funding from the national sections of international organisations to run 'programs or enterprises' which aimed to achieve one or more of the agency's aims.[61] The Alliance encouraged its national affiliates to take up the opportunity and suggested that projects pertain to adult education and that the Athens Course be used as a model. By 1959 Alliance sponsored study courses were being run in

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[58] LMA, ACC/3613/0168, NCW, ICW International Standing Committee, 24/1/57; ICW, *Women in a Changing World: the Dynamic Story of the International Council of Women since 1888,* (Routledge: London, 1966), p.106

[59] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 52 (11), November 1958, p. 828; WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 52 (5), p. 782

[60] British Library (Hereafter BL), National Life Stories Collection: Fawcett Collection, Amy Bush Interviewed by Janet Grenier, 28/3/91, Part 4

[61] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 52 (5), p. 782

Ghana, Nigeria, Mauritius and the Middle East following financial awards from UNESCO.[62] Course content focussed on aspects of household management, food preservation, nourishment, child welfare in ways that directly mirrored the gendered aspect of the 'civilising mission' that had characterised European women's efforts in a missionary and colonial context. Such forms of education have generally been viewed as attempts to export 'appropriate' forms of social organisation and gender roles in ways which tended to leave the female recipients without the type of help they often needed the most.[63] Training in the domestic sciences was not enough to combat the structural causes of poverty. Arguably, the historical persistence of such study topics was not just a reflection of the inability of these organisations to locate a role for women outside of the family, but was also a result of the sector-wide depoliticisation of development. Ignorance of the political and historical requisites of poverty in the 1950s encouraged short term solutions that prioritised immediate forms of relief.[64] These organisations hoped that improving the lives of women through the dissemination of information would have an immediate social effect; the courses were designed to improve the living conditions of women rather than to transform them.

By 1955, the impact of international development discourse on the structure of the IAW was also apparent. The 17th Annual Congress had been deliberately held for the first time in an 'Eastern' country in the Sri Lankan city of Colombo. This was an attempt by the leadership to project the organisation's new global values. The Congress' opening statement affirmed that the organisation had dedicated itself to 'helping Eastern women and…those in under developed countries…in their basic problems, and to encourage them to take advantage of

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[62] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 54 (6); WL, *International Women's News,* 52 (9-10), September 1958, p. 816

[63] M. Adams, 'Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life', p. 2

[64] M. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity,* p. 122

the new international aid schemes'.[65] Since its previous Congress three years earlier, the organisation had embarked on a 'recruitment drive' in a deliberate attempt to attract new members from the global South and had urged its national affiliates to form networks with other organisations across national borders. By 1955 the result was a 'steady increase' in the national membership of the IAW. Particularly significant was the growth in applications for membership from organisations in less economically developed areas. The IAW leadership hoped that now that two-thirds of its international membership originated from poorer countries this would prove that the organisation had successfully 'moved with the times' contrary to internal critics. It was hoped that these figures would also demonstrate its representative capacity to the UN specialised agencies and the TAA.[66] In order to help develop the organisation's technical assistance strategy, the Alliance decided to form regional groupings to ensure that projects met particular social and economic requirements in between official Congresses. The international program was now divided into five geographical regions which consisted of Africa, Asia, Far East, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East, an act which directly mirrored the contemporary UN regional groups.[67] The first IAW Asian regional conference was held in 1956 in Ceylon on the subject of education for women, a second organised the following year on technical training.[68]

Education featured prominently on the agenda of both the IAW and ICW throughout the 1950s. Both organisations maintained that the education of women and girls was central to raising the economic standard of a country, in addition to vocational training.[69] In this instance, the organisations directly linked their work on technical assistance to the wider

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[65] WL, 2IAW/1/C, IAW, *Report of the Seventeenth Congress: Colombo, August 17th – September 1st 1955,* p. 6

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid. p. 13

[68] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 52 (9-10), p. 816

[69] WL, 2IAW/1/C 004, IAW, *Report of the Seventeenth Annual Congress, Colombo,* p. 46

principles of human rights. Ensuring greater access to education would in turn increase the economic potential of a country's citizens but would also guarantee a fundamental human right; health and education had been formally integrated into the UN Charter and Declaration of Human Rights as fundamental principles essential for human welfare.[70] In 1958 the IAW 'intensified' its campaign against illiteracy and passed a resolution that pledged to work for the development of adult educational programs for women without a primary level of education and to provide leadership training for rural women, who would then deliver training programs to women on a localised basis.[71] By the mid-1950s the IAW was consistently being invited, along with a number of other NGOs, to meet directly with officials at UNESCO and the CSW, meetings which were frequently detailed in the organisation's official journal.[72] At these meetings, the organisation pressed for the provision of vocational schools and training centres for women with technical assistance funding at regular points in the year. The IAW and ICW co-operated at multiple points between 1954 – 1958 to protest against the removal of the 'equality' clause from UNESCO education programs. In 1958 after four years of 'persistent fighting' through their official proxies at the UN, the subject was re-introduced onto the UNESCO agenda and a working party set up to make recommendations on equal educational opportunities for women'.[73] By 1959, the ICW had decided that its involvement in international development would be practically executed at a local, community level. The

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[70] C. Chabbott, 'Development INGOs', p. 233

[71] Ibid. WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 52 (9-10) September 1958, p. 823

[72] See for example WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 44 (7) May 1950, pp. 93-100; *International Women's News,* 44 (9) July 1950, pp. 111 – 115; *International Women's News,* 45 (8) June 1951, pp. 95 -96; *International Women's News,* 45 (12) October 1951, pp. 142 – 144; *International Women's News,* 46 (7) May 1952, pp. 74 – 83; *International Women's News,* 47 (12) October 1953, pp. 142 – 145; *International Women's News,* 48 (8) May 1954, pp. 217 – 220; *International Women's News,* 48 (8) June 1954, pp. 229 – 233; *International Women's News,* 49 (7) May 1955, pp. 361 – 363; *International Women's News,* 49 (10) August 1955, pp. 409 – 412;*International Women's News,* 50 (7) June 1956, pp. 533 - 548

[73] WL, 2IAW/1/C 004, IAW, *Report of the Seventeenth Annual Congress, Colombo,* p. 38

organisation had prepared for a series of initiatives, in collaboration with its National Councils that covered education in addition to health and nutrition.[74]

By the late 1950s then, technical assistance had become firmly established in the international policies of both the IAW and ICW. Whilst at the beginning of the decade efforts had centred on ensuring women were given adequate consideration during the planning stages of development projects, by the late 1950s both organisations had taken steps towards running their own independent projects, albeit under the umbrella of UNESCO. By the 1960s and eventually the 1970s, international development became the key area of international policy, subsuming older committees under one new division. Policy in the later 1960s and 1970s shifted direction slightly in reaction to wider concerns about the longer term causes of women's inequality and acknowledged their productive role in the economy, in line with a wider reorientation in development thinking more broadly.[75] The IAW did recognise the marginalisation of women in agricultural and economic forms of technical assistance to some degree in the 1950s. This found practical expression in the endorsement of projects which supported the technical training of women and cottage industry. However, a larger proportion of projects focussed on the basic education and training of women in literacy and domestic subjects. This was due in part to the consistency of a belief in the primacy of women's maternal role; the ICW's international congress in 1960 was centred on 'women and the family in the new global order' for example.[76] 'Imperial maternalism' had directly informed earlier European colonial projects and had proved formative in setting out a framework for action whereby educated women sought to represent those presumed to be less fortunate and vulnerable. Whilst Maternalist initiatives provided an important foundation for the expansion of social services and welfare measures in the colonies, it simultaneously

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[74] WL, 5ICW/C/02, NCWGB, Press Release, ICW Executive Meeting, 5th September 1959

[75] M. Hilton, 'Ken Loach and the Save the Children Film: humanitarianism, paternalism and imperialism in twentieth-century Britain', (Forthcoming), p. 26

[76] LMA, ACC/3613/0168, NCW, Minutes of the ICW International Standing Committee, 14/3/60

tended to perceive of women solely in their domestic function and left them desperately poor and without daily necessities, the legacies of which continued into a post-war setting.[77] The cultural acceptability of international development at this time made the issue accessible to these organisations in a way that world peace was not. However the global 'turn to development' during the post-war years was based on and encouraged the active depoliticisation of poverty. This approach ignored enduring structural problems and inequalities and facilitated rather than challenged the traditional Western view of women.

Inevitably, this shift was to eventually filter down to British women's organisations, particularly those attached to the IAW and ICW. The extent to which this occurred depended primarily on organisational success in the 1950s – whereas the politics of the Cold War had had a detrimental effect on smaller organisations such as the SPG, larger mainstream organisations such as the WI and Townswomen's Guilds thrived and formalised internationalism onto their organisational agendas.[78] The involvement of British women's organisations in international development was informed by the additional historic and contemporary involvement with the practices of late colonial development in the 1940s and 1950s in ways which were to shape and direct practical projects as well as the personal attitudes of the women involved.

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[77] S. Pedersen, 'The Maternalist Moment in British Colonial Policy: the Controversy Over Child Slavery in Hong Kong, 1917 – 1941' in *Past and Present,* 171 (2001), p. 165

[78] M. Hilton et al., *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain, Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector Since 1945,* (Macmillan: London, 2012), p. 17

British Women's Organisations, the Women's Institutes and International Development

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The politicisation of peace had a profound impact on smaller British women's organisations in the early 1950s, particularly those who had actively sought connections with Left-leaning groups. The SPG, the British organisation originally the most committed to the idea of internationalism and world peace had seen its support for the issue collapse under pressure from its wider national membership. The Group's leaders had deliberately deleted the issue of peace from organisational literature and a conscience decision had been made by 1952 to stick explicitly to an 'equal rights' agenda that had consequently led to the prioritisation of domestic, national issues. The historians Harold Smith and Elizabeth Wilson have both observed that British feminist activity in the 1950s was concentrated largely around the principle of equal pay in addition to single issue campaigns for legal reform pertaining to married women's property rights, political representation and the marriage bar.[79] The SPG did continue to release official statements relating to international affairs during the mid to late 1950s but the issue did not receive the prominence it had commanded in earlier years. In 1955 the organisation rejected a proposal to apply to membership of the World Woman's Party on the grounds that equal pay within Britain was the main concern of the organisation.[80] The SPG did however continue to monitor the work of the CSW throughout the 1950s and on several occasions sent observers to official meetings when the Commission sat in Geneva.[81] For the Married Women's Association the situation was much the same; the retreat from peace had the seen the organisation re-focus aims towards its original tenets financial equality for women within marriage. Funding was also an issue; the

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[79] H. Smith, 'The Politics of Conservative Reform: The Equal Pay for Equal Work Issue, 1945 – 1955' in *The Historical Journal,* 32 (2) (1992), pp.401 – 415 and E. Wilson, *Only Halfway to Paradise, Women in Post-war Britain, 1945 -1968,* (Tavistock: London , 1980), p. 17

[80] WL, 5SPG/A FL 524, SPG Minutes August 29th 1955

[81] WL, 5SPG/J FL 538, SPG, Letter to Members, February 1952

SPG and MWA both experienced an endemic decline in membership from the mid-1950s onwards causing a reduction in monthly fees which consequently made international issues an unnecessary expense.

However this temporary withdrawal from international affairs was by no means unanimous. The large mainstream organisations such as the WI and Townswomen's Guilds increased the international side of their work over the course of the 1950s as, particularly in the case of the WI, the international sub-committee moved to mainstream internationalism into the everyday running of the organisation. In addition, organisations with strong connections to their international parent bodies also tended to retain and develop their international policy throughout the 1950s. The British NCW, which could boast several ICW Executive Committee members on its management board, acted upon the calls made by the ICW for action regarding technical assistance. In addition, the British National Women's Citizens Association, whose Chairman Nina Spiller sat on the Board of the IAW, saw international affairs come to feature more prominently on its agenda. Prior to the mid-1950s the organisation had been reluctant to engage wholeheartedly with internationalism and had worried about the political bias of other women's organisations for which international affairs took precedence.[82] By the mid-1950s however, the NWCA was co-operating extensively with the IAW and sent representatives to its five international standing committees on a regular basis.[83]

Both the NCW and National Women's Citizens Association acted as the British representative organisations to the ICW and IAW respectively. The prioritisation of technical

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[82] WL, 5NWC/4/A, NWCA, Minutes of the Extraordinary Executive Committee Meeting, 19th January 1949; 5NWC/1/B 174, NWCA, Minutes of the Sixth Annual General Meeting, May 1954

[83] WL, 5NWC/4/A 171, NWCA, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 19th November 1952

assistance and international development was quick to reach both organisations; both regularly reported on the official policy of their parent organisations in their monthly newsletters and in communication to members. The National Women's Citizens Association frequently sent representatives to the NCW's international sectional committee meetings where the policy direction of their constituent parent bodies was discussed and possible areas of collaboration debated.[84]   At a joint international meeting in May 1954, both organisations agreed that poverty constituted the greatest 'common enemy on earth' and that the low standards of living of people in many poorer areas undermined the 'value of human life' and agreed to work wherever possible towards the success of the IAW and ICW run schemes.[85] In September 1954 the NCW officially pledged its commitment to the ideals of technical assistance in an organisational resolution and the following year moved to acquire representation on the British UNESCO and UNICEF committees.[86] From 1955 onwards the NCW encouraged its affiliated societies to participate in the UNESCO gift coupon scheme to provide nurseries for women and children in India in line with the ICW technical assistance program.[87]

Both the NCW and National Women's Citizens Association responded to the calls from the IAW and ICW for direct action to pressurise national governments to alter aspects of their technical assistance policy. Throughout the 1950s the Expanded Program of Technical Assistance depended directly on financial contributions from UN member states in order to fund practical projects, visits from experts and the training of national citizens. In addition to its contribution to the Commonwealth Colombo Plan, the British Government contributed annually to this fund. From 1951 onwards the British Government's contributions typically

[84] WL, 5NWC/4/A 171, NWCA, Minutes of a Meeting held at the Minerva Club, 24th March 1954

[85] WL, 5NWC/4/1 172, NWCA, Minutes of a Meeting held at the Minerva Club, 14th May 1954

[86] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* October 1954

[87] WL, NCW, Annual Report and Accounts, 1955, p. 30

totalled between £600,000 to £800,000 each year.[88] However, in 1955 the then Conservative Government came under increasing criticism from NGOs and politicians alike who argued that, in relation to other countries, British contributions to the fund had in fact proportionally decreased over the course of the decade.[89] In April 1955 the NCW, in collaboration with the National Women's Citizens Association and the British branch of the WILPF, wrote to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary demanding that Britain increase its funding to the Technical Assistance Board.[90] In a letter to its members the National Women's Citizens Association argued that it was vitally important that Britain, as an economically stable country, provide a more reasonable level of capital in order to ensure the success of the technical assistance project.[91] The NCW considered it 'only equal and just' that Britain contribute financially to the fund on a proportionally equal basis as other economically secure countries.[92]

By 1954 the National Women's Citizens Association had affiliated to the Women's Advisory Council of the UNA following confirmation that the Council's constitution contained 'nothing too controversial'.[93] The National Women's Citizens Association had so far been reluctant to join any outside umbrella organisation in the post-war period, aside from the IAW, on the grounds of concern about their organisational reputation. The organisation had a close connection to the IAW through Nina Spiller, who in the 1950s had represented the IAW at ECOSOC and the CSW on multiple occasions. She had also been responsible for drafting the IAW's official resolutions in 1953 and 1955. In 1954 the organisation set up an international sub-committee tasked with monitoring the IAW's policy and managing the

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[88] Hansard, *HC Debate 16 November 1955 vol. 546 c35W*

[89] Hansard, *HC Debate, 20 June 1955 vol. 542 cc.1010-2*

[90] LMA, ACC/33613/120, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 5nd April 1955

[91] WL, 5NWC/1/I 186, NWCA, Letter to Members, May 1955

[92] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* May 1955

[93] WL, 5NCW/4/A 171, NWCA, Minutes of a Meeting held at the Minerva Club, 26th November 1954

Association's international work within Britain. By 1955 the IAW had begun to prioritise the issue of technical assistance as a means of translating its work for peace into non-political terms. As a result, a large proportion of the work done by the Association's international committee centred on providing assistance to the IAW with its technical assistance commitments and it performed both practical and promotional work for the Alliance. In 1956, in collaboration with the NCW, the Association worked directly with the British branch of UNESCO in order to administer study courses for a select number of women from Nigeria and India.[94] The program had been officially sponsored by the IAW with courses typically lasting for three months at a time. Students were provided with accommodation by Association members and the organisation was responsible for arranging a proportion of the content of the course in conjunction with UNESCO. In line with official IAW UNESCO funded study courses at this time, the National Women's Citizens Association emphasised the importance of training in basic healthcare and nutrition, but also the education of women in citizenship and political rights. Further, in June 1958 the organisation sent two delegates to assist with the organisation of the IAW Study Course in Athens, the first IAW independently run development program funded directly by the UNESCO technical assistance fund.[95]

The international work of the Women's Institutes had been stimulated by the new opportunities accorded to the organisation by the end of the Second World War and the 1950s saw the solidification of internationalism onto the movement's mainstream agenda. In 1946 the organisation had committed itself to the promotion of friendly relations between rural women in all countries and in 1954 this mandate was extended. At the Annual General Meeting members voted to pass a resolution that added the 'promotion of international understanding' to the movement's aims and objects.[96] The international work of the 1950s

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[94] WL, 5NWC/1/I 186, NWCA, NWCA, Newsletter, May 1956

[95] WL, 5NWC/4/A 171, NWCA, Minutes of Meeting held at the Minerva Club, 25th June 1958

[96] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 36 (3) March 1954

saw the development of earlier initiatives aimed at popularising internationalism with the movement in addition to the intensification of collaborative work with its international parent body, the Associated Countrywomen of the World (ACWW). The ACWW has not been given much attention by historians of the international women's movement but had grown out of a convene of representatives of rural women's organisations organised by the International Council of Women in 1929 in recognition of the need to form an 'independent, democratic association' that linked together country women's organisations with rural interests from around the world.[97] The WI affiliated to the organisation in 1935 and by 1953 the Association claimed to represent 5.5 million rural women from 138 societies in a total of 23 different countries. Initially, the WI regarded the ACWW as distinct from its own domestic work, however, as internationalism gradually became central to the organisation's everyday ethos, the WI began to routinely co-operate with the Association through the organisation of exchange programs, study courses and later, international training projects for women. Like the ICW and IAW, the ACWW had begun to prioritise the issue of international development in the 1950s as an effective means of improving the lives of rural women in poorer countries. In particular, the ACWW had been keen to develop links with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to provide training for women in modern agricultural, storage and practical techniques.[98]

Within Britain, the WI increased the number of exchange programs it ran over the course of the 1950s. These courses enabled women from different countries to travel to Britain for training and local tours of institutions and organisations. The female students invited to attend these courses tended to be drawn almost exclusively from past and present British colonies. This was not a coincidence, the WI had, along with other women's organisations such as the NCW, the Young Women's Christian Association and the Women's Freedom

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[97] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 36 (3), March 1954

[98] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 33 (7), July 1951

League, been active in demonstrating popular support for the Empire from the early twentieth century both independently and through co-operation with women's imperial propaganda societies such as the Victoria League.[99] Indeed, the NCW had been at the centre of several campaigns to increase the number of women in the colonial administration and had prepared several memoranda to the head of the Government department throughout the mid-1940s.[100] The WI and the Townswomen's Guilds had been responsible for the organisation of study courses for overseas students from the colonies since the 1930s but these were officially endorsed by the British Government in the late 1940s when the WI international sub-committee was approached by the Colonial Office and the British Council to assist in the social development of women in the colonies.

The importance of the imperial state in international development projects before and after the Second World War has been well documented.[101] In 1940 the British Government passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act that outlined a new coordinated development program which emphasised social reform at its core. The Act was a response to a number of different pressures including the post-war emphasis on state planning and investment, the economic impact of War in combination with mounting international concern about the low standards of living in the colonies.[102] In her assessment of the impact of colonial development on women, Mildred Ndela has identified an increased level of official

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[99] M. C. Hendley, *Organised Patriotism and the Crucible of War: Popular Imperialism in Britain, 1914 – 1932,* (McGill Queens University Press: Quebec, 2012)

[100] WL, 3AMS/B/10 69, NCW, 'Women in the Colonial Office and Colonial Administration: A Memorandum Submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Conference of Women's Organisations Convened by the National Council of Women', 1944

[101] See J. Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and Legacies of British Colonialism,* (Ohio University Press: Ohio, 2007); R. Skinner & A. Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40 (5), 2012, pp. 729-747.

[102] J. Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History,* (Harvard University Press: London, 2007), p. 110

concern for the social welfare and 'development' of women in Western Kenya in the decades that followed the Second World War, in ways that were later paralleled in other areas of colonial Africa and the Caribbean.[103] Practical solutions were to centre on the basic education of women and girls and led to the provision of training programs in a small number of countries including Nigeria and the Cameroons.[104] Despite such programs, the overall lack of government sanctioned initiatives for women in the Colonial Development Act encouraged the colonial administration to look to voluntary organisations as a means of improving the lives of women.[105]

From 1943 the Colonial Office had sought the help of the WI on an ad hoc basis to assist in the development of voluntary organisations in the colonies modelled on those in operation in Britain. The WI was deemed the most suitable for export, its emphasis on family living, rural practices and adult education were broadly in line with the administration's contemporary emphasis on social reform. The WI took this responsibility seriously; the organisation held two national Colonial Conferences in 1944 and 1947 to decide what sorts of practical assistance the movement could realistically provide. The conferences affirmed two clear objectives for women in the colonies – education and improved food production.[106] In 1944 the WI had sent information and instructions to women in Jamaica in conjunction with the Office for the Development and Welfare of the West Indies that had helped to found the Jamaican Federation of Women.[107] Similarly, in 1947 the WI had helped to organise the first

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[103] M. Ddela, 'Women and Development Since Colonial Times', p. 240; M. Strobel, *European Women and the British Empire,* p. 60; J. French, 'Women and Colonial Policy in Jamaica after the 1938 Uprising' in S. Wieringa (ed.), *Subversive Women: Women's Movements in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean,* (Zed Books: London, 1995), p. 139

[104] M. Adams, 'Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life', p. 5

[105] M. Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire,* p. 61

[106] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 30 (1), January 1948, 'The Colonial Conference, 1947'

[107] J. French, 'Women and Colonial Policy in Jamaica after the 1938 Uprising', p. 139

Women's Institute Homecraft Club in Southern Rhodesia.[108] In 1951 the WI assisted in the establishment of several WIs in British Malaya and in Goa and the Philippines in 1953 which had seen several WI members sent 'out in to the field'. Volunteers were sought from Voluntary County Organisers and Margaret Herbertson was selected to fly out to Malaya for six months in 1951, taking with her a variety of 'simple' visual aids 'concerning such things as childcare, hygiene, gardening, plain sewing and toy-making'.[109] The WI provided support, advice and training in the principles of leadership as well as holding regular courses on associational procedure that included minute taking and the committee process at their purpose-built adult education centre Denman College.[110] In Nigeria, the WI was used as a model for the development of Maendeleo ya Wanawake (Women's Progress) in 1952. The organisation was a federation of women's clubs sponsored under the auspices of the colonial government's Department of Community Development and Rehabilitation and used British women volunteers. This WI-modelled federation worked in multiple ways for the benefit of the colonial state. Not only did it contribute to the long term project of development by promoting better living conditions by through the provision of instruction in food preparation, health, hygiene and handicrafts, but they were also actively involved in government funded schemes to aid in the suppression of anti-colonial sentiment at this time.[111]

In 1951 the Colonial Office formalised its relationship with the WI through acceptance of the Institute's application for representation on the Advisory Committee on Social Development

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Women's Institutes, *WI Life,* 39 (October 2011), p. 74

[110] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 36 (7) July 1954

[111] M. Ndeda, 'Women and Development Since Colonial Times', p. 243; F. Manji and C. O'Coil, 'The Missionary Position: NGOs and Development in Africa', p. 570; L. Aubrey, *The politics of development co-operation: NGOs, gender and partnership in Kenya* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 45-54.

and the Committee on Women's Work.[112] In the following years the WI, the Women's Group on Public Welfare and the Townswomen's Guilds were approached by a multitude of official and governmental organisations including the National Council of Social Services, several international Universities, the Dominion High Commissioners Office and the Colonial Office to extend their established exchange program with the provision of specific funds.[113] By 1953, the WI had received students and arranged tours for visitors from Uganda, British Guiana, Gambia, Kenya and Rhodesia.[114] Students were taught various aspects of modern rural development practices, food preservation and adult educational methods, as well as being subject to a vigorous fortnightly tour of County Federations, local WI meetings, museums, farm institutes, schools and theatres.[115] By 1954 the organisation had become proficient in the provision of courses based on providing instruction to women in the colonies on the necessary ingredients for a successful voluntary organisation. In her work on the public response to decolonisation in Britain after World War Two, Anna Bocking-Welch notes the prevalence of lectures and talks on imperial topics at a local Institute level and has correctly concluded that the Empire and Commonwealth continued to form a substantial component of the WI's international educational initiatives into the 1960s.[116] The WI international sub-committee continued to develop contacts within the Commonwealth and was approached at numerous points over the 1950s by the Young Women's Christian Association, the Mothers Union and the Corona Club, a society run by wives of colonial students and officials, to supply speakers in this capacity.[117]

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[112] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 36 (3) March 1954

[113] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 53 (4), April 1959; WL, NUTG, *Townswoman,* February 1961, p. 32

[114] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 35 (9), September 1953

[115] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 34 (12), December 1952

[116] A. Bocking-Welch, *The British Public in a Shrinking World: Civic Engagement with a Declining Empire, 1960 – 1970,* (University of York: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2013), pp. 92 - 97

[117] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 36 (3) March 1954; *Home and Country,* 38 (2) February 1956; *Home and Country,* 38 (4), April 1956

International connections between organisations were viewed as a priority by the WI international sub-committee at this time as a means of sharing experiences and advice across national boundaries. Organisational leaders such as Kathleen Thomas hoped that the creation of such networks would encourage members of the wider movement to participate in efforts to improve international living conditions and status.[118] In 1951 the ACWW issued a resolution that emphasised the responsibility of its national affiliates to 'improve the standards of living for all of those living in rural areas throughout the world'.[119] Exchange programs and study courses were conceived as one of the ways in which the WI could translate this appeal into independent action. In reality however, the Institute's commitment to improve the standards of living of women in the South was not entirely altruistic but had been shaped by the demands of the colonial state. Given the level of interaction between the WI and the Colonial Office over the course of the 1940s and 1950s it may be more appropriate to view these forms of WI involvement in development as motivated by the ideals of 'benevolent paternalism' that had traditionally been at the heart of British imperialism and assumed that the British way was 'the best way'. Historically, British women's organisations have been deeply embedded in the practices of imperial culture since the nineteenth century. Antoinette Burton and Julia Bush have both shown how the belief in Anglo-American superiority was heavily engrained into female British associational culture at the turn of the twentieth century.[120] Clare Midgley's work has revealed the multiple historic roles that British women played in providing justifications for imperial rule through its 're-presentation as social mission' rather than exploitation.[121] The systematic depiction of Eastern women as helpless, degraded victims of religious custom and uncivilised practices

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[118] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 35 (12)December 1953

[119] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 33 (7), July 1951

[120] A. Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865 – 1915*; J. Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power,* (Leicester: University of Leicester Press, 2000)

[121] C. Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain 1790 – 1865,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 148; C. Midgley, 'British Women, Women's Rights and Empire 1790 – 1850' in P. Grimshaw et al. (eds.), *Women's Rights and Human Rights: International Historical Perspectives,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 3 - 15

made the women of the colonies the object of humanitarian concern and a pretext for British feminist imperial intervention. Campaigns against the practice of *sati* in India and child slavery in Hong Kong for example, were couched in terms of the need to rescue colonial women from 'ignorance', a trait attributed to 'indigenous patriarchal relations' alone.[122] The WI's relatively small-scale colonial development projects betrayed lingering aspects of this skewed power relationship; the schemes and courses for women were developed in relation to, in the words of the NFWI Secretary, 'the capacities of the colonial people', which were invariably conceptualised as lower than that of their British counterparts in the 1950s and 1960s.[123] British voluntary associations were considered by the Colonial administration to be the 'right' way of engaging the female population in public life as well as administering aspects of social welfare. Like the international women's organisations, the courses for colonial women were designed to focus specifically on domesticity and, in a similar manner to those maternal imperialists before the War, they also tended to ignore the realities of colonial life. However, the subjects of these courses were to later form the core of WI educational and social contributions to the practical projects of the FFHC in the 1960s.

Development work outside the formal colonial context came in the form of the increased collaboration between the WI and the ACWW in the 1950s. The movement received regular visits from the Association's President at its Annual General Meetings throughout 1955 to 1957.[124] In a similar manner to the ICW and IAW, the ACWW's development program emphasised the principle of fundamental education, particularly for rural women. The ACWW's aim was to remove some of the 'burdens of rural women' through the 'introduction

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[122] C. Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain 1790 – 1865*; S. Pedersen, 'The Maternalist Moment in British Colonial Policy: the Controversy Over Child Slavery in Hong Kong, 1917 – 1941'; M. Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire,* p. 51

[123] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 30 (1), January 1948 'The Colonial Conference 1947'

[124] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 39 (9), September 1957; NFWI, *Home and Country,* 40 (9), September 1958; NFWI, *Home and Country,* 38 (6), June 1956

of improvements to primitive domestic techniques' and included for example, the introduction of community mills for grinding corn.[125] The ACWW urged its national affiliates to highlight the role of women in all technical assistance applications and to encourage the provision of programs that specifically improved the lives of women. The WI responded directly to this request in 1959 with the establishment of the Lady Aberdeen Scholarship Fund at the movement's Edinburgh Conference in joint conjunction with the ACWW. The Fund was named after Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, former President of the ICW and founder member of the ACWW. The Fund consisted of contributions from WI County Federations which were matched by the ACWW itself, its purpose to fund the 'training of country women and home makers' in developing countries, to improve the lives of women throughout the world and to help the organisation forge new links towards international friendship.[126] The Fund was intended to finance a permanent scholarship scheme for the training of voluntary and professional leaders in the 'field of home economic and rural community welfare' and therefore reflected the aims of the organisation as a whole.[127] Applicants were expected to have demonstrated a 'genuine and lasting' interest in work to promote the welfare of their countrywomen, their families and their communities'.[128] Given the organisation's previous experience of designing international study courses for colonial women, the international committee of the WI was responsible for the creation of appropriate syllabi and course materials. A large proportion of the training was held at the organisation's adult education college. The scholarship scheme led to the endorsement of many different and initially small scale local projects. Following the establishment of this permanent fund, the WI assisted the ACWW in the administration of three pilot training schemes in West Bengal, East Pakistan and Rhodesia. The schemes were intended to train a small number of women in basic

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[125] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 33 (7), July 1951

[126] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NWFI, Co-operation with ACWW: Lady Aberdeen Scholarships, 1959

[127] WL, 5FWI/D/2 153, NFWI, Letter to Members, Lady Aberdeen Scholarship, March 1959

[128] WL, 5FWI/D/2 153, NFWI, Co-operation with ACWW: Letter to Members, December 1960

reading and writing skills, health and nutrition and leadership.[129] All of these schemes were extensively reported on by the Institutes in its monthly journal, and members were also called upon during these years to help raise monies for the Fund itself.[130]

The purpose of these projects was to improve the standard of living for women in existing social systems by through the provision of basic education but it did not aim to challenge the social and economic position of women in their families. However, the increased level of co-operation between the WI and the ACWW increased the visibility of international work to the ordinary member through the organisation of training schemes and the presence of international students at local WI branches throughout the 1950s. These initiatives also produced important connections that were later to prove formative in the organisation's official adoption of the Freedom From Hunger Campaign in 1960. Schemes such as the Lady Aberdeen Scholarships expanded on the colonial study courses that the WI had been running since the mid-1950s and drew directly on the movement's priorities as a rural women's organisation. By providing training to women in countries other than Britain, the WI was able to participate the cultural project of development, and guided by its parent organisation (which by this time had also been awarded consultative status 'B' at ECOSOC), began to finance, organise and run larger projects throughout the 1960s.

Whilst the concept of international development appeared more urgent at an international level, the importance of its message had nevertheless filtered down to some British women's organisations during the 1950s in ways which were shaped by past participation in colonial development. The NCW, National Women's Citizens Association and the Women's Institutes

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[129] WL, 5FWI/D/2 153, NFWI, Report by the ACWW to members of the NFWI, September 1958

[130] WL, 5FWI/D/2 150, NFWI, Letter to County Federations, April 1958; WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 36 (4)

demonstrated that they were willing and able to put the resolutions of their international parent bodies into action. The cultural acceptability of development at this time enabled the concept to appeal to more mainstream organisations that were attempting to fix international affairs more permanently into their agendas. Whilst technical assistance did feature as a policy initiative at this time, the 1960s inaugurated a new era. The popular aspect of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign ensured development was to become a priority area for British women's organisations. Gilbert Rist has argued that the 1950s represented the 'incubation' stage of international development and that it was only in the 1960s, with the onset of the first Development Decade, that it became a feature of the popular imagination.[131] In this sense, whilst British women's organisations maintained that efforts to combat poverty were essential, there was little that they could practically achieve during this period. World Refugee Year in 1959 and the more significantly for women's organisations, the FFHC, were the catalysts that inspired a broader female public.

The Freedom from Hunger Campaign

The FFHC was launched in 1960 by the Food and Agricultural Organisation with an initial mandate of five years. The campaign represented the culmination of international concern over world food production that had pervaded since the end of the Second World War and was a response to awareness that the problems of hunger were more complex than previously believed.[132] The Campaign was extremely significant in the level of co-operation that it facilitated between UN agencies, international NGOs and state governments and for its impact on popular consciousness. The participation of NGOs in the Campaign was the

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[131] G. Rist, *A History of Development,* p.89

[132] M. Cépède, 'The Fight Against Hunger: Its History on the International Agenda' in *Food Policy,* 9 (4) (1994), p. 286

central innovation of FFHC, one which ordered them into a 'new framework for international development in which they were central'.[133] In a broader context the FFHC also embodied a wider trend in humanitarian action at this time, the shift from immediate relief to a developmental, preventative model of international aid that placed precedence on the need for longer term solutions to the problems of poverty.[134] The aims of the campaign were threefold and prioritised respectively research, education, and action. The educational aspect of the Campaign aimed to raise public awareness about the causes of hunger as a means of securing long term change.

Whilst previous literature about the Campaign has tended to emphasise its significance for the humanitarian sector, it also had important ramifications for international and national voluntary women's organisations. Several international women's organisations had been involved in the Campaign at its highest levels from the beginning at the FAO and British women's organisations were able to secure membership to the UK National Campaign Committee. At one of the first advisory meetings to discuss the participation of NGOs in the Campaign 23 NGOs sent representatives to Rome, five of which were international women's organisations. These included the ICW, the WILPF, the ACWW, the Young Women's Christian Association and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women.[135] The ACWW also sat on the Ad Hoc Committee for the Campaign out of a total of six members. [136] Significantly, the FFHC brought these organisations into direct contact with other NGOs and specialist agencies in ways that had not been seen before. The FFHC brought the pilot projects of the 1950s into a more official and professionalised international space and enabled these organisations to develop contacts with the specialised agencies on

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[133] A. Bunch, *All Roads Lead to Rome:* Canada, the Freedom From Hunger Campaign, and the Rise of NGOs, 1960-1980, (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Waterloo, 2007), p. 56

[134] A. Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses', p. 880

[135] A. Bunch, *All Roads Lead to Rome*, p. 57

[136] Ibid., p. 58

a similar footing with other, larger humanitarian organisations. These new relationships not only facilitated the sharing of expertise, but also allowed these international women's organisations to conceive of themselves in a global developmental context.

By the end of 1960 the IAW, the ICW, the WILPF and ACWW had all committed the support of their affiliated organisations to the Campaign. The co-operation of NGOs was deliberately sought during the planning stages of the FFHC; the Campaign's organiser, the Director-General of the FAO Binay Ranjan Sen insisted that NGOs were crucial for the delivery of development assistance programs in developing countries given their prior experience. Significantly for the FFHC, they were also practised in methods of fundraising, addressing areas of need, and organising responses to these problems.[137] Significantly, NGOs would have a key role to play in the dissemination of educational and promotional material. One of the key aims of the Campaign was to create a climate of opinion to encourage the intensification of 'action programmes', that is, building up grassroots support.[138] Maggie Black has argued that the preoccupation with popular education and the adoption of a more considered approach to the issue of hunger was in fact the most striking aspect of the Campaign as a whole.[139] International women's organisations embraced the educational side of the Campaign with vigour, and ran regular pieces on the causes and effects of hunger in their respective journals and encouraged their national affiliates to take time to study the causes of hunger.[140] In addition, the ICW, IAW and ACWW were able to build on

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[137] Ibid.

[138] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 54 (6), June 1959, p. 892

[139] M. Black, *A Cause for Our Times, Oxfam the First 50 years,* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992)*,* p. 72

[140] See WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* (55) (3), March 1960; IAW, *International Women's News,* 55 (9), October 1960; IAW, *International Women's News,* 56 (6), June 1961; IAW, *International Women's News,* (57 (2), February 1962; IAW, *International Women's News,* 57 (4), April 1962; A. L. S. Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation Changed the World, 1945 – 1965,* (Kent State University Press: Ohio, 2006), p. 239

and adapt the training schemes they had initiated in the late 1950s to fit more coherently with the Campaign's aims. The gendered aspect of their training persisted into the early 1960s and women's role continued to be conceptualised as primarily domestic regardless of local cultural norms and patterns of employment. The IAW pledged to support the Campaign in February 1960 and the IAW's practical Freedom from Hunger projects were folded into existing schemes. Training and study courses emphasised new aspects of technical training in agricultural techniques for women, including the use of fertilisers, light machinery and communal ovens.[141] Similarly, the ICW urged its national affiliates to work through their national committees for FFHC. A large proportion of the ICW's training courses initiated in the 1950s had focussed on women in rural areas, and these were brought under the banner of the global campaign in the early 1960s. Study courses for women in 'family welfare' were tied in with lessons on nutrition and these outlined the importance of different food groups and an average daily calorific intake. The courses were designed to help combat the economic causes of malnutrition through practical demonstrations of different methods of food preservation, but they also aimed to dispel aspects of 'cultural ignorance'.[142] According to the ACWW in 1964, too many lives were lost from malnutrition in Pakistan 'due to a lack of trained care and…ignorance.'[143] Whilst the main thrust of the FFHC was to help developing countries break out of the cycles of poverty and hunger, by continuing to locate the source of malnutrition as cultural in origins international women's organisations continued to actively participate in the depolitcisation of the issue in the early 1960s.

The ACWW decided to extend its financial provisions to the Lady Aberdeen Scholarship run jointly with the WI, but reoriented the focus towards FFHC aims on the grounds that malnutrition whether due to 'poverty or ignorance' constituted a 'desperately destructive

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[141] IAW, *International Women's News,* 56 (4), April 1962

[142] LMA, ACC/3613/0168, NCW, Minutes of the ICW Standing Committee, 4/7/61

[143] WL, 5FWI/D/2/2/04, WI, Speech Made by Mrs Aroti Dutt to AGM of NFWI, June 1964

thing'.[144] The agrarian vision of development embraced by FFHC organisers meant that the organisation was well placed to assist. From March 1960 the Lady Aberdeen Scholarships focussed primarily on combatting hunger, malnutrition and preventing the pollution of milk and food.[145] The expansion of the Scholarship scheme was financed from appeals to members for personal donations and by the fundraising efforts of national affiliates which sent their contributions to a central fund in addition to the Pennies for Friendship Scheme (a regular appeal that called on all members to donate the smallest coin domination in their country).[146] Later that year, two of the Association's constituent societies in the Netherlands and the USA established their own scholarship funds that also drew from central ACWW funds. These scholarships provided training for women in the fields of home economic, nutrition and rural community welfare. Nutritional instruction involved training women for a year in 'practical nutrition' in accordance with the native food supply in that country. With assistance from FAO, the Association ran workshops on food preparation, preservation, uses of food and rural welfare. Shorter scholarships for three to six months involved training in adult education, home crafts and family welfare, with the view that a suitably educated rural population would inevitably raise the standard of living for the population as a whole.[147] Between 1961 and 1964 the ACWW had financed, in conjunction with its national affiliates, a total of 24 scholarships for women from Uganda, Trinidad, Pakistan, Ceylon, Kenya, Zambia, India and Brazil.[148]

In 1961 the ACWW extended the scholarships and training schemes to include the training of women as community leaders. The organisation's administrators hoped that the installation of permanent leaders, educated in aspects of nutrition and health, would

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[144] WL, 5FWI/D/2, NFWI, Copy of Letter Sent by ACWW to All Constituent Societies, 28/3/60

[145] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, The Lady Aberdeen Scholarship Fund, November 1962

[146] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, ACWW Lady Aberdeen Scholarships, October 1960

[147] WL, 5FWI/D/2 153, NFWI, ACWW Public Release, December 1960

[148] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, ACWW, Lady Aberdeen Scholarships, 1962

contribute to the long term solution of hunger. A key problem of earlier colonial forms of development had been the lack of a permanent infrastructure and staff.[149] The training of 'indigenous local leaders' was therefore considered to be vital to community and rural development as a whole.[150] It was in this respect that the Lady Aberdeen Scholarships were to be expanded over the course of the 1960s as the organisation built on the connections it had established with the FAO and UNESCO, both individually and as a member of the Ad Hoc committee, during the first five years of the FFHC.

A primary feature of the FFHC was the formation of national campaign committees. The Campaign's founder, Binay Ranjan Sen had envisioned that these would act as coordinating bodies for national governments and NGOs to facilitate the organisation of national campaigns.[151] In Britain, the FFHC was extremely well received and a national committee was formed in 1961, chaired by Earl de la Warr.[152] The Committee was significant for bringing British women's organisations into contact with other humanitarian agencies including Oxfam and Christian Aid. In 1962 a total of 40 organisations had affiliated to the UK Committee including the National Council of Women, the WI, the UNA (and consequently, the WAC) and the British branch of the WILPF. The Women's Group on Public Welfare pledged its support to the Campaign in June 1960 but did not press for affiliation to the coordinating committee, bringing the total number of participating women's organisations (including those affiliated to the above umbrella organisations) to 76.

The educational aspects of the Campaign appealed to many different organisations. The NCW distributed central committee publications to its wider branch structure and

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[149] M. Ndela, 'Women and Development Since Colonial Times', p. 254

[150] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, ACWW, Lady Aberdeen Scholarships – Traing Women Leaders, March 1962

[151] A. Bunch, *All Roads Lead to Rome*, p. 72

[152] M. Black, *A Cause for Our Times,* p. 71

encouraged local branches to hold educational seminars and offered trained speakers from its central publicity offices.[153] The Women's Group on Public Welfare and the WILPF both produced their own FFHC leaflets that set out the long-term nature of the Campaign and encouraged national affiliates to engage with local fundraising activities.[154] The Townswomen's Guilds encouraged their members to seriously examine the background to 'the problem of hunger, its causes and the steps that are being taken to combat them'. The Guilds worked closely with the Workers' Educational Association, an adult educational body, to provide speakers about the Campaign to its local branches.[155] The WI incorporated the Campaign into their now already well developed international curriculum which was now disseminated throughout the counties on a regular basis and FFHC lectures were offered at the residential courses held at Denman College.[156] Local WIs were encouraged to 'study the problems' of hunger and to put aside some time to discuss the global implications of malnutrition with other local rural organisations. In 1961 the International Sub-Committee prepared Campaign study kits, films, literature and organised training courses to train County representatives in the key tenets of the Campaign in recognition of the likelihood that they would need lots of speakers 'to get this down to the WIs' in the villages.[157] The popular aspect of the FFHC directly corresponded to the total funds raised and by 1965 the British public had succeeding in raising a total of £7,000,000. For British women's organisations including the NCW and more significantly, the WI it had the additional impact of inspiring wider local membership and helped to cement internationalism and later, development, into the organisation's identity.

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[153] LMA, ACC/3613/01/025, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 14/5/61

[154] WL, 5WFM/ C 559, WGPW, Report Of Executive Officers, 1/3/61

[155] WL, NUTG, *The Townswoman,* 29 (7), July 1962

[156] LMA, ACC/3613/01/025, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 14/5/61

[157] WL, 5FWI/D/2 153, NFWI, FFHC – Sharing the World's Larder 6/10/61

Whilst ultimately eclipsed by the contribution from humanitarian organisations such as Oxfam, the fundraising attempts of the NCW, the Townswomen's Guilds and the WI were nevertheless impressive for organisations of their size. The social aspect of the Guild and WI's work in addition to their localised membership base meant that they were both well placed to appeal for funds. In 1959 the WI had donated £75,052 to the World Refugee Fund as part of the UN sponsored international year; many County Federations had decided to work together to raise money through traditional means, although there was no centrally organised fundraising effort.[158] That same year, the Townswomen's Guilds had successfully mobilised its local membership and contributed £9000 to the central World Refugee Fund.[159] The FFHC built on this enthusiasm and was the first centrally directed international campaign to successfully mobilise both movements as a whole.

In March 1961 a special ad hoc committee was set up in March 1961 to co-ordinate the WI effort.[160] Whilst previously, domestic campaigns such as Keep Britain Tidy (launched in the mid-1950s) had succeeded in spreading to the countryside locales, the FFHC was the first international based effort to capture the imagination of rural women. The international sub-committee had decided early on that the organisation should invest the results of its fundraising drives into individual projects rather than to the generic national FFHC pot.[161] This decision was made deliberately; the Committee hoped that specific small-scale projects would appeal to WI members on a personal level and that popular interest could be sustained through the provision of regular updates on the status of the WI schemes. The WI's early FFHC projects were selected from a list accredited officially by the UK FFHC Committee and were initially gender blind. The WI chose to finance two projects and the organisation pledged to raise £25, 750 by 1965. The first project funded the building of the

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[158] WL, FWI/D/2, NFWI, World Refugee Year, 17/6/60

[159] WL, NUTG, *The Townswoman,* April 1960, p. 100

[160] LMA, ACC/3613/01/025, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 16/8/62

[161] WL, 5FWI/D/2 153, NFWI, FFHC – WI Fundraising Projects 16/10/61

'Karamoja Farm Institute' in Uganda and aimed to combat the problems of over grazing and soil erosion by supplying training in agricultural methods to leaders of the local tribes. The scheme also planned to hold special classes for women. The second, smaller project involved the building of a Co-operative trading store in Radisele, Bechuanaland which was sponsored and funded by the WI Co-operative Markets (a self-contained organisation within the movement).[162] The store would allow local people to sell their maize and millet crops locally and buy necessary goods at a point near to their land and formed part of a larger development scheme for the Banmangwato tribe. It was hoped that the store would act as a combination of a 'co-op and village hall' – a local incentive to encourage higher levels of production and a centre for social activity.[163] The store would channel profits into other local development projects, provide local employment and enable locals to gain experience of trading.[164] Being smaller in size and with limited resources, the NCW opted to sponsor one initiative in Tristan Da Cunha, but contributed the majority of its efforts to the central UK FFHC fund.[165] In 1962 the Townswomen's Guilds opted to sponsor a Farm Diet Scheme in Gayaza in Uganda which aimed to improve local nutrition in addition to farm income.[166]

Local WIs were encouraged to use their imagination when organising fund raising projects, but recommended activities such as sponsored walks, bake sales, coffee mornings, jumble sales, bring and buy sales, raffles, fetes and car boot sales. The Campaign was an immediate success, by as early as February 1963 the initial money required to finance the first two projects had been raised and the Radisele store had already been built and fully equipped. The WI was one of first two voluntary organisations to have completed the first of

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[162] WL, 5FWI/D/2 165, NFWI: BBC Today Programme, Extract from Barbara Hooper's Interview, 21/3/62

[163] WL, 5FWI/D/2 152, NFWI, FFHC – Attachment to Circular, 28/2/62

[164] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 44 (1), January 1962

[165] LMA, ACC/3613/01/025, NCW, Executive Committee Minutes, 18/4/62

[166] WL, NUTG, *The Townswoman,* June 1962

their FFHC projects by 1963, yet the money was still coming in. In less than a year the Institutes had collected £42, 338, an amount that surpassed the expectations of the international committee and the National Executive. The problem now lay in what to do with the surplus. The Committee decided that 5% of all future donations would go directly to the National FFHC Committee and £5,000 extra was given to the Lady Aberdeen Scholarship Fund. By the end of 1964 the NFWI FFHC fund had reached in excess of £180,000, and was used to fund further projects a total 25 five projects in countries such as Kenya, Ceylon, Rhodesia and Trinidad. Large projects included the financing of a University Farm at the Faculty of Agriculture in Trinidad for teaching and research in tropical agriculture.[167] The WI's smaller scale projects shifted the focus onto women; the majority centred on providing training for women in areas with which the WI was historically familiar. WI FFHC funds stationed British women graduates in Fiji, Southern Rhodesia and Pakistan to demonstrate needlework and cookery to local women.[168]

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[167] WL, 5FWI/D/2 152, NFWI, Report of the FFHC AD Hoc Committee, 22/1/63

[168] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 47 (1) (1965)

Figure 3 – One of the British graduates sent overseas through WI FFHC funds, 'looking at a section of the display of needlework set up by students from the five different territories of Fiji, showing the graded scheme of work, beginning with simple sewing'.

Home and Country, 47 (1) (1965)

Figure 4 – Two Fijian students displaying the domestic equipment they had made themselves following the establishment of a WI funded course, including 'storage cupboards, storage jars, rubbish containers, graters, measuring cups and a hay box'.

Home and Country, 47 (1) (1965)

In 1964 the WI expanded upon the pilot project they had started in conjunction with the ACWW in West Bengal in the 1950s. The scheme had originally centred on six villages in the Maukhali area near Calcutta. A travelling team of teachers and doctors had been sent to the area to provide instruction in literacy, handicrafts, first aid and cookery with the broader aim of reducing illiteracy rates in adult women in the area by 100%.[169] In 1964 the scheme was expanded to include 18 villages and utilised forms of training that could be delivered in a relatively short period of time to women with 'practical ability' but without formal academic training.[170] The teachers helped to set up local nursery schools so that women could attend in the day, and by 1967 a total of around 400 women in the area had received some degree of training.[171] In 1965 the scheme was expanded to include annual leadership camps for women from each village and a permanent Training Centre was established to provide refresher courses for the women of project villages. Leaders were carefully selected so that they might 'extend their knowledge' to other villages. The Fund also provided the area with a mobile van, a classroom and furniture and later in 1965 a production centre for the part time employment of trained women in 'suitable handicrafts'.[172]

The project in West Bengal was later used a model for a similar two year pilot scheme in East Pakistan which the WI sponsored in 1965. The scheme was intended to provide training for village women in nutrition, food preservation and preparation, horticulture, maternity and child care, family planning, craftwork and literacy with the help of a partner organisation, the All Pakistan Women's Organisation.[173] Like the West Bengal project, the long term impact of this training was to secure local 'leaders' who would disseminate the information amongst the women of their own communities thus ensuring the longevity of the

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[169] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* July 1966, p. 232

[170] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 46 (4) April 1964

[171] WL, 5FWI/D/2 153, NFWI, Towards a New World, 28/3/68

[172] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 46 (4), April 1964

[173] WL, 5FWI/D/2/2, NFWI, Letter from Mrs John Bull to General Secretary Mr Weitz, 8/9/68

project. The scheme was to be based at a national agricultural centre and the East Pakistan Development Organisation agreed to provide instructors for the project.[174] The project was based on the premise that rural women should receive 'complementary training to that given by their menfolk' if efforts to raise the standards of living in local communities were to be successful. The gendered aspect of this project was not hidden – the WI international committee were clear that the training aimed specifically to help rural women to be 'good mothers and efficient housewives'.[175] By the end of 1966 the WI magazine reported that 116 women had been trained as local leaders and in each village a Mahila Samiti (WI) had been established in addition to a nursery school.[176] In the same year, the project was taken to Rhodesia albeit on a smaller scale. The fund provided for the five jeeps and trained several local leaders who used the cars to travel around the country to provide instruction to village women in health, nutrition and 'homecraft'.[177]

The only WI funded project that was not situated in a former British territory was the Programme for the Protection of the Pre-School Child in Colombia. The scheme was organised and run jointly by the NFWI and the National Institute of Nutrition in Colombia between 1965-6 and was financed by funds raised during the FFHC totalling £15,000. The scheme aimed to prevent child malnutrition caused most frequently, according to WI reports, by local ignorance and the prevalence of traditional beliefs about certain types of food and child weaning.[178] The scheme provided complementary feeding and educational programmes for mothers and children from the poorest communities in specially built Nutritional Recovery Centres in six selected areas. This was then followed up by regular

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[174] WL, 5FWI/D/2/2 153, NFWI, Pilot Project in East Pakistan, 5/4/66

[175] WL, 5FWI/D/2/2/04, NFWI-ACWW, Training Project of Home Economics and Nutrition in Rural Areas in East Pakistan, July 1967

[176] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* April 1966, p. 136

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid. p. 138

house visits and one to one sessions.[179] Once again the gendered nature of the scheme is clear – the educational side of the programme that provided instruction on healthy food preparation and storage targeted mothers and elder sisters specifically, whilst disregarding male members of the family unit.[180] Interestingly, this was the only FFHC project to be directly criticised by leaders of the County Federations. Mary Burke of Staffordshire wrote to the international committee in May 1966 raising concerns about the NFWI supporting charitable enterprise in countries 'much better off financially than we are'.[181]

Figure 5 – A typical cookery demonstration in Mexico. These types of practical demonstrations formed the core of 'nutritional education' projects for women in the global South during the 1960s.

Home and Country, 43 (9), September 1961

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[179] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, A Programme for the Protection of the Child, Columbian Children and British Women, May 1966

[180] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, Freedom from Hunger – Progress on Columbia Project, January 1966

[181] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, Letter from Mary Burke, Stoke to Mrs Curry,

Conclusion

The WI used the courses for women it had designed in a colonial context as blueprints for its entry into international development. This was not a coincidence; the legacy of colonialism was a symptom of the wider British approach to development at this time. Recent scholarship by Anna Bocking-Welch has highlighted the extent to which the shape of the UK FFHC effort was moulded by lingering imperial legacies.[182] Indeed, Frederick Cooper has argued that in an era of rapid decolonisation and the withdrawal of the colonial presence in global South, Britain transformed its 'colonial development apparatus into a foreign aid system'.[183] The UK Campaign Committee had been responsible for the selection of suitable projects for the British public to support. The group of 'experts' commissioned by the committee largely consisted of former colonial officials. The projects on the list tended to be those started as colonial development initiatives in earlier years, or were deliberately chosen in areas with which committee members had existing experience and knowledge. In this sense, the UK Campaign Committee made a conscious decision to concern itself with the provision of assistance to the under developed territories in the Commonwealth.[184] That British women's organisations did not question this prioritisation of former colonies is not surprising given their public support for the Empire in the inter-war period and their involvement in colonial development in the 1940s and 1950s. British women's organisations, including the WI and the NCW had been participants in the creation and maintenance of a female imperial culture which had existed from around the mid-19th century in multiple forms. Consequently, as Figure 2 shows, a large proportion of the FFHC projects sponsored by the WI existed in ex-colonial territories.

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[182] A. Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses', pp.879 - 896

[183] F. Cooper, *Africa Since 1940,*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 84

[184] A. Bocking-Welch, 'Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses', p. 883

Firoze Manji and Carl O'Coill have stressed how the discourses of development that pervaded at the time of the FFHC continued to define non-Western people in terms of their perceived divergence from the cultural standards of the West in ways which reproduced the social hierarchies that had defined the relationship between both groups under colonialism.[185] Indeed, WI literature from this time betrays the enduring effects of colonial imbalances of power. Native peoples are continuously described in culturally inferior terms; laziness, primitiveness, apathy and ignorance were all apparently features of individual populations from Africa, Asia and South America.[186] The persistence of such attitudes occasionally resulted in a rejection of the concept of 'development' as a whole, Herefordshire County withdrew from FFHC fundraising efforts on the grounds that the Karamajong people were not 'suitable' subjects for long term initiatives for example.[187] In *Home and Country*, African communities are described in terms of their alien dress, physical features, and distinguished by differing hair styles.[188] Despite the apparent good intentions of the ACWW and WI, English was still a prerequisite for individual entry onto their developmental scholarship system in the 1960s and a significant proportion of the training was deliberately held in Western, rather than native countries.[189] The WI justified this position Whilst this was justified in terms of assess to expertise it was more than likely to neglect local particularities. Within Britain, West Indian calypso bands and dancers from Zambia and Uganda in national costume were paraded in front of members on WI international days whilst little was actually done to encourage women from these communities to join the movement itself.[190] The success of the international exchange visits is difficult gauge, but as late 1961 *Home and*

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[185] F. Manji and C. O'Coil, 'The Missionary Position: NGOs and Development in Africa', p. 574

[186] WL, 5FWI/D/2, NFWI, FFHC – Farm Institute Attachment to County Circular, 19/11/62; WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 45 (1), January 1963, pp. 6-8

[187] WL, 5FWI/D/2 152, Letter from Margaret Owen to Mrs Curry, 22/11/62; WL, 5FWI/D/2 152, Letter from Mary Sheppard to Mrs Curry, 3/11/62; WL, 5FWI/D/2 153, Hereford Times – 'WI Clash of Views Over Help for Uganda', 3/11/62 and 'County WIs Spilt Over Campaign', 22/11/1962

[188] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 42 (9), 1960, pp. 306 - 309

[189] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, List of Lady Aberdeen Scholarship Awards, 1967

[190] WL, NFWI, Home and Country, 45 (12), 1963 p. 21; *Home and Country,* 47 (1), 1965, p.13;

Country was still having to advise members *not* to ask their guests 'whether they lived in mud huts?'[191]

The involvement of the NCW, the Townswomen's Guilds and in particular, the WI in the FFHC was driven not only by the direction of their international parent bodies but it was also informed by their participation in the maintenance of Empire. The persistence of colonial terms of reference and the vocabulary of ignorance suggests that the legacies of 'imperial maternalism' continued in a development context after the Second World War. Both British and international women's organisation's approach to the FFHC continued to be shaped by a gendered (Western) understanding of women's role in society that aimed to improve her standard of living within the confines of the home rather than to transform her role in society. Arguably, this limited vision of women's role in development persisted throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s. It was not until international women's organisations directly sought out the participation of women from underdeveloped nations that they were able to respond more thoroughly and realistically to women's real needs within the local community.

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[191] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 43 (4), 1961

Chapter Four

The 'Vanguards of Development Planning': Women's Organisations and Women-Centred Development, c.1965 – 1975

In 1975 the Women's National Commission (WNC), a government sponsored advisory body, helped to organise over 550 events celebrating International Women's Year (IWY) around the UK.[1] Utilising the branch structures of its affiliated member organisations, the Commission broadcasted the key themes of IWY, equality, development and peace, to towns and villages throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The response to the WNC's appeal for assistance was unprecedented; over 50 different voluntary, political and professional women's organisations ranging from the Women's Institute, the Women's Royal Voluntary Service to the Women's Section of the Communist Party offered their services.[2] Summarising their efforts the following September, the Commission considered IWY to have been one of the most successful UN based programmes in Britain in terms of national visibility.[3] IWY was the means by which international development was made accessible to a broad spectrum of British women's organisations, both small and large. However, the emerging critiques about women's inadequate role in development that seemingly pervaded at this time did not find practical expression in British IWY initiatives in 1975. This was not only a product of historical continuity rather than change, but was also fostered by the WNC's deliberate exclusion of politically feminist organisations from its organising body. The marginalisation of feminist politics in the Commission's preparations prevented the wider implications of IWY from being practically recognised. In this sense, the history of women

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[1] Women's Library (Hereafter WL), 5ICW/F/10 39, Women's National Commission (WNC), Activities arranged in connection with International Women's Year in London and around the United Kingdom, December 1974

[2] Ibid.

[3] WL, 5SJA/6 520, WNC, International News Sheet, Autumn 1976, p. 7

and development in the 1970s was one of continuation and adaptation rather than revolution.

The Women in Development (WID) scholars and activists of the mid-1970s attempted to make visible women's complex employment patterns and multi-faceted productive roles in the global South. Their work set the terms of reference for IWY and helped to facilitate the formation of new international development institutions and research centres for women throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. Influential research carried out by the CSW and academics such as Ester Boserup during this period revealed the extent to which development benefits had not 'trickled down' to women and that many of the inherent assumptions of past development theory had served to ignore women's productive role in the economy.[4] Boserup's work was fundamental for identifying that the changes in technology associated with the international development modernisation project had served to substantially reduce the status of women through the marginalisation of her place in agricultural systems. New technology had frequently displaced women in some of the activities for which they had long been economically responsible, whilst the focus on funding 'cash crops' ignored the traditional subsistence farming that women typically performed.[5]

IWY has generally been viewed as marking a 'watershed' in the history of women's international politics for encouraging the development of the first truly 'global' international women's movement and the creation of an international machinery for policy on women and development; the results of the Mexico Conference in 1975 established the comprehensive 'World Plan of Action' which mapped out strategies for action to improve the status of

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[4] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN: A Sixty Year Quest for Equality and Justice,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005)*,* p. 52

[5] E. Boserup et al., *Women's Role in Economic Development,* (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2007), p. 44

women worldwide.[6]   However despite the amplification of international attention, a large majority of development projects for women continued to be financed, planned and managed by international and national voluntary, and more specifically, women's organisations. Endemic levels of underfunding and a general lack of planning on behalf of official agencies continued to situate women's organisations as the convenient administrators at the centre of project delivery in the Third World. Thus, projects for women in the 1970s continued to be informed by legacies of an older Maternalism which theoretically and practically shaped perspectives on how to successfully integrate women into national development. The Western model of gender relations and the division of labour continued to be utilised in a developmental context despite the intensification of criticism from feminist scholars during this period who had identified that women had been more often the 'victims' of development programs rather than the beneficiaries.[7]

Projects in the 1970s continued to charge women with sole responsibility for the well-being of the family thus providing for women in terms of familial needs and problems rather than individual social, economic or political advancement. The provision of health and welfare services for women and children had been central to British women's organisations during the inter-war period both in colonial and national contexts and persisted in post-war relief efforts.[8] These types of services prioritised nutritional health, hygiene, child welfare and maternal well-being, and were conceptualised by British women in terms of their ability to

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[6] N. Çağatay et al, 'The Nairobi Conference: Towards a Global Feminism?' in *Feminist Studies,* 12 (2) (1986), p. 401

[7] M. M. Islam, 'Third World Women in the Development Process: Feminist Thoughts and Debates' in *Higher Education of Social Science,* 1 (2) (2011), p. 25

[8] B. Bush, ''Britain's Conscience on Africa': White Women, Race and Imperial Politics in Inter-War Britain' in C. Midgley (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 219; A. Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture,* (University of North Carolina: North Carolina Press, 1994) p. 60; B. Caine, *English Feminism,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

allow women to carry out their 'natural' duties. The emphasis on social well-being prioritised women's role as mother; maternity and child care were assumed to be the central experiences and functions of all women across national boundaries. Developmental projects for women in the late 1960s and 1970s continued to centre on the provision of 'social' services which emphasised rather than challenged the primacy of women's reproductive role within local communities.

IWY was eagerly anticipated by British women's organisations in the 1970s, many of which viewed the celebrations as an opportunity for women to meet together to decide a dynamic programme for women's integration into development at all levels, national, regional and international.[9] However this Chapter will show that whilst IWY was indeed a crucial moment in the history of women's international activism and development thought, practical initiatives demonstrated significant levels of continuity rather than transformation. Whilst international organisations such as the IAW and ICW were instrumental in recognising the importance of women's economic role in local communities and encouraged this through new pilot income generating projects by the late 1960s, this often went hand in hand with training in homecrafts and domestic science. Within Britain, projects for IWY continued to set aside funds specifically for the provision of domestic utensils; domesticity remained a persistent practical feature of British development schemes. Thus the development practices for women remained problematic in 1975; the multiple histories of Western women's involvement in the global South continued to impact on the ways in which Third World women were contextualised and planned for. Projects which prioritised social welfare services and assistance remained popular but failed to challenge women's status in society or their unequal access to resources.

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[9] WL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 69 (4) (1974)

This Chapter will examine the international development practices of both British and international women's organisations from 1965 leading up to IWY in 1975. The Chapter will begin with a survey of the range of development projects invested in by British women's organisations following the Freedom from Hunger Campaign in the 1960s and 1970s. Although a significant proportion of these projects did indeed continue to conceive of women in solely reproductive terms, some organisations did attempt to sponsor projects which targeted women's basic needs, in addition to access to family planning information and small-scale productive labour. In this sense, British women's organisations responded to wider debates regarding women's contribution to the social and economic development of their countries. At the forefront of British women's organisations involvement in international development was the Women's Institute, which will be considered in the second section of the Chapter. The Institute's involvement in the FFHC and close links to the Associated Countrywomen of the World (ACWW) encouraged the organisation to utilise development as a means of practically embodying the Institute's commitment to international understanding. The organisation was able to finance individual projects in the developing world and was also able to secure representation on and solidify organisational connections to a number of British official and voluntary agencies. However, WI projects in the late 1960s and 1970s continued to demonstrate a maternalist bias as the organisation's work in Asia and Africa reveals. The WI's approach to development continued to conceive of poverty and malnutrition in terms of cultural ignorance and passivity. The third section will consider how these assumptions about women's role in development were articulated and practised by international women's organisations at this time and how this filtered down to British women's organisations. It will examine specifically the work of the IAW and ICW, for whom international development now featured as a central organising concept.

The final section will move on to look at how British women's organisations responded to the IWY. The establishment of a new semi-official organisation, the Women's National

Commission, was charged with the responsibility for arranging the British celebrations throughout 1975 in addition to all follow up action. The organisation had a multitude of international connections and emphasised the development aspect of the Year's tripartite message through fund-raising initiatives and official sponsorships. However, the organisation's deliberate exclusion of feminist organisations enabled the persistence of a socially-conservative perspective that did not attempt to challenge existing notions of women's role in development. The prohibition of older feminist and newer radical women's groups in favour of those with social welfare priorities did not facilitate the burgeoning critiques of contemporary development planning.

British Women's Organisations and International Development c. 1965 - 1975

For many British women's organisations, the fund-raising activities that formed the popular basis of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign had the effect of positioning development onto their international agendas for the first time. Many organisations built upon this initial effort in the latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s in a multiplicity of ways. Not only did this period see an increase in time spent 'studying' the problems of the Third World, but it also saw the passage of official resolutions that committed organisations to promote the ideals of international development in addition to investment in practical initiatives. Devaki Jain has identified the late 1960s as the period in which international agencies and planners began to recognise women's potential contribution to the social and economic development of their countries in ways that conceptualised her as a partner in the developmental process.[10] Thus, the idea that women's issues had development policy implications gradually gained

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[10] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN,* p. 58 - 67

credence within international institutions.[11] The CSW for example, was approached by the General Assembly of the UN to prepare a study of Long Term Program for the Advancement of Women, consequently leading to the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women in 1967.[12] UNESCO meanwhile, had begun to stress the need for 'educational planning for women' in a significant proportion of its published official documents and had also implemented several institutional mechanisms to deal specifically with 'the woman question'.[13] Resources from the newly established United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had enabled the wider funding of women's projects in Africa and had also facilitated the production of numerous new reports which emphasised the connection between women's socio-economic status and access to family planning.[14] Although these developments were tentative at best, there is evidence that British women's organisations responded to these emerging discourses specifically through sponsorship of practical initiatives. Programs that promoted female literacy and education became paramount for a number of British women' organisations during this period, along with new forms of education regarding family planning and practical projects that attempted to alleviate the daily burdens which had historically tied rural women in the global South to domestic duties. However this is not to say that these projects were without flaws; the tendency to view women within the context of the family persisted in various forms of developmental activity.

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[11] N. Kabeer, *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought,* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 4

[12] M. E. Galey, 'The United Nations and Women's Issues' in P. R. Beckman & F. D'Amico (eds.),*Women, Gender and World Politics: Perspectives, Policies and Prospects,* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1994), p. 135

[13] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN,* p. 61

[14] A. Whittick, *Woman into Citizen,* (London: Anthenaeum, 1979) p. 249

Over the course of the late 1960s the NCW intensified its organisational connections to its international parent body, the ICW. The ICW's strong commitment to international development at this time, most particularly in the field of adult education, inevitably had an effect on the international direction of its British branch. In 1968 the organisation had passed a resolution on the 'International Standard of Living' that noted the 'growing disparity between affluent and poor countries' and committed its affiliated societies to press for Governmental action 'to bring all people of the world a standard of living that is now technically possible' with specific reference to women.[15] It went on to urge that 'realistic aid targets be met' and advocated the objective of 1% of Gross National Product to the British Government, a figure that had been set at the meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development that same year.[16] This resolution was re-affirmed at the 1972 Annual Conference but added that the Government should utilise its 'influence in International Trade forums towards the improvement of conditions of access to the rich markets for the products…of poorer countries'.[17] In 1970, the NCW translated its commitment to international development into membership of official bodies and had secured representation on a number of national development bodies including the British Council for Aid to Refugees, the British Committee of UNICEF, the Standing Conference on the Economic and Social Work of the UN (SCESWUN) and in 1972, the Standing Conference on the Second Development Decade.[18] The NCW was receptive to the new international emphasis on women and in 1971 the organisation passed a resolution which noted that the 'incomplete participation of women' in setting official international development goals had directly contributed to the failure of the majority of the First Decade targets.[19] During that same year, the National Women's Citizens Association also affirmed its

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[15] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 43, Autumn 1973, p. 10

[16] Ibid. p. 8

[17] WL, 5ICW/F/10 39, NCW, Letter from NCW to Mr Wood (Minister for Overseas Development), 17/10/1973

[18] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 47 Autumn 1971, p. 8; NCW, *Council,* 1 (5) (1973)

[19] LMA, ACC/3613/030/35, NCW, Report of International Standing Committee on ICW, May 1971

support for the objectives of the Second Development Decade (DD2), particularly with reference to the full incorporation women into the developmental process.[20]

The NCW manifested practical support for international development through the UNESCO gift coupon scheme and national efforts helped to finance a literacy project in Nepal in 1967.[21] The coupon scheme proved extremely popular with British organisations throughout the 1960s; the Townswomen's Guilds had also helped to fund a literacy programme for young women in Pakistan in 1965 by advocating the scheme to its national membership at local meetings.[22] The gift coupon scheme had been introduced to Britain in the early 1950s and was essentially an 'international currency' that allowed project leaders in developing countries to purchase equipment, resources and materials. Projects were chosen by UNESCO centrally and organisations within Britain were given the opportunity to select projects of their choosing. The scheme relied on the wider organisational membership to purchase 'gift stamps' which were subsequently exchanged for coupons of monetary value. The scheme was a success; by the early 1980s it had developed globally and had helped to finance a significant number of educational projects over the course of its existence.[23] Indeed, the UNESCO scheme was promoted by British women's organisations during the 1960s as a means of practically involving their wider membership in development schemes for women. Between the years 1966 – 1970, the NCW helped to fund the construction of two libraries in Botswana as well as the training of six women from Cameroon in literacy instruction through UNESCO.[24] The Council also granted bursaries to 30 African women to finance their attendance at University between 1969 - 1971.[25]

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[20] WL, 5NWC/1/I 186, NWCA, Agenda – Final Version, May 1971

[21] LMA, ACC/3613/4/11, NCW, International Affairs Report, November 1967

[22] WL, 2IAW/1/D/8 IAW, Minutes of a Meeting of the International Committee, May 1965

[23] D. Heater, *Peace through Education: The Contribution of the Council for Education in World Citizenship,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1984), pp. 110 - 111

[24] LMA, ACC/3613/060/05, NCW, *Women in Council,* 47 (Autumn 1971)

Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s the NCW's international connections expanded and its international participation intensified. The organisational Presidents from 1968 – 1972, Guinevere Tilney and Janet Cockcroft served as British representatives to the CSW and both were keen to encourage connections with the international parent body.[26] Between the years 1966 – 1975 the British branch participated in the organisation of a majority of the ICW's specially arranged international regional seminars on international development and helped to prepare conference papers and briefings.[27] The organisation presented reports and acted as an authority on matters pertaining to education and community development, and also served on the organising body that set the terms of reference for proceeding meetings. These international seminars reveal much about the ways in which the organisation conceptualised women's role in the development process between these years. Literacy formed a central part of the ICW's development strategy in the 1960s and 1970s and this directly informed the international policy of the British NCW.

In 1966, the British NCW assisted in the organisation of an ICW regional seminar entitled 'Literacy – a Social Experience'. Delegates attended from 39 countries from Europe, Asia, Africa and South America; the aim was to discuss the ways in which voluntary women's NGOs could contribute to raising standards of literacy throughout the world. In some respects, the British conference report appears to be ahead of its time. From the outset, the report stressed that 'without the understanding and active participation of women, no true or lasting development of community or nation is conceivable'. Not only did this recognise that current development projects had not in fact affected men and women equally, but it also made clear that a large proportion of international resources used in literacy training were

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[25] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 36 (Autumn 1968)

[26] D. Glick, *The National Council of Women: The First One Hundred Years,* (London: National Council of Women, 1995), p. 256

[27] WL, NCW, *Women in Council,* 47 (Autumn 1971)

'often directed exclusively to young men'.[28] The report also went on to link women's literacy with productivity and outlined how literacy could potentially increase women's opportunities to earn income both independently and from subsistence farms. Literacy had the potential to open up the doors to the 'mechanisms of modern society'.[29] The seminar resolutions, prepared jointly by the British and Italian representatives, urged National Councils to render every possible assistance, both technical and financial, to other affiliates that were in the process of organising and extending their literacy work for women. Affiliates were encouraged to raise money for ICW pilot projects and to participate in the UNESCO Study Tour Programme for women adult education leaders.[30]

However, further examination of the report demonstrates that the primacy of women's role in the family still loomed large in the NCW's interpretation of development for women. Whilst female literacy was indeed central to the Council's vision of participative development for women, its primary value lay in its ability to contribute to the welfare of the family unit. Whilst the seminar had apparently recognised the intrinsic value of women's participation in development, this was mediated by an emphasis on her responsibility for standards of health, hygiene, child care and nutrition. Thus, the long term effects of literacy were conceived of in terms of their impact on the welfare of the family. Although members maintained that the benefits of adult education were central to efforts to facilitate female productivity, the 'major economic value' lay essentially in:

> '…the possibility of breaking out of vicious circles of ignorance, hunger, disease in the family and in opening up the way to that improvement in home conditions, and in health, educational level and productive capacity of her children.'[31]

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[28] WL, 5ICW/P/05 44, ICW, Literacy: A Social Experience: the Role of Women's Non-Governmental Organisations in Literacy Programmes, 14th – 26th May 1966, p. 5

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid. pp. 34 - 35

[31] Ibid. p. 31

The practical projects envisioned by the women at the seminar reflected this prioritisation. Although vocational training was considered essential for 'newly literate and young women', instruction in home management, food production and civic education were deemed suitable for the majority of housewives and mothers of large families. This emphasis on training in domestic subjects found expression in other aspects of the British Council's approach to international development. In 1970, members of the Council's international standing committee helped to organise another regional seminar on 'Women's Role in Development'; none of the committee members saw anything problematic about the centrality of 'handicrafts' in the seminar programme.[32] Within Britain, the National Executive had initiated a campaign in April 1974 which asked members to send in copies of women's magazines for ICW run literacy campaigns in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Members were urged to give special priority to those magazines which featured particular 'women's interests' including most significantly child welfare, dress making, cookery and health, subjects that were deemed the most suitable for export.[33]

Scholars of gender and development have coined the phrase 'welfare approach' to best exemplify this policy style concerning women.[34] This approach was popularised throughout the 1950s and 1960s as development planners distinguished between market orientated programs which targeted the 'producer' in the family unit and welfare assistance for 'vulnerable groups'. Thus women were brought into development first as passive

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[32] WL, 5ICW/P/05 44, ICW, Regional Seminar Organising Committee Minutes, 4/6/1970

[33] WL, NCW, *Council: The Newsletter of the National Council of Women of Great Britain,* 2 (7) (1974), p. 2

[34] See for example J. H. Momsen, *Women and Development in the Third World,* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.101; S. M. Rai, 'Gender and Development: Theoretical Perspectives' in N. Visvanathan et al. (eds.), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader: Second Edition,* (London: Zed Books, 2011), p. 28; A. Sen, *Development as Freedom,*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 189 - 190

beneficiaries of social welfare in ways that conceived of her solely in her reproductive role.[35] Thus, whilst men entered the development apparatus as 'household heads and productive agents' women were viewed by planners primarily in their capacity as housewives and mothers which served to relegate them to the marginal 'welfare' sector.[36] Women's role as mother was widely viewed as the most effective means of bringing her into the development process and directly reflected 'First World' interpretations of household structure and power relationships. The approach fostered the use of 'top down' initiatives that centred predominately on food aid, family planning and malnutrition. These practical enterprises were often complemented by social training 'in areas considered natural' for women situated firmly in the domestic sphere, such as sewing, handicrafts and home economics.[37] The prevalence of the 'welfare approach' in international development discourses had a historical lineage unique to the West and was embedded in the histories of philanthropy and relief. James Midgley has stressed that the benefits of social development first found practical expression in the colonial development efforts of the first half of the 20th century. 'Community development' initiatives that focussed on remedial aspects of social welfare championed the ideals of self-help.[38] Caroline Moser and Mayra Buvinić complicate this picture by tracing the association between welfare and women specifically, directly to the end of the Second World War. Programs of economic assistance and financial aid to promote post-war reconstruction in Europe were complemented by emergency relief programs designed to provide help for socially deprived groups in ways which fostered the creation of two parallel approaches to developmental assistance. These initiatives were originally administered by international voluntary agencies which provided relief to poor women based on the assumption that they

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[35] C. Moser, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training,* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 58

[36] N. Kabeer, *Reversed Realities,* p. 6

[37] A. Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 172

[38] J. Midgley, *Social Development: The Development Perspectives in Social Welfare*, (London: Sage, 1995), pp. 53 - 56

were central to the health and survival of the family unit. These separate and gendered approaches to international relief were internalised by NGOs and later, the UN and replicated in the development policy of Third World countries in proceeding decades.[39] The compartmentalisation of social welfare as distinct from economic development systematically served to exclude women from mainstream development.

Thus, the 'welfare approach' to women in the global South remained popular throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s despite the growing critique of such measures by the feminist scholars of WID. Geeta Chowdry has shown how the welfare approach continued to underride projects for women sponsored by the World Bank throughout the 1980s.[40] Its popularity persisted due predominately to its politically safe implications. Welfare programmes did not challenge existing (Western) presumptions about the division of labour within society or the distribution of resources within the development sector as a whole. As Buvinić has argued, welfare programmes for women tended to be funded by monies that had traditionally been set aside for this purpose and therefore did not require the re-structuring of developmental budgets or existing financial models.[41]

The 'welfare approach' continued to dominate the ways in which British women's organisations conceived of women's role in the developmental process. Historically, British women's organisations played a key role in aspects of colonial development that emphasised familial welfare as Chapter Three revealed, but they had also been active in

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[39] M. Buvinić, 'Projects for Women in the Third world: Explaining their Misbehaviour' in *World Development*, 14 (5) (1986), p. 658; C. Moser, Gender Planning and Development, p. 59

[40] G. Chowdry, 'Engendering Development? Women in Development (WID) in International Development Regimes' in in M. Marchand & J. L. Parpart (eds.), *Feminism, Postmodernism, Development*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 32

[41] M. Buvinić, 'Projects for Women in the Third Word: Explaining Their Misbehaviour', p. 659

campaigns for women's and children's welfare within Britain itself. Caitríona Beaumont has made clear the ways in which the WI, the NCW and the Townswomen's Guilds prioritised women's maternal health, social welfare benefits and nutrition in policy objectives throughout the inter-war period.[42] Whilst debates regarding the inadequacy of the growth-orientated tenets of the UN First Development Decade did indeed filter down to British women's organisations, the prioritisation of welfare-based initiatives remained largely un-challenged.

In 1973, the National Executive of the Townswomen's Guilds organised a comprehensive 'study plan' for the organisation as a whole that aimed to make clear to its wider membership the complex issues that impacted on Third World countries. Not only did the organisation stress the need for the re-distribution of 'the resources and the wealth of the world' but it also recognised the reciprocal relationship between women's productive role and successful socio-economic development.[43] Despite this progressive stance on women's place in development, the Guilds had continued to stress the importance of women's role in 'community development' throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. The Guilds had for example, helped to finance study tours for social workers and Community Development Officers from Rhodesia and Tanganyika with the aim of promoting higher standards of living and family welfare. The tours provided advice regarding the establishment of women's clubs in addition to an introduction to modern methods of teaching basic literacy. Whilst 'academic education' was important, 'domestic education' was equally so.[44] Similarly, the Women's Group on Public Welfare continued to extend its exchange program with women from overseas throughout the late 1960s. In 1968, the organisation had received guests from the Foreign Office, the Central Office of Information and the International Department of the

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[42] C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928 – 1964,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 101 - 133

[43] WL, NUTG, *The Townswoman,* 40 (7) (1973)

[44] WL, NUTG, *The Townswoman,* 29 (5) (1962); IAW, *International Women's News,* 61 (12) (1966), p. 109

National Council of Social Services. Women from Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda and the Sudan were sent to the WGPW specifically so that they might receive information and training relating to 'all aspects of the welfare of women and their families'.[45]

Social welfare programs for women tended to cater for women in terms of their biological and social functions. The primacy attached to women's reproductive role had found expression in the proliferation of mother-child health programmes and projects that targeted pregnant women specifically. During the 1960s however, the UN's increased concern with the rising global population shifted the developmental emphasis to family planning. Family planning initiatives were utilised by development agencies at this time as an answer to widespread hunger and poverty and women were identified as being primarily responsible for limiting the size of families.[46] However, what was significant about the late 1960s was the deliberate linkage of women's status with that of access to family planning and the freedom to plan child spacing. The newly created UNFPA provided the funds for comprehensive national surveys and case studies to be carried out at an international level. The work of Helvi Sipilä, the then Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at the UN, helped to shift the debate on family planning out of the realm of 'macroeconomics and into the realm of women's rights'. Her report entitled 'the Inter-relationship of the Status of Women and Family Planning' eventually published in 1974, made clear the human rights aspects of family planning. In the Report, family planning services were outlined as a means of enabling women to free themselves as individuals and to allow them to exercise their right to social, economic and political equality with men.[47]

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[45] WL, 5WFM/A 560, WGPW, Annual Report 1967/8

[46] C. Moser, *Gender Planning and Development,* p. 61

[47] A. Whittick, *Woman into Citizen,* p. 249

Thus, family planning was taken up by a broad spectrum of both international and national women's organisations during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, Helvi Sipilä had close connections to the IAW and had spoken numerous times at the Alliance's official Congresses and at regional seminars. Both the IAW and ICW took up the issue of family planning with vigour during this period and arguably, this emphasis trickled down to British women's organisations. The Townswomen's Guilds, a British affiliate of the IAW was keen to involve its membership by the early 1970s. In 1974 the organisation committed itself to raise £10,000 by the end of 1975 for a Women's Education project in Lesotho. The project aimed to integrate family planning with rural development and was sponsored by the International Planned Parenthood Federation, an organisation that had also developed strong links with the IAW and ACWW in the late 1960s.[48] Fund raising drives were complemented by 'study sessions' in which members of local branches familiarised themselves with the problems faced by women in the Third World. Later that year, the Guilds opted to sponsor another project, a Save the Children sponsored initiative in Nepal to build, equip and run a women and child health clinic that provided free family planning advice. Marjorie Rice, chairman of the Guilds at this time, described the fund raising activities as a 'landmark' in the history of the organisation'. According to Rice, the success of these projects demonstrated that the Townswomen of Britain fully accepted the responsibilities of internationalism and were willing to take up the 'problems of the developing world'.[49] From 1967 to 1970 the Women's Group on Public Welfare developed links with the British Red Cross and the International Planned Parenthood Association to run courses to train local women leaders in aspects of family planning.[50] In 1970, the NCW declared its support for free family planning services throughout the world whilst underlining its belief in the importance of 'responsible parenthood'. 'Responsible parenthood' also involved attention to nutrition, health in addition

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[48] WL, 5ICW/F/10 39, WNC, *International Women's Year: UK Newsletter,* April 1975, p.1

[49] M. Stott, *Organisation Woman: The Story of the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds,* (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 199

[50] WL, 5WFM/A 560, WGPW, Annual Report 1967/8; Annual Report 1969/70

to social development more generally.[51] Indeed throughout this period the NCW's stance on family planning and women's status was mediated by its belief in the complementary value of education in maternal care and nutrition.[52]

Despite the increased visibility of international discourses connecting women's status and family planning during this period, practical campaigns have generally been viewed as misplaced. Subsequent research revealed that improvements to the supply of family planning methods had not had a substantial impact on birth rates in the Third World as the conditions that led to the demand for large families had remained intact.[53] Indeed, Matthew Connelly's work on the history of the population control movement concludes that it was the emancipation of women, rather than population control programs that facilitated the decline in global fertility rates over the last 60 years.[54] According to Connelly, the attempts by the UN and other Western institutions to control fertility in the global South after the Second World War were forms of neo-colonialism, built upon the idea that Western experts 'knew best'.[55] The family planning initiatives sponsored by British and international women's organisations alike were encompassed into their existing welfare orientated developmental structure. This structure continued to identify local women rather than the lack of resources as responsible for the social ills that resulted from poverty. In this sense, the development projects sponsored by British women continued to allow the women of the South to negotiate their existence within poverty rather than being freed from it.

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[51] LMA, ACC/3613/030/35, NCW, List of Proposed Resolutions, February 1970

[52] WL, NCW, *Council: Newsletter of the National Council of Women of Great Britain,* 2 (7) (1974)

[53] N. Kabeer, *Reversed Realities,* p. 4

[54] M. Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population,* (Cambridge: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 375 - 6

[55] Ibid. p. 378

The Women's Institutes and International Development post- Freedom from Hunger

The WI is considered separately from other British women's organisations in operation at this time as its experience of international development differed in many respects from those previously mentioned over the course of this period. The success of the WI's efforts during the FFHC had familiarised its Executive members with development planning, delivery and strategy and had also secured the organisation a place on the national FFHC organising committee. The WI had voiced its opinions on this Committee alongside large humanitarian and relief agencies that included War on Want and Oxfam. The period between 1966 and 1977 saw the organisation intensify its development program both internationally and within Britain itself. The WI had successfully translated its commitment to internationalism into an international development strategy in ways that practically involved its wider membership. However, the entrenched assumptions regarding women's responsibility for community and family welfare that had characterised the WI's development efforts during the early 1960s continued to pervade throughout their practical programs during this period.

Within Britain, the WI was an active participant in the celebration of a number of UN-based activities at this time; the scale and scope of these preparations were not replicated by other British women's organisations. International Human Rights Year was celebrated by the organisation throughout the country in 1968 as a means of practically embodying the Institute's commitment to international understanding. The international sub-committee successfully integrated the organisation onto several official development structures; throughout the 1960s and 1970s the WI was able to secure representation on a number of national organising committees and it was also able to court links with newer organisations, networks and individuals. On an international level, the WI continued to develop its existing schemes for women in addition to providing financial assistance to fund new projects for

women and children throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. Significantly, the late 1960s also saw the intensification of the relations between the organisation and its parent body, the ACWW. By the 1970s the WI provided the funds for a significant proportion of ACWW sponsored projects in the developing world. The ACWW continued to expand its work in this field over the 1970s and drew on the co-operation of its affiliated societies in the South. The success of the WI's FFHC fund-raising efforts and the close connection to the ACWW ensured that development had become central to the international policy of the organisation by the mid-1960s.

The success of the WI's fund raising efforts for the FFHC had enabled the organisation to invest more comprehensively than other British women's organisations in a range of development projects. Significantly, by 1965 the organisation was able to finance several training projects in India and Pakistan that targeted women specifically as Chapter Three made clear. These projects aimed to train local women leaders in literacy, nutrition and healthcare who were then expected to pass on their knowledge to the wider local community. Whilst these projects typified women in terms of their social and cultural role within the family, they did appeal to WI members throughout the country who had helped the organisation to surpass the original fund raising target of £25,000 by 720%. The success of the FFHC campaigns bolstered support for the international side of the WI's work and in the late 1960s the international sub-committee took steps to develop their international infrastructure. In 1964 the organisation appointed two international officers for each County Federation, both of whom were expected to attend an annual meeting to decide the international policy of the organisation for the forthcoming year. International officers were also expected to attend courses and day schools that were offered by Denman College in order that they might become 'experts' in their field.[56] Members of the central international

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[56] 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, What is International? The International Work of the WIs 1964 – 1974 Pamphlet, December 1974

sub-committee hoped that this would help to incorporate international work more completely into the day to day running of the Institutes and permeate in those areas with small branches. According to Mrs Curry of the Executive NFWI (and also IAW Executive member), the aim was to encourage members to 'think internationally in all areas of their lives'.[57] National international conferences were also held annually and in 1967 these were expanded into six area conferences in Devon, Gloucestershire, Middlesex, Yorkshire, Shropshire and Cambridgeshire all of which reported average attendances that ranged from 600 – 1500.[58]

The WI continued to promote the ideals of international understanding through international study courses and exchange visits as they had from the early 1950s, but was also keen to promote larger UN based initiatives following the end of the FFHC initial five year stint. In 1968, the UN declared 'International Human Rights Year' to celebrate the 20 year anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights and to review the work of the UN in the field and to adopt a new programme of action.[59] Sam Moyn argues that human rights remained peripheral as an organising concept for NGOs in 1968 despite the UN's designation of this themed year.[60] However, the NFWI central body was keen to use the Year as a conduit for its wider international policy. Although the NFWI had no formal mandate to support human rights without official acknowledgement from its constitution, human rights were viewed by organisational leaders at the annual conference in 1968 as the embodiment of the WI commitment to 'the ideals of freedom, justice and equality'.[61]

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[57] 5FWI/D/2 146, NFWI Minutes of the International Sub-Committee, 8/2/67

[58] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* 49 (9)

[59] A. Robertson, 'The United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights' in *The British Yearbook of International Law,* 43 (1968-1969), p. 21

[60] S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History,* (Harvard University Press), p. 2

[61] WL, 5FWI/1/2/66 91, NFWI, NFWI Position on Human Rights, 12/1968

The international sub-committee had been encouraged to make preparations for the Year by the ACWW; the Association had deliberately arranged its Triennial Conference in Michigan of 1968 to correspond to the UN's declaration.[62] The WI was represented on the UK Committee for Human Rights Year and County Federations were urged to support human rights committees in their local areas. International Officers were instructed to arrange talks and discussions on relevant subjects including women's equal rights, international development, immigration and the rights of children.[63] The Year was also used to review the international development activities of the WI and to decide possible future projects, with themes including adult education in rural areas, consumer education, over population, problems of the working mother and the role of voluntary organisations in the community.[64] The WI continued to promote the ideals of human rights throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and in 1976 the organisation joined the UK Human Rights Network.[65]

The WI also fostered formal links with newly established official bodies pertaining to international development within Britain during this period. Indeed, the Institute was the only British women's organisation to actively seek out and pursue these links over the course of the 1960s. In 1964, the newly established Ministry of Overseas Development became the first central government department to oversee the administration of Britain's foreign aid policy and took over the responsibilities that had been previously shared by a number of different departments.[66] At a meeting of the international sub-committee in December 1964 it was concluded that the WI should approach the new government department in order to

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[62] WL, 5FWI/1/2/66 91, NFWI, Report of NFWI and WI Support for Human Rights Year, 4/12/1968

[63] Ibid.

[64] WL, 5FWI/D/2 151, NFWI, International Conference, 11/7/1968

[65] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, Attachment 3, Clarification of Human Rights Network, December 1976

[66] P. Burnell, 'Introduction to Britain's Overseas Aid: Between Idealism and Self Interest' in A. Bose & P. Burnell (eds.), *Britain's Overseas Aid since 1979: Between Idealism and Self Interest,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 3

secure 'lasting links and useful contacts' and several letters were sent the following year.[67] In 1967, the WI was able to secure a position on the Advisory Panel to the Ministry of Overseas Development and also had a seat on the UK Committee for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).[68] WI representatives regularly attended meetings of the Advisory Panel, and throughout the late 1960s the WI was frequently approached by the Ministry for advice on projects relating to women in addition to appeals for assistance with projects. In February 1968 for example the international committee was invited by the Ministry to undertake a project to further adult women's education in Bangladesh and was financed entirely by UNESCO.[69]

In 1973 the WI joined the UK Standing Conference for the Second Development Decade (DD2); the Decade had been inaugurated by the UN in 1970 in response to widespread international recognition that the growth and modernisation based development models of the First Decade had not produced significant results.[70] DD2 emphasised the impact of development on the individual and called specifically for the integration of women into the total developmental effort.[71] The Standing Conference had been convened by the Voluntary Committee for Overseas Aid and Development (VCOAD) in order to disseminate information to 'help the people of Britain to understand the problems of world development and work for the success of the Decade'.[72] VCOAD, an organisation consisting of a number of charitable,

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[67] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, Minutes of the International Sub-Committee, 16/2/1965

[68] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146 Minutes of the International Sub-Committee, 11/5/1967

[69] WL, 5FWI/D/2 146, Minutes of International Sub Committee, 20/5/1967

[70] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN: A Sixty Year Quest for Equality and Justice,* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 48

[71] O. Stokke, *The UN and Development: From Aid to Co-operation,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 158

[72] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* January 1973, p. 11

humanitarian and voluntary organisations had been established in 1965 to consult with the government on matters pertaining to international aid.[73]

The Standing Conference was comprised of a number of different bodies that included church organisations, the main political parties, student and youth organisations in addition to charitable and aid organisations. The educational aspect of the Standing Committee appealed to the WI, the organisation had published regular reports on the progress of the Decade and UN based initiatives in its monthly journal. Interestingly, by the early 1970s the WI had become increasingly critical of the British's government's response to the key tenets of the Decade. In a small article prepared by the international committee, the WI claimed that Britain had become part of a 'rich countries club' by failing to accept the targets set down by UN regarding the proportion of Gross National Product to be donated by countries to finance development.[74] In 1976 the WI made the decision to support VCOAD in its campaign to oppose the Government's intention to reduce the aid programme as part of public expenditure cut backs. In an article that encouraged the wider membership to write to the Prime Minister, the WI insisted that any cutback would contravene Britain's undertakings on DD2 and argued that the preservation of 'our own standards of living' should not 'be achieved at the expense of developing countries'.[75] The WI also openly proclaimed its dissatisfaction with the level of official development assistance provided by the British government later that year and stated that Britain's contribution of 'a mere 0.38% of GNP a year' was particularly shocking.[76] Such open criticism of government policy had only recently

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[73] M. Black, *A Cause for Our Times: Oxfam the first 50 years,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 158; M. Hilton, 'Politics is Ordinary: Non-Governmental Organisations and Political Participation in Contemporary Britain' in *Twentieth Century British History,* 22 (2) (2011), p. 246

[74] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* April 1973, p. 18

[75] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, Pamphlet: The British Government and the AID Programme, September 1976

[76] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, International Committee: Executive Attachment Aid and VCOAD, July 1976

been made possible for the organisation. In 1971 a constitutional amendment altered the 'non-sectarian, non-political' rule which gave the Institutes the freedom to discuss and make statements on 'topical, political and moral issues'.[77] Not only did this allow Institute members to discuss matters ranging from family planning to education reform at both national and local levels, but it also allowed the international committee to publically oppose government policy regarding international development.

In 1976 VCOAD ceased its operations following the termination of government funds which had previously financed its existence. However, some of VCOAD's functions were translated into other organisational forms. The educational unit of VCOAD was preserved through a government grant of £120,000 that enabled individuals rather than voluntary organisations to re-constitute it as a charitable company, the Centre for World Development Education.[78] The WI continued to maintain links with the new Centre and in March 1977 was invited by the organisation to submit a project proposal to 'increase public understanding on all issues affecting the economic and social development of developing countries'.[79] Such a project fit well with the Institutes existing international study schemes and the organisation used the funds to develop new promotional and educational materials to disseminate amongst its national membership.[80] A small proportion of VCOAD's other liaison roles were taken over by a new Council on International Development and the WI's international committee

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[77] WL, FWI, *Home and Country,* July 1971

[78] S. Arnold, 'Constrained Crusaders? British Charities and Development Education' in *Development Policy Review,* 6 (2) (2008), p. 198

[79] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, The Development Education Fund, March 1977

[80] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, Executive Attachment 9, World Development Education Fund Proposed Project, 1977

chairman, Kay Shearer, was given a personal place on the Committee for two years in March 1977.[81]

In July 1977 the WI was approached by the World Development Movement as part of the organisation's attempt to form a 'National Coalition for Development Action' following the dissolution of VCOAD the previous year. The World Development Movement had grown out of a new politically motivated coalition in 1969 called 'Action for World Development' which consisted of a number of aid agencies including Oxfam, Christian Aid and War on Want. The new political manifesto demanded an increase in national aid budgets and political action on foreign aid and trade.[82] The World Development Movement had been formed in response to the Charity Commission's concerns that the political motivation of Action for World Development breached contemporary charity laws and key members decided to set up an independent and non-charitable body to deliberately pursue these aims.[83] Although the WI response to this request is not made clear in the administrative records, that the organisation was approached by this more 'political' development organisation suggests the ways in which the Institutes were perceived by the wider development movement at this time. Indeed, the WI appears to have had some form of representation on a significant proportion of the major formal British development coalitions and networks.

The presence of the ACWW in the international side of the WI's work intensified throughout the 1960s and 1970s and the organisation's work became the central point from which the WI engaged in international development. Indeed, by 1981 the international sub-committee

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[81] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, Executive Attachment 11, Council on International Development, 20/7/1977

[82] C. Saunders, 'British Humanitarian, Aid and Development NGOs, 1949 – Present' in N. Crowson et al. (eds.), *NGOs in Contemporary Britain,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p. 45

[83] M. Black, *A Cause for Our Times: Oxfam the First 50 Years,* p. 161

admitted that it did not have complete records for 'all the projects we have helped to finance' due simply to the significantly large volume.[84] For the ACWW, development was at the heart of its international policy; following its commitment to promote friendship, understanding and mutual help among rural women, its second objective committed the organisation to help to provide a better life for women through rural development projects.[85] The visibility of the ACWW in the day-to-day operation of the WI was strengthened in part following the election of Olive Farquharson, former chairman of the WI international committee, to the position of ACWW President in 1969.[86] The WI, in conjunction with the Women's Institutes of Canada, had also become financially responsible for a majority of the Association's development projects in Asia and Africa by the middle of the 1970s. Money continued to be raised through direct appeals to the wider British membership, the WI Markets, the Lady Aberdeen Scholarship Fund and the Pennies for Friendship scheme and the British contributions were the most significant. The ACWW had also been extremely successful in acquiring 'matched funding' from UNESCO during this period, enabling the organisation to finance over 200 development projects, ranging from small scale - the financing of an individual scholarship for example, to large scale, including a five year 'Save Sight' scheme in West Bengal.[87] In 1975 the ACWW acted as UNESCO's co-partner in Co-Action Project UCA569, which aimed to help rural women in the Gilbert Islands in Malaysia and Zambia assume 'their rightful place in their communities' through the provision of study courses in leadership training and nutritional education.[88]

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[84] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, International Projects – Past, Present and Future, 1981

[85] 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, What is International? The International Work of the WIs 1964 – 1974 Pamphlet, December 1974, p. 1

[86] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* March 1969

[87] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, ACWW, List of Projects, 1970 - 1980

[88] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154,NFWI, Co-Action Newsletter – Women's Place is in…the Community'

The development projects organised by the ACWW throughout the 1970s built on the forms of training that had been established during the 1960s and retained the view of women in the global South as limited to the family. A large proportion of projects continued to emphasise the importance of nutritional education for women and indeed the Association's 'Nutritional Education Trust Fund' was the largest of three similar financial reserves.[89] Occasionally these lingering gendered assumptions existed side by side with newer approaches to women and development in the same project; whilst child care centres had been set up for women in multiple areas of Botswana to free them to pursue other aims for example, these existed in order that the women of local communities could receive training in nutrition, home improvements and 'budget recipes'.[90] In Mauritius ACWW funds had contributed towards the establishment of 50 girls clubs with a membership totalling 1,000; students were required to study kitchen gardening, nutrition, cookery and home economics as part of the clubs' commitment to contribute to the 'well-being' of women and families in the area. Although some training was given in small scale income generation, a larger proportion of subjects pertained to women's domestic role. In addition, a large proportion of ACWW training schemes arranged for 'gifted' women from local communities in Lesotho continued to be held in Western countries.[91]

Between 1967 and 1970 the ACWW was successful in securing seven travel grants from UNESCO to sponsor a three month training programme for women from developing countries which were organised and run by the British WI. Some ACWW projects did indeed recognise women's role in local economies, such as the project in Madore in India which provided local women with agricultural training, tools for farming, and training manuals in Hindi in addition to local crèches. However, the ACWW's general approach assumed that

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[89]WL, 5FWI/D/2 156, ACWW, Trustees of ACWW's Registered Charities, October 1972

[90] Ibid. p. 3

[91] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, ACWW, List of Projects, 1970 - 1980

women's status would be enhanced through improvements to the quality of their lives within the family unit, in isolation from the economy. As late as 1979, the ACWW continued to organise training for women in home economics in rural areas of Tonga without any parallel schemes for women outside of a domestic setting.[92] Despite the growing international feminist critique of existing models of development, the majority of ACWW projects did not acknowledge the key realities of the WID literature: that globally most women work, whether it is subsistence, farming activities or working in fields.[93]

Although the work of the ACWW came to dominate the WI's international efforts in the 1970s, the organisation did organise and finance some large development projects independently during this period. Whilst a large proportion of these projects continued to perpetuate presumptions about the cultural source of poverty, some did seemingly respond to the wider shift in development discourses that recognised women's (often unpaid) economic role in society, as owners of small holdings or as farmers wives. In 1969 the WI had helped to establish a rural training centre at Gaberones in Botswana aptly named 'the Denman Rural Training Centre' after their equivalent college in Oxfordshire. The project was financed by the remaining funds left over from those collected during the FFHC campaign in addition to £14,000 raised from a centrally organised campaign. The centre exported a form of the British syllabus to rural Botswana and provided literacy classes for women in addition to classes in cookery, nutrition and preservation methods in a similar manner to the WI's own courses within Britain.[94] However, the Centre also specialised in the provision of training for women in agricultural methods; it was equipped with its own arable farm and over 200

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[92] WL, 5FWI/D/2 156, ACWW, The Work of the Projects Committee, 9/1978

[93] I. Tinker, 'Challenging Wisdom, Changing Policies: The Women in Development Movement' in A. Fraser & I. Tinker (eds.), *Developing Power: How Women Transformed International Development,* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2004), p. 69

[94] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, Letter from International Sub-committee to Mrs Schumann, 20/5/1969

acres of grazing.[95] This side of the Centre's work provided residential courses for 'farmers and their wives' and covered all aspects of rural development from 'cash crops' to 'home economics', from 'grain storage' to the 'control of animal disease'.

Two of the most significant and largest projects of the 1970s included the project to combat 'nutritional blindness' in Southern India and water projects in Kenya and Lesotho. The water projects in these two countries directly acknowledged the types of work that women in rural communities performed on a daily basis. WI members in Britain were made aware of the daily realities of women's lives in developing nations for the first time through specially produced educational material on this project. They were informed that women in Kenya walked 20 miles a day simply to collect water in addition to their work cultivating smallholdings, collecting firewood, selling surplus produce at local markets in addition to tending to their families.[96] The water project aimed to install and develop a clean water supply and sanitation system in both countries and acknowledged the actualities of women's daily working patterns in these areas. The WI pledged to raise £20,000 for both projects and advised County Officers to promote similar methods of fundraising to those employed during the FFHC.[97]

Nutritional blindness was an issue raised initially at the ACWW Triennial Conference in 1971 and following preliminary work by the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, the WI took the issue up the following year. Although projects to supply an effective water infrastructure to poor areas represented cautious recognition by the organisation of the actualities of poverty and malnutrition, the WI approach to nutritional blindness located the

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[95] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* October 1969, 'Botswana's "Denman"

[96] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, Letter to County Federation International Officers, Water Project in Lesotho: Fundraising Guidelines, April 1972

[97] Ibid.

blame for the condition solely on individual ignorance. In similar ways to the projects of the 1960s, 'nutritional education programs' continued to be conceived as the solution to 'preventing blindness through ignorance' throughout the Madurai and Manamadurai areas of Southern India. The condition of 'nutritional blindness', a result of vitamin A deficiency, was blamed specifically on women:

> 'The sad truth is that the sight of the vast majority of these children could be saved if their mother could only be taught what foods their children need. Many of the babies who would previously have died have been kept alive by supplies of dried milk, but the subsequent shortage of vitamin 'A' in their diet at weaning time has led to failing an ultimate loss of sight'.[98]

Educational programs for women thus appeared to the WI to be the most appropriate form of action. Paradoxically, the organisation spent no time addressing the potent reality that foods with high levels of Vitamin A, which included meat, fish and milk, were often too expensive for poor families in this area to purchase.[99]

The project was twofold and aimed firstly to provide emergency relief in the form of doses of vitamin A to children throughout the local area. The 'long term' solution was the education of mothers and women within the local community. Cultural ignorance was targeted specifically; the WI was keen to urge women to spend their 'meagre money' on healthy items such as ground nut flour rather than on local 'charms or vows to save their children'.[100] Little consideration was given to the particularities of the surrounding community; ground nut flour formed the base of local animal feed and was therefore widely considered by residents to be inappropriate for human consumption.[101] The money raised by the WI went helped to finance

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[98] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* March 1972

[99] Ibid.

[100] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, Cheshire Women's Institute – Notes of the Month, Just Turn on the Tap, October 1972

[101] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* March 1972

the purchase of a 'mobile education unit' and its staff; the team consisted of a nurse, a podiatrist and a cookery demonstrator that travelled around the area of Madurai and performed health check-ups in addition to providing nutritional instruction.[102] 15 care and feeding centres were set up in villages around Madurai in a later stage of the project's duration and each housed up to 30 children. In 1973, the IAW congratulated the organisation in its official magazine and cited that the project had been successful in saving the sight of over 200 children in total.[103]

Thus whilst a proportion of ACWW and WI development projects in the 1970s did acknowledge to a certain degree the productive contribution made by women to local communities through farming and subsistence, a more significant proportion tended to focus on women's role within the family unit.[104] Smaller projects adopted by the WI during the 1970s reveal a preoccupation with the provision of 'sewing kits' and 'craft bags' to women in Africa. In 1968 the WI had assisted the Save the Children Fund in a five year project in the Windward Isles which involved raising funds to provide sewing machines, machinery, patterns, needles and cotton to local women so that local children might be 'suitably' dressed to attend school.[105] That the actual number of development projects sponsored by the WI was unclear even to the WI international sub-committee suggests that international development had become the central aspect of WI international work by the 1970s. The WI was not alone in its continued preference for welfare-based initiatives for women during this period and its failure to comprehend the wider debates about the centrality of women's productive role. This form of de-politicised development for women persisted throughout the

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[102] 5FWI/D/2 158, NFWI, What is International? The International Work of the WIs 1964 – 1974 Pamphlet, December 1974

[103] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 71 (3) 1976, p. 29

[104] E. Boserup & C. Liljencrantz, *Integration of Women In Development: Why, When, How,* (New York: United Nations Department of Information, 1975), p. 11

[105] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* October 1971, 'The Windward Isles Clothing Scheme'

1970s, and was further compounded by the work of international women's organisations including the ACWW, IAW and ICW whose contact with the instruments of the UN placed them in closer proximity to the WID debate.
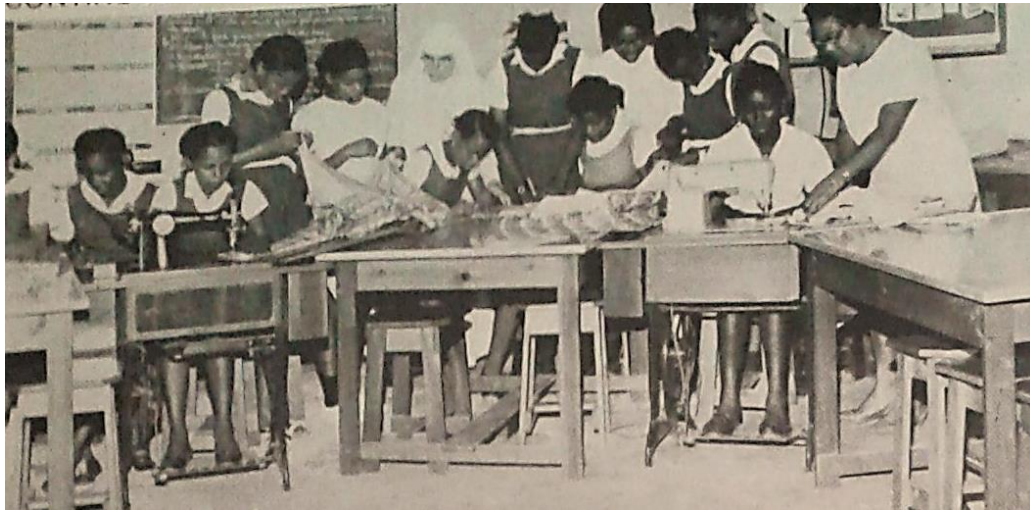
Figure 6 – Girls being taught to sew using materials sent via the scheme sponsored by WI and Save the Children in the Windward Isles.

Home and Country, October 1968

International Women's Organisations: Taking Development to Africa and Asia in the 1960s and 1970s

The 1950s had seen the international policy of both the IAW and ICW come to centre on technical assistance provision and by the early 1960s both organisations were co-operating with UNESCO to run pilot projects in undeveloped countries, albeit on a small scale. These projects typically related to training and educational initiatives, and both organisations had been committed from the early 1950s to combat illiteracy amongst adult women in the poorest areas. In the 1960s it was hoped that these projects could be extended through

greater 'effective co-operation between NGOs and the UN Agencies' which, it was hoped, would lead to the greater provision of regular and consistent funding.[106] Co-operation with UN agencies increased during this period and both the ICW and IAW were extremely successful in securing funding for a variety of projects and seminars. Their close connections to CSW and UNESCO brought both organisations directly into those spaces that had helped to foster the radical critique of contemporary development strategies. The IAW and ICW both responded to these debates; their early theorisation of women's economic role in community development and the open encouragement of women's participation in the national development of individual countries were testaments to their continued prioritisation of women in this context.[107] However, both organisations remained unaware of the preconceptions inherent in a large proportion of their practical initiatives. Whilst both the ICW and IAW actively promoted the incorporation of women in the development process in accordance with the WID analysts, their solutions continued to be conceived in gendered terms. This was not only a product of the histories of these organisations themselves, but also of the institutionalised approaches to women's projects within an international development machinery that continued to rely on voluntary organisations for project administration.

Regional conferences and seminars that directly involved organised women in the South were envisioned as 'the way forward' for organisational development policy. The seminars represented a practical means of incorporating Third World Women directly into project planning stages. Both the IAW and ICW had made preliminary preparations for these types of international meetings in the early 1960s. In 1963 for example, the IAW awarded the Council of Women's Societies in Nigeria the necessary funds to organise a conference on women's status in Liberia for that year. The conference made 'history' for the organisation in

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[106] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of the Board Meeting, 4/1/1961 , p. 1

[107] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 66 (1), 1971, p. 10

several ways; not only was this the first IAW meeting in Africa, but it was the first conference to be organised entirely by women in the respective country.[108] The apparent success of this form of organising convinced members of both the IAW and ICW during the late 1960s that regional seminars, which encouraged discussion and debate between women in developed and undeveloped nations, offered them a unique opportunity to tailor their development projects directly to women's real needs.[109]

During the 1960s, an increasing amount of African and Asian states joined the UN after securing independence from the colonial powers. Margaret Snyder has stressed that it was this new presence of African, Caribbean and Asian countries at the UN that 'quickened' the new emphasis on 'people centred development' that was to characterise the motivation behind DD2.[110] However, whilst the inclusion of women in undeveloped countries as members had been a priority for the IAW and ICW from the mid-1950s, the establishment of the one- party governments that characterised the politics of independent African states in the 1960s nevertheless posed an organisational dilemma.[111] Applications for membership from organisations that existed in states with a one-party political machinery breached both organisations' non-partisan constitutional commitments. This problem had troubled the Admissions Committee of the IAW since the beginning of 1961 when the Parti Democratique de Guinea, the Women's Section of the Democratic Party of Guinea, submitted an application to join the Alliance. Members of the Admissions Committee had delayed their response until members of the Executive could be consulted on this matter. The debate that

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[108] WL, 2IAW/1/D 007, IAW, Report on the Seminar 'The Challenge of Women's New Status in Modern Africa', Liberia, July – August 1963

[109] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of Board Meeting June 1965

[110] M. Snyder, 'The Politics of Women and Development' in A. Winslow (ed.), *Women, Politics and the United Nations,* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), p. 96

[111] C. Gertzel et al., 'Introduction: The Making of the One Party State' in C. Gertzel (ed.), *The Dynamics of the One Party State in Zambia,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 2

ensued took up the majority of the Executive meeting in January, and members were divided as to whether the organisation was eligible for membership. Margery Corbett Ashby felt that as the organisation was a 'government political party', this posed a 'great difficulty' to the Alliance's identity.[112] Amy Bush, Chairman of the organisation's Education Commission felt that the Guinean organisation's commitment to national government precluded it from joining the Alliance, whose first commitment was to women, rather than a particular form of government.[113] Further, Mrs Spiller argued that if the IAW accepted the application, there was a substantial risk that this would open up the 'floodgates', and the Alliance would 'be eaten up by organisations who work for political ends'.[114] Concluding the meeting, she claimed that whilst the IAW were unanimous in 'wanting to help African women' she foresaw that the long-term result would inevitably see the Alliance sacrifice its status as an independent NGO. The ICW had similar concerns about women's organisations in Ghana. At an Executive meeting in 1962 it was decided not to 'initiate invitations' to these countries for the time being.[115]

In 1963 the Alliance considered the issue again, following applications for membership from women in Ghana and Mali. The tone of debate had shifted at the meeting of the Admissions Committee. Members now stressed the need to adapt the organisation to accommodate changing contemporary social and political developments. 'We cannot go on according to our present constitution,' argued Mrs Matmon of France, 'when the world is changing all around us.'[116] Corbett Ashby had come to the conclusion that a large proportion of the new independent African states would in fact pose a similar problem for the Alliance, and that membership of a particular political party did not necessarily preclude an organisation's

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[112] WL, 2IAW/1/B 002, IAW, Minutes of the Board Meeting, January 4th – 6th 1961

[113] Ibid. p. 9

[114] Ibid. p. 8

[115] WL, 5ICW/P/02, ICW, International Co-ordinating Committee, May 1962

[116] WL, 2IAW/1/B 003, IAW, Minutes of the International Committee, May 1963

dedication to women's rights. She considered that in fact 'half the current IAW affiliates would probably be thrown out' if the Alliance expelled all those with some degree of political affiliation. In light of the fact that a majority of these 'contentious' states were now full UN members, the desire 'to get started in this new world' ultimately won out against the inter-war preoccupation with political neutrality. In 1964, the Alliance passed a resolution which allowed the Admissions Committee to accept organisations from African one-party states. This did not yet stretch to organisations from the Communist Bloc however, who were regarded as being 'different from African communist countries'. The Committee ruled that they would re-consider co-operation with Soviet women's organisations the following year.[117] Similarly, the ICW ruled that organisations from one-party states could be accepted as members of the Council in 1965 subject to conditions; all such organisations were warned that they could not use the organisation to promote their own political propaganda.[118]

These constitutional changes facilitated the participation of a larger proportion of African women in both organisations and allowed their co-operation in the development of the system of regional seminars. From 1966 – 1976 the IAW financed 12 regional seminars in Nigeria, the Caribbean, India, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and West Africa. The seminars all centred on aspects of women's role in international development and considered the important role that international and national NGOs could play in the formulation and administration of new projects.[119] The ICW meanwhile helped to organise six regional seminars from 1966 – 1974, the majority of which focussed on education and literacy for women.[120] The seminars were used to consider definite plans and projects by which the

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[117] WL, 2IAW/1/B 003, IAW, Minutes of the Congress Planning Board, Stockholm January 1964 pp. 2 - 4

[118] WL, 5ICW/P/02 43, ICW, Minutes of the Admission Meeting, January 1965

[119] A. Whittick, *Woman into Citizen,* p. 260

[120] 5ICW/P/05 44, ICW, Role of Women's Non-Governmental Organisations in Literacy Programmes: Literacy a Social Experience, 1966; 5ICW/P/05 44, ICW, Human Resources for Development,

women of these regions could be mobilised and incorporated into development more broadly and to discuss ways in which women could contribute to their local communities.[121] In 1966 the IAW organised a workshop in Sierra Leone to explore the role of women in the economic development of the country well before the importance of this was recognised by international agencies.[122]

Indeed, women's economic rights came to feature more prominently on the IAW's agenda in the early 1970s, suggesting that the organisation was sensitive to debates about the nature of women's productivity in the global South. In 1970 the organisation held a regional workshop on 'women's education and employment in Lucknow followed by a national seminar in Indonesia on 'women's participation in rural development' later that year.[123] In 1971 the organisation held a seminar in Gabon which drew explicitly on the link between women's education and her participation in economic life. Representatives at the seminar stressed the need for women to form co-operatives and for education in 'technical know-how' including simple accounting methods in order that they might 'participate fully and contribute greatly to the economic life of the country'. This was somewhat mediated by the organisation's suggestion that training in the 'production of handicrafts' was the most likely productive scheme for women to succeed.[124]

The IAW and ICW were involved in projects and celebrations for International Education Year in 1970. Both organisation's took the opportunity to review the existing work they had

January – February 1970; WL, 2IAW/2/D 34, ICW, Report of the ICW Covering June 1973 – June 1977

[121] WL, 2IAW/1/C/4, IAW, Report of the Hanna Rydh Memorial Seminar, 'The Role of Women in Economic Development', Sierra Leone, April 1966

[122] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 67 (10) (1972)

[123] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 66 (12) (1971), p. 9

[124] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 66 (12) (1971), p. 86

done and to promote the ideal of 'functional literacy' and passed resolutions to press for international measures in this regard at UNESCO.[125] During the Year, the ICW urged its national affiliates to seek increased cooperation with their governments in order to provide 'continuing literacy training' and to ensure the supply of 'post-literacy reading materials' to the 'increasing number of women still totally cut off from the mainstream of education and development' as set out in the Councils objectives of 1966.[126]

The association of UNFPA with women's rights had grown out of mounting concern at the UN and amongst NGOs regarding the issue of inadequate family planning education and services in undeveloped countries, and this issue had become a major point of contention for the CSW in 1965.[127] The IAW passed a resolution that committed the organisation to the cause at its 1970 Congress despite concern from some members that it may offend religious elements within the organisation. The Alliance justified its decision by stating that women had an equal right with men to decide the size of her family and that by negatively affecting the status of women, lack of family planning had a direct bearing on the economic and social development of the country.[128] The ICW passed a resolution at its 1966 Congress which supported the CSW's research in this area as part of the organisation's commitment to responsible parenthood.[129] Both organisations urged the women in their national affiliates to make use of local family planning centres and to spread knowledge of such services by means of books, pamphlets and the mass media. In 1968 the IAW established links with the ACWW to extend a project building new educational centres in Western India sponsored by

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[125] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 65 (3), 1970, p. 22

[126] WL, 5ICW/P/05 44, ICW, Human Resources for Development: Nineteenth Plenary Conference, Bangkok, January 21st – February 12th 1970, p. 7

[127] M. Galey, 'Women Find a Place', in A. Winslow (ed.), *Women, Politics and the UN,* (London: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 21

[128] A. Whittick, *Woman into Citizen*, p. 233

[129] WL, 5ICW/P/02 43, ICW, List of ICW Resolutions, 1963 - 1967

the International Planned Parenthood Federation.[130] However, a large proportion of both organisations' work on this issue couched the concern with family planning in relation to its connection to global population control, rather than women's status. In a statement submitted to the CSW in 1972 for example, the IAW stressed that fertility control was vital to securing long-term population stability which in turn would lead to the betterment of economic and social conditions for all.[131] Similarly, the ICW tended only to discuss aspects of birth control at its regional conferences in relation to its association with population and development.[132]

Over the course of the 1970s, the IAW's regional seminars produced 21 practical projects that ranged from large to small scale and the majority were financed by UNFPA but were arranged and administered by national organisational affiliates in respective countries. In this regard, regional seminars were accompanied by pre-seminar enquiries, national one-day workshops after the seminar and technical visits by IAW official staff, all of which by 1972 were seen as central to the Alliance's process of developing and financing development projects in the Third World.[133] The projects aimed to meet women's immediate needs and a large proportion also covered income generating activities in addition to adult education. The overall success of the regional seminars in the promotion of locally based development projects led to the establishment of regional workshops that offered training for leaders of national affiliates in the core aspects of managing international development projects, including planning and project development, budgeting, community involvement, marketing and research.[134]

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[130] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 66 (4), p. 19

[131] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 67 (2) 1972, p. 9

[132] WL, 5ICW/P/02 43, ICW, *Newsletter,* 13 (1) (1974), p. 1

[133] WL, 2IAW/1/C 4, IAW, Working Programme, 1970 - 4

[134] WL, 2IAW/1/D 8, IAW, Report of the Educational Seminar, September 1972

The individual development projects varied and were designed to meet various needs within local communities. In Nepal, the IAW affiliate was awarded the funds to run day workshops to 'enlighten rural women' about contraceptives and to run courses to eradicate literacy at various community centres throughout the country.[135] Family planning projects were started in Nepal, the Seychelles and India; in Swaziland 26 clinics were set up during in the late 1960s as a direct result of IAW co-operation with the national Ministry of Health. Innovative ideas were encouraged by the organisation to take the message of responsible parenthood down to women in local communities. According to an IAW report, in a central Indonesian township a gong was sounded every evening to remind local women to take their contraceptive pill.[136] In Zambia and Madagascar working mothers were encouraged to set up co-operatives and training in planning, marketing and budget management were provided.[137] The IAW provided the funds for threshing equipment for local women in Lesotho in addition to storage facilities for surplus produce.[138]

However the concern with women's social welfare persisted throughout this period and a significant proportion of the development projects sponsored by the IAW and ICW continued to focus predominately on women's role within the family unit. In Sri Lanka, the IAW sponsored only one project that financed courses for 150 local women in handicrafts and cookery in 1971. In Trinidad the custom of having to obtain a husband's permission to attend courses had encouraged the IAW to arrange training in more traditionally acceptable topics for local women that included instruction in bread and preserve making.[139] This was mirrored in ICW sponsored projects as well; although the Council had launched a programme of

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[135] WL, 2IAW/1/D 8, IAW, Report of the International Seminar 'Review and Appraisal of IAW Regional Seminars and Follow Up Projects , 1970 - 1979

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid.

[139] WL, 2IAW/1/D/8 IAW Report of Regional Seminar – South East Asia, November 1975

promoting adult literacy and family planning through the use of trained local leaders and UNESCO Study Tour Grants in Tunisia, Cameroon and Iran, a large proportion of projects listed in the organisations regional seminar review continued to pertain to aspects of women's domestic, rather than economic, life as they had done in the 1950s.[140]

Whilst the IAW and ICW did not necessarily fully respond to the critiques of women's role in development that coalesced in the 1970s, the emphasis on literacy and small scale income generation does suggest that they were at least sympathetic to their validity. Although older transnational women's movements were largely supplanted by grassroots organisations following the inauguration of IWY and the UN Decade for Women, Jutta Joachim notes that they nevertheless made significant allies for newer organisations; the IAW and ICW's then 30 year familiarity with the institutions of the UN proved invaluable and they were now considered generally by government delegations as legitimate socio-political participants.[141] Both organisations had substantial experience of the Commission on the Status of Women in addition to UNESCO, a body with which they now co-operated on a regular basis by providing reports and sending representatives to each plenary session. At the CSW's session in 1972, the Alliance had submitted over 18 separate reports pertaining to women's rights and women's position within international development strategies for example.[142]

In her analysis of women's development projects following the end of the UN Decade for Women in 1985, Buvinić attributed the persistence of welfare-based initiatives for women

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[140] 5ICW/P/05 44, ICW, Role of Women's Non-Governmental Organisations in Literacy Programmes: Literacy a Social Experience, 1966; 5ICW/P/05 44, ICW, Human Resources for Development, January – February 1970; WL, 2IAW/2/D 34, ICW, Report of the ICW Covering June 1973 – June 1977

[141] J. Joachim, 'Shaping the Human Rights Agenda: The Case of Violence Against Women' in M. K. Meyer & E. Prugl (ed.), *Gender Politics in Global Governance,* (Maryland: Rowman, 1999), p. 149

[142] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 67 (5), p. 33

directly to the involvement of women-only voluntary organisations in relief-based international efforts. Historically, women's organisations have been central to aspects of relief provision in ways that depended on the voluntary participation of upper and middle class women.[143] These forms of aid distributed emergency forms of relief to vulnerable groups of women and children and also involved the administration of welfare-orientated projects. This was later translated into a developmental context in the 1960s and 1970s as development agencies deliberately sought out assistance from international and national women's organisations alike to assist in the administration of development projects for women. This was a product of the widespread assumption that only female staff were eligible to work with women on the ground, but was further compounded by the reluctance of development agencies to allocate significant financial resources for women.[144] Voluntary organisations were willing to perform these activities as part of their organisational mandate. Indeed, there is evidence that international women's organisations conceived of their role in development in these terms. In a statement sent to the Secretary General of ECOSOC in 1972 regarding the role of women's NGOs in DD2, 17 separate international women's organisations emphasised the important role their organisations played in filling 'the vacuums of service which are found in the programmes of governments and non-governmental organisations at all levels'.[145] In this sense, women's organisations constituted the 'vanguards of development programming', frequently taking charge of pilot programmes for women in the Third World that had been turned over to them specifically so that 'funds and experts' could be diverted to alternative development endeavours.[146]

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[143] K. Storr, *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees and Relief, 1914 – 1929,* (Bern: Peter Lang 2010)

[144] M. Buvinić, 'Projects for Women in the Third World', p. 659

[145] BL, IAW, *International Women's News,* 68 (1) (1973), p. 10

[146] Ibid.

International women's organisations did not necessarily view their central role in development provision as problematic. However, Buvinić makes the case that their lack of training and planning expertise in addition to their inadequate organisational infrastructures and staffing, fostered rather than challenged the prevalence of welfare-orientated programs during the 1960s and 1970s. Whilst these organisations had played a key role in affirming women's place on the initial development agenda in the 1950s, their organisational structures, lack of experience and limited participation in WID debates predisposed a preference for those projects that had historically been central to their development strategies.

In this sense, international women's organisations facilitated rather than challenged existing assumptions about women's marginal place in the development process. The types of international development endorsed by these organisations were not preventative, but were instead attempts to deal with familial needs as they arose within poverty. Given the closely interconnected relationship between international women's organisations and their British counterparts that often relied on their international parent bodies for information and direction, it is of perhaps no surprise that British women continued to conceive of women's role in the developmental process in apolitical terms. Whilst IWY in 1975 has generally been considered as a radical moment in the history of women and development, this sense of change had not yet been experienced by those bodies already entrenched in the official developmental process.

International Women's Year: the Women's National Commission and Popular Development

The proposal for IWY was initially put forward at the 24th session of the CSW early in 1972 by the WIDF to mark the organisation's 30 year anniversary.[147] However the aims of the Year soon broadened to advance the status of women globally and the three themes of equality, development and peace were confirmed. The Year has generally been attributed as facilitating the formal affirmation of women onto the development agenda. 1975 created an official space for WID critiques to flourish and provided legitimacy to a diverse section of Third World women's organisations. IWYs sense of departure from the past was made against the backdrop of wider shifts amongst development agencies and organisations more broadly; the move away from emergency forms of 'relief' encouraged a more politically-based approach to the alleviation and prevention of poverty. The new emphasis rejected the previous growth obsessed models that had characterised development efforts of the 1950s and 1960s and stressed instead the need to challenge existing social structures to allow the poor to bring themselves out of poverty.[148] Development strategies were reformulated to take into consideration the actualities of poverty, resource distribution and basic needs.

IWY celebrations in Britain were numerous and lively but the sense of radicalism accorded to its principles by new scholars, activists and Third World women was lost in translation in a British context. This was due in part to the moderate international outlook that persisted through the membership of the IWY co-ordinating committee, the Women's National Commission (WNC), but also due to the historical relationship between British women's

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[147] C. Donert, 'Women's Rights in Cold War Europe: Disentangling Feminist Histories', in *Past and Present,* Supplement 8, (2013), p. 201

[148] M. Black, *A Cause for Our Times: Oxfam the first 50 years,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)*,* p. 173

organisations and a conservative development strategy. In this sense whilst IWY did encourage new links between women across political lines through the promotion of women's status globally, it did not inspire a re-analysis of existing presumptions or encourage the adoption of alternative projects for women.

In 1969 Harold Wilson's Labour Government established the WNC to bring the 'informed opinion of women', through voluntary associations, to bear on government policy and matters of national and international public interest.[149] The Commission was formed in response to a request made in 1967 by the then Secretary- General of the UN, U Thant, who had recommended that each member country form a National Status of Women Commission to mirror the work of the UN CSW.[150] Despite the British Government's intention to enable the representation of British women at an official level, the strict membership criteria permitted the participation of a particular type of organisation. Only those organisations with a sizeable and national membership with broadly socio-economic or educational 'responsible aims' were eligible to apply.[151] Consequently, whilst mainstream organisations such as the Townswomen's Guilds, the National Women's Citizens Association and the WI were assured places on the new Commission, those with feminist or political aims were prohibited from joining.[152] In an article published in *The Times* in November of 1970, the reporter Penny Symon noticed that this had led to bias; whilst the Commission consisted of 32 organisations there 'did not appear to be any organisations fighting explicitly for women's rights'. The Fawcett Society, an organisation that worked for equality between men and women and had grown out of the Suffrage movement, was refused membership on the grounds that the

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[149] W. Stokes, 'The Government of the United Kingdom: The Women's National Commission' in S. M. Rai (ed.), *Mainstreaming Gender, Democratising the State: Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women,* (Rutgers: New Jersey, 2008), p. 185

[150] WL. 5SPG/I/6 37, SPG Draft Memo: the Women's National Commission, 15/8/69

[151] WL, 2SJA/6 520, WNC, Women's National Commission Constitution, 1974

[152] For a list of affiliated organisations see Appendix III

Commission felt that the organisation's aims were simply 'too narrow'.[153] Further, in October 1969 the SPG submitted an application for membership of the Commission. The Group quoted the history of its 40 year campaigns that had aimed to improve the social and economic status of women that ranged from adoption, prostitution, family planning, taxation, domicile and maintenance as justification for full membership. However, the Commission rejected their application in November 1969 and cited that the SPG did not meet the Commission's selection criteria on the grounds of its small membership.[154] The Married Women's Association was excluded on the same basis the following month. Despite having a more developed branch structure than the SPG the Commission did not feel that the Association constituted a 'national body' in the same sense as the WI or the Townswomen's Guilds.

Harriet Hunkins-Hallinan, the SPG's Chairman expressed her profound disappointment at the Group's exclusion in a letter to the Commission. She explained that despite their centralised London membership, the women members of the SPG constituted an 'intellectual elite'. In this respect, the Commission had in fact prevented the participation of an organisation that would make more stimulating contributions than say, professional women's bodies.[155] In March 1970 the SPG held a meeting with several other organisational leaders from the Married Women's Association, the Women's Group on Public Welfare and the Fawcett Society to discuss representation on the WNC; the conclusions were threefold. In a document sent to both Co-Chairman of the Commission, the document criticised the inflexible nature of the eligibility criteria that effectively worked to exclude bodies 'whose work for women constituted some of the most effective in the past 40 years'. The document scathingly criticised the membership committee for 'bending over backwards' to

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[153] WL, 5FWI/A/3/09 72, *The Times,* 9/11/1970, 'Women's Renewed Voice', P. Hunter Symon

[154] WL, 5SPG/1/6 537, Letter to Hazel Hunkins-Hallinan from WNC Secretary Mrs M. Davidson, 10/11/69

[155] WL, 5SPG/1/6 537, SPG Memorandum to WNC, February 1970

accommodate 'do-gooders, religious and social organisations' which would do nothing to 'improve or enhance the status of women'.[156] The document noticed with dismay that the Commission had decided to accept applications from women's subsidiary sections of national men's organisations:

> 'On looking over the list of members of the Women's National Commission we are struck with the fact that organisation number one is composed of the WIVES of the men's Rotary Clubs; the 11th organisation is the women's subsidiary to the men's organisation of the Toc H. and the National Teacher's Union – basically a man's organisation open to women. It is entirely officered by men…all men who cojstantly [sic] say they are against equal pay for women.'[157]

It went on to remind the WNC that the UN Secretary General U Thant had asked for the establishment of a Status of Women Commission interested in the status of women and not 'merely as an organisation of women dedicated to doing good in the community'.[158] The document maintained that the Commission did not represent women engineers, pharmacists, institutional managers, women executives or scientists in its professional capacity.

That the Government was so reluctant to involve feminist organisations is a testament to the impact of radical women's politics during this period. The Commission had been established at a time that corresponded with the emergence of Women's Liberation (WLM) as a social movement. WLM advocated the radical overhaul of existing social and economic structures which had historically served to position women as secondary citizens. The need to exclude this form of feminist protest and activism from official government structures consequently allowed a conservative women's politics to persist amongst the Commission. In 1973 the Commission's Co-Chairman, former President of the NCW Mrs Guinevere Tilney, warned that many members 'would recoil with horror at the thought of being equated with this

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[156] WL, 5SPG/I/6 37, SPG, Draft Letter to WNC Chairman, March 1970

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid. p. 2

movement' and that any association with this movement would inevitably lead to bad publicity.[159] Thus, the Commission's membership consisted largely of those women's organisations whose histories were deeply embedded in educational and social-welfarist roots which were to impact on the way in which they continued to engage with the international.

The WNC had one independent committee established to deal with international issues pertaining to women. In 1974 the international committee was invited by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to co-ordinate the UK's national efforts to mark IWY. Organisations represented on the separate co-ordinating committee for the Year included the Women's Group on Public Welfare, the Townswomen's Guilds, the NCW, the WI, the UNA WAC and the British Federation of University Women.[160] The British Government's initial response to the idea of an international celebration of women can be described as lukewarm at best. The British delegation to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in December 1972 had abstained from voting on the proposal to designate 1975 IWY. Defending this decision in the House of Commons Julian Amery, Conservative MP, claimed that the Government had doubts about the timing of Year; the study of the implementation of the Declaration on the Discrimination against Women would not be complete until 1976. However, he also made it clear that the Government were uncertain about the desirability of 'singling women out for this kind of special attention'. Questioned on this point by Shirley Summerskill, Labour MP and daughter of Edith Summerskill (former President of the SPG), Mr Amery insisted that it was the Government's view that discrimination against women would not be eliminated by singling out women for special treatment in this international manner.[161] Deliberations concerning the finance, extent and legacy of IWY are littered with examples of ridicule and

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[159] WL, NCW, *Council: Newsletter of the National Council of Women of Great Britain,* 1 (5) (1973)

[160] WL, 5ICW/F/10 39, WNC, International Women's Year Co-ordinating Committee Minutes, 27/11/1974

[161] Hansard, *HC Debate,* 11th December 1972 vol. 848 cc. 23 - 4

mockery in the Parliamentary records. During several debates pertaining to the financial subsidiary of events during IWY made over the course of 1974 for example, several male members of the House of Commons felt obliged to ask whether the Government would make equivalent funds available for an international year of men.[162] Despite this lacklustre response, the British delegation was instructed to vote in favour of the proposal in late December. In November 1974 following consultation with the WNC, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office allocated the Commission with £10,000 towards the organisation of events throughout the year, an amount that disappointed members of the WNC.[163]

Anna Maria van der Vieuten has made similar observations regarding the 'half hearted' approach to IWY on behalf of national governments in France, Germany and the Netherlands. Despite this lack of official enthusiasm however, she notes that the limited government initiatives in each of these countries did in fact function as catalysts for new types of activity and collaboration between national women's groups and organisations.[164] Indeed, this was the case in Britain, as the lack of official funding forced the co-ordinating committee of IWY to look for other methods of securing support and financial backing. The co-ordinating committee was able to draw on the organisational collaboration of the official membership, but also on the historic networks of women's organisations that had been forged through participation in older bodies such as the Status of Women Committee, the Women's Group on Public Welfare and WAC UNA. In this sense, the Commission was able to organise events and fund raising opportunities on both a national and local level through the utilisation of organisational branch structures and federated bodies such as the WI and the local Standing Conferences of Women's Organisations co-ordinated by the Women's

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[162] Hansard, *HC Debate,* 27th November 1974 vol. 882 c.416

[163] Hansard, *HC Debate,* 27th December vol. 882 cc.415 - 7

[164] A. M. van der Vieuten, *The Price of Gender Equality: Member States and Governance in the European Union,* (Aldershot: Ashgate: 2007), p. 77

Group on Public Welfare.[165] The committee also sought the assistance of women's organisations that did not currently sit on the board. By the end of 1974, the Married Women's Association and the Fawcett Society had submitted event proposals, although they continued to be excluded from the planning stages.

One of the key aims of IWY as stated in the official UN background papers was to encourage the integration of women into the total development effort globally, and to urge the full co-operation of women's organisations in this global project. [166] It was in these dual capacities that the Prime Minister Harold Wilson appointed Barbara Castle as the Government appointed Co-Chairman of the Commission in April 1974. As the Minister of Social Affairs, Castle was Wilson's only female Cabinet Minister, but she also had other important connections. Her role as the Minister in the newly created Ministry of Development between 1964 - 5 had also seen her play a key part in the establishment of VCOAD. Although Castle's diaries reveal that her response to IWY was far from enthusiastic, her presence on the co-ordinating body did much to prioritise the issue of development during preliminary meetings.[167] At the first meeting of the co-ordinating body in June 1974, members discussed the general policy for the Year. In these discussions, it was made clear that whilst 'much needed to be done here at home in the field of education and training', practical and charitable assistance 'to women outside of this country' was the most 'laudable objective'.[168]

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[165] WL, 5ICW/F/10 39, ICW, Letter from Mary Hill to Deaconess Eileen Harding, International Women's Year 1975, 19/9/1974

[166] 2SJA/04 517, United Nations Information Office: International Women's Year 1975, November 1974

[167] B. Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964 – 1976,* (London: Papermac, 1990), p. 544

[168] WL, 2SJA/6 520, WNC, WNC Bulletin, July 1974

The Commission helped to organise over 550 events for IWY nationwide, but a large proportion of work for IWY involved the promotion of women's role in international development. According to Dr Janet Cockcroft, Vice-President of the ICW and British delegate to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the key goal of IWY was to dispel the large numbers of complacent women within Britain, the 'I'm all right Jills', who did nothing for their under-privileged sisters overseas.[169] In this sense, the WNC perceived of its role in terms of its ability to promote and popularise the concept of international development, rather than to stridently challenge existing strategies. Whilst in general, the promotional material distributed by the Commission did acknowledge contemporary debates that related to the adverse effects of projects which neglected of women's productive capacities in the global South, this did not tend to find effective practical expression in sponsored projects.

British women's organisations participation in the development side of IWY was twofold and involved educational initiatives but also fundraising. A majority of WNC member organisations held educational courses on women in development as a part of their broader plans and events for IWY. However it was the UNA WAC that held the most intensive program of educational drives throughout 1975. As part of the larger UNA the organisation had unique access to a number of specialist speakers and materials and was keen to publicise the new international emphasis on individual co-operation.

In November 1974 the General Council of the UNA had passed several resolutions in support of the principles of IWY and pressed for a 'positive programme' for the advancement of women throughout the world. Specifically, the UNA called for recognition of the 'importance of the full participation of the potential of developing countries' and urged the Ministry of Overseas Development to promote special measures for the advancement of

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[169] WL, 5SJA/6 520, WNC, International News Sheet, Autumn 1976, p. 7

women.[170] The WAC UNA, whose membership had grown over the course of the 1960s and 1970s and now included 48 national women's organisations, encouraged the promotion of training projects for women in rural and urban areas.[171] The organisation held a total of 14 seminars on women and development over the course of 1975 and invited a range of 'expert' speakers, including Donald Tweddle, former chairman of the UK FFHC committee and current chairman of the UK Standing Conference for DD2, Frederick Lees of the Voluntary Committee for Overseas Aid and Development, Dr Teresa Spens from the Ministry of Overseas Development and Janet Cockcroft, British representative to the CSW.[172] The primary aim of the seminars was to outline the changes in the development discourse affecting women such as that being advocated by WID at this time These focused on the premise that ignorance of women's productive and economic role had encouraged a 'tendency in development work' for projects that made women's social and economic position within the community worse. Visuals aids were used to highlight for example, the fact that mechanisation had in some cases increased the amount of work women were called to do. Accounts from women in Tanzania and Lesotho were used to demonstrate to British women the fact that a large proportion of agricultural training projects in this area had tended to ignore women altogether, despite women's traditional role in the cultivation and preparation of crops.[173] UNA WAC sponsored development projects for women during IWY were progressive in that they aimed first to 'liberate their shoulders' by financing schemes which would provide women in developing areas with practical assistance. In January 1975 the WAC and its member organisations, which included many of those mentioned in this study, pledged to raise £15,000 to finance fresh supplies of water to rural areas in India. The scheme also aimed to provide local women with storage facilities in an attempt to reduce the

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[170] WL, 3AMS/F/19/1 146, UNA WAC, The UN and Development, December 1974

[171] WL, 3AMS/F/19/1 146, UNA WAC, Minutes of WAC Meeting, 2/7/1975

[172] WL, 3AMS/F/19/1 146, UNA WAC Minutes of Meeting, 26/10/76

[173] WL, 3AMS/F/19/1 146, UNA WAC, List of Seminar Aids, May 1975

trip for water performed on a daily basis by women throughout the country.[174] These attempts to meet women's basic human needs did not however, challenge the existing assumptions that had made this project necessary. It did not attempt to contest traditional patterns of labour or women's subordinate position in society.

The WI and Townswomen's Guilds organised similar seminars, albeit devoid of the high profile speakers as those run by WAC UNA. By this point, the WI had been actively participating in the language of development since the 1950s, but the courses at Denman College during IWY took a distinctly more women-centred approach. Courses entitled 'Women's Role in Development', 'Women's Functional Literacy in the Third World' and 'Women's Nutritional Health' all aimed to drive home the key themes of IWY to rural women in Britain. The WNC itself produced a total of 10,000 pamphlets which detailed the ways in which women's role in international development had been undermined or sometimes, ignored. These leaflets were distributed free of charge to its member organisations at the beginning of 1975.[175]

On the initiative of Barbara Castle and Janet Cockcroft, the WNC offered organisations and individuals the opportunity to raise funds for some of its centrally sponsored development projects which it advertised in its monthly newsletter. These projects included a water project in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands to provide water pumps in rural areas; a literacy program for women in Tanzania and a fund to provide women in Malaysia with the opportunity to open and run local market stalls to sell surplus produce on a regular basis.[176] These centrally organised fund raising opportunities allowed smaller organisations that were not officially

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[174] WL, 3AMS/F/19/1 146, UNA WAC, Projects for IWY, November 1975

[175] WL, 2SJA/6 520, WNC, WNC Bulletin, December 1975

[176] WL, 5ICW/F/10 39, WNC, *International Women's Year: UK Newsletter,* September 1975, p. 1

associated with a larger, umbrella organisation to contribute to efforts to improve women's lives outside Britain, albeit in small ways. In August 1975 for example, the Married Women's Association presented the WNC with a cheque totalling £400 for a UNESCO sponsored literacy club project publicised in the monthly newsletter; the amount had been raised solely by the small Hereford branch of their organisation.[177]

Individual organisations appeared keen to involve themselves in development and many decided to raise funds for their own individually selected projects that arguably reflected their educational and welfare orientated organisational aims. The British Federation of University of Women sponsored an educational project for women in Vietnam.[178] The Women's Forum decided to devote its IWY fund raising efforts towards a £10,000 UNICEF organised project in Zambia which aimed to simultaneously provide family planning advice and promote basic levels of literacy through the training of women leaders in local communities.

This is not to say however that these projects were without flaws, the tendency to view women within the context of the family persisted. Older versions of 'mothercraft' were frequently translated into a more innocuous form of vocational training 'in the home'. Whilst in 1975 the NCW accepted that a significant proportion of women in the global South 'work the fields and help to produce cash crops', they still had an 'enormous part to play in the promotion of nutrition and…the feeding of infants'. In this regard, the provision of 'appropriate technology for storage, preservation and preparation of food' superseded agricultural training.[179] The NCW helped to finance a Nutrition Education Programme in Zimbabwe which dealt with basic nutrition, general health and the care of the pre-school

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[177] WL, 2SJA/5 520, WNC, List of Donations for IWY Projects, November 1975

[178] WL, 2SJA/6 520, WNC, Bulletin, December 1975

[179] Ibid.

child. Budgeting, food preservation and storage were all topics central to the course.[180] According to the WI, the 'focal points' for development in 1975 consisted of 'nutrition, health, childcare and family planning programmes'. These were considered to be the 'essential first steps' to enable women to be integrated into the multiple processes of rural development.[181] These were sentiments that continued to be shared by British women's organisations at this time and were epitomised in the practical programmes of 1975. In a project sponsored by the WI for example, women in Uganda continued to be sent on home economics and craft courses despite the lack of an adequate water supply in the era.[182] Whilst the Townswomen's Guilds had opted to raise money to assist in the 'extension of income generating skills' to women in Botswana by providing access to machines for canning locally grown fruit and vegetables, funds were simultaneously set aside to pay for cooking utensils, nursery equipment and washing facilities for local women.[183]

British celebrations for IWY included educational programmes that aimed to promote the idea of international development amongst the women's organisations of Britain. Whilst the WNC leaders felt that the Year had been a success overall, there remained a disjuncture between emerging international debate and practical organisational understanding. The exclusion of overtly political feminist organisations with experience of gender-analysis in preference for those with more palatable aims prevented the wider implications of IWY and WID based analysis from being recognised and practically employed in official IWY projects. Larger mainstream organisations were prioritised in IWY events and were the most likely to be able to raise the necessary funds for practical projects. Thus the legacies rooted in older forms of relief and social welfare for women persisted at a time when they were being systematically challenged at academic and theoretical levels.

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[180] LMA, ACC/3613/030/12, NCW, IWY Update, January 1976

[181] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, ACWW Statement of Objectives: How We Can Help, February 1975

[182] WL, 5FWI/D/2 154, NFWI, ACWW Project List, September 1975

[183] WL, 5WFM/A 560, WGPW, Minutes, 16/12/1975

Conclusion

In 1978 the WI held a conference entitled 'The Village in an International Context' at Denman College. Conference attendees were sent a selection of background papers prior to the conference, which included a UNESCO Co-action Bulletin from the previous year.[184] The Bulletin provided an outline of women's current place in international development and was critical of past approaches. One of the central points raised by the Bulletin was the fact that 'problems affecting nutrition' were in fact of an economic, rather than cultural nature. The Bulletin made it clear that it was the organisation of production, marketing and pricing, rather than societal taboos and female ignorance that constituted the most fundamental causes of malnutrition, directly undermining the nutritional education courses that the WI had helped to develop.

Summarising previous development programmes for women, the Bulletin stated that in a majority of cases, projects had often 'wrongly assumed' that rural women had the time to take part in 'family welfare, nutrition and child care programmes'.[185] Instead, improvements should focus on making 'their work less burdensome'; providing day care facilities for children, increasing the number of wells, providing light machinery for grinding corn and granary construction formed the core alternative proposals for women. Whilst this recognised the WID concern with women's productive roles, women continued to be charged with the responsibility for the nutritional welfare of the family. The 'basic needs' approach which found prominence in the late 1970s and aimed to supply the people in the poorest areas with the essential goods and services necessary to live a healthy and productive life,

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[184] WL, 5FWI/D/2 158, Background Papers for Village in an International Context, Denman College October 1978: Summary of FAO Report on FFHC, 1977
[185] Ibid.

continued to build on those assumptions that had been allowed to flourish in the 1960s.[186] Development projects for women continued to define the problems of poverty in terms of the family's basic needs rather than unequal access to resources, a rhetoric which continued to cast women primarily in domestic roles.[187]

The legacy of women's involvement in development on both national and international scales questioned the assumption that 'women and development' became a recognised paradigm only in the 1970s. Rather, development projects grew and evolved over the course of this period in response to critiques and changing notions about what it meant for women to be incorporated into the 'total development' effort. International women's organisations and to some degree, British women's organisations had attempted to place women on the agenda from the outset, albeit in a limited and gendered way. The 1970s did not see this approach wither away entirely as the persistence of training in domestic science reveals. However, the continued presence of these organisations in the development debate demonstrates that the history of women and development is one of continuation and adaptation, rather than revolution.

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[186] I. Palmer, 'Rural Women and the Basic Needs Approach to Development' in *International Labour Review,* 115 (1) (1977), pp. 104 - 105

[187] N. Kabeer, *Reversed Realities,* p. 7

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to make clear British women's experience of public engagement beyond national boundaries in the three decades following the end of the Second World War. It has attempted to blend the histories of women's associational life, imperialism and international aid and development to assess how 'the international' was understood at an organisational level. Emerging literature on British women's post-war activism has tended to focus predominately on national and localised forms of civic action.[1] Internationalism has a long history of informing the direction of women's associational life in Britain; Helen McCarthy's work on the League of Nations Union clearly demonstrates the appeal of foreign affairs to women's organisations throughout the inter-war period.[2] It is clear that this enthusiasm persisted after the close of the Second World War and that it was translated in light of the contemporary social, economic and political context.

The formation of separate organisational international committees and the passage of independent international resolutions created official organisational spaces for international work for the first time. British women's organisations did by no means neglect national or local issues during the post-war period; domestic campaigns continued to form a key part of the agendas of all of the women's organisations mentioned in this study. International

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[1] See C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928 – 1964,* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2013); S. Clements, *Feminism, citizenship and social activity: the role and importance of local women's organisations, Nottingham 1918-1969,* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Nottingham, 2008); J. Freeguard, *Time for Women of the 1950s to Stand Up and Be Counted,* (Unpublished DPhil Thesis: University of Sussex, 2004); J. A. Laite, 'The Association for Moral and Social Hygiene: Abolitionism and Prostitution Law in Britain, 1915 – 1959' in *Women's History Review,* 17 (2) (2008), pp. 207 - 223

[2] H. McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nation: Democracy, Internationalism and Citizenship, c.1918 – 1948,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 185

campaigns often complimented these forms of national work; human rights in addition to women's unique 'feminine point of view' were used as justifications for women's political representation both in national and international contexts in the early 1950s for example. The practices of the women's organisations in this study reveal that internationalism resonated beyond the boundaries of the UN and traditional international NGOs to affect ordinary British women in towns and villages alike.

British women's engagement in international development can be traced back to the histories of female mission and philanthropy in the 19th century. However, post-war involvement in humanitarianism was as much of a product of circumvention as it was of tradition. Inspired by a new post-war sense of duty and internationalism British women's organisations embraced the new international institutions that had formed as a result of War with a newfound sense of purpose, one which allowed them to join new organisational partners and participate in new processes and debates. Women's role in international affairs was conceptualised as organisationally necessary, as vital for a new age that simultaneously demanded international connectivity and exchange, both in economic and political terms. Women's international political representation, human rights and international education were central to this new post-war internationalist identity.

However, it was the failure of peace to unite women across social and political lines in the face of the 'red scare' that effectively positioned international development as the convenient space to act out these new international commitments. Members of organisations including the Six Point Group had envisioned that world peace would act as the means to form a new, active women's movement; by appealing to women's innate preference for peace these organisations specifically addressed women on the ground of their gender and hoped to transcend national, political and class differences. The extent to which British women's

organisations eventually dissociated themselves from world peace in the early 1950s demonstrates that the practices of civic life are vulnerable to contemporary political contexts. Indeed, this observation is not limited to solely to the effects of Cold-War politics; Anna Bocking-Welch's recent study of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign in the 1960s demonstrates the impact that decolonisation had on the organisational priorities of a range of British associations at this time.[3] The prioritisation of technical assistance by international women's organisations was both pragmatic and deliberate; leading members agreed that the key tenets of peace could be successfully translated into apolitical action. Not only did this satisfy the internal critics but it also solidified their working place in the international political machinery responsible for technical assistance administration. Working relationships were established with international agencies and experts in ways that were to eventually leave international and national women's organisations responsible for the administration of a large proportion of development projects for women.

The results of this new international priority within Britain were informed directly by histories of colonialism and imperial power. British women's first interaction with the concept of development had been in the 1940s and 1950s following the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940. Despite a general lack of female colonial administrators, British women's organisations were co-opted by the Colonial Office to act as models for organisational export and to encourage appropriate forms of civic engagement.[4] Indeed, further research on these types of colonial encounters could shed detailed light about the ways in which they infringed upon later development initiatives in the 1960s and 1970s. Whilst historians have made clear the ways in which imperialism shaped British women's perception of their relationship to their colonial sisters in the first few decades of

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[3] A. Bocking-Welch, *The British Public in a Shrinking World: Civic Engagement with the Declining Empire, 1960-1970,* (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of York, 2013)

[4] K. Staudt, 'The State and Gender in Colonial Africa' in S. Ellen et al. (eds.), *Women, the State and Development,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 78

the 20th century, little historical attention has been paid to British women's involvement in colonial development specifically.

Freedom from Hunger was the catalyst for British women's organisations entry into contemporary international development, and by the time of International Women's Year in 1975 it had become central to international work more broadly. Freedom from Hunger's populist and technocratic approach to the problems of hunger fitted suitably with wider organisational aims that excluded the presence of politics. Organisations such as the WI and NCW utilised their colonial experience to inform their contemporary projects, leaving assumptions about priorities, gender relations and Western superiority uncontested despite the rapid process of decolonisation. In later years, practical commitments to international development have become more diverse and varied, ranging from small-scale resolutions to the endorsement of new national and international campaigns. The 1970s saw the adoption of a multitude of different projects by different organisations. These projects did not however, systematically aim to challenge women's role within society nor did they successfully identify the interconnected structural causes of poverty. Later analysts have revealed that the blame for this lack of comprehension cannot solely be located on women's organisations themselves, the institutional structure of international development continued to act to depoliticise women's role in development throughout the 1970s by failing to allocate suitable budgets and by continuing to outsource projects to non-specialists.

This thesis then, has attempted to problematize the 1970s as the 'moment' at which women were rescued from the peripheries of development discourse. The decade has been accredited as the key moment in the history of women's global politics; the moment at which women's role in development 'exploded' across international and national geographies. Despite this increased visibility in international spaces, it is clear that residual maternalist

and colonial interpretations of women's location in society continued to triumph over the focus on empowerment, both in theory and practice. Women's engagement with international development came initially from a deliberately apolitical direction in the 1950s and the consequences of this process continued to be felt throughout the proceeding decades. The 1950s set a precedent for action that proved difficult to shake 'on the ground' and was further compounded by a lack of comprehensive international planning. Whether this renders the innovatory depiction of this period uncertain is subject to debate; certainly, it took the IAW and ICW another ten years to recognise their own project biases. This re-assessment of the 1970s had implications for the ways in which historians might study the proceeding decades; whether these points were internationally recognised in light of the sector-wide re-evaluation of political agency in the 1980s is thus a pertinent question.

Indeed, there remains more work to be done on the evolution of women's organisations relationship to development from the 1980s to the present. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the entrenchment of the women and development agenda in the institutional architecture of the UN through the establishment of official bodies and research centres.[5] There is evidence that British women's organisations had responded to critiques of women's marginalisation in the development debate by the mid-1980s. The NCW for example, was particularly outspoken about the provisions made for women in the Band Aid/Live Aid programme in ways which specifically appealed to women's economic productivity. In June 1986 the organisation insisted that the Executive Director of Band Aid Penny Jenden, remember women farmers in Africa, who 'produce up to 80% of the food grown in Africa, yet they are so often ignored in aid and development programmes, having no access to agricultural training, mechanical technology or credit'.[6] Similarly, the WI urged that it was 'essential for women's inclusion in the planning and operation of all projects' and that

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[5] D. Jain, *Women, Development and the UN:A Sixty Year Quest for Equality and Justice,* pp. 94 - 5

[6] LMA, ACC/3613/030/35, NCW, Letter from Bibi Small to Penny Jenden, 18/6/1986

'training programmes for women in modern technology and farming techniques…would avoid previous unsuccessful attempts to resolve the disastrous situation and fulfil Bob Geldof's objective'.

Preliminary enquiry suggests that the 1980s could act as a potentially fruitful and productive periodization for further historical enquiry on this topic. The 1970s and 1980s have generally been viewed as the backdrop for the politicisation of the humanitarian sector; Clare Saunders claims that it was during this period that British charities and aid agencies became more politically explicit in both their outlook and strategies.[7] The WI continued to expand its international program throughout this period, and issued statements on a range of issues affecting women and culminated in the international campaign against the marketing, distribution and sale of powdered baby formula in the Third World and the spread of AIDS in the early 1980s.[8] The NCW has also been vocal on the international spread of AIDS since 1987.[9] The NCW, the WI and the Townswomen's Guilds were all active to some degree in the Campaign to Keep the UK in UNESCO in 1985, following the UK Government's announcement to officially withdraw membership and financial backing after a review period of one year.[10] Historically, the connection between women's organisations and UNESCO had been at the centre of their development efforts since the 1950s and many British organisations had sat on the UK National Commission. UNESCO had provided the funds for a large proportion of literacy based training programmes which had allowed both national and international women's organisations to translate their commitment to adult education

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[7] C. Saunders, 'British Humanitarian, Aid and Development NGOs, 1949 – Present' in N. Crowson et al. (eds.), *NGOs in Contemporary Britain,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 53

[8] J. Robinson, *A Force to Be Reckoned With: A History of the Women's Institute,* (London: Virago, 2011), p. 233

[9] D. Glick, *The National Council of Women: The First One Hundred Years,* (London: NCW, 1995), p. 103

[10] H. Cornell, 'Where is the Constituency for a Global and International Education?' in *Journal of Education Policy,* 3 (3) (1988), p. 283

into practice from the mid-1950s. British withdrawal from the inter-governmental organisation deprived women's organisations of a significant international voice, and their efforts to challenge this suggest that this was an important reality.

The publication of the Brandt Report in 1980 also had a marked effect on British women's organisations. The Report was commissioned to consider the global issues arising from the economic and social disparities of the wider world and the impact of its conclusions were far-reaching. The Report emphasised the division between rich and poor and made this geographically visible through use of the metaphorical 'Brandt line', which characterised the North as having 'one quarter of the world population and four fifths of the income' whilst the South remained in acute poverty.[11] Within Britain, the Report led to the formation of an 'action group' by the Women's Forum (formerly the Women's Group on Public Welfare) to raise awareness amongst the women of Britain regarding its conclusions. The Report also played a key role in awakening the Mothers' Union, an organisation with an already significant presence in Africa, to its broader responsibilities in the global South.[12] Encouraged by agencies such as Christian Aid, this eventually led to the organisation's re-branding as a global development agency by the mid-1990s.[13] The history of the Mothers' Union's involvement in international development differs from the other types of women's organisations mentioned here. However, that the organisation's central aim is now to help women 'take control of development', specifically to empower women as individuals, suggests that the Union's experience of international development in the 1980s may mesh with other women's groups at this time. An analysis of the activities of the Mothers' Union could also shed important light on the Christian Church's involvement with women's role in international development more broadly.

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[11] P. Burnell, *Foreign Aid in a Changing World,* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), p. 63

[12] WL, Mothers' Union, *Home and Family,* May 1982

[13] C. Moyse, *A History of the Mothers' Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation, 1876 – 2008,* (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 239 - 242

The legacies of this post-war internationalism can be seen today. Larger British women's organisations have continued to prioritise development in their international work; as recently as 2012 the Townswomen's Guilds approved a new mandate on international aid and disaster relief. The seven page document, based on evidence provided by Transparency International, urges for closer monitoring of aid provision in fragile states.[14] The NCW meanwhile, has continuously re-affirmed its commitment to the UN's Millennium Development Goals, a strategic set of eight international priorities to combat global poverty and aid human development.[15] UNIFEM has provided a focus for British women to engage with women-centred development initiatives in the past three decades. The organisation, formerly named the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women, has been at the centre of international project provision.[16] The WAC UNA has been particularly active in promoting UNIFEM and UN CSW activities over the past three decades.[17] The Women's National Commission was officially closed by the coalition government in 2010 following a comprehensive review of all non-departmental public bodies. Until this point however, the Commission's international committee remained operational and continued to closely monitor UN deliberations relating to women.[18]

The WI in particular, has been keen from the outset to carve out a space for the organisation in these debates. Its historical connections to colonial forms of management and community

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[14] 'Mandate on International Aid and Disaster Relief'
http://www.townswomen.org.uk/page.asp?node=11&action=view_document&tid=7732&sec=Mandates&page=1 [accessed 11/11/13]

[15] NCW, 'Foreign Affairs Committee', http://www.ncwgb.org/foreign.php [accessed 11/11/13]

[16] C. Murphy, *The United Nations Development Programme: A Better Way?,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 201 - 211

[17] WL, 3AMS/F/19/1 146, *New World,* March/April 1983, 'Experts Decide Women are Important'

[18] Women's National Commission, http://wnc.equalities.gov.uk/work-of-the-wnc/international-articles.html [accessed 11/11/13]

development in addition to its strong international connections placed it in an ideal position for this type of work. Matthew Anderson's work on the history of the Fair Trade movement in Britain in the post-war period has pointed to the conspicuous presence of the WI on the board of the Fair Trade Foundation, which the WI joined in the early 1990s.[19] Indeed, separated from the wider context of the organisation's international history the WI membership of this body could certainly read as an anomaly, particularly on consideration of the list of other members, all of which were international aid and development organisations: Christian Aid, Catholic Action for Overseas Development, New Consumer, Oxfam, Traidcraft Exchange and the World Development Movement. However, this thesis has made clear that this connection to Fair Trade is a logical development in the organisation's international policy. It is yet one more example of the multiplicity of practical ways in which the WI has expressed its commitment to international aid and development in the second half of the 20th century. The organisation has continued to involve its grassroots members on a local basis in these issues. In the early 1990s, the movement began organising 'three year action plans' which embodied the WI commitment to international development; entitled 'Tomorrow's Women Working for Tomorrow's World', each of the three yearly plans aimed to focus the efforts of grassroots members at local communities and encourage them to 'widen their horizons and together influence international affairs and development'.[20] Information days, lectures, pageants and themed meetings are all ways in which the WI has integrated this issue into its everyday operation.

British women's post-war internationalism has wider implications for the study of the history of organised women in the 20th century. Whilst the accepted interpretation of women's activism in this period is one of fragmentation, a history of women's international

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[19] M. Anderson, *The British Fair Trade Movement, 1960 – 2000: A New Form of Global Citizenship?,* (University of Birmingham: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2009), p. 133

[20] WL, NFWI, *Home and Country,* June 1994

engagement has revealed a vibrancy that conflicts with this account. McCarthy's work on popular internationalism in the inter-war period has shown how the LNU flourished through the agency of non- party women's organisations, which directly facilitated the survival of 'broad-based alliances' of women nationally.[21] These broad based alliances were stimulated by the existence of umbrella organisations, common goals and organisational co-operation which encouraged interaction between socially-conservative and those more radical organisations. Catriona Beaumont has argued that it is more helpful to recast the 'women's movement' in the first half of the 20th century as a social rather than feminist movement.[22] This broader definition recognises the on-going connections between political, conservative and feminist groups. Indeed, the history of British women's internationalism after the Second World War has demonstrated the extent to which women's organisations shared similar, rather than conflicting, concerns and goals.

Finally, a history of British women's internationalism can help us as historians to define the British public's relationship to the wider world after 1945. The level of organisational engagement in international development after 1961 suggests that humanitarianism has indeed become a popular means of performing a modern version of international citizenry.[23] Grassroots members expressed their knowledge about the global in small but significant ways, fund-raising, attending courses and entertaining international visitors. This was however, a circumscribed knowledge formulated against the backdrop of Empire and imperial power. Britain's colonial experience continued to impact on broader public attitudes towards humanitarianism at this time. For the women in this study, international development continued to be understood as a means of exporting Western standards to the globally poor.

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[21] H. McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations,* p. 187

[22] C. Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens,* p. 3

[23] A. Bocking- Welch, *The British Public in a Shrinking World,* p. 262

Appendix I

Affiliated organisations to the Women's Group on Public Welfare c.1943:

Association of the Inner Wheel Club
Association of Teachers of Domestic Subjects
British Association of Residential Settlements
British Federation of Business and Professional Women
British Federation of Social Workers
British Federation of University Women
British Institute of Adult Education
British Legion (Women's Section)
Brotherhood Movement (Sister Department)
Educational Settlements Association
Electrical Association for Women
Fabian Women's Group
Federation of Soroptimist Clubs
Joint Committee of Four Secondary Associations
Medical Women's Federation
National Adult School Union
National Association of Women Civil Servants
National Association of Local Government Officers
National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare
National Association for Mental Health
National Federation of Business and Professional Women
National Federation of Women's Institutes
National Society of Children's Nurseries
National Union of Conservative and Unionist Association
National Union of Teachers
National Union of Townswomen's Guilds
National Women's Citizens' Association
Nursery School Association of Great Britain
Royal College of Midwives
Royal College of Nursing
St John's Ambulance Brigade (Nursing Section)
Salvation Army
Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations
Toc H (Women's Section)
Trades Union Congress (Women's Advisory Committee)
Women's Advisory Council on Solid Fuel
Women's Co-operative Guild
Women's Gas Council
Women's Guild of Empire
Women's Liberal Federation
Women's Public Health Officers' Association
Women's Social Service Clubs
Young Women's Christian Association

Appendix II

Affiliated organisations to the Women's Advisory Council of the United Nations Association, c. 1957:

Baptist Women's League
British Commonwealth League
British League of Unitarian Women
British Federation of University Women
British Vigilance Association
Council of Married Women
Electrical Association of Women
Fawcett Society
Federation of Soroptimist Clubs
Federation of Women Zionists
Married Women's Association
National Association of Women Civil Servants
National Council of Women
National Federation of Business and Professional Women
National Federation of Women's Institutes
National Free Church Women's Council
National Women's Citizens' Association
National Union of Women Teachers
Open Door Council
Six Point Group
St Joan's Alliance
Trades Union Congress (Women's Advisory Committee)
Women's Freedom League
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (British branch)
Women's Liberal Federation
Women's National Advisory Committee, Conservative and Unionist Association
Women Public Health Officers
Union of Jewish Women

Appendix III

Affiliated organisations to the Women's National Commission, c. 1975:

Association of Assistant Mistresses
Association of Headmistresses
Association of Inner Wheel Clubs in Great Britain and Ireland
British Federation of University Women
Church Army
Church of Scotland Woman's Guild
Communist Party of Great Britain
Co-operative Women's Guild
Educational Institute of Scotland
Health Visitors' Association
League of Jewish Women
Medical Women's Federation
Mothers' Union
National Association of Women's Clubs
National Board of Catholic Women
National Council of Women of Great Britain
National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland
National Federation of Women's Institutes
National Free Church of Women's Council
National Labour Women's Advisory Committee
National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations
National Union of Teachers
National Union of Townswomen's Guilds
Royal College of Nursing and National Council of Nurses of the United Kingdom
Salvation Army
Scottish Women's Rural Institutes
Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland
Toc. H. Women's Association
Trades Union Congress (9 representatives from different unions and Secretary of the
Women's Advisory Council)
United Kingdom Federation for Education in Home Economics
Women's Liberal Federation
Women's Royal Voluntary Service
Young Women's Christian Association of Great Britain

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1/M 019	Affiliated Organisations
2/B 027 – 030	Women's Organisations in Great Britain
2/C 031 – 033	International Women's Organisations
2/D 034	General International

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D/2/1 146	International Sub-Committee, 1931 - 1977
D/2 147 – 165	International - Administrative Files, 1947 - 1996
E/2/03/4 183	Denman College Sub-Committee Minutes, 1959 – 1967

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1/B 171- 174	Annual General Meetings, 1949 – 1974
1/E 181	General Correspondence, 1931 – 1973
1/H 184 – 185	Correspondence with Other Organisations, 1944 - 1973
1/I 186	Publications and Newsletters, 1918 - 1973

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A 523 – 525	Executive Committee Minutes and Papers, 1935 – 1980
B 526	Annual General Meetings, 1931 – 1979
F 530 – 533	Campaigns and Projects, 1937 – 1976

H 534	Social and Public Meetings, 1943 – 1979
J 538	Newsletter and Circulars, 1941 – 1979
M 546	Hazel Hunkins Hallinan Papers, 1950 -1981

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N/2 520	Women's National Commission, 1975 - 1982

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A 555 -556	Executive Committee Minutes
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