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Women's Organisations, Active Citizenship, and the Peace Movement: New Perspectives on Female Activism in Britain, 1918-1939

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ABSTRACT

The history of women's engagement in the interwar peace movement has focused primarily on feminist pacifists, individuals who participated in both the women's suffrage movement and the peace movement. Much less attention has been given to the peace activism of voluntary women's groups that did not self-identify as feminist but which were equally committed to preserving peace. This analysis explores the contribution of three women's organisations – the National Council of Women, the Women's Institutes, and the Young Women's Christian Association – to the interwar peace movement. Their involvement not only reveals the extent of their anti-war activism but calls into question long-held assumptions about what motivated women to engage in the campaign for peace. This re-evaluation provides new insights into the varied reasons why women wanted peace and challenges the belief that anti-war activism weakened the women's movement during the interwar years.

Histories of twentieth century Britain include in-depth accounts and analysis of its two most prominent social movements: the women's movement and the peace movement. This body of work includes key texts such as Martin Ceadel's *Pacifism in Britain, 1914–1945: The Defining of a Faith* and Barbara Caine's *English Feminism, 1780 to 1980*.¹ Ceadel seeks to rectify the 'relative historical neglect of the interwar peace movement' and in doing so provides a useful analysis of the different types of pacifism evident during these years.² Caine challenges the idea that feminist activism was 'spasmodic and fragmentary' and illustrates the vitality of the women's movement throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³ Adding complexity to these discrete histories, historians have identified the intersections between the peace and women's movement. Jill Liddington's *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-militarism in Britain since 1820*, Julie Gottlieb's *'Guilty Women', Foreign Policy and Appeasement in Inter-War Britain*, and Sarah Hellawell's study of the

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British Women's International League [WIL] vividly illustrate how suffrage and feminist activists were drawn into the national and international peace movement, each assessing the impact this dual participation had on both movements.⁴

The 'international turn' in women's history, reflecting a desire to go beyond the history of nation states, further contributes to histories of the twentieth century women's and peace movements.⁵ Research into the transnational women's movement highlights the long-standing interconnectivity between the women's and peace movements.⁶ For organisations such as the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, the International Council of Women [ICW] and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom [WILPF], engaging in campaigns for women's rights and peace activism, often went hand in hand. Established in 1888, the ICW set up a standing committee on Peace and Arbitration in 1899, and WILPF's founding came in response to the 1915 Women's Peace Congress at The Hague.⁷ Ingrid Sharp acknowledges the overlap: 'the women's peace movement, inextricably bound up with the campaign for women's suffrage, was clearly transnational in nature'.⁸ This 'imagined community', operating on a transnational level, was composed of women from across the globe, including North America, Britain, Poland, Germany, Ireland, India, and Japan.⁹

As Sharp suggests, research into early twentieth century women's peace movements has focused primarily on individuals and organisations that also participated in national and transnational women's suffrage movements. It has resulted in an incomplete account of female peace activism within the historiography. In the British context, women who aligned their feminist, and more often than not socialist and/or radical beliefs with pacifism, joined organisations such as the WIL – the British branch of WILPF – the Women's Co-operative Guild [WCG], Women Against War and Fascism, and the Women's Peace Crusade.¹⁰ Significantly less attention has focussed on the peace activism of voluntary women's groups who did not self-identify as feminist, and that were more conservative by nature, but which were equally committed to the preservation of peace, particularly in the wake of the First World War.

The gap in knowledge needs addressing. The participation of three women's organisations – the National Council of Women [NCW], the National Federation of Women's Institutes [WI], and the Young Women's Christian Association [YWCA] – in the interwar peace movement reveals not only their anti-war activism but also calls into question long-held assumptions about what motivates women to engage in peace activism. This re-evaluation reveals new insights into the varied reasons why women's organisations campaigned for peace. Moreover, the inclusion of the NCW, WI, and YWCA in the history of the interwar peace movement challenges the idea that activists had to choose between the women's and peace movements, and that prioritising anti-war activism weakened the women's movement during the interwar years.

A split did occur within the wartime suffrage movement. Feminist pacifists including Maude Royden, Kathleen Courtney, and Catherine Marshall left the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies because of its support for the war to join peace groups such as the WIL.¹¹ The split may have been symptomatic of the fragmentation of the Edwardian suffrage movement, but it should not be assumed that once the war ended, women's groups were unable to combine peace activism with campaigns to enhance the status of women.¹² Instead an underlying commitment to improve the everyday lives of women during the interwar years helps explain why the NCW, WI, and YWCA were so keen to participate actively in the peace movement. Another war would have disrupted this objective. Before turning to their peace activism, it is useful to situate their anti-war stance within wider understandings of pacifism, feminist pacifism, and maternalist pacifism. These terms appear frequently in histories of the twentieth century peace movement, thus it is important to identify which, if any, of these terms apply to the peace activism of the NCW, WI, and YWCA.

Ceadel defines pacifism as a personal conviction that war is always wrong regardless of the circumstances.¹³ It has frequent links to religious beliefs, for example, the Society of Friends or Quakers, well known for their uncompromising pacifist stance.¹⁴ Ceadel uses the term pacificism to describe individuals and groups who regard war as an irrational and inhumane way to solve disputes, a view that gathered support following the calamity of the First World War. Pacificism is understood here in terms of an 'ethic of responsibility' to prevent war and extends to all governments, thereby requiring international co-operation amongst nations to maintain peace. In contrast to pacifists, Ceadel argues that pacificism embodies an acceptance that controlled use of armed force may at times be necessary to maintain world peace in the face of aggression.¹⁵

The terms feminist pacifism, feminist pacificism, and maternalist pacifism often define women engaging in peace activism. Feminist pacifism most frequently describes the activism of women engaged in the suffrage movement, who joined women-only peace organisations, for example WILPF and the Women's Peace Crusade. Regarded as an organisation made up of suffragists who opposed militarism, the WIL combined 'radical feminist claims to citizenship with calls for peace and international law'.¹⁶ These women saw their feminist activism in terms of demanding women's right to equality, political authority, and social justice. All three demands were 'intimately related and influenced the nature and direction of their pacifism. These women saw themselves not merely as peace activists, but as feminist pacifists',¹⁷ an accurate portrayal of women involved in organisations such as WILPF and the WIL during the interwar years.

Ceadel defines feminist pacificism as also emerging from the women's suffrage movement and a viewpoint that 'blames war on men or patriarchy'.¹⁸

He argues that the outbreak of the Second World War signified the fading away of this form of female peace activism until the 1970s and the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement.¹⁹ In the years after 1945, peace activism did lose momentum but it is wrong to suggest that women no longer participated in such activism. Women's organisations, including WILPF, WCG, and WI continued to raise awareness about the dangers of war. The threat and consequences of nuclear warfare were of particular concern, an issue leading in 1958 to the establishment of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.²⁰

Maternalist pacifism has long been used to describe and understand female peace activism.²¹ This idea refers to the apparent predilection that all women have for peace, based on stereotypical assumptions about their caring nature as mothers or potential mothers.²² Helen McCarthy argues that 'the age-old binary opposition twinning femininity with the values of pacifism and masculinity with those of militarism' dominated the peace movement throughout the interwar years.²³ Other authors support this view. Carol Miller has shown that this association went beyond national borders, and women's transnational organisations, including WILPF, frequently used 'claims about women's special contribution to the cause of peace to expand women's influence at the League of Nations'.²⁴ Gottlieb has coined the phrase 'natural pacifists' to describe the enduring essentialist view that women as mothers had a particular interest in preventing war.²⁵ These labels are apt, but require caution in use. Linking female engagement in peace activism with either feminist or maternalist motives risks overlooking additional factors that prompted women to campaign for peace.

For the NCW, WI, and YWCA, participation in the interwar peace movement tapped into the notion that women as mothers had a vested interest in peace. All three embraced traditional gender roles, represented women as wives and mothers, and supported the view that women had a unique and different contribution to make to public life. Yet maternalist pacifism alone does not fully explain why these three organisations participated in campaigns calling for peace and arbitration during the 1920s and 1930s. Clearly, the NCW, WI, and YWCA succeeded in combining maternalist pacifism with a commitment to citizen-based political activism. Their engagement with the peace movement was pacifist in nature, prompted by the belief that women's lives could only see improvement by preventing future wars. This is how each group framed their peace activism throughout the interwar period.

Before turning to the contribution of the NCW, WI, and YWCA to the interwar peace movement, it is important consider how they related to the wider women's movement. For many years, histories of the movement excluded these groups, most often because they did not seem radical or feminist. More recently, there is an acknowledgement of their contribution to campaigning on behalf of women during the early to mid-twentieth

century.²⁶ Demands made on behalf of their members included improvements in housing, maternity and health care, legal rights relating to divorce and family law, and worker's and pension rights to name a few.²⁷ These groups were reluctant to adopt publicly a feminist identity during the interwar years.²⁸ They feared that too close an association with a believed radical ideology would deter women from joining. Instead, the NCW, WI, and YWCA successfully utilised a discourse of citizenship rights to provide a context for women's participation in public life. They used the extension of the parliamentary franchise to women in 1918 and again in 1928 to legitimate their claims for social, economic, and political reforms, and the right of women to engage in public life.

Overlooking the participation of the NCW, WI, and YWCA in the interwar peace movement continues to be the case. McCarthy's excellent study of the British League of Nations Union [LNU], a public organisation supportive of the international organisation, is a notable exception; but even here, there is only brief analysis of the support given by the NCW and WI to the LNU.²⁹ Despite or perhaps because of these omissions, the NCW, WI, and YWCA make for ideal case studies. They each illustrate how popular women's organisations combined traditional ideas about maternalist pacifism with more radical demands that the voices and views of women be included in public life.

Indeed, there is an argument that the idea of women as 'natural pacifists' made it easier for all three to encourage members to take part in national and international peace activism. In the aftermath of the First World War, women campaigning for peace were less likely to experience the same hostility that suffrage and feminist activists had to endure. Women supporting calls for peace appeared part of the 'natural' order of things, conforming to their traditional gender role in seeking to protect fathers, husbands, and children. Conversely, feminist campaigners were often regarded as disruptive and a threat to family life. This pejorative perception of feminism helps explain why many post-suffrage feminist groups, for example the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, experienced a decline in membership during the interwar years.³⁰ Reflecting on this in 1928, Vera Brittain, the prominent socialist and feminist, remarked that feminists remained portrayed as 'spectacled, embittered women, disappointed, childless, dowdy and generally unloved'.³¹

The NCW, formally the National Union of Women Workers founded in 1895, changed its name in 1918 following the partial extension of the franchise to women and then affiliated to the ICW. This decision indicates that the NCW was supportive of what Ceadel argues was a pacifist outlook, seeking to prevent war via international diplomacy and arbitration. In 1924, the NCW made clear to members that the goal of the organisation was:

not only National, but also International ... by working together with the International Council of Women we seek to bring all the blessings we have won ourselves ... [and] make for a better understanding between the nations and eventuate in the real peace of the world.³²

By the late 1920s, 145 women's societies in Britain had affiliated to the non-partisan NCW, including egalitarian feminist societies like the Women's Freedom League, alongside more conservative women's organisations including the YWCA and the Mothers' Union. This brought the affiliated membership of the Council to over 500,000 women, plus some 15,000 individual members.³³

Throughout the interwar years, the NCW's objective was to 'promote the social, civil, moral and religious welfare of the community'.³⁴ The WI declined to affiliate to the NCW because its commitment to religious welfare compromised the WI's non-sectarian status.³⁵ Working-class women's groups such as the WCG also chose not to join and instead affiliated to the Labour Party-sponsored Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations.³⁶ This move confirms the middle-class character of the NCW, helping explain why historians have often viewed the organisation as a conservative and less radical women's association.

Founded in 1915, the WI represented the interests of rural housewives and mothers in England and Wales throughout the interwar period. By 1928, the organisation had recruited over 240,000 women within 4,000 local branches.³⁷ A major aim of the WI was to ensure that countrywomen 'need no longer lead lives of utter loneliness'.³⁸ Adopting a rigorous non-party political and non-sectarian stance, the WI successfully recruited a mass membership amongst working and middle-class wives and mothers. Nevertheless, like the NCW and the YWCA, middle and upper middle-class women dominated its leadership structures. In 1935, the WI affiliated to the Associated Countrywomen of the World, with the intention of working with other national organisations to represent the interests of rural women worldwide.

One of the principal goals of the YWCA, established in 1877, was to 'draw together for mutual help, sympathy, and instruction Young Women of all classes' and 'promote the moral, social and intellectual well-being of all through its various agencies'.³⁹ In common with the NCW and WI, the YWCA was a non-party organisation; but from its inception, it developed as an evangelical movement open to women and girls who 'agreed to unite in prayer and place themselves under Christian influence'.⁴⁰ Perhaps best known for its network of affordable hostel accommodation for girls and women, the association was also deeply committed to improving conditions for female workers in industry, shops, and offices. In the early 1930s, the YWCA in England and Wales had a membership of approximately 34,800.⁴¹ Throughout the interwar years, the association affiliated with the transnational

World Young Women's Christian Association [YWCA], which had central offices in Geneva and represented one million Christian women across the globe.⁴²

By the early 1930s, the NCW, WI, and YWCA each set up national sub-committees to consider peace, disarmament, and international relations. These committees sat alongside the numerous others that each organisation had established to co-ordinate their national work concerning the welfare of women and oversee policy and campaigning activities. The decision to set up peace committees is indicative of the fact that as organisations for women, each group viewed campaigning for peace as a natural extension of their work. This is not so surprising considering the long tradition of maternalist pacifism in Britain. Moreover, the strong links each group developed with international women's organisations during the 1920s and 1930s further explains the attention given to anti-war activism. A crucial third factor helps explain the enthusiasm each group had for peace work. This was their overriding desire to ensure women, as equal citizens, had a voice in public life and a say in local, national, and international affairs.

What a glorious time to be alive! For the sake of generations to come, and for the sake of the men who have done their bit in a way one cannot talk about, let us take up in the same spirit the great work which Peace calls us, and let us rebuild the world on the best and surest foundations. The question for us ordinary sort of women is, of course, how do we do it?⁴³

The optimism expressed in this January 1919 editorial published in the YWCA magazine, *Our Own Gazette*, is palpable and symptomatic of the peace activism of women's organisations during the 1920s. Identifying what 'ordinary' women, members of the YWCA, NCW, and WI, could do to sustain this newly won peace soon pre-occupied the leadership of each group. Their commitment reflected the wish 'never again' to experience a world war but also the knowledge that some 8.4 million women now had the right to vote in parliamentary elections and so had the potential to influence decisions on war and peace.

In common with post-suffrage, feminist, trade union, and women's branches of political parties, the YWCA, NCW, and WI were keen to ensure that women used their vote wisely and participated actively in public life.⁴⁴ Unwilling to adopt a feminist identity, the concept of active citizenship became a central factor in legitimating their right to speak on behalf of women. It is within this context that the YWCA, NCW, and WI worked tirelessly to educate members on public questions. The YWCA viewed this task as an implicit part of its Christian mission 'to study the laws affecting the welfare of women and girls, and to bring pressure to bear ... to secure legislation in the best interests of the community'.⁴⁵ The NCW was aware that many women in the 1920s 'leading circumscribed lives, with little leisure

for anything outside their home duties, take little interest in the wider problems of government'.⁴⁶ To overcome this apparent apathy, the Council called on women to accept their 'obligation as citizens to give their opinion on national questions by choosing as their representatives in parliament those who hold the same views as themselves on justice, freedom, honesty and peace'.⁴⁷ The WI saw itself as 'a remarkable mechanism for political, as distinct from party political, education in rural areas'.⁴⁸ This meant working to convince every member of her 'obligation to the country of which she is a citizen, to help her develop her mental powers, to make her realise the importance of the intelligent use of the vote'.⁴⁹ NCW, WI, and YWCA eagerness to educate members in citizenship, thereby ensuring women participated fully in public life, adds further credence to McCarthy's assertion that during the interwar years, 'the growth in mass membership associations of a non-party character . . . met with remarkable success in engaging voters in alternative forms of activism and organised sociability'.⁵⁰

Active citizenship is a key component in understanding the willingness of the NCW, YWCA, and WI to engage in peace activism in the interwar period. Aware of the power of participatory democracy, all three recognised the opportunity the peace movement gave to demonstrate publicly that 'ordinary' women were ready and able to fulfil their responsibilities as democratic citizens. One way to achieve this was by supporting the work of the British LNU, set up in 1918 to promote arbitration in international disputes, encourage multilateral disarmament agreements, and educate the British public in the principles of the League.⁵¹ By 1925, the LNU received a Royal Charter and recruited over 400,000 paid-up members, making it the largest and most influential peace organisation in Britain.⁵²

Much of the LNU's success in attracting a mass membership was its support from individual women and women's organisations, including the NCW, YWCA, and WI. Refusing to affiliate to the WIL, due to its strong ties to feminist pacifism, the NCW, YWCA, and WI were happy to be associated with the new non-party LNU, which had no direct links to feminist ideology.⁵³ By 1920, the WI was working in close co-operation with the LNU. Augmenting this new relationship, a resolution passed at the WI 1921 Annual General Meeting [AGM] declared, 'this meeting urges all women's institutes and County Federations within the National Federation to encourage the study of the principles underlying the League of Nations'.⁵⁴ As a result, the WI magazine, *Home and Country*, gave significant coverage to the work of the League and LNU.

Here, it reported on 24 June 1922 that 70 WI delegates representing the Essex, Surrey, West Kent, Middlesex, and Berkshire Federations had joined the WI chairwoman, Lady Denman, at a demonstration in Hyde Park to mark the third anniversary of the signing of the League Covenant.⁵⁵ Aware that local institutes might wish to join the Union, the WI liaised with LNU officials to establish

a model for Corporate Associate membership. In 1923, confirmation came that local institutes now had permission to affiliate directly to the LNU.⁵⁶ This enthusiastic endorsement of the LNU's work was re-iterated again in 1924 in an AGM resolution acknowledging 'the maintenance of peace to be the world's greatest present need, and the vital concern of all women, and therefore commends the study of the work of the League of Nations to all Women's Institutes'.⁵⁷

An article in *Our Own Gazette* in August 1920 reminded YWCA members that war was an 'outrage on all humane ideals and a negation of Christianity'.⁵⁸ The text provided an overview of the League's aims and urged readers wishing to support its work to join the LNU. Making direct reference to women's newly won political citizenship, it advised, 'the woman who votes, and the woman who is not yet a voter ... [must] study continually the affairs of this changing world, and make it their duty to try to learn about and understand international questions and events'. From the early 1920s, the YWCA was committed to a policy of disarmament in step with the transnational peace activism of the WYWCA. In 1921, a resolution passed urging the government 'to do everything in its power to achieve a reduction in armaments throughout the world, in the conviction that great armies and navies ... are a direct menace to the peace of the world'.⁵⁹ The resolution subsequently went to the prime minister and LNU secretary to make known that the views of the YWCA on this issue.

The YWCA regularly reported on the League's work and the peace campaign in *Our Own Gazette* and the *Monthly Letter* published by the association throughout the 1920s. As a Christian organisation, the link amongst Christianity, internationalism, and pacifism was alluded to often, for example in articles by Maude Royden, highlighting the importance of Christian internationalism in the work of the League.⁶⁰ In June 1926, Edith Picton-Tubervill, the YWCA national vice-president, reminded readers of *Our Own Gazette* of the importance of the Christian ideal of universal peace and women's particular duty to promote such ideals. She wrote,

women are having a say in national and international affairs today, and though I am sorry to say there are women who are even more militarist than men, they are very few. The weight of women's influence will be thrown into the scales of peace.⁶¹

Picton-Tubervill provides excellent insight into the kind of woman who took on leadership positions within the YWCA and the campaign for peace. As a Christian committed to social activism, she joined the YWCA before the First World War and played a key role in raising funds to set up canteens and hostels for women munitions workers during the fighting. After the war, she continued to devote her time to improving the lives of the disadvantaged and women and, from 1929 to 1931, served as Labour MP for The Wrekin in Shropshire.⁶²

In 1927, Picton-Tubervill wrote again in *Our Own Gazette* about the LNU's work urging readers to join, pointing out that individual membership 'costs one shilling a year. Not much, is it?' YWCA branches were encouraged to sign up as either Corporate Associates or Corporate Members – receiving all the literature published by the LNU. She expressed her disappointment that only eight YWCA branches had so far joined, including Northampton, Huddersfield, Selly Oak, and Sunderland.⁶³ This low number, compared to the 611 WI branches registered as Corporate Associates by 1931, suggests that local YWCA members did not always share the same enthusiasm for the LNU espoused by their national leadership.

The maternalist pacifist tradition was also evident in NCW's peace activism. Speaking in June 1919, Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon, president of the Council, told members attending the AGM, 'the love of humanity and understanding that oversteps political and geographical boundaries should be able to reveal themselves more easily and unreservedly in women than in men, in virtue of the inborn protective instinct of motherhood in all women'.⁶⁴ Like Picton-Tubervill, Ogilvie Gordon was a well-known figure within the interwar women's movement. An internationally recognised geologist, she became in 1900 the first woman to receive a PhD from Munich University. Having moved to London from Scotland in 1919, she was active in the Liberal Party and a number of leading women's organisations, including the National Women's Citizens Association and NCW.⁶⁵

Ogilvie Gordon and the NCW were determined to ensure that the League of Nations in Geneva adequately represented the views of women. To this end, a meeting in Caxton Hall, Westminster, in September 1919, saw attendance by 80 delegates from 43 British women's organisations, including the NCW, YWCA, and WI.⁶⁶ Following the meeting, a new Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations emerged to lobby for and monitor the appointment of female representatives to the League. With Ogilvie Gordon appointed president of the new Council, members included the prominent feminist internationalists Millicent Fawcett and Margery Corbett Ashby, who sat alongside representatives from the NCW, WI, and YWCA.⁶⁷

To develop its female support base further, the LNU established a Women's Advisory Council [WAC] composed of representatives from feminist, party political, religious, professional, and voluntary women's societies.⁶⁸ Lady Denman and Grace Hadow, chairwoman and vice-chairwoman of the WI, served on the WAC along with Ogilvie Gordon, Lady Emmott, the NCW president and vice-president, and Picton-Tubervill, the YWCA vice-president. The fact that such high-ranking and well-known officials sat on the WAC is significant, a testament to the importance attached to peace activism by these groups and their determination that the LNU knew of the views of women's societies.

Tensions did emerge within the WI over its support for the work of the LNU. Minutes of the WI Executive Committee reveal that in 1925, Miss Hilda Chamberlain, chairwoman of the Hampshire County Federation, and sister of the Conservative MP and future prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, had written to object to the WI decision to support 'the LNU campaign for the limitation and reduction of armaments by way of arbitration'. She also objected to the fact that WI representatives had attended a meeting to launch this campaign and 'maintained that such action went beyond the scope of the National Federation of Women's Institutes whose aims were purely educative'.⁶⁹ In response, the Committee wrote informing her that the WI leadership had acted in line with the mandate of the 1924 AGM resolution. Furthermore, she received a reminder that the objects of the WI were 'not limited to education' and that the movement had 'already done useful work by co-operating with other societies in urging public authorities to certain courses of action'.⁷⁰ Chamberlain had joined the WI in 1919, establishing the Oldham Branch of the movement. Her interest in the WI likely developed from her work during the First World War organising wartime agricultural schemes to increase food production. Chamberlain's wider commitment to public service is evident from her involvement in the Children's County Holiday Fund in the 1890s and her role as a School Board manager. In 1936, she became national treasurer of the WI, indicating that her criticism of the organisation did not result in her sudden departure.⁷¹

The spat between Chamberlain and the WI Executive Committee in 1925 is however revealing. It demonstrates that not all WI members were happy with the national leadership's fervent support of the LNU. The swift and firm response of the Executive to Chamberlain's concerns is illustrative of how committed the leadership was in supporting the cause of peace during these years. Nonetheless, the incident did result in the WI Executive agreeing to draft a second resolution supporting the LNU for its 1926 AGM. It was also agreed that until that time, 'no further definite action in support of the League should be taken'.⁷² In June 1926, a new resolution was duly passed stating, 'this meeting strongly supports the principle of the League of Nations'.⁷³

Throughout the interwar years, women's organisations such as the WI, NCW, and YWCA had to be constantly on the alert for any conflict of interest about their activities. As non-party political associations, they had to be careful to avoid the taint of political bias. Aware of these constraints, the WI remained vigilant in ensuring its independent and non-party political stance when supporting the LNU. Guest speakers, books, leaflets, and pamphlets provided by the LNU for WI meetings and AGMs needed approval in the first instance by the WI leadership. At the WI Executive meeting in January 1924, reports indicated that the LNU was to issue a new pamphlet entitled *The League and Women*. In response, Lady Denman was to write to the LNU stating that the

WI 'deprecates the treatment of the subject solely from the women's point of view'.⁷⁴ This decision indicates that maternalist pacifism was not the only reason why the WI supported the peace movement. Assumptions might have existed that women had a particular interest in peace but, for the WI, peace was an issue of concern for all citizens.

Like the WI, the NCW and YWCA encouraged members and local branches to learn more about the work of the League and LNU. The *NCW News* regularly reminded readers to consult pamphlets produced by the LNU and arranged for LNU speakers to visit local groups. Despite the concerns raised by the WI, this material often aimed specifically at women, for example the 1934 pamphlet, *Women, Work for Peace! What is the claim of the League of Nations to the support of women?* The YWCA was also keen to promote the LNU and, in 1933, reported the holding of international education classes in many centres around the country discussing the implications of disarmament, arbitration, and the role of the League.⁷⁵

In 1926, women's organisations received the ideal opportunity to demonstrate publicly their support for peace and the LNU by participating in a national Pilgrimage for Peace. The brainchild of the WIL, the Pilgrimage was a direct response to the newly elected Conservative government's rejection of the Geneva Protocol, a decision dashing hopes for establishing a formalised system of international arbitration of disputes. The NCW immediately threw its support behind the Pilgrimage and joined the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage Council in January 1926 to plan the nationwide action. It is notable that despite not affiliating to the WIL, the NCW and YWCA were willing to co-operate with the League to ensure the success of the Pilgrimage. This ability to work with other women's organisations on single issues or events is evident throughout the interwar years and contradicts suggestions that the women's movement fractured in the aftermath of the suffrage.⁷⁶

An article in *NCW News* in May 1926 reported that the Pilgrimage was 'a very remarkable thing indeed', with 'nearly all of the leading societies of women, of every school of thought in other matters' agreeing to co-operate in carrying out this huge national propaganda effort'.⁷⁷ It is significant that the Pilgrimage appeared as an opportunity to unite feminist, party-political, socialist, and other women's groups. This coming together of disparate organisations is illustrative of the meaningful contribution made by a whole range of women's societies to the interwar peace campaign, a fact often overlooked within the existing historiography. For those involved, such action was considered imperative if

the voice of British women of all parties [is] heard now, before the next Assembly of the League of Nations, demanding that disputes between nations shall be referred, not to settlement by arms, but to arbitration and conciliation ... as to give Great Britain the moral leadership of the world.⁷⁸

The main routes for the Pilgrimage, where groups of women would march with banners, hand out leaflets, and hold meetings along the way, included North and South Wales via Bath and Bristol to London, Land's End to London, Brighton to London, and Scotland to London. Local branches of the NCW took part, a detailed account of their participation documented in the July 1926 edition of *NCW News*. YMCA members were also encouraged to support the Pilgrimage. Readers of the *YWCA Bulletin* for April 1926 learnt that the association was co-operating with the NCW and the WIL in planning the Pilgrimage. Local groups were urged to get involved because 'as a "Women's League of Nations" we should [join] with the other women's organisations and the League of Nations Union in helping to make the Pilgrimage effective'.⁷⁹

There is no evidence of official WI support for this initiative. It may well have been because the 1926 AGM resolution did not pass until June of that year, and so the Pilgrimage took place during the temporary suspension of WI support for the LNU. Nonetheless, it is likely that individual WI members did take part. The Peace Pilgrimage culminated in a mass rally held in Hyde Park on 19 June 1926 where over 10,000 marchers gathered to demonstrate the support of women for arbitration in international disputes. The following year, the NCW further committed itself to this idea by passing a resolution in favour of international arbitration, security, and disarmament, reminding members of the importance of women in particular having an active and well-informed opinion on the subject.⁸⁰

By the end of the 1920s, it is evident that a wide range of women's organisations was actively involved in the interwar peace campaign. Acknowledging this fact challenges the notion that voluntary women's organisations in Britain were mere adjuncts to the LNU and the wider peace movement. Instead, the NCW, WI, and YWCA devised their own rules of engagement, ensuring autonomy regarding their peace activism and protecting the unique and non-party political identity of each group. It also safeguarded their continued commitment to provide social, religious, educational, and leisure opportunities to a broad-based female membership and campaign on a wide range of issues relevant to women's lives.

The 1930s brought new challenges to women's organisations involved in the campaign for peace. The deteriorating international situation, with the invasion of China by Japan in September 1931, and the inability of the League to prevent the crisis, punctured the optimism of the 1920s. The focus of the campaign in Britain shifted from education of the public to the need for more direct action, particularly around calls for disarmament. The action of transnational women's groups in part influenced this change in emphasis. In September 1930, the 'big three' – WILPF, ICW, and International Women's Suffrage Alliance – along with the WYWCA, came together in Geneva to

establish a new Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, chaired by the WYWCA's Mary Dingman. The new committee was set up to promote the planned 1932 League Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments – the World Disarmament Conference.⁸¹

The national campaigns for peace orchestrated by the NCW, WI, and YWCA reflected the emphasis on disarmament promoted by transnational women's organisations. After 1930, a WI International Sub-Committee provided a space to discuss issues relating to peace, disarmament and the League. The next year, the YWCA set up a Disarmament Committee to prepare for the World Conference, and the NCW established a new Peace and League of Nations Committee. Membership of the WI committee included Lady Denman and Hilda Chamberlain, suggesting her interest in the international work of the WI continued unabated. Nancy Tennant, a Quaker and sister of the banker, Ernest Tennant, the co-founder of the Anglo-German Fellowship [AGF], was another member of the committee and, from 1934, the WI representative on the WAC.⁸²

The WI Executive Committee made the decision to send a delegate, Miss Farrer, to an international conference in Paris in November 1931 to discuss plans for the World Disarmament Conference. This decision followed a 1929 WI AGM resolution recognising the 'great need for mobilising public opinion against the acceptance of war as a necessity, and the important part that women can take in doing so, urges every Women's Institute to study the work of the League of Nations and to consider how best to further the cause of world peace'.⁸³ The WI International Sub-Committee later noted that the conference had shown 'that a large body of opinion existed in many countries in favour of a system of limitation of armaments'.⁸⁴

Such affirmative action on the part of the WI indicates a growing sense of urgency within the movement to do what it could to prevent war. This was evident once again in 1932 when the WI passed a new resolution registering its appreciation of the work done by the government 'in the direction of the reduction of armaments, and wholeheartedly supports any further efforts on its part to induce the nations of the world to reduce expenditure on armaments by mutual agreement'.⁸⁵ The resolution went to the Foreign Office, the League secretary general, women's organisations internationally, and British delegates attending the World Conference.

Universally welcomed by women's organisations, the Conference finally opened at Geneva in February 1932. The NCW responded with a call for an all-round decrease of weapons and urged 'a concentrated national effort be made to ensure that the Conference shall result in immediate reductions of the Army, Navy and Air Forces of the world'.⁸⁶ This robust defence of disarmament echoed the Council's 1928 emergency resolution reaffirming its commitment to peace and disarmament, asserting, 'all progress in social reform

depends on the maintenance of peace'.⁸⁷ For an organisation involved in numerous campaigns, including divorce law reform, maternal welfare rights, and equal social insurance provisions, it was obvious that war would be disruptive. It seems therefore that more than just maternalist pacifism influenced the NCW commitment to maintaining peace. The organisation also recognised that preventing war was essential to ensure it could continue in its work campaigning for social reforms that would improve women's daily lives.

In Geneva, the World Disarmament Conference received the signatures of eight million women supporting arbitration and disarmament, collected by women's organisations in Europe and America. Included amongst these groups were the WILPF, WYWCA, and ICW, as well as the WI, YWCA, and NCW. The YWCA reported that 63 of its centres had passed a resolution expressing its 'earnest desire for the successful issue of the Disarmament Conference and the conclusion of a Convention assuring equality of status and security for all nations'.⁸⁸ Yet, in spite of the optimism expressed by women's groups, disagreements by the participating Powers quickly overtook the Conference, resulting in stalemate. Because of these underlying tensions and Germany's withdrawal from the Conference in October 1933, the meeting adjourned without any agreement on disarmament.⁸⁹

In February 1934, a demonstration occurred in Brussels by the League to rally support around the principles of collective security and disarmament. The WI sent Nancy Tennant to speak at the meeting, again illustrating WI leadership desires to ensure the movement's representation in all efforts to support the League's work.⁹⁰ Reporting to the WI International Sub-Committee, Tennant said she believed the demonstration 'had shown a strong will for peace in most countries and that Europe was looking to Great Britain for a lead'.⁹¹ Rallied by this news, the WI passed a resolution at its June 1934 AGM clearly setting out its support for disarmament:

We desire to affirm our faith in the League of Nations Union and urge His Majesty's Government to do their utmost to secure a real measure of world disarmament; and further, we authorize co-operation where advisory between the National Federation of Women's Institutes and other organisations with a view to every possible effort being made to attain this end.⁹²

Equally frustrated with the lack of progress, the NCW organised a mass meeting in Central Hall, Westminster, on 10 May 1934, backing the principle of disarmament. The meeting was 'not meant for women only, but for all who believe in peace . . . that we will never even dream of giving up'.⁹³ With a letter of support from Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald read out, speakers included Winnifred Kydd, president of NCW Canada, Florence Horsbrugh, MP, and Lady Nancy Astor, MP.⁹⁴ Following the meeting, a statement was released declaring, 'a fresh competition in armaments, with the inevitable suggestion of war, can only be averted by conclusion of an international

disarmament convention'.⁹⁵ This high-profile event, taking place in the heart of Westminster, indicates that the NCW's peace activism was dynamic and not just confined to supporting the work of the LNU.

The deteriorating situation in Europe in the 1930s required women's societies to reconsider their position on peace and the international question. WILPF and WIL made the decision to continue supporting disarmament and pacifism despite the fact that Germany was rapidly re-arming after 1935.⁹⁶ Spending on arms in Britain had decreased since the 1920s, but in July 1934, the government decided to reverse its disarmament policy and build up the strength of the RAF.⁹⁷ Anxious to buoy up public support in Britain for the League, the LNU embarked on a mass survey of public opinion, entitled the National Declaration on the League of Nations and Armaments, more commonly referred to as the Peace Ballot.

The history and significance of the Peace Ballot remains well-rehearsed and gendered, most notably by McCarthy, but this exegesis offers a different interpretation concerning the participation of the NCW, WI, and YWCA.⁹⁸ The 'door-knocker parade', as the men and women who visited 11 million homes to complete the ballot were known, have been viewed as an embodiment of the LNU's ability to 'exploit the associational capacities of interwar society'.⁹⁹ This approach foregrounds the role of the LNU in histories of the Peace Ballot. However, it is important to consider the Ballot from the viewpoint of the NCW, WI, and YWCA. The WI leadership made the decision not to support it, despite a formal invitation to do so by Dame Adelaide Livingstone, who oversaw the initiative for the LNU. Following a discussion, the WI International Sub-Committee decided that the WI 'should be prepared to give the National Declaration publicity but that Institute machinery should not be used for carrying out the ballot'.¹⁰⁰

The reason given for withholding co-operation was the Committee's lack of conviction as to the value of a referendum of this kind. The WI Executive agreed with the recommendation but confirmed that County Federations and local institutes were 'free to co-operate or to withhold co-operation as seemed advisable'.¹⁰¹ The refusal to participate formally may be reflective of a growing uncertainty within the WI leadership about the policies of the LNU and realisation that debates on disarmament were becoming increasingly controversial and politicised. Further evidence of this mounting unease was the decision taken by the Executive in October 1935 that it was no longer advisable for disarmament to be the main subject of talks at local institute meetings 'at the present time'.¹⁰²

Individual WI members no doubt offered their support to the Peace Ballot along with members of the WCG, WIL, NCW, and YWCA. Unlike the WI, the NCW and YWCA national leaderships had no qualms in supporting the Ballot. As representative societies, they distributed and collected the Ballot

papers through their nationwide networks. Both groups viewed the Ballot as a logical extension of their own peace activism and an excellent opportunity to educate further and inform women on the complex issues involved. In addition, actively participating in the census provided members with practical campaigning experience, valuable for future NCW and YWCA activism. The results of the Ballot showed that 87% of those questioned supported the League's proposal for economic sanctions against aggressors, whilst 59% supported military measures.¹⁰³ Despite this national show of support for League policies, the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and outbreak of civil war in Spain the following year dented confidence in the principle of collective security and disarmament. For the WI, YWCA, and NCW, these events presented new challenges, and their leaders had to consider how best to manage their continued involvement in peace activism.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the WI was the first to react to these changed circumstances. In June 1936, 529 local institutes affiliated to the LNU as Corporate Associates were asked to pass resolutions protesting against Italy's use of poison gas in Abyssinia. The WI International Sub-Committee ruled that such a request had gone beyond the original understanding with regard to Corporate Associate membership.¹⁰⁴ Despite rejecting a suggestion by Hilda Chamberlain that WI Corporate Associate status be restricted in view of the 'controversial character of the Union', agreement existed that the relationship needed review.¹⁰⁵ The outcome was that the LNU was 'to refrain from using Women's Institutes to spread knowledge of its policy and should regard their function as educational'.¹⁰⁶ Underlying this point, Corporate Associate status changed to Study Associate to make clear that their function was educational and not propagandist.

Notwithstanding this rapprochement, the relationship between the WI and LNU remained strained. Moreover, the WI slowly began to withdraw from active involvement in peace activism. It refused requests to support new peace campaigns, for example, the International Peace Congress [IPC] and the Peace Pledge Union. The decision not to support an emergency AGM resolution condemning the aerial bombing of civilians in Abyssinia and Spain led in summer 1937 to the resignation of a member from the Canford Cliffs WI.¹⁰⁷ Eagerness to avoid political controversy was evident once again in March 1938 when the Executive refused to sign a letter supporting the work of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, despite the fact that its chairwoman, Lady Denman, endorsed the appeal.¹⁰⁸

By 1938, the WI clearly felt that any public statements relating to peace, arbitration, and appeasement were no longer appropriate for the organisation. It denied appeals by several institutes for a resolution of thanksgiving for Prime Minister Chamberlain following the signing of the September 1939 Munich agreement. The reason given was the belief that such a move would not be acceptable to all WI members.¹⁰⁹ The international situation had

become so fraught by the end of 1938 that Lady Denman felt compelled to announce 'at the present time any discussion on methods of securing peace cannot avoid being party political' and that resolutions on this topic would be ruled out of order.¹¹⁰

In contrast to the WI, the NCW continued to campaign actively for peace throughout the late 1930s. Outraged by the targeting of civilian populations in Abyssinia, Spain, and China, the Council released a statement expressing its dismay and horror at the 'indiscriminate bombing of the civil population as a method of warfare'.¹¹¹ Its faith in the LNU and the League, however, began to wane. From 1936, the Council's Peace and International Affairs Sub-Committee became increasingly interested in the work of the British Committee of the IPC. Originating in France, this new peace organisation proved extremely popular and attracted support in 43 different countries claiming to represent over 400 million people.¹¹²

Lord Robert Cecil, the president of the LNU, also became president of the British Section, with Livingston as vice-president. These appointments indicate that links with the LNU remained, despite the fact the IPC appeared more left leaning than the non-party and more liberal-inclined LNU. The NCW repeatedly refuted suggestions of IPC links to communism, claiming that such accusations originated in the French papers 'under the control of Armament makers'.¹¹³ Mrs Bigland of the NCW was appointed to serve on the British Committee of the IPC along with representatives from 233 other organisations including the YWCA, WCG, and the Jewish Women's Peace Society.¹¹⁴ Throughout the late 1930s, the NCW enthusiastically supported headline-grabbing initiatives devised by the IPC, for example Peace Weeks and the Peace Penny Scheme.¹¹⁵

The minutes of the NCW Peace and International Affairs Sub-Committee also document a growing awareness and concern over anti-Semitism in Germany. The Committee called on the British government to do more to support refugees coming to Britain, with local branches each urged to provide for the maintenance of one Jewish child refugee. In February 1939, the Cheltenham and Birmingham branches had undertaken such a responsibility.¹¹⁶ *Women in Council* featured articles about the welfare of refugees and treatment of the Jewish population in Germany; an April 1939 article discussed the religious conflict in Germany and the Nazi regime's persecution of members of the Jewish faith.¹¹⁷

Nevertheless, the NCW continued to hope in averting war with Germany. This may explain the reason why in March 1939, the NCW president was present at a dinner in London honouring Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, leader of Germany's National Socialist Women's League. There then followed by a reception attended by Mrs Cowan, the NCW general secretary.¹¹⁸ The visit, co-organised by the AGF, was set in the context of building good relations amongst international women's organisations but,

curiously, no mention of it appears in the minutes of the Peace and International Affairs Sub-Committee.

The Council's official endorsement of the policy of appeasement, even into the late 1930s, may also explain support for this visit. In her Presidential Address to the October 1938 Representative Council Meeting, Lady Ruth Balfour reflected on the Council's long commitment to the principle of arbitration. Acknowledging that many had concerns regarding the Munich agreement, she argued that appeasement was the best option for the British government and that Germany 'had been shown a better way'.¹¹⁹ This steadfast commitment to peace, even as it became clear that Fascism threatened to destroy the democratic ideals championed by the NCW, led to the Council being identified amongst the 'guilty women' who failed to stand up to Fascism.¹²⁰

In line with the policy of the WYWCA, the YWCA continued to promote the cause of peace in the two years before the Second World War broke out. In January 1938, the YWCA reaffirmed its support of the League and hoped that its 40,000 members 'do know these expressions of public opinion they have recently supported'.¹²¹ Yet doubts were emerging. This was evident in an April 1939 article in the YWCA *Blue Triangle Gazette* on the Munich agreement written by Kathleen Courtney, a founding member of WILPF, who later joined the LNU. The piece unequivocally denounced the policy of appeasement. Courtney argued that peace is 'something positive and constructive . . . something that includes the process of constructing, in co-operation with other nations, a better world order'. Contrasting this ideal with the reality of war in China and Spain, the suffering of refugees, and those persecuted in their homelands, Courtney declared, 'the answer to the question "Is it peace?" must be an emphatic "No!"'.¹²²

When war broke out in September 1939, the NCW, WI, and YWCA joined in the national war effort and, along with the rest of the population, prepared for the conflict ahead.¹²³ This followed two decades during which they devoted considerable time and energy to peace activism and played a significant, but often neglected, role in the interwar peace movement. Their peace activism did embrace the concept of maternalist pacifism. As organisations representing women, many of whom were wives and mothers, doing all in their power to prevent another war that risked the loss of husbands, sons, brothers, and lovers was a logical decision. However, this analysis goes further in suggesting three additional motives to the maternalist pacifist discourse. Engaging in peace activism on their own terms and choosing how and when to support the work of other organisations including the LNU, WIL, and IPC illustrates that the NCW, WI, and YWCA had other more complex reasons for engaging in peace activism.

First, campaigning for peace was a high profile, well-established, and accepted means by which women's organisations such as the NCW, WI, and YWCA could participate in public life. This was particularly important in the

interwar years when increasing numbers of women were granted the parliamentary vote, a reform that brought with it anxieties about how women would use their vote. Engaging in peace activism was the perfect way to demonstrate that women, as equal citizens, stood as well informed as men on international questions relating to foreign policy, war, and peace. Second, the interwar peace movement presented voluntary women's organisations and their members with an opportunity to test and flex their activist muscles and gain useful practical experience of lobbying and campaigning. The leadership of the NCW and YWCA viewed participation in major public events, such as the Peace Pilgrimage and the Peace Ballot, as highly educational and positive experiences for members. Third, the NCW, WI, and YWCA were acutely aware that the prevention of war was crucial to ensure the continuation of their campaign work on behalf of women. Another war would jeopardise their demands for social, economic, and political reforms benefitting women. Actively campaigning for peace was a practical way to stop that from happening.

Acknowledging these additional factors extends current understandings of female peace activism during the interwar years beyond the categories of feminist pacifism, feminist pacificism, and maternalist pacifism. In doing so, the peace activism of popular women's organisations that did not self-identify as feminist can and must be included in histories of the peace movement. Moreover, the motives of the NCW, WI, and YWCA in campaigning for peace illustrate an overarching commitment to enhancing the lives of women throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Their ability to contribute in a meaningful way to both the peace movement and the women's movement challenges the suggestion that anti-war activism weakened the women's movement during these years. Instead the opposite occurred. The women's movement of the 1920s and 1930s expanded to accommodate the many issues that concerned women in the two decades after winning the vote. This included the demand for peace and, ultimately, a failed attempt to avoid the catastrophe of another world war.

Notes

- 1 Martin Cead, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford, 1980); Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780 to 1980* (Oxford, 1997). See also Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, 3rd ed. (London, 2015); James Hinton, *Protests and Visions: Peace Politics in 20th Century Britain* (London, 1989).
- 2 Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, 1.
- 3 Caine, *English Feminism*, 1.
- 4 Jill Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820* (London, 1989), Julie V. Gottlieb, 'Guilty Women', *Foreign Policy, and Appeasement in Inter-War Britain* (Basingstoke, 2015); Sarah Hellawell, "Antimilitarism, Citizenship and Motherhood: The Formation and Early Years of the Women's International League (WIL), 1915-1919," *Women's History Review*, 27/4 (2018): 551-64. See also Heloise Brown, *The Truest Form of Patriotism: Pacifist*

- Feminism in Britain, 1870-1902* (Manchester, 2003); Jo Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote: The Erosion of Democratic Suffragism in Britain during the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2007).
- 5 Julie V. Gottlieb, “The Women’s Movement Took the Wrong Turning’: British feminists, pacifism and the politics of appeasement,” *Women’s History Review*, 23/3 (2014): 443, notes that the “international turn” originated from within the social sciences in the 1980s and “motivated women’s historians to examine the international and transnational interests and structures of the interwar women’s movement”.
 - 6 Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013); Ingrid Sharp, “Feminist Peace Activism 1915-2010: Are We Nearly There Yet?” *Peace and Change*, 2 (2013): 155-80; Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of the International Women’s Movement* (Princeton, NJ, 1997); Carol Miller, “Geneva – The Key to Equality: Interwar Feminists and the League of Nations,” *Women’s History Review*, 3/2 (1994): 219-46; Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Women’s Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood Between the World Wars* (London, 2012); Laura Beers, “Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars,” in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics Since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (NY, 2015), 202-21.
 - 7 Laura Beers, “Feminism, Internationalism and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom,” *History and Policy* (2015): <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/dialogues/discussions/women-peace-and-transnational-activism-a-century-on>.
 - 8 Ingrid Sharp, “The Women’s Peace Congress of 1915 and the envisioning of women’s rights as human rights,” *Ibid.*
 - 9 Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe, “Women’s International Activism during the Interwar Period, 1919-1939,” *Women’s History Review*, 26/2 (2017): 166. Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 37-40, lists 46 “superinternational coalitions and international women’s organisations” active during the interwar years.
 - 10 Gottlieb, “Wrong Turning’,” 441-62. See also Liddington, *Long Road*; Hinton, *Protests and Visions*.
 - 11 Gottlieb, “Wrong Turning,” 443. See also Pugh, *Women’s Movement*, 4-5; Lucy Noakes, “War and Peace,” in *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (Harlow, 2001), 316-19.
 - 12 Pugh, *Women’s Movement*, 5.
 - 13 Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, 4.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 3.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 5.
 - 16 Hellawell, “Antimilitarism, Citizenship,” 551.
 - 17 Beers, “Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.”
 - 18 Martin Ceadel, *Thinking about Peace and War* (Oxford, 1987), 130.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, 131.
 - 20 Noakes, “War and Peace,” 381, writes that the WCG oversaw the establishment of the National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons Tests in 1957 with 2,000 black-sashed women marching through London to raise awareness of the dangers of nuclear testing.
 - 21 Hellawell, “Antimilitarism, Citizenship,” 552-55. See also Bernice A. Carroll, “Feminism and Pacifism: Historical and Theoretical Connections,” in *Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Ruth Roach Pierson, 2nd ed. (London, 2019), 2-28.
 - 22 The association between “women and peace” and “men and war” is also evident in international relations theory. Cf. Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The*

- Militarization of Women's Lives* (London, 1983); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL, 1995).
- 23 Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c. 1918-45* (Manchester, 2011), 182.
- 24 Miller, "Geneva," 233.
- 25 Gottlieb, *Guilty Women*, 10.
- 26 For example, Maggie Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Institute Movement as a Social Movement*, Second Edition (London, 2015); Caitriona Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-1964* (Manchester, 2015); idem., "Fighting for the Privileges of Citizenship: The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), feminism and the women's movement, 1928-1945," *Women's History Review*, 23/3 (2014): 463-79; Daphne Glick, *The National Council of Women of Great Britain: The First One Hundred Years* (London, 1995).
- 27 Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*; idem., "Fighting for the Privileges of Citizenship".
- 28 Idem., *Housewives and Citizens*, 40-67.
- 29 McCarthy, *British People*, 182-211.
- 30 Affiliated membership fell from 478 branches in 1914 to 90 in 1929 and then to 48 by 1935: Pugh, *Women's Movement*, 242.
- 31 *Manchester Guardian* (December 13, 1928).
- 32 *NCW News* (May 1924), 7.
- 33 Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, 22.
- 34 *NCW Handbook* (1932), 61.
- 35 Despite this decision, individual institutes had permission to join local NCW branches.
- 36 Peter Gordon and David Doughan, *Dictionary of British Women's Organisations 1825-1960* (London, 2001), 105-06.
- 37 *Home and Family* (February 1928), 1.
- 38 *National Federation of Women's Institute 12th Annual Report 1928* (1928), 2.
- 39 "The Constitution of the YWCA" (1885), YWCA [YWCA Archive, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Warwick] MSS 243/13/3/79.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *YWCA Annual Report 1930* (1930), 3.
- 42 For a history of the WYWCA, see Carole Seymour-Jones, *Journey of Faith: The History of the World YWCA 1945-1994* (London, 1994).
- 43 *Our Own Gazette* (January 1919), 5.
- 44 See for example, Sue Innes, "Constructing Women's Citizenship in the Inter-war Period: The Edinburgh Women's Citizens' Association," *Women's History Review*, 13/4 (2000): 621-47; Esther Breitenbach and Valerie Wright, "Women as Active Citizens: Glasgow and Edinburgh c.1918-1939," *Women's History Review*, 23/3 (2014), 401-20; Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, 40-67.
- 45 *YWCA Bulletin* (August 1928), 6.
- 46 *Women in Council* (May 1931), 4.
- 47 *NCW News* (January 1928), 16.
- 48 *Home and Country* (August 1928), 136.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 Helen McCarthy, "Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain," *Historical Journal*, 50/4 (2007): 892.
- 51 Established in 1919, the League of Nations was an intergovernmental organisation with the principle aim of maintaining world peace. It aimed to do this through a combination of international collective security and public opinion, the latter seen to be essentially rational.

- 52 Helen McCarthy, "Democratising British Foreign Policy: Rethinking the Peace Ballot, 1934-1935," *Journal of British Studies*, 49/2 (2010): 358. See also McCarthy, *British People*, 28-36.
- 53 Branches of the Women's Co-operative Guild and Women's Sections of the Labour Party did join the WIL but its overall membership remained low at approximately 5,000 members: Liddington, *Long Road*, 140.
- 54 *National Federation of Women's Institutes Annual Report* (1921), 34.
- 55 *Home and Country* (August 1922), 7.
- 56 *National Federation of Women's Institutes Annual Report* (1923), 43.
- 57 *National Federation of Women's Institutes Annual Report* (1924), 31.
- 58 *Our Own Gazette* (August 1920), 4-5.
- 59 "Memorandum on Disarmament", nd, YWCA MSS 243/13/3.
- 60 "Christian Internationalism," *YWCA Monthly Letter* (October 1926).
- 61 *Our Own Gazette* (June 1926), 19.
- 62 Sue Crampton, "Remembering Edith Picton Turbervill (O.B.E. 1872-1960)," Women's History Network (2014), <https://womenshistorynetwork.org/remembering-edith-picton-turbervill-o-b-e-1872-1960/>.
- 63 *Our Own Gazette* (March 1927), 9.
- 64 *National Council of Women Occasional Papers*, 85 (1919), 8.
- 65 Cynthia Burek, "Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon 1864-1939," *Scottish Geology*.
- 66 Miller, "Lobbying the League," 26.
- 67 *NCW News* (February 1926), 66.
- 68 McCarthy, *British People*, 185.
- 69 Executive Committee Minutes, July 14, 1925, WI [National Federation of Women's Institutes Archive, Women's Library, London School of Economics, London] 5FWI/A/1/1/07 Box 006, 1.
- 70 *Ibid.*
- 71 Chamberlain Family Guide, University of Birmingham (2016), <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/documents/chamberlain-family-guide.pdf>.
- 72 Executive Committee Minutes, September 8, 1925, WI 5FWI/A/1/1/07 Box 006, 1.
- 73 Executive Committee Minutes, January 12, 1926, *Ibid.* 5FWI/A/1/1/07 Box 006, 3.
- 74 Executive Committee Minutes, January 8, 1924, *Ibid.* 5FWI/A/1/1/07 Box 006, 13.
- 75 *The YWCA Annual Review 1933* (1933), 5.
- 76 Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*.
- 77 *NCW News* (May 1926), 136-37.
- 78 *Ibid.*
- 79 *YWCA Bulletin* (April 1926), 2.
- 80 *NCW News* (February 1928), 47.
- 81 Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, 41-2.
- 82 Ernest Tennant helped set up the AGF in 1935 to promote peace and good business relations between Germany and Britain. Soon, however, the organisation was recognised as being pro-Nazi with some members openly sympathetic to the Nazi regime. See Julie V. Gottlieb and Matthew Stibbe, "Peace at Any Price: The Visit of Nazi Women's Leader Gertrud Scholtz-Klink to London March 1939 and the Response of British Women Activists," *Women's History Review*, 26/2 (2017): 179. Interestingly, business interests did not feature as a reason why the NCW, WI, and YWCA were keen to engage in peace activism.
- 83 Annual Reports 1928-1932, WI 5FWI/A/2/2/04 Box 40, 34.
- 84 *Ibid.*
- 85 Annual Reports 1928-1932, *Ibid.* 5FWI/A/2/2/04 Box 40, 25.

- 86 *NCW Handbook 1931-32* (1932), 76.
- 87 *NCW Handbook 1928-29* (1929), 75.
- 88 *Blue Triangle Gazette* (January 1934), 6.
- 89 Liddington, *Long Road*, 149.
- 90 International Sub-Committee Minutes, September 1930-November 1947, WI 5FWI/D/2/1/1, 4 January 1934, 2.
- 91 *Ibid.* 5FWI/D/2/1/1, April 5, 1934, 1.
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- 123 See Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, 135-64 for an account of the activities of these groups in wartime.

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