**‘What *Do* Women Want? Housewives’ associations, activism and changing representations of women in the 1950s’**

**Abstract**

The myth that the women's movement in Britain went into decline in the decade following the Second World War has now been debunked. Yet despite this more accurate re-telling of the fate of female activism in the 1950s, the view that the majority of women at this time aspired only to marriage and motherhood persists. The iconic image of the ‘ideal 1950s housewife’ has proved hard to excise from the historical record and the public imagination. The aim of this paper is to discover what women really wanted in the 1950s. This will be done through a study of popular housewives' associations who represented the interests of over a million British women throughout the decade. The paper will evaluate how successful these groups were in supporting their members and campaigning to improve the lives of women. In exploring these themes it is argued that a new understanding of domesticity emerged in the 1950s better reflecting what women really wanted in the decades following the Second World War.

 The important thing is you are encouraging the housewife to

 believe in herself as a person…not just as her husband’s missus

 or the mum of her children, the mender of clothes, the cooker

 of meals’ (Minister of Education’s address to the 1949

Annual General Meeting of the National Federation of

 Women’s Institutes)[[1]](#endnote-1)

In Britain in the late 1940s and early 1950s there was growing recognition that housewives had an important contribution to make to postwar society. This was due in part to the significant contribution women had made to the war effort and to postwar reconstruction.[[2]](#endnote-2) Aware that this presented a new opportunity to promote the status of women, women’s organisations endeavored to ensure that the views of wives and mothers were made known in postwar Britain so that female voices would be heard in public life in the decades that followed.

 This was no easy task in light of the fact that throughout the 1950s women remained significantly underrepresented in local and national politics.[[3]](#endnote-3) The prevailing view of women at this time, as illustrated in popular women’s magazines, was that the vast majority aspired only to marriage and motherhood.[[4]](#endnote-4) Once married it was assumed that women willingly dedicated themselves to family life to the exclusion of all other interests. With over two thirds of women aged twenty to sixty four identified as full-time housewives in 1951[[5]](#endnote-5) it is perhaps not surprising that this period has often been regarded as a time when women conformed to an ideology of domesticity and that ‘the gulf between the mass of British women and the organised movement working on their behalf did yawn wide in this period’.[[6]](#endnote-6)

 However, as historians turn their attention to the history of everyday life in the 1950s what becomes clear is that women’s lives during this decade were much more complex and multifaceted than has previously been acknowledged.[[7]](#endnote-7) Women during the 1950s were not just housewives and mothers but were also workers, campaigners, consumers, spinsters, lovers, divorcees, prostitutes and citizens. Reducing the universal experience of 1950s women to that of the ‘happy housewife’, gazing out from the pages of *Woman* and *Good Housekeeping,* limits our understandings of women’s past experiences, their diverse experiences of domesticity and their ability to enjoy and to control their own lives.[[8]](#endnote-8)

The aim of this article is to explore in greater detail what women, and wives and mothers in particular, wanted during the 1950s. This will be done through a study of the activities of four popular housewives’ associations, who by the mid-1950s represented over one million British women.[[9]](#endnote-9) The four groups are: the Mothers’ Union (MU), the National Federation of Women’s Institutes (WI), the National Union of Townswomen’s Guilds (TG) and the National Council of Women (NCW). I have written elsewhere of the contribution these organisations made to women’s lives and to the history of the women’s movement during the years 1928-64.[[10]](#endnote-10) Here I want to focus in particular on the 1950s to shed more light on the vast range of issues, debates, causes and campaigns that these groups engaged in.

In the past historians have underestimated the importance of housewives’ associations. For example Martin Pugh dismisses the impact of these groups by suggesting that the TG had become a ‘conventional’ women’s organization by the 1950s and that the NCW was ‘too widely drawn to be really coherent’.[[11]](#endnote-11) Other key texts on the history of women in Britain in the twentieth century make little if no reference to housewives’ associations and the impact they had on the lives of wives and mothers.[[12]](#endnote-12) In challenging this omission, it will be argued that it is impossible to have a better understanding of women’s lives in the 1950s if women’s involvement in associational life is not considered. The records and campaigning activities of the MU, WI, TG and NCW demonstrate that each group was at the heart of the debate about what women wanted and how they envisaged their role in postwar Britain.

**Women’s roles, politics and activism in the 1950s**

When exploring the lives of women in the 1950s one key feature to emerge is the prominence given to discussions about the role or roles of women in postwar society. Much of this debate was driven by the growing numbers of married women taking up paid employment throughout the decade. In 1951, 44 per cent of women workers were married. This rose to 50 per cent in 1957 and 53 per cent by 1959. By 1960 one in six of the labour force was a married woman and in 1961 over half of all women in paid employment in the UK were married, the majority of whom worked part-time.[[13]](#endnote-13) This increase in the numbers of married women working during the 1950s prompted numerous reports, surveys and studies about the impact of paid employment on married women, their families and home life.[[14]](#endnote-14)

 Alongside this newfound interest in the impact of paid work on married women two other aspects of women’s lives became topics for discussion during the 1950s. These were: women’s role as wives and mothers, and the role of women as democratic citizens who, like men, had a contribution to make to postwar society. Despite the increasing numbers of married women going out to work, the primary role associated with women throughout the decade remained that of a wife and mother.[[15]](#endnote-15) Indeed the desire for a return to ‘normal’ family life after the disruption of war meant that married life and motherhood was scrutinized like never before.[[16]](#endnote-16) The relationship between a mother and her child was prioritised as the teachings of child psychologists, namely John Bowlby and David Winnicot, became increasingly popular. In their publications both stressed the ‘importance of constant nurturing care by the mother if the child was to develop and mature into an adequate and emotionally mature adult’.[[17]](#endnote-17) Such advice placed ever more pressure on mothers to devote themselves to the well-being of their children. Failing to do so could result in what was every parent’s worst nightmare in the 1950s, his or her child becoming a juvenile delinquent.[[18]](#endnote-18)

 It is clear therefore that the 1950s heralded the introduction of new pressures on women to not only be the ‘perfect mother’ but also the ‘happy housewife’ whose image was splashed across the glossy pages of women’s magazines. To complicate things even further these demands were being made at a time when increasing numbers of married women were taking up paid work outside the home. It would be wrong to assume however, as some have done, that women in the 1950s were compliant and complicit in attempting to live up to these stereotypical roles.[[19]](#endnote-19) Women at this time were able to challenge, contest and offer alternatives to the roles assigned to them in the 1950s. There were different ways of achieving this and a diverse range of women’s organisations were all involved in the process. Taken together their objective was to provide women, workers, housewives and mothers, with the means to express their demands, interests and concerns. Moreover, these groups campaigned to ensure that wives, mothers and workers were supported by the state in fulfilling their various roles in postwar society.

 One of the most significant ways in which women could assert their rights was through their role as ‘good’ and ‘active’ citizens. Having won the franchise on equal terms with men in 1928, many women’s societies adopted the rhetoric of citizenship rights and duties to pursue greater equality for women.[[20]](#endnote-20) Women’s contribution to the war effort further consolidated the state’s recognition of women citizens and as Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska has written, by the late 1940s ‘the citizen housewife was a significant political force’.[[21]](#endnote-21) Seeking out ways to maintain the political influence of women citizens in the decades that followed was the key motive for a series of conferences held in London in the late 1940s and early 1950s on the theme of ‘The Feminine Point of View’.[[22]](#endnote-22)

These meetings, which included representatives from post-suffrage societies such as the Six Point Group (SPG) and the Women’s Freedom League (WFL) along with the British Federation of Business and Professional Women (BFBPW) and the NCW, considered obstacles to a greater participation of women in public life. Specific problems identified were women’s lack of self-confidence, lack of economic power and lack of career options (although the consensus was that mothers of children under five should look after their children full-time). Solutions proposed included the introduction of equal pay for equal work, part-time work opportunities for women, the greater availability of family planning and an equal moral standard. Whilst incorporating many of the traditional demands of feminist pressure groups during the inter-war years, the report of the conference was unusual in advocating an ‘equal but different’ approach to the status of women.[[23]](#endnote-23) Catherine Blackford has argued that this approach demonstrated the ‘centrality of married women and mothers in 1940s and 1950s feminist discourse’.[[24]](#endnote-24)

Despite this focus on ‘equal but different’ feminism in the 1950s, organisations such as the SPG, the WFL and the Married Women’s Association (MWA), already numerically small, had difficulty in attracting additional members during the 1950s.[[25]](#endnote-25) Indeed the failure of these feminist pressure groups to win popular support is one of the reasons why the 1950s have sometimes been referred to as the ‘nadir’ of British feminism.[[26]](#endnote-26) However, more recent historical research into the activities of self-identifying feminist societies during these years has revealed that some significant gains were made with regards to women’s equality.[[27]](#endnote-27)

Joyce Freeguard and Catherine Blackford have shown how the MWA and other women’s groups campaigned throughout the 1950s to highlight the economic value of housework and the legal recognition of marriage as an equal economic partnership. These were important concepts at a time when the number of marriages ending in divorce was on the rise.[[28]](#endnote-28) The MWA was successful in introducing to Parliament the 1958 Maintenance Orders Act, an important protection for deserted wives whose husbands had failed to pay the agreed maintenance provision.[[29]](#endnote-29) Other victories during the decade included the introduction of equal pay in the public sector from 1954 following a lengthy campaign by a wide variety of feminist and women’s groups including the NCW and the WI.[[30]](#endnote-30)

Also active during the 1950s was the Women’s Co-operative Guild (WCG), a key voice for working class women highlighting both feminist and socialist concerns. Yet despite a membership of 58,785 women in 1953 it has been suggested that that the movement became marginalised in the postwar years.[[31]](#endnote-31) Gillian Scott argues that the Guild’s assertion that marriage and motherhood was ‘the greatest career of all’ confirms that by the 1950s the WCG had cast aside any ‘feminist analysis of women’s role in the family’.[[32]](#endnote-32) More research is needed on the activities of the WCG during the 1950s to learn more about how it represented the interests of working class women during these years. Rachel Ritchie, in her study of the Guild’s magazine *Outlook,* has already demonstrated that the organisation continued to engage with politics, public questions and domesticity after the Second World War. [[33]](#endnote-33)

The Guild remained closely aligned to the Labour Party throughout the 1950s but is likely to have been disappointed with the lack of attention paid to

issues relating to women during these years. The postwar Labour Government’s commitment to a policy of austerity and ongoing food rationing hit housewives hard and its refusal to introduce equal pay in the public sector was a bitter blow to many women’s societies. Explaining Labour’s problem with gender, Black and Brooke have argued that the wider Labour movement ‘took little notice of the activities of its women’s organisations’ during the 1950s and appeared to be in denial that women could be both ‘traditional wives and mothers’ and ‘married women workers’.[[34]](#endnote-34)

This was in stark contrast to Conservative Party policy which deliberately set out to target female voters. Its 1949 women’s charter *A True Balance: In the Home, in Employment and as Citizens* included ‘feminist demands such as equal pay and equal citizenship’ with a call for ‘adequate housing and labour saving devices to ease the heavy burdens placed upon the housewife’.[[35]](#endnote-35) Following election success in 1951 and again 1955 the Conservative Government introduced equal pay in the public sector, oversaw the admission of women to the House of Lords in 1958 and ended food rationing in 1954.

The Conservative Party was successful therefore in addressing some of the demands made by women and women’s organisations during the 1950s. Introducing reforms ranging from equal pay and enhanced political and consumer rights demonstrates that unlike Labour, the party had grasped the fact that women in the 1950s were not only housewives and mothers but also workers, consumers and citizens. The reforms the party introduced and its electoral triumphs provide some insight into what women voters wanted in the 1950s. However not all the demands made by women during these years resulted in government action. Gender inequality, female poverty, limited job opportunities, lack of childcare, consumer standards, bad housing and the quality of state services all continued to affect the lives of women throughout the 1950s.

Much of the work carried out by women and on behalf of women in political parties and feminist societies in the 1950s has now been documented. Nevertheless, these new insights into what women did and what women wanted in the 1950s are limited as they exclude the opinions and actions of the one million wives and mothers who were members of national housewives’ associations. The four housewives’ organisations discussed here had, since their inceptions, promoted the domestic work undertaken by women in the home and supported members in carrying out this work. The MU, WI, TG and NCW were avowedly non-party political and distanced themselves from overtly feminist groups, who they believed were too political and a threat to traditional family life.[[36]](#endnote-36)

In 1954 membership of the WI peaked at 467,000 women and in the same year the MU recorded the membership for the British Isles at 481,623. The TG, which had been established in the late 1930s, expanded rapidly in the 1950s and by 1954 had a membership of approximately 131,000 women.[[37]](#endnote-37) As an umbrella organization the NCW represented 97 women’s societies during the 1950s. In addition its 89 local branches met to discuss NCW policy and to support its campaigns, all of which were linked to the Council’s desire to ‘promote the social, civil, moral and religious welfare of the community’.[[38]](#endnote-38)

**Wives and mothers**

Including the aims and activities of housewives’ associations in the history of women’s lives in the 1950s sheds new light on what women wanted during this decade and how they viewed their role in a changing society. Here I am going to focus on three issues identified as key areas of interest to wives and mothers. I will then move on to consider how the MU, WI, TG and NCW articulated the concerns of women workers and women citizens throughout the decade. Each of the four groups featured here represented different communities of women. The MU (1885) was a society for devout Anglican women and its central aim was to support members in fulfilling their duties as Christians and mothers. Although open to both working class and middle class members, the MU leadership remained dominated by middle and upper middle class women and its attitude towards working class members or ‘cottage mothers’ could at times be patronising.[[39]](#endnote-39)

 The WI (1915) was an organisation for working class and middle class rural women and set up branches in rural areas with populations under 4,000. The aim of the WI was to provide friendship and support for wives and mothers living in isolated areas and to enhance their skills in domestic work, food production, handicrafts, drama, singing and agricultural activities.[[40]](#endnote-40) In common with the MU, the leadership of the WI reflected middle class values, particularly at national level. It was in an effort to repeat the success of the WI that the TG was launched in 1932 to recruit wives and mothers living in urban and suburban areas. Emerging from the post-suffrage National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), the new organisation immediately sought to dissociate itself from political or feminist groups so that it could provide women access to a ‘common meeting ground’. Like the MU and WI, the TG was open to both working class and middle class women. Nevertheless it became clear from the outset that the Guild attracted mostly middle class married women and its local and national leadership consistently reflected middle class sensibilities. [[41]](#endnote-41) The NCW was primarily made up of educated middle class women, both married and single, who wished to challenge policy and legislation negatively impacting on the lives of all women.

The MU was an affiliated member of the NCW, with the proviso it could abstain from any resolution it disagreed with particularly in relation to religious or moral questions. The TG refused to join on the grounds that the Council was too political and too feminist. Interestingly the WI declined an invitation to affiliate to the NCW because of the Council’s commitment to promote the ‘religious welfare’ of the community. As a non-sectarian organisation the WI felt affiliation to the Council would compromise this strongly held principle.[[42]](#endnote-42) At first glance it would appear therefore that there were insurmountable divisions between housewives’ associations, as well as between feminist and political women’s groups in the 1950s. However on closer inspection it becomes evident that in reality women’s organisations were often able to work together as an effective women’s movement in an effort to enhance the status of wives and mothers in postwar society.[[43]](#endnote-43)

One of the reasons why the MU, WI and TG recruited so many members in the postwar period was their ability to provide women with the opportunity to engage in a range of social, educational and leisure activities outside the home. Members were keen to take up these opportunities, indicating how important a break from home, family, housework and paid work was for many wives and mothers. The WI was well aware of the role it played in providing women with access to leisure and education both in the form of formal classes and courses but also at the monthly branch meeting.[[44]](#endnote-44) Its 1959 pamphlet *Time to be Social* provided leaders with advice on how to plan for the final half hour of the branch meeting where members engaged in ‘social time’. With many meetings moving to the evening, to accommodate working mothers, leaders were advised that ‘the day’s work is done, there is not quite such a hurry to get home, and therefore members are more likely to be in a relaxed frame of mind, ready to take part in anything that is going’.[[45]](#endnote-45)

 Activities recommended included music, dancing and drama and suggestions were made of popular games to play. Debates, exhibitions, round-table conferences and competitions were also suggested as appropriate ways to spend this time. The ultimate aim was to allow women to unwind and enjoy themselves but to also gain confidence and to learn the value of ‘co-operation…energy, forbearance, and general team spirit’.[[46]](#endnote-46) As Margaret Andrews has documented, the WI continued to provide an extensive range of educational courses for its members during the 1950s including residential courses held at its training centre, Denman College.[[47]](#endnote-47) These activities ranged from handicrafts, cookery and interior decorating to literature, music and drama.

The MU, whose weekly meetings featured prayer and contemplation along with advice and support for mothers, expanded its programme of activities in the 1950s to include ‘drama, book clubs and talks’. This decision reflected their willingness to review what women wanted from weekly meetings but was also part of a drive to attract more ‘wives of professional men’.[[48]](#endnote-48) The TG provided members with opportunities for leisure and education at local monthly meetings and records suggest that handicrafts, cooking and dressmaking remained the most popular activities. In addition the TG continued to offer civic education throughout the 1950s in the form of lectures and debates on current affairs so that women could make informed decisions on public questions and ‘on the common good’.[[49]](#endnote-49)

One of the unique features of housewives’ associations was their ability to offer a space where women could come together for companionship, fun and education. The success of these activities suggests that this was something wives and mothers wanted from their local women’s group. However providing leisure and educational pursuits wasn’t the only goal of these associations. Throughout the 1950s the MU, WI, TG and NCW provided a voice for women at local and national level, highlighting the everyday difficulties that wives and mothers encountered. Unsurprisingly issues such as housing, the financial security of wives, divorcees and widows, maternity services and consumer standards were considered topics of greatest concern to wives and mothers during the 1950s.

It is not possible to discuss all of these issues here so instead I am going to focus on housing and consumer rights.[[50]](#endnote-50) As Claire Langhamer has argued the meanings of home and access to good housing remained a critical issue for both women and men throughout the 1950s.[[51]](#endnote-51) For housewives’ associations, ensuring that the views of wives and mothers on housing provision and design were made known had been a priority since the inter-war years.[[52]](#endnote-52) During the Second World War the MU, WI, TG and NCW, along with the WCG, gave evidence to the 1942 Design of Dwellings Committee, established to consider how the design of homes and suburban housing estates could be improved after the war. Information presented by the MU, WI and TG was informed by extensive surveys of their own members thereby providing an excellent insight into what women wanted from housing during the mid twentieth century.[[53]](#endnote-53) Having considered their evidence, the Design of Dwellings Committee adopted a number of their recommendations in its final report.[[54]](#endnote-54) These ideas were subsequently included in *Housing Manuals* published after the war and also featured in the *Daily Mail* *Book of Britain’s Post War Homes* (c.1951)as the plan for ‘the house that women want’.[[55]](#endnote-55)

 The wartime destruction of homes and on-going housing shortages ensured that the housing question continued to dominate public debate throughout the 1950s. By the end of the decade ‘housing need remained a crucial political issue’.[[56]](#endnote-56) Rachel Ritchie has suggested that the ability of housewives’ associations to influence housing policy after the war was compromised. The expansion of the postwar welfare state and a growing culture of professional expertise within public services meant that it became more difficult for women’s groups to exert influence.[[57]](#endnote-57) It may be overly pessimistic however to suggest that wives and mothers no longer exerted any influence over housing policy. Evidence would suggest that throughout the 1950s housewives’ associations continued to identify what women wanted with regards to housing and did what they could to ensure that this information was passed onto local and national housing authorities.

Housing standards and design were regular topics on the agenda of the WI Public Questions Sub-Committee throughout the 1950s. In January 1952 the committee noted with concern that the floor space for local authority houses had been reduced to 900 square feet for a three-bed house. The same month a member of the WI visited a show house in Ipswich and reported with approval that ‘the sitting room has a recess under the stairs with a window and this space can be curtained off to take a pram, toys, etc.’.[[58]](#endnote-58) Other features WI members expected to see in modern homes included spacious living and dining rooms, well fitted kitchens with cupboards and drawers, good-sized bedrooms and adequate space for prams and bikes.[[59]](#endnote-59)

In March 1952 the WI informed members that the movement had accepted an invitation from the Ministry of Housing to provide advice on the domestic appliances and furnishings required for one of three ‘people’s houses’ being shown at the annual Ideal Homes Exhibition.[[60]](#endnote-60) It was felt the invitation signified recognition on the part of the Ministry that ‘the women’s point of view mattered to the experts’.[[61]](#endnote-61) In May that year the WI wrote to the Minister of Housing and Local Government requesting that the Central Housing Advisory Committee appoint a ‘qualified countrywoman’ to sit on the Committee so that the views of rural women would be considered.[[62]](#endnote-62) As this request makes clear the overall quality of rural housing remained a significant issue for the WI throughout the 1950s. However the extension of electricity supplies to homes and farms soon emerged as a matter of particular concern.

Rural electrification was regularly discussed on the WI Public Questions Sub-Committee throughout the mid-1950s.[[63]](#endnote-63) In 1952 the Devon County Federation urged the government ‘to speed up the provision of electricity in the countryside and to ensure that rural areas received a fair share of the capital available for electrification’.[[64]](#endnote-64) Rural electrification also featured in the pages of the WI magazine *Home and Country* with articles published throughout the 1950s on the continued absence of mains connection in rural areas.[[65]](#endnote-65) The views of the WI on rural electrification appear to have been taken seriously by the relevant authorities and WI representatives were regularly invited to sit on regional Electricity Consultative Councils, for example in Yorkshire in November 1953.[[66]](#endnote-66) The report of a survey carried out by the WI in 1956 entitled *Our Villages* confirmed that ‘only one village in twelve was still without mains water and all but 222 villages had now got good mains electricity’.[[67]](#endnote-67) This positive response indicates that significant progress had been achieved with regards to rural electrification thereby improving living and working conditions of a significant number of rural women.

 In common with the WI the NCW continued to monitor housing standards and housing conditions throughout the 1950s. In November 1959 the Council submitted evidence to the Central Housing Advisory Committee’s Sub-Committee on Housing Standards. This Committee’s task was to recommend minimum standards for future public and private dwellings, particularly in light of changes in living patterns since the publication of the Dudley Report in 1944. In their evidence the NCW appeared to be largely satisfied with existing housing standards. Recommendations made included a larger third bedroom, off-road parking, television aerials and more storage space. The Council reported that separate kitchens and sitting rooms were more practical for families and that ideally there should be a W.C. on every floor of a house.

Also recommended was space for a pram in houses, flats and maisonettes. Kitchens that caught the morning sun were preferred and having enough room for a table in the kitchen was preferable as ‘the social stigma’ attached to eating in the kitchen was was deemed to be dying out thanks to modern kitchen design.[[68]](#endnote-68) The invitation extended to the NCW by the Housing Committee and the WI’s ongoing monitoring of housing standards suggest that the views of housewives on housing were still valued during the 1950s. It is clear what wives and mothers wanted was a home incorporating a modern design, labour saving features and adequate space for all the family. Living in this modern home would allow housewives to carry out their domestic work in a comfortable and efficient manner.

In addition to housing, consumer standards were another important area of concern to wives and mothers throughout the 1950s. Matthew Hilton has written of the role played by middle class housewives’ associations in the establishment of the British Standards Institute’s Women’s Advisory Committee (WAC) in 1951.[[69]](#endnote-69) Membership of the WAC included the NCW, the WI and the TG and the role of this new body was to comment on consumer standards for a wide range of products. Hilton states that the 1950s represented a time when ‘the middle class housewife was increasingly to become the voice of consumer interest’.[[70]](#endnote-70)

 As well as working in an official capacity on the WAC, housewives’ associations reflected the concerns of members on specific consumer related issues during the 1950s. For example on 22 February 1956 the NCW organised a conference on ‘Consumer Protection’ in County Hall, Westminster. Representatives of twenty-six women’s groups attended and the *Guardian* reported that together they expressed the views of ‘two to three million women’.[[71]](#endnote-71) The need for better consumer advice for the housewife was highlighted as it was ‘no longer possible to leave everything to the housewife’s good sense, good sense cannot tell you anything about television sets, electric bulbs, detergents, or even about pre-packed foodstuffs’.[[72]](#endnote-72) In response individual women’s organisations endeavored to assist members in making good consumer choices. For example the WI’s journal *Home and Country* published an advice column entitled ‘Home Affairs’ during the years 1956 to 1965.[[73]](#endnote-73)

 Amongst the consumer issues of greatest concern to the WI were the quality and price of household goods. In 1954 the Nottinghamshire Federation Council passed a resolution requesting that women’s corsets be taken off the luxury list, as a result of which no purchase tax would be paid.[[74]](#endnote-74) Purchase tax on household items at this time was a major bone of contention. In 1957 the WI passed a resolution calling for the abolition of purchase tax on ‘housewives’ kitchen utensils including electrical appliances’. In supporting the motion Mrs. Ward stated that the WI ‘had no quarrel with menfolk, but do think some have not been very fair to us working housewives. They say no purchase tax on workers’ tools: aren’t women workers?’.[[75]](#endnote-75) The TG highlighted its members’ views on the pricing of household goods. A 1958 resolution called on manufacturers to reduce the prices on articles such as detergents in order that ‘housewives may benefit from a reduction in prices’. The resolution was sent to the National Chamber of Trade whose reply welcomed the ‘attitude’ adopted by the TG.[[76]](#endnote-76)

 The ability of housewives’ associations to raise concerns about the quality and affordability of household goods and clothing at this time once again provides an insight into the lives of women during the 1950s. Women were being offered a rapidly increasing range of products to choose from. Yet in spite of this greater choice wives and mothers wanted to ensure that the products offered were of a high quality and good value for money. As the MU stated in 1963 it was no longer acceptable that women should be ‘exasperated with shoddy household goods’.[[77]](#endnote-77) Housewives’ associations played a key role in articulating what women wanted in this new mass consumption society.

**Women Workers**

By the end of the 1950s housewives’ associations had accepted that a significant proportion of wives and mothers wanted to work outside the home. I have documented elsewhere how these groups adjusted to the changing pattern of women’s domestic and paid work throughout the decade.[[78]](#endnote-78) Here I want to draw out some of the primary concerns the MU, WI, TG and NCW had with regards to mothers working. In common with the majority of women’s groups, the government and the general public, housewives’ associations believed that mothers with children under five should care for them full time at home. However, as increasing numbers of married women with older children took up paid work, combining motherhood and paid work was clearly something more and more women wanted to do.

 To determine how family life was affected when mothers went out to work the NCW carried out a survey of its members in 1956. Reporting on the findings the following year it was revealed that where mothers with young children worked part-time, had supportive husbands and were able to secure suitable childcare that ‘the children did not appear to suffer’.[[79]](#endnote-79) The survey indicated that the primary reason married women chose to take up paid work was economic. This factor had long been a key motive for working class mothers, who would often have to work to augment the family income. However the survey revealed that for middle class mothers paid work offered the possibility of greater financial independence whilst also enabling the family to purchase new consumer durables and achieve a higher standard of living.[[80]](#endnote-80)

It was also revealed that what working mothers most needed was the greater provision of after school care and holiday clubs so that they could continue to work outside school hours and during school holidays. The NCW highlighted the lack of affordable childcare available to working mothers and called on local authorities and employers to do more to help by providing subsidised childcare and allowing mothers to work flexible hours.[[81]](#endnote-81) The WI and TG supported the NCW in its calls for greater support for working mothers. Throughout the 1950s the MU continued to express reservations about young children being cared for outside the home after school and during the holidays.[[82]](#endnote-82)

This view was echoed by the WI who despite acknowledging the right of modern women to find fulfillment in paid work announced in 1957 its intention to lobby employers to introduce ‘married women’ shift patterns. This would allow mothers to only work during school hours and to take time off work when children were ill so that it was they and not a stranger looking after the children.[[83]](#endnote-83) The TG accepted that not all its members approved of mothers working but the fact that so many were meant the Guild had a responsibility to represent their interests. As a result the TG supported the expansion of day nurseries, summer camps and after school clubs and called on the state to provide the funding for such schemes.[[84]](#endnote-84)

 Protecting the rights of married women workers was also of concern to housewives’ associations during the 1950s. The NCW and WI played an important part in the campaign for equal pay in the public sector and welcomed the introduction of this significant reform in 1954.[[85]](#endnote-85) In 1953 the NCW lobbied the government to demand married women workers be paid the same contributions and receive the same benefits as other workers.[[86]](#endnote-86) As increasing numbers of married women took up part-time work during the 1950s the Council urged the government to change the practice whereby employers had to pay the full insurance contribution for part-time workers. Anxious that mothers with young children would choose to work part-time the NCW wanted to ensure that work of this nature was readily available.[[87]](#endnote-87)

 Representing significant numbers of educated middle class women, housewives’ associations were aware that their members wanted the opportunity to take up skilled and professional work. To this end the NCW argued that there should be no obstacles to women taking up ‘highly skilled and responsible occupations’ especially when their children were older.[[88]](#endnote-88) The MU also supported calls for older mothers to return to the teaching profession and the TG argued more needed to be done to encourage older married women back to work to avoid a ‘wastage of brain and talent’.[[89]](#endnote-89) Speaking out on behalf of working mothers illustrates how housewives’ associations sought to adapt to the changing roles of women in postwar society. In doing so they ensured that they remained relevant to women’s lives over the course of the decade.

**Women Citizens**

In addition to representing the interests of women as wives, mothers and workers, housewives’ associations during the 1950s engaged in a number of campaigns which asserted the rights of women as citizens. The concept of democratic citizenship was firmly embedded in the culture of the MU, WI, TG and NCW and had been since the inter-war period.[[90]](#endnote-90) In asserting the right of women to equal citizenship housewives’ associations were determined to ensure that the opinions of women were made known on questions of national importance. The range of campaigning activity undertaken by the MU, WI, TG and NCW during the 1950s is vast and so it is not possible to provide a detailed account of every campaign here. Instead a snapshot will be given to provide some insight into the causes these groups supported.

Resolutions passed by the MU, WI, TG and NCW during the 1950s reflected concerns ranging from environmental issues such as anti-litter campaigns and nuclear weapons testing to road safety. In 1962 the WI highlighted ongoing concerns about the impact of radiation on the environment. A resolution calling on the WI to combine with ‘other women’s organisations throughout the world, in order to persuade all governments to reduce experimental nuclear explosions in the atmosphere to an absolute minimum’ was passed by a large majority.[[91]](#endnote-91) Closer to home the WI, working with the TG and MU, launched an anti-litter campaign in 1954 which four years later became the national ‘Keep Britain Tidy’ campaign.[[92]](#endnote-92) In 1957 the TG called for tests to be introduced for child cyclists to improve safety and advised guilds to contact their local police force and education authorities to request action be taken on this matter.[[93]](#endnote-93)

Another significant campaign of the 1950s, supported by the MU and NCW, was the demand that the term ‘common prostitute’ be removed from the statue book. Both the MU and NCW highlighted the unfairness of labeling women common prostitutes in a court of law before their case was heard. They argued this was a flagrant breach of a woman’s citizen rights within the criminal justice system and an example of gender inequality. Moreover both groups demanded that the penalties for prostitution be the same for the woman and man involved. This would guarantee that an equal moral standard was embedded in the law.[[94]](#endnote-94)

Even from this brief overview of campaigning activity it is evident that housewives’ associations were able to bring attention to a diverse range of issues impacting upon the lives of women citizens in postwar Britain. Their ability to work together on a number of these campaigns as well as on efforts to highlight the needs of women as wives, mothers and workers signifies that a dynamic women’s movement continued to be effective in Britain in the 1950s.

In assessing how successful housewives’ associations were in representing ‘what women wanted’ in the 1950s a number of caveats must be considered. First of all there is little doubt that the MU, WI, TG and NCW prioritised the interests of middle class women during these years. Secondly, housewives’ associations made little if no reference to the experiences of non-white women living in Britain in the 1950s. Thirdly fewer younger women were joining housewives’ associations as the decade progressed. By the 1960s all four groups were expressing concern about their ageing memberships.[[95]](#endnote-95) There is little doubt that this inability to capture the support of a more diverse group of women resulted in the MU, WI, TG and NCW becoming increasingly sidelined on gender issues in the 1960s and 1970s.

Despite these qualifications, the fact that housewives’ associations successfully expressed what over one million wives and mothers wanted during the 1950s is significant and should not be underestimated. These groups directly challenged the myth of the happy housewife. All four demonstrated that wives and mothers deserved recognition for their work, unpaid and paid, and were entitled to ask that the state support them in carrying out their roles as wives, mothers, workers and citizens. They instilled in members a sense of entitlement, a sense of worth and the self-confidence to be more than just someone’s ‘missus or mum’. This in turn enabled women to not only articulate what it was they wanted in the 1950s but to fight to achieve their goals.

1. [] *Home and Country*, Vol. 31, No. 7, July 1949. WI Archive, Women’s Library @ London School of Economics (LSE), 5FWI/A/2/3/08 Box 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. [] For a discussion of the role played by women and women’s organisations during wartime and in postwar reconstruction see for example: Caitríona Beaumont (2013), *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women’s Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), Penny Summerfield (1984), *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Routledge) and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2000), *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. [] For example in the period 1945-59, 29 women were elected for Labour, 15 for the Conservatives and one for the Liberals. See Martin Pugh (2000), *Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), p. 303. In 1954 the total for women in local government was 4,142 in comparison to 42, 208 men. *Public Questions Newsheet* 1955. WI Archive, 5FWI/D/1/2/04: Box 138. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. [] See for example Caitríona Beaumont (2015), ‘”What is a wife”? Reconstructing domesticity in postwar Britain before *The Feminine Mystique*’. (*History of Women in the Americas*, in press), Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 189-194 and Majorie Ferguson (1983), *Forever Feminine: Women’s Magazines and the Cult of Femininity* (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp. 44-77. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. [] Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain*, p. 103. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. [] Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement*, p. 284. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. [] See for example Claire Langhamer (2013), *The English in Love: the intimate story of an emotional revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Rachel Ritchie (2010), ‘The Housewife and the Modern: The Home and Appearance in Women’s Magazines, 1954-1969’ (PhD Thesis, University of Manchester), Angela Davis (2012), *Modern Motherhood: women and the family in England, c. 1945-2000* (Manchester: Manchester University Press) and Virginia Nicholson (2015), *Perfect Wives in Ideal Homes: the story of women in the 1950s* (London: Viking). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. [] Rachel Ritchie writes that *Woman* was the most iconic of the middle-class weeklies to achieve a mass circulation, selling two million copies per issue by the 1950s. Ritchie, ‘The Housewife and the Modern’, p. 37. *Good Housekeeping* was read by one of every two middle-class women in 1950. Dolly Smith Wilson (2006), ‘A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 17 (2),

p. 214. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. [] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, p. 190. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. [] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. [] Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement*, p. 69 & 297. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. [] For example Barbara Caine (1999), *English Feminism 1780-1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) and Sue Bruley (1999), *Women in Britain Since 1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. [] Pearl Jephcott (1962), *Married Women Working* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd), p. 1 & 20. See also Smith Wilson, ‘A New Look’. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. [] For example Ferdynand Zweig (1952), *Women’s Life and Labour* (London: Victor Gollancz), Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein (1956), *Women’s Two Roles: Home and Work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.) and Jephcott, *Married Women Working.* [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. [] Between the years 1951 to 1955, 76.4 women (per thousand of population) married. This rose to 82.6 between the years 1956 to 1960. See Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement*, p. 223. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. [] For more on the woman question in the 1950s and 1960s see Caine, *English Feminism*, pp. 240-254 and Birmingham Feminist Women’s Group, ‘Feminism as femininity in the nineteen-fifties?’ *Feminist Review*, No. 3, 1979. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. [] Caine, *English Feminism*, p. 242. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. [] Smith Wilson, ‘A New Look’, pp. 210-211. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. [] For example Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) argued that women had fallen victim to domesticity and as a result were left frustrated, unhappy and unfulfilled. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. [] See Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 40-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. [] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2001), ‘Housewifery’, in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited), p. 156. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. [] Olwen Campbell (1952), *Report of a Conference on The Feminine Point of View* (London: Williams and Norgate). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. [] Ibid., p. 47. See also Caine, *English Feminism*, p. 237. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. [] Catherine Blackford (1996), ‘Ideas, Structures and Practices of Feminism, 1939-1969’ (PhD Thesis, University of East London), p. 115. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. [] For example during the 1940s and 1950s the MWA had approximately 2,000 members in twenty branches. Blackford, ‘Ideas, Structures and Practices’, p. 102. The WFL was disbanded in 1961 due to a failure to recruit new members. Caine, *English Feminism*, p. 239. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. [] Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement*, p. 284. See also Mark Donnelly (2005), *Sixties Britain* (London: Pearson Longman), p. 161. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. [] See Joyce Freeguard (2004), ‘It’s Time for Women of the 1950s To Stand Up and Be Counted’ (PhD Thesis, University of Sussex), Linda Perriton (2007), ‘Forgotten Feminists: The Federation of British Professional and Business Women, 1933-1969’, *Women’s History Review*, 16 (1), Samantha Clements (2008), ‘Feminism, citizenship and social activity: the role and importance of local women’s organisations, Nottingham 1918-1969’ (PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham) and Blackford, ‘Ideas, Structures and Practices’. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. [] In 1946 there were 41,704 petitions for divorce. This figure rose to 137,400 during the period 1956-1960. Claire Langhamer (2006), ‘Adultery in Post-War England’, *History Workshop Journal*, 62, p. 94. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. [] Blackford, ‘Ideas, Structures and Practices’, p. 220. See also Freeguard, ‘It’s Time For Women’, pp. 151-156. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. [] Freeguard, ‘It’s Time for Women’, pp. 96-122. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. [] Gillian Scott (1998), *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women: the Women’s Co-operative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War* (London: UCL Press), p. xii. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. [] Ibid., pp. 272-273. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. [] Ritchie, ‘The Housewife and the Modern’, pp. 65-90. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. [] Amy Black & Stephen Brooke (1997), ‘The Labour Party, Women, and the Problem of Gender, 1951-1966’, *Journal of British Studies*, 36, p. 433. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. [] Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (1996), ‘Explaining the Gender Gap: The Conservative Party and the Women’s Vote, 1945-1964’ in Martin Francis & Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (eds.), *The Conservatives and British Society 1880-1990* (Cardiff: University of Wales), pp. 196-215. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. [] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, p. 201-2. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. [] Ibid., p. 190 [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. [] *Handbook of the National Council of Women of Great Britain 1931-1932* (1932), p. 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. [] See Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 9-15. See also Cordelia Moyse (2009) *A History of the Mothers’ Union: Women, Anglicanism and Globalisation* (London, The Boydell Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. [] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 23-27. See also Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism.* [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. [] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 27-33. Angela Davis writes that in the 1950s middle class women were more likely to join associations to find companionship, a trend noted by social commentators at the time. Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, p. 46. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. []File on Affiliated Organisations*,* WI Archive, 5FWI/A/3/81: Box 66. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. [] See Caitríona Beaumont (2009), ‘Housewives, Workers and Citizens: Voluntary Women’s Organisations and the Campaign for Women’s Rights in England and Wales during the Post-war Period’, in Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton & James McKay (eds), *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. [] See Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism*, pp. 59-78. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. [] WI (1959), *Time to be Social* (London: Novello & Company), p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. [] Ibid., p. 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. [] Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism*, pp. 59-78. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. [] *The Mothers’ Union Workers Paper* (July 1950), p. 68. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. [] *National Union of Townswomen’s Guilds, Handbook 1938* (1938), p. 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. [] For further discussion on the financial position of married, widowed and divorced women and on maternity services see Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 108-115 & 200-210. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. [] Claire Langhamer (2005), ‘The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. [] See Caitríona Beaumont (2013), ‘Where to Park the Pram? Voluntary Women’s Organisations, Citizenship and the Campaign for Better Housing in England, 1928-1945’, *Women’s History Review*, 22, 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. [] For a full account of these housing surveys see Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 171-175. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. [] *Design of Dwellings: Report of the Central Housing Advisory Committee* (1944), (London: HMSO). [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. [] Deborah Ryan (1997), *The Ideal Home in the Twentieth Century* (London, Hazar), p. 89. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. [] Langhamer, ‘The Meanings of Home’, p. 343. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. [] Ritchie, ‘The Housewife and the Modern’, p. 68. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. [] WI *Public Questions Newsletter*, 7, January 1952, WI Archive, 5FWI/D/1/2/01: Box 138. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. [] Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. [] The two other houses were being fitted out by the TG and the Old People’s Welfare Committee. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. [] WI *Public Questions Newsletter*, 8, March 1952, WI Archive, 5FWI/D/1/2/01: Box 138. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. [] WI *Public Questions Newsletter*, 9, May 1952, WI Archive, 5FWI/D/1/2/01: Box 138. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. [] WI Executive Committee Minutes, September 1953-June 1955, WI Archive, 5FWI/A/1/1/24: Box 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. [] Simon Goodenough (1977), *Jam and Jerusalem* (Glasgow: Collins), p. 82. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. [] Ritchie, ‘The Housewife and the Modern’, p. 80. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. [] WI Public Questions Sub-Committee 26 November 1953, WI Executive Committee Minutes, September 1953-June 1955, WI Archive, 5FWI/A/1/1/24: Box 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. [] WI Annual General Meeting Reports 28 May 1957, WI Archive, 5FWI/A/2/3/09: Box 47. By the late 1950s 95% of households were wired for electricity. Cited in Ritchie, ‘The Housewife and the Modern’, p. 80. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. [] NCW Evidence to the Central Housing Advisory Committee Sub-Committee on Housing Standards 22 December 1959, National Archives, Public Records Office, HLG 37/166. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. [] Matthew Hilton (2003), *Consumerism in the Twentieth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. [] Ibid., p. 168. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. [] *The Guardian* 23 February 1956. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. [] Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. [] Ritchie, ‘The Housewife and the Modern’, p. 85. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. [] WI Public Questions Sub-Committee 8 September 1954, WI Archive, 5FWI/A/1/1/24: Box 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. [] WI Annual General Meeting Reports 28 May 1957, WI Archive, 5FWI/A/2/3/09: Box 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. [] *The Townswoman* January 1958, p. 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. [] *Mothers’ Union News* (Watch News), June 1963, p. 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. [] See Beaumont, ‘”What is a wife?”’ and Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 195-199. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. [] *Women in Council*, 28, 8, April 1957, p. 69. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. [] See Smith Wilson, ‘A New Look’, pp. 206-229. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. [] Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. [] London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), NCW Archive, ACC/3613/3/024, Executive Committee Minutes, 21 November 1958. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. [] *Home and Country*, 39, 9, September 1957, p. 269. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. [] *The Townswoman*, September 1963, p. 243. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. [] See Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 146-153. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. [] NCW Archive, ACC/3613/1/020, Executive Committee Minutes, 18 September 1953. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. [] NCW Archive, ACC/3613/3/024, Executive Committee Minutes, 18 July 1958. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. [] NCW Archive, ACC/3613/01/023, Executive Committee Minutes, 12 April 1957. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. [] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, p. 198. The number of women finding employment in skilled work fell from 15.5 % in 1951 to 13.9 % in 1961. Gerry Holloway (2005), *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840* (London: Routledge), p. 204. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. [] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 40-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. [] *National Federation of Women’s Institutes Keeping Ourselves Informed 1964-74* (1974), I.3. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. [] WI Public Questions Sub-Committee 15 May 1954, WI Archive, 5FWI/A/1/1/24: Box 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. [] *The Townswoman*, January 1958, p. 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. [] Caitríona Beaumont, ‘”Women of the Shadows”: voluntary women’s groups and the campaign to reform the law with regard to prostitution in the 1950s’ (unpublished conference paper, Social History Society Annual Conference, University of Leeds, 25-27 March 2013). See also Julia Laite (2011), *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885-1960* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. [] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, pp. 215-217. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)