

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE  
and  
PARTY POLITICS  
IN BRITAIN  
1866-1914

# STUDIES IN POLITICAL HISTORY

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*by*

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## FOREWORD

The first woman suffrage society in Britain was formed in 1867. This book appears appropriately in the centenary year. That women should vote is now so generally accepted that few of the post-war generation can appreciate the long and intense struggle before woman's right to political equality was recognized. John Stuart Mill presented his Woman Suffrage Petition to the House of Commons in 1866. It took Parliament fifty-two years to accede.

The agitation for woman's enfranchisement did not become a compelling political force until the decade before the First World War. The constitutional suffrage movement led by Mrs. Fawcett was already exerting an important influence; then came the militant suffragettes led by Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel. They caught the headlines, and no one could avoid the issue.

In these pages Constance Rover objectively analyses the political impact of the suffragettes. Thinking back to those exciting days (the excitement included Lloyd George's campaign against landlords and Lords, and Edward Carson's threat of Ulster rebellion) one remembers the effect of the beginning of militancy with the arrest of Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney at Sir Edward Grey's Manchester meeting in October 1905. Votes for Women became talking point number one. They put the issue on the map. I think the suffragettes carried public opinion increasingly with them so long as their defiance of the law remained non-violent. There is also little doubt that they lost support for their cause when they began to burn buildings and damage works of art. The Parliamentary majority for woman suffrage reflecting public opinion disappeared.

War came, and it was the patriotic devotion of the leaders and the service of women in the war effort which won them the vote rather than political agitation. But without the earlier

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campaign, Parliament and public opinion would not have been ready.

I suppose I am one of the few men now living who took some part in the suffrage movements before the war. Keir Hardie converted me to Socialism, and I shared instinctively his conviction that human progress required that women should be included in the political life of the nation. I had been a Young Liberal and I took into the I.L.P. my belief in democracy. I wanted national freedom for subject peoples; I saw Socialism as the condition of economic freedom for the working population, and I wanted political freedom for women.

My first enthusiasm was for the militants. As a teen-age junior reporter I offered my services to the Pankhursts. I remember photographically with what dignity they entered the room at their Lincolns Inn headquarters and their sudden shock when, expecting a mature Fleet Street journalist, they saw little more than a boy; they instructed a member of their staff to give me envelopes to address. I addressed the envelopes and my enthusiasm survived. I accompanied their marches on Parliament from Caxton Hall, when there were nasty scenes with the police. I waited outside the gates of Holloway Gaol at seven o'clock in the morning to greet a friend when she was released after repeated imprisonments and hunger-striking.

In 1912 I became editor of the *Labour Leader*, the I.L.P. paper, and not only wrote in their favour but took an active part in the campaign, run by the constitutional suffragists, when they decided to support the Labour Party, the one party pledged to their cause. I remember a somewhat humiliating experience when invited to speak at a demonstration in the Royal Albert Hall. With the drama which the suffragists loved, the speakers, led by Mrs. Fawcett, walked in procession the length of the hall. I brought up the rear and was turned back by a steward who mistook me for a youthful press table messenger.

Although the Labour Party decided that no measure to extend the franchise would be acceptable unless women were included, there was a good deal of controversy in their ranks, as Constance Rover tells, whether women should be given the vote on the basis of adult suffrage. The suffragists, seeing the issue as one of sex equality, demanded enfranchisement on the same terms as men, but some Socialists argued that, whilst the

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franchise remained restricted to property, income and educational tests, the political balance against the working class would be strengthened. Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden and George Lansbury were among the leaders who understood the real significance of the women's claim. Its essence was the emancipation of women from inferiority in all spheres of life. They saw that recognition of political equality would be an historic act of liberation even if a class limitation continued in the franchise. In fact, when women obtained the vote in 1918 it was not on exactly the same terms as men, but ten years later both the sex and the class restrictions were done away with.

The argument was often used during the suffrage campaign that women as voters would bring to political life a new surge of determination to end social injustice and war. Many of us have been disappointed that this has not proved true. Women have voted much as men have voted; indeed there is a good deal of evidence that they are more opposed to radical changes than men. Nevertheless, the victory of the women, suffragists and suffragettes alike, represented the beginning of a new era in human relations. Women have not yet won equality in all spheres, but we have women members of parliament, women peers, women cabinet ministers, women barristers, women professors, scientists and doctors, women ministers of religion. But men's domination remains; the women have only won recognition in a man's world. Yet women's political recognition was the decisive change. We must pay tribute to the pioneers, both men and women, who have led to the beginnings of the evolution of a man-woman community.

It is because of this that Constance Rover's book is so important. We should congratulate both author and publisher. With conscientious research and great clarity of presentation Dr. Rover has told the story of the forty-eight years' struggle for women's political equality. She has described the lonely early efforts, the creation and progress of the movement, the grounds of opposition (most of which seem fantastic today), the strains between the constitutional suffragists and the militant suffragettes, the political manoeuvrings under the Asquith government, and the final achievement.

She has done this so thoroughly that her book must be

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recognized as a standard historical work. Let no one belittle the significance of what she tells. The attainment of political equality by women was the symbol of a revolution in human relations, the full significance of which we cannot yet foresee but which, in the expanding life of women, is already proving fundamental and profound.

FENNER BROCKWAY

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## PREFACE

The women's suffrage movement, as well as being subject to a partial boycott by the press in the years before the First World War, seems to have attracted to itself a measure of invisibility which has extended to the present day. The press boycott was finally broken in 1911 by the introduction of a 'Woman's Platform' in the *Standard* (then a morning paper). This aura of invisibility seems to have affected many historians who (with some honourable exceptions, such as Elie Halévy) have confined themselves to a paragraph or two about the suffragettes and have scarcely noticed the constitutional movement, which was operative from 1866. There has recently been a revival of interest in the women's campaign, illustrated by television features and books on the subject, and this work is being produced to mark the centenary of the presentation of the Women's Suffrage Petition to Parliament by John Stuart Mill on 7 June 1866, and the foundation of the first Women's Suffrage Societies in 1867.

Although there are a number of narrative accounts of the campaign, mostly, though not entirely, by participants, it does not seem to have been examined from the viewpoint of the various political parties and the anti-suffragists and it is hoped that this work will do something to fill the gap.

If, in my efforts to be impartial or through ignorance, I have offended or misrepresented any who have participated in the campaign, I proffer my sincere apologies.

To a large extent I have ignored the heroics of the movement and the personalities involved, as this work is an attempt at a political analysis and I have not tried to add to the many narrative accounts already in existence.

In making a study such as this, one faces the same difficulty which the suffragists themselves had to face, for it is difficult to put the case for the women without appearing to attack the men: let me assure any male readers that my sentiments towards their sex are entirely amiable.

## PREFACE

My thanks are due to the Governors and Principal of the North-Western Polytechnic, London, for sponsoring my research and to many friends and colleagues within the Polytechnic for help and encouragement. The skilled assistance provided by the North-Western Polytechnic Department of Librarianship and the Library has proved invaluable.

Like everyone else working in the field of women's emancipation, I am greatly indebted to the Fawcett Society Librarian, Miss Vera Douie, O.B.E. I am also grateful for access to the women's suffrage records held by the London Museum and John Rylands Library, Manchester. Other sources of help are too numerous to mention, but will become obvious to anyone who reads this book and to all concerned I tender my sincere thanks.

I cannot conclude without mentioning Professor O. R. McGregor, who has given me valuable advice and whose *Bibliography* (published in the *British Journal of Sociology* in March 1955) I have used extensively. Also, I am indebted to Mrs. Catherine Adler of the Oxford Extra-Mural Delegacy, who was good enough to act as a 'sounding-board' for my ideas when I first conceived this project.

It goes without saying that I am more than grateful to Lord Brockway who, in the midst of very many heavy commitments, has had the great kindness to write a foreword to this work.

CONSTANCE ROVER

*Highgate, London.*

## ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

N.U.W.S.S. or 'National Union'	The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. The chief constitutional association, whose members were referred to as 'suffragists'.
W.S.P.U. or N.W.S.P.U.	The Women's Social & Political Union or, as it was for a time, the National Women's Social & Political Union. The chief militant society, directed by the Pankhursts, whose members were referred to as 'suffragettes'.
W.F.L.	The Women's Freedom League, also a militant society, resulting from a split within the W.S.P.U.
Suffragist	Either (a) Anyone, male or female, constitutional or militant, who supported women's suffrage or, more narrowly, (b) A woman member of a constitutional society.
Suffragette	A woman member of a militant society.
I.L.P.	The Independent Labour Party.
W.L.L.	The Women's Labour League.



'Howiver, I'm not denyin' the women are foolish:  
God Almighty made 'em to match the men.'

Mrs. Poyser in *Adam Bede*, by George Eliot.  
(Book Sixth, Ch. LV)



# I

## THE ORIGIN OF THE MOVEMENT



THE women's suffrage movement grew out of the changing relationship between men and women in the nineteenth century and is part of the larger movement for women's emancipation. John Stuart Mill, in his speech in the House of Commons on his women's suffrage amendment to the 1867 Reform Bill, referred to,

. . . a silent, domestic revolution: women and men are, for the first time in history, really each other's companions . . . The man no longer gives his spare hours to violent out-door exercises and boisterous conviviality with male associates; the two sexes now pass their lives together: the women of a man's family are his habitual society: the wife is his chief associate, his most confidential friend and often his most trusted adviser.<sup>1</sup>

The suffrage movement was connected with what is called the 'women's movement' in three ways. Firstly, it was one of several 'rights' which women felt they ought to have and for which campaigns were launched. Secondly, it was a means to an end, the 'end' being social reform. Some feminine philanthropists of the nineteenth century came to feel that private charity was not enough and that the power of the state was needed to bring about social progress; they were irked by having no direct political influence. One gains the impression that with the early supporters, the vote was desired primarily as a means of political pressure towards a better society whereas, with the militant suffragettes in the twentieth cen-

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Series 3, Volume 187, column 821 (hereafter abbreviated).

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ture, it became (at least in the later years of their campaign) an end in itself and practically an obsession. Thirdly, as might be expected, many women interested in one aspect of women's rights gave their support to other aspects. There were therefore links in personnel between the various campaigns. While this holds as a general proposition, it was sometimes thought wise to keep the various campaigns separate for tactical reasons. Miss Emily Davies was closely associated with the 1866 Petition to Parliament for women's enfranchisement, having drafted it jointly with Mrs. Bodichon (formerly Barbara Leigh-Smith) and Miss Jessie Boucherette, but when she subsequently concentrated her energies on girls' education, she thought it wise to keep this movement separate from the suffrage movement, to avoid the odium attaching to the claim for women's vote. Similarly, Mrs. Fawcett<sup>1</sup> felt it unwise for the women's suffrage movement to be associated with Josephine Butler's campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts and the violent opposition which this aroused, although she later became a great admirer of Mrs. Butler and (jointly with E. M. Turner) one of her biographers.

Mrs. Fawcett realized the interconnection between the suffrage movement and other aspects of the women's movement and, writing in the *Nineteenth Century* in May 1886, stated:

Women's suffrage will not come, when it does come, as an isolated phenomenon, it will come as a necessary corollary of the other changes which have been gradually and steadily modifying during this century the social history of our country. It will be a political change, not of a very great or extensive character in itself, based upon social, educational, and economic changes which have already taken place. It will have the effect of adjusting the political machinery of the country to the altered social conditions of its inhabitants. The revolution has been quietly taking place for at least two generations; the political change will not be a revolution, but a public recognition by the State that the lot of women in England is no longer what it was at the beginning of the century.

The claim for the women's vote appears to have first been made by William Thompson in 1825, when he published, with

<sup>1</sup> Dame Millicent Fawcett, born Millicent Garret, 1847, married Henry Fawcett, M.P., 1867. Leader of the 'constitutional' movement for women's suffrage after the death of Lydia Becker in 1890. (See pp. 57/8 post for fuller personal details).

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the assistance of and under the inspiration of Mrs. Wheeler, 'An appeal of one half of the human race, women, against the pretensions of the other half, men, to retain them in political, and thence in civil and domestic slavery; In reply to Mr. Mill's celebrated article on Government'.<sup>1</sup> In the 'celebrated article on Government', which provoked such a spirited reply, James Mill stated:

. . . all those individuals whose interests are indisputably included in those of other individuals may be struck off without inconvenience . . . In this light also women may be regarded, the interests of almost all of whom are involved in that of their fathers or in that of their husbands.<sup>2</sup>

A more important event was the passing in 1832 of the great 'Reform Bill' enfranchising 'male persons'; it was the inclusion of the word 'male', thus providing the first statutory bar to women voting, which provided a focus of attack and a source of resentment from which, in time, the women's suffrage movement grew.

The question was first raised in parliament by Henry Hunt ('Orator' Hunt), on 3 August 1832, when he presented on behalf of Miss Mary Smith of Stanmore, Yorkshire, a Petition for the enfranchisement of unmarried females with the necessary property qualification.<sup>3</sup> In the same year Mr. William Johnston Fox, M.P. for Oldham, commented in the *Monthly Repository* on the anomaly that women were without votes, yet a woman was likely to inherit the throne in the near future.<sup>4</sup>

The first draft of the Charter of 1838 included women, but the claim for adult suffrage was later reduced to that of adult male suffrage. Some women's political associations were formed as part of the Chartist movement and accounts of women's meetings are to be found in the *Birmingham Journal* of 7 and 14 April 1838.<sup>5</sup> Although the women seem to have formed an

<sup>1</sup> First published 1825 (Longmans, Hurst, Rees).

<sup>2</sup> See Supplement to 4th, 5th & 6th Editions of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, pub. 1824, vol. IV, p. 500.

<sup>3</sup> Commons *Journal*, vol. 87. Elective Franchise. 'Petition of Mary Smith for extending the elective Franchise to unmarried women; To lie on the Table; Motion for Printing the Petition; Withdrawn; 551.'

<sup>4</sup> 'A Political and Social Anomaly'. *Monthly Repository*, September 1832, p. 637.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix I to this Chapter for reproduction of report of meeting on 2 April 1838.

enthusiastic audience, the speakers at the meetings appear to have been male and the meetings themselves the result of male initiative, as was the broadsheet issued 'To the women of Birmingham' by T. Clutton Salt on 16 August 1838.<sup>1</sup> This is in contrast to the Sheffield Female Political Association of 1851 (see below) which had women officers.<sup>2</sup>

In 1843, Mrs. Hugo Reid in her *Plea for Women* claimed equal rights with men and, in considering parliamentary representation, wrote:

Of course, we do not mean that all women should possess a privilege which has, as yet, only been conferred on particular classes of men; we only mean to insist that the right is the same in both sexes. If there be any particular reason for the exclusion from this privilege of a certain class among men, we would allow it to have weight for excluding the corresponding class of women, but for these alone. We would insist that, with whatever speciousness certain classes among men have been excluded from this right, it does not follow as a matter of course—as often assumed—that ALL women ought to be excluded. The class of women corresponding to the privileged class among men have still a claim; and the *onus probandi* against them lies with those who advocate the continuance of the system of exclusion.<sup>3</sup>

In or about 1847 a leaflet<sup>4</sup> in favour of women's suffrage was issued by the Quakeress, Anne Knight, of 'Quiet House', Chelmsford, and in July 1851, an article on 'The enfranchisement of women' appeared in the *Westminster Review* by a writer who was later discovered to be Mrs. John Stuart Mill. 1851 seems to have been a year of some activity, as on 13 February a Petition<sup>5</sup> was presented to the House of Lords by the 7th Earl of Carlisle, claiming the elective franchise for women, and

<sup>1</sup> See appendix II to this chapter for reproduction of Broadsheet.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix III to this chapter for account of meeting of the Sheffield Female Political Association.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, (Marion Reid) pp. 52/3. (Wm. Tait, Edinburgh, 1843).

<sup>4</sup> Reproduced in *Record of Women's Suffrage*, by Helen Blackburn, p. 19 (Williams & Norgate, 1902).

<sup>5</sup> *Lords Journal*, vol. 83. 13 February 1851. Electoral Law (23). 'A Petition of the Female Inhabitants of the Borough of Sheffield in the County of York, in Public Meeting assembled, praying their Lordships "to take into their serious consideration the propriety of Enacting an Electoral Law which will include Adult Females within its provisions" was presented, read and Ordered to lie on the Table, and to be read as the Petition of "Mrs. Abiah Higginbottom, the Person in the Chair," who only had signed it.'

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on the 26 February the 'Sheffield Female Political Association' met in the Democratic Temperance Hotel, Sheffield.<sup>1</sup> The cause does not seem to have aroused much comment during the remainder of the 1850s, although in 1855 a pamphlet was issued by 'Justitia' (Mrs. Henry Davis Pochin) on 'the Right of Women to Exercise the Elective Franchise'.<sup>2</sup>

The question of women's suffrage was first brought before British electors in 1865, when John Stuart Mill made it part of his 'platform' on contesting the Borough of Westminster. Later in this year, according to Helen Blackburn's *Record of Women's Suffrage*<sup>3</sup> the 'Kensington Society'<sup>3</sup> debated the subject. This society comprised the enterprising feminists who had been instrumental in the foundation of 'The Society for the Employment of Women', the publication of the *English-women's Journal* and, subsequently, the *Englishwomen's Review*. Jessie Boucherette, Barbara Leigh-Smith (Mrs. Bodichon), Bessie Rayner Parkes and Emily Davies were included in this group of women.

From 1866 onwards articles and discussions on women's suffrage become too numerous to mention. The year 1866 saw the presentation on 7 June, by John Stuart Mill and Henry Fawcett, of a Petition,<sup>5</sup> signed by 1,499 women, praying that enfranchisement should be without distinction of sex. This event marked the commencement of a continuous campaign for women's suffrage, organized by women, extending until the vote was won.

The period under review in this study is from 1866, when an organization of women was formed for the presentation of the Petition to the House of Commons, to the outbreak of war in 1914, when agitation was suspended on patriotic grounds. A provisional committee was formed in 1866 to succeed the Petition committee, and became, in 1867, the London National

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III at end of chapter.

<sup>2</sup> A second edition, with the author's name, was published by the Manchester Women's Suffrage Society in 1873.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> The writer has been unable to trace the original records of the 'Kensington Ladies' Discussion Group'.

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons *Petitions*, 1866. Elective Franchise: 'Petition of Barbara L. S. Bodichon, for extension to all householders without distinction of sex. 747'. Delivered 13 June.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE MOVEMENT

Society for Women's Suffrage. The Fawcett Society of today claims direct descent from the committee of 1866.

In 1867 societies were formed in Manchester<sup>1</sup> and Edinburgh also and at the end of the year were federated with the London Society in the National Society for Women's Suffrage, to be joined the following year by Birmingham and Bristol. Co-operation between the provincial societies was effected by a Central Committee after 1872 and, in 1897, all societies then existing which were devoted exclusively to women's suffrage were federated in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies,<sup>2</sup> which was still functioning when war broke out in 1914.

There was, therefore, a continuous organization and campaign for women's suffrage between 1866 and 1914. The years immediately prior to the First World War saw the springing up of numerous societies for women's suffrage, of which the most important was the Women's Social and Political Union<sup>3</sup> (the 'suffragettes') formed in 1903, from which sprung the militant branch of the movement.

<sup>1</sup> There is a dispute concerning the date of the foundation of the Manchester Society. The first annual report was issued in 1868, indicating that the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage was constituted in August 1867. Sylvia Pankhurst, in her book *The Suffragette Movement* (Longmans, 1931, pp. 30-31) states that Mrs. Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy always insisted that the society was founded in 1865 and that, as Miss Wolstenholme, she was the first secretary. Helen Blackburn, in her *Record of Women's Suffrage* (Williams & Norgate, 1902, p. 59) refers to a preliminary meeting on 11 January 1867 and a second meeting on 13 February, when Miss Lydia Becker was appointed secretary. The Mill/Taylor letters in the British Library of Political and Economic Science confirm that the Manchester Society was formed before the London Society. (Letter, John Stuart Mill to John Elliot Cairnes, 30 June 1867).

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently referred to as the N.U.W.S.S. or the National Union. Irish societies were excluded from this federation, as they supported the claims of women in local government, as well as the demand for the national franchise, but friendly contact was maintained with them.

<sup>3</sup> Subsequently referred to as the W.S.P.U.

## APPENDIX I

Copy from *Birmingham Journal*, 7 April 1838

At a Public Meeting of the Women of Birmingham, held at the  
Town Hall, on Monday, the 2nd April,

I. Aaron, Esq., in the chair

### IT WAS RESOLVED,

1st. That the Women of Birmingham, not forgetful that the proper sphere of women's virtue, is in the performance of their important domestic duties, have nevertheless thought it incumbent on them to hold a great public meeting, to consider the increasing difficulties to which they find themselves and their families exposed; difficulties which have destroyed the happiness of their homes, and forced them from that retirement and those domestic duties to which they are so much attached, and on the due performance of which the welfare of their families so materially depends, to undertake labours in workshops unsuited to their sex, and further, to consider that even this resource has become less secure in its continuance, and more scanty in its remuneration.

2nd. That it would be worse than folly silently, and submissively to allow this continual and progressive deterioration of their situation to go on; and worse than folly to expect relief from Parliament, who, in answer to their expectations and remonstrances have been so ignorant or fraudulent as to point to the luxuries of the wealthy, as a proof of the non-existence of misery of the poor, and who, unmoved by that misery, have persisted in maintaining corn-laws to make food dear, and money-laws to make money dear, in combination with free trade to make labour cheap; giving MONOPOLY to the wealthy, and COMPETITION to the poor; and who, while they have maintained the interests of the pension and state paupers, have enacted Poor-laws, calculated by their severity to deprive the victims of their iniquity [*sic*] of their last refuge.

3rd. That the time has arrived when the general inquiry has produced conviction in every sound and unprejudiced mind, that the interests of all can only be protected by all being fully represented in the legislature, and that this meeting does pledge itself to be always ready, at the call of the faithful leaders of the industrious classes, and

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to obey their legal directions in all measures needful to obtain universal suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by ballot, abolition of property qualification in members of Parliament, and the ancient constitutional privilege of paying their own representatives, and to use every just and proper influence to induce their friends to give this cause, the cause of Liberty, justice, and humanity, their most zealous support.

The writer is indebted to the City Librarian, Birmingham, for the above.

## APPENDIX II

# TO THE WOMEN OF BIRMINGHAM.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

I have twice called you from your important domestic duties to attend public meetings. I have there explained to you the causes which have brought want to your board and care to your pillow. The iron pressure made you ready to listen and apt to understand. Your Husbands and Brothers, your Fathers and Sons, have united in the great and glorious work of restoring the prosperity and independence of industry. I call upon you also, upon Wife and Sister, Mother and Daughter, to join in this holy league of righteousness and love, that the great FAMILY OF THE PEOPLE may move irresistibly in their onward course, to recover the promises of abundance God has made to the diligent.

The dull in intellect, the cold in heart, will unreluctingly enquire—why do Women leave their domestic occupations?—wherefore are Women made to meddle with politics?

Let this be your reply:—

The Idle have legislated for the Industrious, the Wealthy for the Poor, and they have trampled upon industry in their pride, and plundered it in their greediness. They removed the taxes from the sources that supply luxury and folly, and laid them on industry that supports life. They removed the property tax of seventeen millions from their own shoulders, and laid a tax of thirty millions on food, remorselessly taking from poverty a portion of even its scantiest meal. They taxed the English labourer in his bread, in his beer, in his tobacco, in his tea, in every thing, and having thus burdened him, they have delivered him over to the free competition of the untaxed foreigner. They dragged the Wife from her home, the Child from its sport, to break down the wages of the Husband and Father. They made monopoly for themselves, and competition for us. They made laws to make us poor, and then made poor-laws to deprive us of relief. Therefore do the people gather together, and therefore do the Women leave their homes to attend political meetings.

We hear it openly acknowledged by both factions of the state, that it is impossible, under its present burthens, the trade of England should be maintained in successful rivalry against the competition of the untaxed foreigner. We know, therefore, that bad begins and worse remains. We ask ourselves, if the whole of our trade breaks down under the pressure of our burthens, what accelerated destruction, what multiplied miseries will come upon us when the whole of

our burthens are brought to press upon half our trade? We see our Fathers, Husbands, and Brothers, worn in strength, and subdued in spirit, by disproportioned toil, and the more fatal agency of care, and under the present system we see only a futurity aggravating every present evil. We will not go through the terrible ordeal of suffering the strength of our country to be withered by so cruel a poverty.

Our rulers sooty attempt to compel us to keep our burthens and lose our trade. We are determined, for the common safety, to throw off our burthens, and preserve the trade, the happiness, and the power of our country, and, therefore, do the Women meddle with politics.

The People have petitioned in vain for twenty years; their humble prayers have been refused, and their increasing miseries disregarded. The Factions have given to the unconquered people of England for their inheritance, a Childhood without mirth, a Manhood without independence, and an Old Age without honour or comfort; therefore do the Women meddle with politics, and the whole family of the people unite for justice.

The Proud have scooped their breasts, but the Poor have united their strength, and there is a bond of unity in truth, a strength in virtue, and a weakness in guilt, and the cry of the oppressed ever reaches the throne of grace.

Let, then, the Craven spirit submit, and the Jew spirit torture industry for its gain, and the Second-rate spirit laugh at the mortal agony of the country, and give no aid to the brave that battle for the right, yet shall the people be delivered and rejoice, for the Women have meddled with politics.

The agency of the Women sent the Missionary on his christian pilgrimage; it redeemed the slavery of the Negroes! It has ever triumphed, and it shall now secure the most glorious and perfect of its victories.

The men of Birmingham have set a noble example to the country. The women of Birmingham shall set a still more univalued one. Within a fortnight, fifty thousand Women shall have signed the National Petition; and if that petition be rejected, instant measures will be adopted for the safety of the great interests of the country.

Then, Women of Birmingham, I pray you, meddle with politics, and I am, Your faithful friend,

**T. CLUTTON SALT.**

Birmingham, August 16th, 1838.

## APPENDIX III

*The Sheffield Free Press and Rotherham and Barnsley Advertiser*  
Extract from edition dated 1 March 1851:

'*Female Rights.*' At a meeting of the Sheffield Female Political Association, on Wednesday evening, 26 February 1851, held at Mr. G. Cavill's Democratic Temperance Hotel, 33, Queen Street, the following address was unanimously adopted:—

To the Women of England—Beloved Sisters—We, the women of the democracy of Sheffield, beg the indulgence of addressing you at this important juncture. We have been observers for a number of years of the various plans, systems, and organizations, which have been laid down for the better government and guidance of democracy, which has had for its end the amelioration of the condition of all classes, and we are brought to the conclusion that women might, with the strictest propriety, be included in the proclamation of the people's charter; for we are the majority of the nation, and it is our birthright, equally with our brother, to vote for the man who is to sway our political destiny—to impose the taxes which we are compelled to pay—to inflict the laws which we are compelled to endure; and heartily should we rejoice to see the women of England uniting for the purpose of demanding this great right to humanity, feeling assured that were women thus comprehended, they would be the greatest auxiliaries of right against might. For what would not the patient, energetic mind of woman accomplish, when once resolved? The brave and heroic deeds which history records are our testimony to the world that no danger is too great, or struggle too arduous, that women's co-operation is greatly needed for the accomplishment of our political well-being. But there are some who say: Would you have women to enjoy all the political rights of men? To this we must emphatically answer, Yes! for does she not toil early and late, in the factory, and in every department of life, subject to the despotisms of men; and we ask, in the name of justice, must we continue ever the silent and servile victims of this injustice?—to perform all the drudgery of his political societies, and never to possess a single political right? Is the oppression to last for ever? Are we always to remain the drudges, the helots of society? We, the women of the democracy of