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THE MILITANT SUFFRAGETTES AS A POLICE PROBLEM:

LONDON, 1906-1914

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

by

Kevin Charles Smith, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1974

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A NOTE ON THE REFERENCES

Many of the papers cited in this study are drawn from two vast collections of papers at the Public Record Office. The first is the 45th series of the Home Office Registered Papers, abbreviated as HO 45, followed by a particular document number.

The second major collection is the Metropolitan Police Papers, abbreviated as MEPO. These papers are divided into eight series: the first four are all from the Office of the Commissioner:

- MEPO 1 Letter books.
- MEPO 2 Correspondence and Papers
- MEPO 3 Correspondence and Papers, Special series.
- MEPO 4 Miss. Books and Papers.

Two series are from the Office of the Receiver:

- MEPO 5 Correspondence and Papers.
- MEPO 6 Police Orders.

The last series is MEPO 8, Confidential Books and Instructions. Some of these papers are still closed, particularly those originating from the Special Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department, but often these reports are found in the Home Office papers.

Wherever possible, document references are identical to the form required to page them in the Public Record Office.

INTRODUCTION

The story of the militant suffragettes is at least a twice-told tale, hardly worth retelling. Incidents such as the destruction of mail, massive demonstrations, a woman's death under the King's horse, are well known. Likewise, Scotland Yard is famous, whether for the relatively dense inspector guided to the proper conclusions by Sherlock Holmes or for the equally erroneous view of the super sleuths invariably apprehending the felon. But few efforts have been made to study the police and militants together, to probe the police response to the problems created by these women. This study examines that relationship.

There are a number of points that should be kept in mind by a reader of this study. The first is the important fact that this major movement never had an undivided claim on the nation's attention. In any given year, this was only one of a host of critical issues demanding public attention. The controversy over the House of Lords, the death of the King, the Budget of 1909, two general elections, a naval arms race, Irish Home Rule, growing industrial unrest: these, too, demanded attention. Thus while the women might loudly complain that their needs were being ignored, more often their concerns were crowded out of ministers' minds by seemingly more important issues.

Another key fact is that the women's suffrage movement in London was closely connected with the sessions of Parliament. The militants

were most active in the weeks on either side of the opening of Parliament, and their activities dwindled towards mid-session, and almost stopped when Parliament was in recess. During this quiet period, the women were usually engaged in behind-the-scenes preparations for the next session.

A third point is that the militants were not one unified group under the orders of one set of leaders. Indeed, quite the contrary, many of the outrages, such as the first hunger strike and the first bomb explosion were undertaken by individuals without any previous consultation with the leaders. While such moves were often subsequently endorsed and became policy, they were not arranged in advance by the leadership. Then too "Militant" as used in this paper does not necessarily imply that the individual was a member of any particular group. More often than not, they were members of the Women's Social and Political Union, the W.S.P.U.. But the membership of this group was in constant flux: members came and went as circumstances changed: splinter groups would emerge, submerge, and wither away, with membership rolls in turmoil. In this paper, "Militant" means any person who agitated for women's suffrage in an unlawful manner.

Lastly but by no means least important is the seriousness of this problem from a police point of view. While some of the incidents may seem ludicrous now, only by understanding them in their most serious possible light can the police sense of this movement be appreciated. Extended debate over whether a woman had the right to present a petition to the king in person as he passed in parade may seem somewhat petty. But to police officials remembering the assassination of President McKinley in 1901, of Plehve in Russia in 1904, of King Carlos and his

son in Portugal in 1908, of Stolypin in Russia in 1911 or of Canalejas in Spain in 1912, that innocent-looking petition could easily disguise a demented person's pistol or bomb. In addition, the task of the police was not merely to prevent the militants from breaking the law; their task was far more difficult. They had to protect the public from the militants, certainly, but they also had to protect the militants from an angry, vengeful public, and while keeping these two groups from harming each other, they also had to protect property in the embattled areas as well as patrol the vast areas of London outside the immediate line of fire. Thus the militants were indeed a major police problem.

The truth is that most people have no real knowledge of a policeman's life. They do not know what he has to learn to do his day's work or of what that work really consists; nor why on one occasion he cautions a man who has broken the peace and on another takes him into custody. They do not know how he is supervised or controlled: how a station is organized; why a constable becomes a sergeant, a sergeant an inspector, an inspector a superintendent; or what the respective duties and responsibilities of these offices may be. Consequently, no sooner does some person with an axe to grind, or a grievance to air, stir up mud against the police than every one of us pricks up his ears and is ready to take seriously the most absurd lies and swallow the shallowest slander without a grain of salt. This is a very unsatisfactory state of things -- unfair to the police and dangerous to the public.

-- Times, December 24, 1908

CHAPTER I
THE PROTAGONISTS

In the spring of 1906 a small band of King Edward VII's female subjects decided to concentrate their suffrage agitation in London. By moving to the imperial capital, these women became one of hundreds of other little groups, each seeking redress from Parliament, and each under the watchful eye of what may have been the contemporary world's finest police force, the London Metropolitan Police.

Not quite eighteen thousand men of that force protected a population in excess of seven million.¹ Extending from Colney Heath, Hertfordshire on the north of Mogdore, Todworth Heath on the south to Lark Hill, Essex, on the east to Staines Moor, Middlesex on the west, the Metropolitan Police District covered an area of 699.42 square miles, roughly fifteen miles in all directions from Charing Cross.² Of course, this area exceeded the boundaries of the City of London and in fact took in the county of London except the City, all of

¹Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons), 1908, Vol. IX (Reports, vol. 4), sessional no. 353, 354, "Report from the Select Committee on the Police Forces (Weekly Day of Rest) together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes and Appendices," p. 26. (Hereafter: Report on Weekly Day of Rest).

²Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons and Command), 1908, Vol. I (Reports, vol. 40), Cd. 4156, "Report of the Royal Commission upon the Duties of the Metropolitan Police together with Appendices", Vol. I, p. 10. (Hereafter: Report on Police Duties).

Middlesex county, parts of Surrey, Essex, Kent and Hertsford counties, and the county boroughs of West Ham and Croyden. Protecting this large area while outnumbered better than four hundred to one required a remarkable degree of organization. The entire Metropolitan Police District was broken into twenty-two divisions: twenty-one were designated with letters of the alphabet while the last took the name of its patrol area, the Thames River. Divisions varied widely in size from the tiny 'C' division, St. James of only .76 square miles to the eighty-two square miles of 'S' division, Hamstead.³ Each division had one or more stations, and each station's territory was divided into units for individual constables to patrol, the "beat". These, too, varied widely in size: in densely populated areas, the constable might pass the same point several times in an hour; in outlying areas, some points were lucky to see a constable once in eight hours.

Naturally, the whole police system of London depended heavily on the constable. But by 1906, in W.S. Gilbert's words, a policeman's lot was "not a happy one", and was rapidly becoming worse. By modern standards, his working conditions were appalling, by the standards of the day, he was not very well off and was in fact falling behind the other professions. The working conditions of the constable merit a close look.

Although constables held responsible jobs, having to "... act upon emergencies, and to take all risks of personal injuries, official cen-

³Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons and Command), 1908, Vol. LI (Reports, vol. 41), Cd. 3771, "Report of the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis for the Year 1906," p. 25

sure or punishment, juridical reproofs, newspaper criticisms, actions for damages, criminal prosecution and even penal servitude,"⁴ they were given remarkably informal training. Eighty per cent of London's policemen came from the agricultural and labouring classes; as one commissioner said, "We like to take them straight from the plow; they are slow but steady; you can mold them into any shape you please."⁵ To join the force, the candidate had to be in reasonable health, of sound character, and to have certain minimum educational skills; he had to be able to pass a reading test from the royal reader number three, to count to 100,000, and to add, subtract, multiply and divide.⁶ Once satisfying these requirements, the candidate took three weeks of physical drill, followed by his first assignment, usually duty inside a station house.⁷ For the first six months, he was quizzed for an hour each fortnight on police regulations.⁸ Depending on his rate of progress, the new constable was soon given his own beat, where his sergeant kept a watchful eye on his development. Beyond this minimal formal training, the constable's expertise was very largely developed on the job.

Whether a man was a new recruit or a seasoned veteran, there were a number of serious drawbacks to being a policeman. Some of these un-

⁴Report on Weekly Day of Rest, p. 92.

⁵Commissioner Edward Henry to Raymond Fosdick. Raymond Fosdick, European Police Systems (New York: Century Company, 1915), p. 201.

⁶Report on Police Duties, p. 15.

⁷Walter Hambrook, Hambrook of the Yard: The Memoirs of Detective Superintendent Walter Hambrook, C.I.D. (New York: Ryerson, 1936), pp. 28-29.

⁸Report on Police Duties, p. 15.

pleasant conditions were unavoidable and accepted as such. These would include the often overlooked hardship of working at all hours in all weather. Round the clock and round the year, the bulk of the force worked outdoors. Rain, snow, heat, fog were ignored as the constable covered the regulation two and half miles per hour.⁹ The constable also accepted work at night, but the shift system used by the department seemed to aggravate the unavoidable hardship. Night duty was performed in one block, from ten o'clock at night until six o'clock in the morning. But the two day shifts each served in two blocks of four hours each; one shift worked from six to ten in the morning and returned to work from two to six in the afternoon, while the other day shift worked from ten to two and again from six to ten in the evening.¹⁰ At first glance this may seem insignificant, but it actually created hidden and uncompensated overtime, because the men were required to parade fifteen minutes before and after each shift. With these split shifts, the men were actually at the station an extra hour each day. The Commissioner saw nothing wrong with this: "It is not really hard work; they are talking together and chatting and do not do much work."¹¹ While the commissioner may not have been concerned, it did annoy the men. Many men on split shifts in inclement weather had to return to duty in their still wet uniform, which many believed

⁹Report on Weekly Day of Rest, p. 149.

¹⁰Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons and Command), 1908, Vol. L (Reports, vol. 40), Cd. 4260, "Minutes of Evidence taken before the Royal Commission upon the Duties of the Metropolitan Police; with Appendices and Index," Vol. II, p. 3.

¹¹Report on Weekly Day of Rest, p. 2.

caused colds -- certainly it did not help their health.¹²

There were other irritants in the service rules. Constables had to write reports on their own time. Again, this may seem a petty point, but for men with only a limited education, detailed reports were often a lengthy chore. And the department forbade policemen to hold part-time jobs, a reasonable requirement, but regulations also prohibited the officer's wives from holding jobs.¹³ For married men, especially those with children, this made ruthless personal economy essential. Bachelors were expected to live in the upper floors of the police stations or in nearby section houses, and 4,500 did so.¹⁴ While this gave the men all the advantages and disadvantages of living close to their work, it also made it easy to assemble a force of trained men in cases of sudden emergency, such as the Suffragettes were to cause.

There were many additional drawbacks to a police career. A sudden emergency would require men to remain on duty after their tour of duty, and the large number of parades, processions, state events and so forth required an average of 350 London policemen a day.¹⁵ Based on the average of sick leave, fortnightly holiday and vacation, the police commissioner announced that his men worked an average of forty-nine hours a week. However, the constable worked considerably more than this, for the average figure took into account the superior offi-

¹²Ibid., p. 108.

¹³Report on Police Duties, p. 15.

¹⁴Fosdick, European Police Systems, p. 241.

¹⁵Report on Weekly Day of Rest, p. 15.

cers, and they received a substantial amount of additional holiday time. Constables knew that they would not be paid for extra hours worked; rather, they would receive equal time off -- when the service could spare them.¹⁶ As to leave, the constable was off-duty, conditions permitting, one day out of fourteen, and also received ten days annual leave. But as another example of petty abuse, if the constable's annual leave occurred when he was due for his fortnightly holiday, he lost that day off.¹⁷

One last major grievance of the police was the inadequate sickness benefits. Sick constables reported to the division surgeon who certified them as unfit for duty. Once so certified, a constable lost one shilling per day for the first sixty-two days of sick leave, and twenty percent of his pay was withheld thereafter, unless the doctor reported that he needed his full pay for nourishment.¹⁸ Designed to prevent malingering, the system's financial provisions forced "... many men to neglect to report themselves unless quite unable to keep going. They dreaded the loss of 1 s. per day, the risk of being discharged as medically unfit, with the consequent loss of pension, and the deduction of sick leave from the time counted for pension."¹⁹

Assuming good behaviour, one reward for service under these conditions was a secure job. To a nation with periodic bouts of unemploy-

¹⁶Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁷Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. 135 (1904), pp. 918-919.

¹⁸Report on Weekly Day of Rest, p. 20.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 92.

ment, this was a strong inducement. Another was the regular pay. A constable began at 25 s. 6 d. a week and rose to a maximum of 33 s. per week. After twenty-six years of good service, he received a pension of two-thirds of his salary for the rest of his life. The pension plan was funded in large part by the two per cent deduction made from the pay of all constables.²⁰

When this pay scale was first adopted in 1886, it was reasonable, if hardly lavish. But the rate was no longer as attractive as it had been. From 1894 to 1913, the cost of living rose in England as did average national wages. But those on fixed wages, such as the police, found themselves increasingly worse off. Then too, by 1900 most workmen enjoyed fifty-two Sunday holidays, fifty-two half-holidays and six bank holidays, for a total of eighty-four days off. Policemen enjoyed twenty-six days of fortnightly leave, plus ten days annual leave, or less than half the average worker's time off. Relatively speaking, the police were working longer and their real wages were decreasing.²¹

In view of the drawbacks to police service, it is surprising that the force was able to attract men good enough to perform the mammoth task of policing London. Investigating suspicious noises, checking to see that doors were locked, aiding the drunk, and apprehending the petty criminal occupied most of the dark hours while daylight added directing ever-increasing traffic, giving directions, stopping runaway

²⁰Ibid., p. 20.

²¹J. P. Martin and Gail Wilson, The Police: A Study in Manpower: The Evolution of the Service in England and Wales: 1824-1965 (London: Heinemann, 1969), pp. 15-23.

horses, and telling time to passers-by. And each year saw Parliament add new duties, such as licensing hackney drivers. Then too, hundreds of common place tasks were discharged almost unnoticed. For example, the police seized 39,369 dogs in 1906 for violations of the Rabies Orders.²²

To effectively police the world's largest city required a high degree of organization. This was one of the Metropolitan police's strengths. Before each shift went onto the streets, it was briefed at the station concerning particular problems. A wave of petty burglaries, too many bicycles without lights, a scheduled political meeting might be mentioned. After these instructions, the section sergeant took each of his ten men to their particular beat. Throughout the shift, the sergeant roamed the area his men worked, both to assist them as needed and to see that they were working. A constable who confronted a criminal larger than himself or a band of crooks knew that a blast on his police whistle would bring help from all directions.

While sergeants and constables worked outside the station, each shift was commanded by an inspector, who was usually at the station. In addition to seeing to the needs of prisoners and callers at the station, the inspector had to listen to the constable's account of any arrest he made and to decide whether to hold or release the prisoner. While this duty took a great deal of time, it did serve as an important safeguard for the citizen against the new or overzealous officer's use of his authority.

²²Annual Report of the Commissioner ... 1906, p. 41.

Next in rank was the Chief Inspector of each division. His duties included keeping a watch on clothing, stores, equipment, unclaimed property, and so on. In addition, he frequently went out on an inspection of the division, watching both criminals and constables. The Chief Inspector thus served as the first assistant to the commanding officer of the division, the Superintendent. The latter enjoyed both great authority and great responsibility. He was accountable for discipline, strict compliance with police orders, and for the general management of the division. He could fine a constable up to two days pay and could reduce a man's pay for certain offenses, such as being drunk on duty.

While a great deal of attention was given to the views of superintendents, they too had superiors. The Metropolitan Police District was divided into three units, each headed by a Chief Constable, while a fourth Chief Constable had command of the Criminal Investigation Department. In addition to general administrative duties such as promotions and transfers, Chief Constables often took command at special events when thousands of police were required. The somewhat superfluous Chief Constables were in close touch with those who actually had their offices at Scotland Yard, the three assistant Commissioners and the Commissioner himself.²³

Up to this point, all the members of the force were promoted from the ranks. But the highest offices were given to outsiders:

'Once a constable always a constable' is the remark one often hears -- which is another way of

²³Report on Police Duties, pp. 12-13.

stating the argument that a man whose preliminary education and advantages were such that he could secure nothing better than a position as a patrolman, is not equipped to handle large questions in a large way, or deal administratively with the intricate business of a complex department.²⁴

So instead the department recruited outsiders deemed to have some special talents. For example, after thirty years of police supervision in India, Edward Henry was offered a post as assistant commissioner in 1901. Having installed his method of fingerprinting and having worked well with his colleagues, he became commissioner in 1903.²⁵

The general duties of this large force were apportioned among the assistant commissioners. One monitored clothing, appointments, and the care of police horses, while another checked on personnel and discipline. The assistants were alike in that each was a Justice of the Peace and each was appointed by the monarch on the Home Secretary's recommendation.

In charge of the entire Metropolitan Police Force was the Commissioner of Police. He, too, was a Justice of the Peace for every county in the Metropolitan Police District and was appointed on the Home Secretary's recommendation. His powers over the force were quite extensive: he could hire, fire, promote, demote, fine, suspend, or transfer any man on the force.²⁶ In addition, certain acts of Parlia-

²⁴Fosdick, European Police Systems, p. 160.

²⁵Sir Edward Richard Henry (1850-1931), After University College, London, to India, 1873; Inspector-General of Bengal Police, 1891. Assistant Commissioner for London, 1901; Commissioner, 1903-1918.

²⁶Report on Police Duties, p. 12.

ment gave him power to draft and enforce some rules and regulations that the public at large were required to obey, such as his authority to regulate traffic, both foot and wheeled, within one mile of the Houses of Parliament. This authority was usually employed only on major occasions such as the state opening of Parliament.

Yet even the Commissioner had superiors. He was responsible to the Home Secretary, and the Home Office maintained a subsection to handle Metropolitan Police affairs. While the Commissioner held wide powers, some odd exceptions accent the cooperation that had to exist between the Commissioner and the Home Office. For example, if a constable was convicted in a civil court of any offense, however trivial, the Commissioner could only retain that man by special permission of the Home Secretary.²⁷ Further, under the provisions of the Police Act of 1829, promotions could be made only with the permission of the Home Secretary, a duty successive Home Secretaries considered increasingly pro forma. Discovering this rule, one new commissioner wrote:

... for nearly a century promotions in the Metropolitan Police have probably been approved by some lower division clerk, who signed in much the same supercilious way as a shopwalker signs your bill when you buy a pair of socks.²⁸

These promotions as well as more serious matters were managed by the Criminal Department of the Home Office. Burdened with everything connected with the prerogative of mercy, criminal lunatics, disturbances and riots, extraditions, prisoners and prisons, coroners, and all

²⁷ Nevil Macready, Annals of an Active Life, Vol. 1 (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1925), p. 320.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 319.

the police forces in England and Wales,²⁹ this office seemed to look closely only at two classes of police reports: those answering questions raised in Parliament and those asking for authority to spend money. For example, from time to time a member of Parliament would give the Home Secretary private notice of a question about the police, such as whether they used excessive force to break up a particular assembly. That question would be passed quickly to the Police Commissioner who would call for reports from the senior police officials who had been present. He would then forward his version of what occurred to the Home Office, where the Criminal Department would draft a proposed reply for the Home Secretary. More often than not, the Home Secretary would simply read that answer to the House of Commons, and there the matter would end.

The second class of reports that received close scrutiny were those concerning finance. While an Act of Parliament allowed the Commissioner general authority to levy an annual rate, the exact rate had to be approved by the Home Secretary. Then too, any unexpected or additional expense, whether to install telephones in police stations or to hire five more men, also had to be approved. Thus the financial aspect of the police was controlled by the Home Secretary and the Commissioner-- not by Parliament:

The Metropolitan Police is the only police organization in Europe whose contemplated expenditures are not passed upon by some popularly-elected assembly of body ... In London, ... the tax is collected through the Overseers of the Poor under a general act of Parliament fixing a maximum rate; and all that Parliament

²⁹Report on Police Duties, p. 78.

ever sees is a somewhat colorless statement of expenditures at the end of each fiscal year. To be sure, the presentation of this statement in Parliament is occasionally the signal to the opposition for severe criticism of the Home Secretary's management of the police department, but so far as the question of budget control is concerned, the money has already been spent and the opposition is obliged to content itself with futile motions to reduce the Home Secretary's salary.³⁰

In general, the Home and the Commissioner's offices cooperated closely. Some Home Secretaries took a very active role in police affairs, giving specific orders to the Commissioner and instituting new or modifying old policies. The relationship between the Secretary of State and the Commissioner depended on many things -- their personal confidence in each other; the quantity and severity of recent criticism of the police; how much personal interest the Home Secretary happened to take in police affairs, and so on. Excluding the higher cabinet levels then, the human chain of command ran from the constable all the way up to the Home Secretary.

In addition, the constable was subject to General Orders and Police Orders. General Orders was a massive book of over five hundred pages, long pages of small type, that the constable was supposed to master. This book and a little common sense hopefully provided the correct response to any situation even remotely likely to arise. But even if the constable could remember all the provisions, some were difficult to interpret. For example, concerning riots General Orders announced "The first consideration should be the apprehension of the offenders

³⁰Fosdick, European Police Systems, p. 46.

and the dispersion of the crowd."³¹ Which of these two injunctions should the constable obey first, especially when one nearly precludes the other? The same section of General Orders also stated: "In arresting anyone for inciting to public disorder, or to riotous conduct, care must be taken that sufficient police are at hand to keep order." Thus if the constable waits until enough men are at hand to effect arrests, he ignores the provision to consider first the apprehension of the instigators. But even with such faults, General Orders were considered quite good: "wide discretion must be given, but upon the general rules I cannot very well conceive anything better calculated to give every single man in the force a knowledge of how he ought to perform his duties."³²

A second major source of instructions to the constable was Daily Orders, also called Police Orders. Serving as the principle means of communication between the Commissioner and his men, they were closely read by the members of the force. Daily Orders were issued each evening except Sunday from the Commissioner's office, and included such items as a forecast of problems imminently expected, a summary of lessons learned from recent events, announcements of new or revised policies, as well as the routine but important lists of promotions, transfers and resignations. From time to time, Daily Orders would contain lengthy

³¹General Orders (London: 1910), p. 745.

³²Testimony of Magistrate Sir Albert De Rutyn: Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons and Command), 1908, Vol. LI (Reports, vol. 41), Cd. 4261, "Minutes of Evidence of the Royal Commission upon the Duties of the Metropolitan Police", vol. 3, p. 1008.

extracts from General Orders which circumstances seemed to suggest should be recalled at the moment. For example, shortly before major demonstrations, Daily Orders would often contain a lengthy extract on "Meetings and Processions" lifted verbatim from General Orders.

One of the most important functions of Daily Orders was to make temporary assignment of men from one division to another in preparation for a large demonstration. For example, London's "A" Division contained a large number of public buildings, including the Houses of Parliament. After study of the request of the division superintendent for more men and his plans for deploying them, the Commissioner would order extra men -- often thousands -- to assist in such affairs as the state opening of Parliament, royal weddings, funerals, large political demonstrations, as well as the visits of important foreign dignitaries.

While Daily Orders thus provided the chief method for insuring adequate protection for scheduled events, spontaneous outbreaks of disorder were necessarily handled quite differently. The first officer who could be spared from the scene of disorder reported the affair to the station. The officer on duty would immediately send as many men as possible, including summoning those men who were off duty either upstairs in their rooms over the station or in the nearby station house. If still more men were needed, messengers by bicycle, telegraph or telephone would summon men from the nearby stations and neighboring divisions. The speed with which the police could concentrate a large number of men in a given spot was both a great source of pride as well as a great aid in preventing the disorder from getting out of control.

Once a person was arrested for rioting or for any other offense, the procedure was quite simple: the arresting constable took his prisoner to the station house where he told his side of the event to the inspector on duty. Once sure a reasonable case existed against the prisoner, the inspector could release him with the understanding that he report to the Magistrate's court in the morning, or, if the defendant seemed less reputable, the inspector could simply lock him in the station house cells until the Magistrate's court convened. Most prisoners were dealt with by the Magistrate's Court, where the constable gave his version of the incident, and then the prisoner, who may have been, but usually was not, represented by counsel, told his tale. Since Magistrates knew that the police usually advised a person to desist before arresting him for the less serious crimes, such as disorderly conduct, the Magistrate usually took the word of the policeman and fined or imprisoned the defendant. Cases involving serious crime, complicated legal issues, and appeals from Magistrate's courts were sent on to higher courts. But the vast bulk of offenses -- drunkenness, disorderly conduct, petty larceny -- ended with the magistrate's verdict and sentence. Unlike the American system, the Magistrate's Court did not contain an independent official whose job was to marshal the evidence against the defendant: rather, barring exceptional cases where the employment of outside prosecutors was sanctioned by the Commissioner, the arresting officer, with a little coaching from the magistrate's clerk, acted as both prosecutor and witness.

Reduced to its bare outlines, this was the system used to police London in 1906.

It is more difficult to describe the other party in this particular struggle, the militant suffragettes. The women are harder to categorize: their organization changed, their policy changed, their methods changed, their members changed; only their goal of securing the right to vote remained constant. Thus only some broad observations can be made at this point. First, all of the militants believed that women deserved the right to vote, that their lawful efforts to obtain the vote had failed, and that they were therefore justified in breaking the law as a means of seeking redress. Some militants saw the whole struggle as a simple issue of women being as good as men; others saw the vote as a means to correct social ills, such as child labor laws. But whatever the reasons, the women were frustrated in their peaceful efforts and so gradually turned to force, thus becoming a genuine threat to society, a society protected by the Metropolitan Police.

The women had nothing against the police when this movement began. Nor did the police have any grudges against the women. Indeed, each side seemed to have deeply appreciated the difficulties of the other. But as the women's policy became more and more militant, some excesses did occur: policemen did beat women, women did hurt policemen.

In any event, the militant women came from widely different backgrounds: from the immigrant Kitty Marion, a Westphalian actress to Christabel Pankhurst, a Bachelor of Laws; from the cotton mill

worker Annie Kenney to the educated Lady Constance Lytton.³³ The list of improbable partners extends on and on, demonstrating that what made this movement so strong, and from a police point of view so serious, was the women's total conviction of the righteousness of their cause.

The women had a wide variety of leaders and societies working towards the common goal. Foremost among the societies was the Women's Social and Political Union, the W.S.P.U.. Formed in Manchester in 1903, this group was headed by perhaps the greatest of women's leaders, Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst. At the risk of her civil service position, Mrs. Pankhurst came to London in 1906. She was assisted by an ever-increasing band of followers, including her two daughters, Sylvia and Christabel, as well as Annie Cobden-Sanderson, a daughter of Richard Cobden, and Flora Drummond, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, and hundreds of others.³⁴ As this group became more and more militant, some of these members dropped out or moved to other societies such as the Women's Franchise League (reorganized in 1907 under the leadership of Mrs. Charlotte Despard), or the Actresses Franchise League in which Kitty Marion was active.³⁵

³³Kitty Marion (1870-1944), from a music hall career became an active member of the W.S.P.U. and was many times arrested. Roger Fulford, Votes for Women (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 319. Christabel Pankhurst (1880-1958), one of the most important of the militant leaders; Annie Kenney (1879-1953), left the poor conditions of the cotton mills to become a trusted assistant to Christabel; Lady Constance Lytton (1869-1923): despite her social position, deliberately secured arrest and imprisonment. Fulford, Votes for Women, and D.N.B.. All these women will be studied in subsequent chapters.

³⁴Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960), organized London's East End for the militants. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1864-1943): wife of Fredrick Pethick-Lawrence, the couple who provided the professional management for the W.S.P.U.. Fulford, Votes for Women, pp. 321-322.

³⁵Fulford, Votes for Women, pp. 168 ff.

The women then, while united in objective, differed as to tactics and method. Some advocated only strictly lawful means, and deplored violence; others saw violence as the sole effective weapon. While the various groups cooperated in planning some meetings and demonstrations, not a little energy was lost in disagreements among them.

This, then, was the basic position as 1906 began: a modest movement, small in numbers, low in money, pitted against a large, experienced and effective police force. The story of how that conflict grew and how the police dealt with it will be told in the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

TAKING EACH OTHER'S MEASURE, 1906-1908

This, then, was our situation: the Government all powerful and consistently hostile: the rank and file of legislators impotent; the country apathetic; the women divided in their interests.¹

On December 8, 1905, London witnessed its first skirmish with the new breed of Suffragettes. Tired of demure representations which had achieved nothing in forty years, the new Suffragettes determined to have their goals brought dramatically to the attention of both the Government and the public. The new Liberal Government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had arranged a rally at London's Albert Hall to celebrate their succession to office. Much to their surprise, a banner was suddenly lowered from one of the boxes demanding "Votes for Women". An eyewitness to this wrote some time later than the banner:

was the signal of a new attack in the rear. Another Richmond was in the field. The Trojan host was in ruins, but the Amazons were upon us.²

Such a mild demonstration did not of course persuade that meeting to endorse women's suffrage, but it did merit a few lines in the press. That was its purpose, and recruits began to trickle in to the newly

¹Emmeline Pankhurst, My Own Story (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1914), p. 58.

²A. G. Gardiner, Prophets, Priests, and Kings (London: Alston Rivers, Ltd., 1908), p. 258.

opened branch of the Women's Social and Political Union, the group responsible for the banner. Led by just a few women including Annie Kenney and Mrs. Emmeline Pankhurst, the Union soon rented Caxton Hall, a short walk from the Houses of Parliament, for February 19, 1906, the opening day of the new session. The organizers of the W.S.P.U. passed out handbills, chalked notices on sidewalks and did all they could to advertise the gathering. When the meeting opened, this hard work was rewarded with a crowd of nearly four hundred women who were disappointed when the news arrived that there was no mention of women's suffrage in the King's speech. Mrs. Pankhurst then asked for volunteers to go to the House to protest the omission. A deputation of fifty women left for the stranger's entrance to the House, St. Stephen's Gate.³

It was at this point that the procession, the first suffragette procession in London, became a police affair. Under the provisions of the annually enacted Sessional Order of the House of Commons, the Commissioner of Police was responsible for preventing processions and demonstrations within one mile of Parliament while either House was in session, and to keep the entrances and exits clear and unobstructed.⁴ This responsibility was routinely delegated to the police inspector on duty at the Houses of Parliament. Since non-official traffic entered only by St. Stephen's gate, this duty was seldom a problem: the occasional throng of visitors was usually awed by its surroundings and good natured enough to respond promptly to suggestions from the small

³Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 54.

⁴See appendix A, p. 243 for the text of the Sessional Order.

detail of police on duty there. Constables at the gate had standing orders to prohibit large groups of petitioners from entering: not only would admission set a bad precedent, leading to ever larger groups of petitioners, but groups might become unruly, especially if denied their request. The police believed one or two delegates could easily transact the business of a larger group. When the fifty women arrived, the police refused to admit them. However, passing Members of Parliament persuaded the police to admit them in groups of twenty. They spoke to various Members and then left quietly.⁵

The next morning, Police Orders contained its annual summary of the Sessional Order. In addition, Superintendents were ordered to:

instruct the Constables at all times to prevent or remove any cause of obstruction, and afford every facility for the free passage of Members to and from the House at all times; and when for any cause whatever, there may be any reason to expect the assemblage of a number of persons in the vicinity of the Houses of Parliament, a report is to be made immediately to the Commissioner, who will issue such notice and make such arrangements as may be necessary.⁶

That this order followed the women's demonstration by just a day seems to have been sheer coincidence. As far as the police were concerned, there had been a minor incident, similar to many others. But to the women, it was the first step on the path to a Parliamentary redress of their grievance.

The women soon took a second step. Since the Prime Minister's endorsement would help their cause, they resolved to see Campbell-

⁵Standard, February 20, 1906.

⁶Police Orders, MEPO 7/68, February 20, 1906.

Bannerman in person. On March 9, a group of thirty-five women went to call at 10 Downing Street. When they knocked on the door, they were told the Prime Minister would not see them and the door was slammed in their faces. Angered, one woman knocked again and was arrested: a second woman then pulled what she believed was a knocker but which to her surprise opened the door: she was arrested; a third woman began to give a speech denouncing these arrests until she too was arrested. All three were taken to nearby Cannon-row police station, but were released an hour later. Mrs. Pankhurst told an interviewer: "the superintendent at the police station apologized for the arrests ... The blame rested with one of the attendants at Downing Street who instructed the police to clear the women away."⁷ Later that day, Superintendent Wells wrote his report of the incident:

This was obviously a carefully planned affair -- if they attend again and create disorder Police will be compelled to deal with them from a purely police point of view in the interest of Public Order.⁸

The police would have been hard-pressed to find an appropriate charge for such a "trivial" offense. Simply standing on a doorstep was hardly unlawful. Fortunately, for the police, there was a catch-all provision of the law which sanctioned arrests for "obstructing a police officer in the performance of his duty". Since standing on those steps blocked the doorway and might attract a crowd of spectators, a crowd which might become a nuisance by blocking the sidewalk or becoming

⁷Daily Chronicle, March 10, 1906.

⁸Police Orders, MEPO 2/1016, March 9, 1906.

rowdy, the police often used this vague provision to encourage persons to "pass along please". Since the Magistrates generally had a high opinion of the police and knew that the police usually cautioned before arresting under this act, the magistrates almost always accepted the police version of an arrest.⁹ Properly used, this law was a very useful tool for the police, but what constituted proper use was, of course, open to question.

These first arrests of suffragettes provoked little public comment. The Home Secretary was asked in the Commons why these women were "taken publicly through the streets to the police station and after being detained for some time, were ultimately discharged without any charge against them?" Herbert Gladstone replied that the Prime Minister himself had requested that no action be taken against them.¹⁰

But the women were not finished with Parliament. Under the rules of the House of Commons, members drew lots for the privilege of introducing a private member's bill. Since ten minutes were allowed for such bills, a member could block one by simply talking until the time ran out. Chance gave Keir Hardie the opportunity to present the women's suffrage resolution on April 25. To witness its fate, a number of women, including Mrs. Pankhurst, sat in the Ladies' Gallery. The women murmured in support of some speakers and against others. Hearing these

⁹Report on Police Duties, Vol. III, pp. 1019 and 1028.

¹⁰Herbert John, Viscount Gladstone (1854-1930). A son of Prime Minister William Gladstone, he was Undersecretary to Home Secretary Asquith in 1892, and Chief Liberal Whip, 1899; became Home Secretary in December, 1905. D.N.B. Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. 155, col. 1585.

not very loud sounds, the Speaker ordered extra police into the Gallery in the hopes of preventing a scene.¹¹ That failed when the women noticed the police behind them and the ten minutes nearly gone. Fearing their cause lost and themselves about to be evicted, the women shouted "Votes for Women!" and "Divide! Divide!". The police immediately showed the women out, and the resolution was talked out.¹²

This demonstration did little to help the resolution before the House; in fact, it harmed it. Samuel Evans, who was speaking against the bill when the women shouted, paused a moment before adding "Could there be any stronger argument (against women's suffrage) than what has just occurred?"¹³ The benefits from this scene came from outside the House. Up to this point, most of the London newspapers had all but ignored the issue of women's franchise, but this incident provoked comment. For example, the Daily Mail reported "The debate ... was interrupted by a scene in the Ladies' Gallery unexampled in the history of Parliament." The Daily Chronicle asserted that a number of members who had been indifferent to the question were now hostile and that the ringleaders of the demonstration would no longer be permitted in the House of Commons Gallery.¹⁴ Perhaps this demonstration did hurt the resolution, but it also provided considerable publicity for the move-

¹¹ James Keir Hardie (1856-1915), at this time leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party; also the founder of the newspaper Labour Leader. Daily Mail, April 26, 1906.

¹² Daily Chronicle, April 26, 1906.

¹³ Samuel Evans (Liberal, Glamorganshire), Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. 155, April 25, 1906, col. 1585.

¹⁴ Daily Mail, April 26; Daily Chronicle, April 27, 1906.

ment. And since the women needed to convert the ministers, either directly or through the pressure of converted constituents, this wave of publicity was a bonus to them.

Having performed a number of unexpected acts in a short time, the police began to pay more attention to the Suffragettes. When the women went to interview Campbell-Bannerman, who finally received them on May 19, the Prime Minister advised them to "go on pestering", but he also told the ladies he would not introduce a suffrage bill.¹⁵ Then the W.S.P.U. announced a Hyde Park demonstration of working women from Lancashire for May 20. Taking the women seriously, Police Orders assigned seven hundred and fifty men gathered from fourteen divisions to patrol the crowd. Not knowing what to expect, Police Commissioner Edward Henry printed an extract from General Orders in Police Orders:

Police are expected to show good temper and forbearance in dealing with crowds, but they must take prompt measures to check deliberate attempts to provoke disorder.

The message further reminded the police that standard policy was to patrol each group making up a procession, to keep all detachments together, to keep the route free of both traffic and spectators, and to follow each detachment if the main body split up.¹⁶ In short, these women were to be treated in exactly the same way as any other protest group.

But there may have been more police than demonstrators at this particular meeting, for the demonstrators had "an abundance of enthu-

¹⁵Times, May 21, 1906.

¹⁶MEPO 7/68, May 17, 1906, pp. 441-444. See Appendix B, p. 244.

siasm but a lamentable paucity of numbers."¹⁷ This points up another police problem, that of having the appropriate force -- neither a dangerous too few or an expensive too many -- on the scene. As with other movements, the police would have to learn by experience.

With no bill before Parliament and with Campbell-Bannermann's advice to "go on pestering" still fresh in their minds, the women continued their efforts to see cabinet ministers at their homes and to interrupt their public meetings. During a Liverpool meeting, Lloyd George was so annoyed by the constant interruptions that he hollered "Why do you not go for your enemies? Why do you not go for your greatest enemy?" The crowd responded "Asquith, Asquith", for it was widely believed that he was the minister most against women suffrage.¹⁸ He was.

The W.S.P.U. wrote to Asquith in early June asking for an interview, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that he saw only deputations connected with his official business. The women responded that since his office drafted the taxes women paid, he should see them. When this letter went unanswered, the women wrote again, announcing that a deputation would call at his home in Cavendish Square on June 19.

When the women arrived as scheduled, they were advised that Mr. Asquith had already gone to his office; the detachment calling at his

¹⁷Morning Post, May 21, 1906.

¹⁸Herbert Henry Asquith, later Lord Oxford and Asquith (1852-1928), Home Secretary 1892-94; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1906-1908; Prime Minister, 1908-1916. D.N.B. Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled: The Story of How We Won the Vote (London: Hutchinson, 1959), p. 65.

office were told he had not yet arrived. Actually, he had been smuggled out the back door of Cavendish Square.¹⁹ The women milled around in front of his house and showed no signs of leaving, so the few constables patrolling the square asked the ladies to move away from the doorway into the open area of the square. The women moved away, but Chief Inspector Okly wrote: "Should these women persist, though it is not Mr. Asquith's wish, it may be necessary to deal with them." The endorsing superintendent added: "These women may become very troublesome and Police might have to act."²⁰

The Suffragettes became troublesome just two days later. Again refused an interview with Asquith, a band of women including Theresa Billington²¹ and Annie Kenney again paraded outside his house. This time the women refused to move into the square. Consequently, the police arrested three women for 'using behaviour whereby a breach of the peace may have been occasioned.' Miss Billington thought the police were being excessively forceful with their unresisting prisoners and in retaliation she slapped a policeman and was arrested. Whether the police first pushed the women around and were then slapped or were slapped without provocation was hotly contested: each claimed the other side was the aggressor. The police inspector on the spot insisted his

¹⁹Commissioner Edward Henry to Home Office, June 25, 1906. HO 10345/141956/3.

²⁰MEPO 2/1016, June 19, 1906.

²¹Theresa Billington, afterwards Theresa Billington-Greig: born 1877; after teaching in Manchester, joined W.S.P.U., author of numerous Suffragette books and articles. Fulford, Votes for Women, p. 310.

man was slapped first.²² Miss Billington was taken before the magistrate's court where she refused to plea or to call witnesses, denying that the court had jurisdiction over a woman. Found guilty, she was given the choice of a £10 fine or two months in jail. Since she believed to pay the fine was to admit guilt, she surprised the court by accepting jail and becoming one of the first suffragettes to go to prison.²³

Miss Billington did not care about the jail term; her real goal was to attract publicity for the movement, and from that point of view her activity was a success; most newspapers carried at least a brief account of the incident, and some public discussion followed. For example, the Home Secretary received an unsolicited letter from an annoyed observer:

I certainly hope that you will be firm in the matter of these shameless females arrested yesterday for rioting in Cavendish Square. Thousands of decent people of both sexes and all parties are looking to the Authorities to put an end to the tomfoolery that has been going on ... comparatively unchecked. These creatures have forfeited the consideration their sexes might otherwise have given them.²⁴

Gladstone also received a note from Asquith:

I had, of course, nothing to do with the prosecution of these silly women, which was undertaken by the Police on their own responsibility in the interests of public order. But I need not say that I should be delighted if you could see your way to investigate or annul the sentence of the magistrate.²⁵

²²MEPO 2/1016, June 21, 1906.

²³Times, June 22, 1906.

²⁴Arch. Fibbs to Herbert Gladstone, HO 45/10345/141956/21, June 22, 1906.

²⁵Herbert Henry Asquith to Herbert Gladstone, June 22, 1906. Gladstone Mss., Vol. 45989, f. 146.

Taking this hint, Gladstone personally looked into the matter. Among the information he received were letters from the women involved, all claiming that the police had provoked the incident:

... Miss Billington was accosted by the police immediately she appeared before her intentions were known, just as though the police had been lying in wait for her. She was assaulted by the police before she retaliated.²⁶

In addition, Gladstone received at least five other letters from women eyewitnesses who reported essentially the same thing. The W.S.P.U. tried to keep the pot boiling; in a Hyde Park meeting on June 24, it carried a motion that

This meeting expresses its indignation at the unjust and vindictive sentence ... nominally for an assault on police, but in reality for seeking an interview to demand from Mr. Asquith a withdrawal of his long opposition to the enfranchisement of women.

Sympathy with the women's movement was growing so rapidly that almost identically-worded resolutions were also received from the South Leeds Socialist Union, the Bramley Labour Representation Committee, and several branches of the Independent Labour Party.²⁷ But Gladstone also wanted to hear from the other side, and so he asked Commissioner Henry for a full report. Henry replied at length: after recounting the various deputations outside Downing Street, Henry went on:

In consequence apparently of the supposed declared opposition to the movement by vague members of the Cabinet, the band of female agitators re-

²⁶Edith Martyn to Herbert Gladstone, June 24, 1906. HO 45/10345/141956/12. See also Z 6083.

²⁷HO 45/10345/141956/5.

cently transferred their attentions to Mr. Asquith's house in Cavendish square, which they have closely invested, compelling him to escape from the stable entrance on at least one occasion. On 21 June, an inconvenience (was) caused to neighbours and passersby (so that the police asked the women to move to the open square.)

Every possible effort has been used by the police to quietly disperse the assemblages of the Suffragettes and, in the performance of an obviously difficult duty, the officers engaged have invariably shown the utmost forbearance towards these unruly and excited women, but on the exceptional occurrence referred to there was no alternative but to arrest the ringleader.²⁸

With specific reference to the account of Edith Martyn, Henry reported that there was "no foundation" for her charges.²⁹

Having reviewed all the reports, Gladstone decided the wisest course was to follow Asquith's suggestion. The Home Secretary wrote to the sentencing magistrate and secured his approval for commuting the sentence to one month.³⁰ This exercise of the Home Secretary's prerogative was to have important subsequent consequences. Gladstone's action did not satisfy Miss Billington who told a Hyde Park crowd on June 27 that the police had grabbed her by the throat before she resisted.³¹ Although this case brought further publicity for the Suffragettes, not all of it was favorable. Punch wrote an open letter to Miss Billington which declared "There is nothing like hysterical violence to show people how admirably suited (women) are to have the

²⁸ Sir Edward Henry to Home Office, June 25, 1906. MEPO 2/1016.

²⁹ Sir Edward Henry to Home Office, June 24, 1906. HO 45/10345/141956/12.

³⁰ HO 45/10345/141956/3, June 25, 1906.

³¹ Daily Chronicle, June 28, 1906.

franchise."³² On the other hand, Keir Hardie told the Commons that the excessive sentence of two months was imposed by a magistrate who had also been the chief steward at a meeting Miss Billington had interrupted.³³

On July 4, Magistrate Paul Taylor finally sentenced the other women arrested with Miss Billington. They were ordered to post a bond of £50 for their good behaviour and a surety to keep the peace for a year or face six weeks in jail. The magistrate then commented that he was sorry the women had rejected the olive branch he offered, and warned that the women "could not be permitted to paralyze the law"; neither the magistrate nor the police would permit it.³⁴ When their sentences were nearly over, and without explanation, Gladstone ordered them released from prison one day early.³⁵ While he may have meant this simply as a good will gesture, the public was mystified: "This (release) was attributed to the fear of the Government that the women were dangerous" commented the Standard though how the Government arrived at that conclusion was not explained."³⁶

While some Suffragettes continued to heckle ministers, most spent the summer seeking converts to their cause. One of their more effective methods was frequent meetings in Hyde Park. On Sundays, they could

³²Punch, July 4, 1906, p. 10.

³³Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. 160, July 5, 1906, col. 330.

³⁴Times, July 5, 1906.

³⁵HO 45/10345/141956/21, July 31, 1906.

³⁶August 15, 1906.

draw three thousand or more people. While such activity was entirely lawful, it did cause additional work for the police. For example, the department drafted over five hundred men from fourteen divisions to guard one meeting in July.³⁷ The police role at these meetings was to keep the audience from blocking traffic as well as to keep rowdies from harming the suffragettes. At a meeting on August 25, for example, after Mrs. Cobden-Sanderson announced "At present Mr. Asquith is sheltered behind his butler and the magistrate", the police had to keep an eye on unruly youths who yelled "rot!", "fools!", and "shut up!"³⁸ While not a major strain on the police it nonetheless absorbed police time and public money.

After this relatively quiet summer, Parliament reassembled for the fall session. On October 3, 1906, a number of Suffragettes went to Stranger's gate, but the police admitted only twenty to St. Stephen's hall. These women sent for the Chief Liberal Whip who advised them that the Government did not intend to introduce a women's franchise bill. The women immediately decided to hold a protest meeting in the Hall, but the police quickly ejected them. The women had accomplished nothing except to tip their hand, and the police, expecting repetition, assigned more than forty additional men to the area.³⁹

The wisdom of this augmentation was demonstrated on October 23 when a number of women entered the hall in ones and twos as though wait-

³⁷Police Orders, MEPO 7/68, June 30, 1906.

³⁸Times, August 25, 1906.

³⁹MEPO 2/1016, October 23, 1906.

ing for a member; then, on signal, they began to "make a rumpus". Acting under the sessional order, the police evicted the participants. Some tried to reenter the building and were arrested.⁴⁰ The prisoners were taken before Magistrate Curtis Bennett,⁴¹ and the Police Commissioner sent his own solicitor,⁴² Mr. Herbert Muskett, to prosecute. In the course of his remarks, Muskett revealed that the Suffragettes were becoming a real nuisance:

(Muskett) did not propose to give any undue importance or exaggeration to the case at all, but to ask his Worship to deal with it as an ordinary case of disorder in the public street. The authorities said that this kind of thing must be put a stop to. It might be dealt with in a more serious way, but certainly that course would not be taken; it gave by far too great an importance to the agitation, which was causing so much trouble to the authorities of London.⁴³

The women were found guilty, and as was becoming standard, chose prison.

The Suffragettes did not expect protests such as these to influence Parliament directly; rather, by forcing the question to the public's attention, they hoped to engender more debate and thus more converts to their cause; the converts would then influence Parliament. But while these disorders attracted notice, it was seldom favorable.

⁴⁰Standard, October 24, 1906.

⁴¹Sir Henry Curtis Bennett, 1846-1913; from a law career moved to the bench, Metropolitan Police Magistrate at Bow Street.

⁴²The Metropolitan Police had no legal department. When legal aid was required, the Commissioner had to authorize his own solicitors to act for the police. For many years, the firm of Messrs. Wontner and Son held this assignment, until the workload became too much for them, and a legal department was created in 1935. MEPO 2/5936, a reference I owe to Mrs. E. Browning of the Records Office, New Scotland Yard.

⁴³Morning Post, October 25, 1906.

The Times, for example, already hostile to women's suffrage, pounced on the October 23 incident:

It is all excessively vulgar and silly, but it offers a very good object lesson upon the unfitness of women to enter political life.... The worst of mob rule is the rule of a feminine mob: and we trust that neither Mr. Asquith nor any other Minister will allow himself to be a party to the utter debasement of political life that would be involved in yielding to the clamour of a mob.⁴⁴

The movement was not discouraged however: meetings continued, a crowd of 2,500 "mildly sympathetic" persons turning out on November 5, when Christabel Pankhurst announced the Suffragettes were not yet finished with Parliament, since it was the "best place" for their demonstrations.⁴⁵ The women also continued their policy of breaking minor laws. Chased away from giving a speech at the statue of Richard I outside Parliament, one woman returned to the same spot for the same purpose the next day, when she was arrested and fined 10 s..⁴⁶

This and countless other petty offenses were taking hours of police time, hours of court time, and space in prisons. By the last weeks of 1906, what had started so mildly just months earlier was developing into a major problem. By the end of the year, the authorities were seeking an appropriate response:

We have had another shower of Suffragettes. They came before Horace Smith today, and he fined them 20/ or 14 days. Mr. Gladstone fully agrees with his view that it is no use increasing the punish-

⁴⁴Times, October 25, 1906.

⁴⁵Morning Post, November 5 and November 12, 1906.

⁴⁶Times, November 20, 1906.

ment for repeated offenses. These women want to pose as martyrs or make a fuss in Parliament. Their contemptible little offenses are much best met by contemptible little punishments.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, Gladstone himself gave some thought to this growing problem, and he wrote to Chalmers:

I think it might be advisable to instruct the Commissioner as to whether it would not be good policy to clear away these people when they assemble without arresting them. Of course arrests may be necessary if there is persistence in disturbance, but the object seems to be to create disturbances near to the House of Commons. I do wish a minimum of imprisonment could be imposed, it would be more (punitive?).⁴⁸

Asked for his opinion on this proposal, Henry replied:

The police are most anxious not to arrest even when a disturbance takes place in the House of Commons, what the police do is to gradually force out those disturbing the peace -- they are gradually forced out of the House, then out of the street and it is only finally, when they continue their disturbance, and the crowd is getting altogether unmanageable that the Police arrest. These persons are determined to be arrested and continue their disturbance until this has been effected.

I quite agree that a mild punishment is most effective and that they should be offered no opportunity of claiming the crown of martyrdom but the time comes when their removal from the street is necessary to prevent the crowd from increasing beyond the power of the police.

Reading this exchange of opinions, the perceptive and prophetic Charles Troup⁴⁹ added:

⁴⁷M. D. Chalmers, Permanent Undersecretary, Home Office to Sir Albert DeRutzen, Chief Magistrate, Metropolitan Police Courts, December 14, 1906. HO 45/10349/147337/2.

⁴⁸Gladstone to Chalmers, December 19, 1906. HO 45/10349/147337/2. Henry, Troup, and Gladstone each wrote their remarks, one after the other, on this file.

⁴⁹Sir Charles Edward Troup, at this time head of the Home Office Criminal Department, afterwards Permanent Undersecretary.

There is another consideration worth remembering. If the Police were to go on pushing the Suffragettes out of the way and not arresting, there would come a point where the ladies might change their ground and say the Police were assaulting them, using brute force to persons who they dare not arrest and charge with any offenses.

When all of this was laid before Gladstone, he wrote on the bottom of the file:

I fully appreciate the difficulties -- the Police have acted with all possible forbearance.

While the authorities tried to decide how to cope with the women, the Suffragettes planned a new march on Parliament. A "Woman's Parliament" was convened in Caxton Hall for February 13, 1907, the day after the opening of the Imperial Parliament. When Mrs. Pankhurst announced to the Caxton Hall audience that the speech from the throne contained no reference to woman's suffrage, a deputation of several hundred women left for the Palace of Westminster, which was protected by more than five hundred constables.⁵⁰ The police broke up this procession in the first great clash between the Suffragettes and the police. When the women reached the green in front of Westminster Abbey, mounted policemen rode into the deputation. The ladies then clung to the Abbey railing, from where the constables "dragged them out into the road and flung them like bales of cotton."⁵¹ Also, "The mounted men backed their horses onto the pavement, where the procession was, and many of the women were thrown to the ground and hurt".⁵² "The women split up into little groups

⁵⁰Morning Post, February 14, 1907.

⁵¹Daily Chronicle, February 14, 1907.

⁵²Times, February 14, 1908.

shrieking and affrighted at the intervention of the mounted police."⁵³

No one doubted that the police used some force to keep the procession away from the House as the Sessional Order required, but whether excessive force was used was the question of the hour. Some observers claimed that the police were brutal: "foot police seized them by the back of the neck and rushed them along at arm's length, thumping them in the back, and bumping them with their knees in approved police fashion."⁵⁴ Another asserted that for five hours or more, a struggle quite indescribable for brutality and ruthlessness, went on ... (Some women) took refuge in doorways, but they were dragged out by foot police and were thrown directly in front of the horses."⁵⁵ A Daily Chronicle story all but accused the police of at least one case of perjury:

Seizing her by the arm the inspector beckoned to one of his constables who though he was close at hand could have seen nothing of the woman's conduct. 'Here you are', said the inspector, 'take this one. Now you know what she's been doing, don't you?' The constable nodded and took his captive in charge. What he charged her with is difficult to surmise.⁵⁶

The most serious charge was that the police were ordered to use violence:

Orders had been given to the police to 'break up' the procession. To do the police justice they did not like the job at all. It is not a pleasant thing for a lot of huge men to push and pull and tear at a lot of women and

⁵³Standard, February 14, 1906.

⁵⁴Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931) p. 253.

⁵⁵Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 82.

⁵⁶February 14, 1907.

girls.... We had much sympathy with them in their difficulty. Under their ridiculous orders they could hardly have acted otherwise than they did.⁵⁷

Viewing the action of the police with "regret mingled with shame", the Tribune charged the police with having "signally failed in the performance of their duty. They had been warned in time, and it was a simple question of strategic competence to take adequate steps to bar the entrance to St. Stephen's in such a way that conflict should have been useless and violence unnecessary."⁵⁸

Not all the press comment was hostile to the police. On the contrary, the Standard insisted: "The sangfroid with which the police went about their duty was commendable. Their tempers were tried again and again, but, preserving the greatest good humour, they endeavoured to persuade the demonstrators to go away. Their task was no light one." The Pall Mall Gazette supported the police:

To defy the law; ... to engage in fisticuffs with the police full well knowing that though she may knock off the constabulary casque, her own bonnet is as the Ark of the Covenant, upon which no profane hand will be laid; to hit, kick, scratch -- and then to blame the unfortunate police for failing to hand her to the station with the same ease and elegance with which a lady should be taken down to dinner -- all this may be profoundly feminine, and in a sense it is.

Aware of the charges and counter-charges, the Pall Mall Gazette also observed:

Unfortunately, it is difficult to make arrangements in advance for the presence of impartial referees, and the subsequent evidence of excited players and spectators as to whether this particular policeman or that

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸February 14, 1907.

particular lady preserved unruffled temper and stuck strictly to the rules is liable to discount. Perhaps a foul ought to have been given against the police for mistaking a female representative of the Tribune for a Suffragette, and on the other side against Miss Maria King who boasts that she hung on to a Member of Parliament's coattail, saying 'If you go to the House, I go as well.' But many cases are as doubtful as the attempt of the lady who charged the swinging door of the lobby and sustained damage from it because a Member blocked it with his foot.⁵⁹

The action of the police, proper or excessive, continued to fill the press for some days. In accordance with tradition, the police issued no public statement. Privately, however, Henry reviewed the matter and then reported to the Home Office that "no brutality or unnecessary violence was used", only enough to prevent forcible entry.⁶⁰ Then too, when tried for her part in the disturbance, Christabel Pankhurst told Curtis Bennett that the Suffragettes "did not wish to charge the police with exceeding their orders," and, perhaps most significantly an investigation by Superintendent Wells showed that no woman had visited a doctor or hospital in the immediate vicinity after the disturbance. Of the fifty-six persons tried, only one had a complaint against the police.⁶¹ Of course injured women may have been treated elsewhere and they may have elected not to prosecute individual policemen because they saw them as mere tools of the unjust authorities,

⁵⁹ Standard, February 14; Pall Mall Gazette, February 15 and February 14, 1907.

⁶⁰ Sir Edward Henry to Home Office, February 19, 1907. MEPO 2/1016.

⁶¹ Christabel: Pall Mall Gazette, February 14, 1907. Wells: MEPO 2/1016, February 19, 1907. Complaints: Muskett to Chief Clerk, New Scotland Yard, February 16, 1907, MEPO 2/1016. By the end of this demonstration, 130 women had already been arrested just in 1907. Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 86.

but the fact remains that only one charge was filed. Lady Francis Balfour,⁶² herself dedicated to women's franchise but by strictly lawful means, may have presented the fairest summary of this incident. In a letter to the Times of February 15, she first announced that she had observed the police very carefully because she expected they would be accused. Her letter continued:

No one can say their work was easy. A mob of men resisting the police in the execution of their duty would have been met with a baton charge. The women used all the physical courage of which they are capable, and showed a gallant disregard for the superior force which they attacked. There may have been cases where individual constables lost their temper. One man at least was heavily struck full in the face, and large numbers lost their helmets.... If sightseers were injured, no one must complain, if they go out to see a pitched battle, when a stray bullet grazes their person.... It is not fair that the gloves be taken off on the (woman's) side only. Women cannot use physical force and expect to meet a snowdrift in the persons of the police. They must not fire under cover of the red cross of Geneva. The women were courageous, and the police were not forbearing in the use of a strength they must not exhibit. It was magnificent, but not war.

When the clouds of controversy died down, only one concrete result was visible: St. Stephen's was closed to women unless accompanied by a member.⁶³ Then too, besides the women, only one newspaper seemed to have appreciated the real significance of the riot, and even that understanding was marred:

In short, your suffragist seems to have learned from your suffragette that the shortest way to get the thing you want is to make yourself a nuisance until

⁶²Lady Francis Balfour (1858-1931): Married Eustace Balfour, younger brother of A. J. Balfour. Worked in non-militant women's suffrage movement, author of books and articles advocating women's suffrage. D.N.B..

⁶³Globe, February 14, 1907.

you get it.... You can never tell what women will want next; and the history of catastrophies through the ages is there to show how she has generally had her way.⁶⁴

The police also learned from this experience and made arrangements to increase their strength in the vicinity in the event of renewed demonstrations. Police officials also began to identify and keep an eye on the Suffragette leaders. For example, the senior officer at Westminster wrote: "I feel sure (Miss Mary Gawthorpe) will be one of the first to organize a demonstration in the vicinity of the House should the coming bill be unsatisfactory to them."⁶⁵ Inspector Jarvis was correct; the bill he mentioned was talked out on March 7, and a resolution in favor of women's suffrage sponsored by Sir Charles McLaren was blocked on March 13, when Maurice Levy, an opponent of women's suffrage, gave notice of an adult suffrage bill. Since Levy knew this bill could not pass, he was deliberately abusing the House rules to block the genuine resolution of McLaren. Even those newspapers most hostile to women's suffrage were offended by Levy's maneuver. The Morning Post, the Times and the Standard all regretted the method used; the Post foresaw fresh violence while the Standard believed the "lady agitators will redouble their energy."⁶⁶ The papers were correct: the women marched again on March 20, 1907.

The police were fully prepared this time. More than one thousand men were on duty, but the women were not deterred. Although the police

⁶⁴'Suffragists' used strictly constitutional methods; 'Suffragettes' referred to the militants. Pall Mall Gazette, February 13, 1907.

⁶⁵MEPO 2/1016, March 5, 1907.

⁶⁶All in the editions of March 9, 1907.

had "special instructions to use no more force than necessary", violence still occurred: "time after time the thoroughfare around the House of Parliament became scenes of the wildest chaos. Motor-omnibuses, cabs, and private carriages were mixed up with the crowds of spectators, the arrested women, and the police."⁶⁷ Once again, an exact account is hard to obtain: Mrs. Pankhurst alleged "This time the police met the women at the door of the hall and another useless, disgraceful scene of barbarous, brute force opposition took place" while the Pall Mall Gazette joked "the storming party was repulsed by the garrison with a loss of more than seventy prisoners," and added "the police, as usual, behaved admirably "⁶⁸ In view of the controversy over the February demonstration, the newspapers had begun to pay more attention to the conduct of the police. The Daily Chronicle observed:

As usual, the police were on excellent terms with the leaders of the movement and at ten-thirty Miss Christabel Pankhurst drove up in a cab with Sub-divisional Inspector Laughlin from Caxton Hall to Cannon-row police station in connection with the bailing out of the last few prisoners.

The Tribune reporter who had earlier in his story confessed sympathy with the Suffragettes, interviewed a constable:

I'll own it isn't nice. But it's duty. We're really not rough -- at least, most of us. Some men lose their tempers easier than others, and push a bit hard or grip a bit tight. They say they'll go to the House. The authorities say they shan't, and we've got to stop them somehow.

The Daily Chronicle also noticed that bystanders were becoming an increasing problem at these demonstrations: "As fast as two women were

⁶⁷Daily Mail, March 21, 1907.

⁶⁸Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 85; Pall Mall Gazette, March 21, 1907.

hustled away from one point, two more appeared somewhere else, and to add to all the disorder, the spectators, who quickly numbered hundreds, became inextricably involved in the struggle."⁶⁹ Thus the police had to contend not only with the Suffragettes themselves but with ever-growing crowds and their contribution to the general congestion. After all, the women's main offense was violating the Sessional Order; just by being there, the crowd did the same, as well as forming a great target for pickpockets. Scotland Yard began to deal with this last aspect by assigning men from the Criminal Investigation Department to watch for pickpockets.⁷⁰

These repeated demonstrations were beginning to put a strain on the Metropolitan Police. While some persons and newspapers worried about the opportunities for crime in the areas left unprotected when officers concentrated at Westminster, so too did the Commissioner. For the demonstration on March 20, Henry had summoned the reserves from all the surrounding divisions, and some of those men were on night duty, which meant that they had to stand an unbroken double tour.⁷¹ To protect the undermanned areas, Henry fell back on his only alternative at this time, doubling the beats of the remaining men. Naturally, he felt this was unsatisfactory, but he had no choice.

While Henry worried about the outlying areas, a fresh problem arose at the demonstration of March 20. This time two officers were charged with excessive violence. Since the women had linked arms and refused

⁶⁹Daily Chronicle and Tribune of March 21, 1907.

⁷⁰Standard, March 22, 1907.

⁷¹Daily Mail, March 21, 1907.

to let go, the police had to wade among them, breaking them up. In his report about this complaint, Superintendent Wells of 'A' division included this exchange with one of the accused: "What did you do when told to break them up?" "I walked in among them with the other constables and we parted the women so as to disorganize them, this required a certain amount of force, but no unnecessary violence was used." Inspector Jarvis backed up his men fully: "There may have been some struggling which was inevitable in cases where some of the women refused to let go of each other's arms."⁷² Commissioner Henry was particularly competent to report on this incident since he had taken personal command of his men at the demonstration. He wrote to the Home Office that his presence had been a restraint on the men, and that "I believe that the men had been so well instructed that they quite realized the importance of dealing most gently with the ladies, and I believe that on the whole no unnecessary force was used and this is the view of most persons who were spectators." Annoyed at criticism that his men should not have interfered just outside Caxton Hall, he also declared:

I am satisfied there were indications in the conduct of the Suffragettes coming from the Caxton Hall meeting which called for police action to prevent disorders. I also find such action was carefully taken and properly controlled, and was unbiased by anticipation of what might occur elsewhere.... Two police officers of long and exemplary service have been named and I am of the opinion the accusation against them is unjustifiable.⁷³

⁷²Wells: April 2, 1907. Jarvis: April 3, 1907. MEPO 2/1016.

⁷³Henry to Home Office, April 6 and March 28, 1907. MEPO 2/1016.

For the time being, the Suffragettes suspended these painful marches to Westminster and moved in less dramatic ways. These included street corner meetings, numerous letters to newspapers, and button-holing any prominent person who would listen. For example, Christabel Pankhurst professed to be guided by a sympathetic Lord Robert Cecil: "... the W.S.P.U. will, in dealing with the House of Lords at this stage, be guided by the advice given by yourself and other prominent members of the Unionist party...". She also wrote to Balfour "We have to make this question ripe before it is possible for you to act."⁷⁴ Fully aware of the necessity of keeping the issue before the public, an enormous number of letters to editors flowed from Suffragette pens, male and female. For example, the Times published a letter from a Helen Taylor on April 22 urging that women refuse donations, subscriptions and bequests to any organization that failed to endorse women's suffrage. More and more meetings took place: in October alone, seventy-one large ones were scheduled, only half of which were in London.⁷⁵ Some of the best orators of the day conducted those meetings, such as an Exter Hall rally addressed by Israel Zangwill. In his remarks, Zangwill pointed out that when the women were non-violent, the Times said there was clearly no desire among women for the suffrage; yet when they were violent, the Times held them as unfit to vote. Now, then, Zangwill demanded, were they to win? Mrs. Millicent Fawcett made the same point some time later when she protested to the Times that a meet-

⁷⁴Christabel Pankhurst to Lord Robert Cecil, May 22, 1907. Cecil Mss., Vol. 51158, f. 112 r.. Christabel Pankhurst to Arthur James Balfour, October 28, 1907. Balfour Mss., (provisional) Vol. 49793, f. 32.

⁷⁵Votes for Women, October, 1907.

ing of her non-militant society raised £600 simply by passing the hat, a considerable achievement, but not recorded in the Times, while a few women hecklers at Bow-street on the same day found their exploit reported.⁷⁶

In the last months of 1907, the women continued their mild strategy. The Kensington Committee of the W.S.P.U. invented a questions and answers game: "When does Mr. Lloyd George vote for women's suffrage? When there is no chance of their getting it", and "Do women want the vote? No, they sign petitions for fun."⁷⁷ While the women did continue their policy of heckling cabinet ministers, there was little the police could do about it, because it was not illegal. In fact, sensitive to the consequences of interfering at a political meeting, General Orders insisted: "It is no part of the ordinary duty of police to preserve order at such meetings or to secure an uninterrupted hearing for the speaker."⁷⁸ Most newspapers condemned the interruptions: the Westminster Gazette of November 18 was fairly typical:

They do not interrupt because something is said with which they disagree: they go to the meeting with the deliberate and indeed avowed object of making themselves a nuisance. They do that, not because they think their conduct is per se defensible, but because they think it pays. We think it both indefensible and inexpedient, but that is a difference of opinion which we know is not likely to be composed.

When the women began to heckle magistrates in their courts, however, the police quickly evicted them.

⁷⁶Israel Zangwill (1864-1926), novelist, philanthropist, and political commentator. Zangwill: Times, March 9, 1907 Fawcett, Times, November 23, 1907.

⁷⁷Votes for Women, November, 1907.

⁷⁸Genreal Orders (1910), Rule XXXVI, sec. 9. MEPO 8/7.

As far as the police were concerned, there was no major tangle with the women in 1907 after the March demonstration. But to be prepared for future events, the divisional superintendents began to send a man in street clothes to the larger meetings. This officer reported on what was said and on announcements of future meetings and demonstrations. The police hoped this would give them ample warning, and valued this intelligence system.⁷⁹ Nor did they fail to follow up: when the officer at Rochester Row station asked for ten additional men to guard a Caxton Hall meeting, Superintendent Wells, a prudent man, sent thirty-four.⁸⁰ Thus by the end of 1907, the police were constantly monitoring the Suffragettes and had learned to take them very seriously.

With the opening of the new year, the Suffragettes added a new weapon to their arsenal. While the Cabinet met at Downing Street on January 17, 1908 to plan for the new session of Parliament, two women chained themselves to the railing outside the front door. The police removed the locks and the women without "undue violence".⁸¹ This incident attracted wide publicity. Punch ran an advertisement: "CHAINS! CHAINS! CHAINS! Very strong, with automatic policeproof padlocks and railing attachment complete. State waist measurement."⁸² A few days later, Lloyd George passed along to Gladstone a note warning of an

⁷⁹Superintendent Walter Burmly to Scotland Yard, MEPO 2/1016, June 17, 1907.

⁸⁰MEPO 2/1016., June 12, 1907.

⁸¹Times, January 18, 1908.

⁸²January 29, 1908.

imminent Suffragette disturbance.⁸³ That vague note may have referred to the next move by the Suffragettes, an attempt to hand a petition to the King as he passed the Victoria Memorial on his way to open Parliament on January 19. Four women stepped off the curb with a petition in one hand and a little banner printed "Petition to their Majesties" in the other:

To the authorities and the multitude alike the banneretts were meant to convey the assuring intelligence that the objects of the ladies were quite harmless -- that they had neither bombs nor dynamite concealed up their sleeves.⁸⁴

It was precisely this possibility which most frightened Scotland Yard. A genuine assassin would hardly so advertise himself, and an insane person could easily disguise himself as a Suffragette, even if the women themselves were harmless. While the police on duty stopped the women from getting to the King, other unnerving incidents went along with this one, including two successive days of sieges of cabinet ministers in their homes. Violating the custom that ministers were not subject to official calls at their private residences, deputations of Suffragettes rang the bells at the homes of Haldane, Asquith, Grey, Harcourt, Birrell and others. At Grey's house, a typical example, the women persistently rang the bell and knocked at the door until a crowd of about one hundred fifty persons gathered. When the police finally asked the ladies to move on, they refused and were arrested for obstructing the police in the performance of their duty, their duty in

⁸³January 22, 1908. Gladstone Mss., Vol. 45986, f. 78.

⁸⁴Daily Telegraph, January 30, 1908.

this case being to keep the sidewalk clear.⁸⁵ While some people found this pestering of cabinet ministers quite amusing,⁸⁶ the police foresaw the possibility of personal attacks on both ministers and the King. Alarmed, Henry ordered Muskett to prosecute the door-bell ringers. Muskett told the Court:

The Suffragette nuisance is becoming intolerable, and it is very difficult to know how the police authorities could cope with it. The commissioner did not know from day to day what provisions he would be called upon to make -- what steps were necessary to take to stop these scenes of disorder. Every tolerance had been shown, and now the police would really have to be supported in their efforts to maintain public order.⁸⁷

Ignoring Muskett and trying to work up support for a new bill before Parliament, the Suffragettes marched again on February 13. The police again met them at the door of Caxton Hall, as a letter to the Times on February 17 from an Edith Kerwood reported:

As we emerged from the Caxton Hall, we seemed to come to a sea of constables, the road was full of them, and there can be no question about it, we were immediately attacked by the police.... Is England to be made a laughing stock and a byword in the eyes of the world because the police force of London is called out to protect the members of the House of Commons from a handful of women?

A second letter from Constance Williams also criticized the police.

... the bitterest (Suffragette) enemy must have been surprised and shocked by the action of the police. It was obvious that the officer in charge of the men lost his head. He was shouting excitedly 'Break their ranks'

⁸⁵Ibid., January 31, 1908.

⁸⁶'Just as a distinguished Frenchman once said that the funeral oration added another terror to death, so the militant female suffragist and the crusade she represents, add another terror to Cabinet responsibility ... he knows not the day or the hour' Ibid.

⁸⁷Times, January 31, 1908.

where there were no ranks to break, and nothing more formidable than a group of rather scared and bewildered women and girls.

Siding with the police critics, the Daily Chronicle of February 14 published a picture of a mounted constable titled The London Cossack and reported on February 12:

A jeering, laughing crowd soon joined the throng, and it was interesting to see how quickly the rabble of idlers and urchins gathered from the side streets to add by their rowdyism to the confusion.

Muskett prosecuted the fifty women arrested at this demonstration and all but two of them chose jail. These arrests brought the total number arrested in just the first two months of 1908 to seventy-two, of whom fifty-three had served or were serving their sentences.⁸⁸ With no end to this problem in sight, Muskett ended his prosecution of these February offenders by threatening to invoke an old law dating back to Charles II:

No person whatever shall repair to his Majesty or to both or to either of the Houses of Parliament upon pretense of presenting or delivering any petition, complaint, remonstrance, or declaration or other address accompanied with an excessive number of people, nor at any one time with above the number of ten persons.⁸⁹

Mrs. Pankhurst responded to this challenge by leading a deputation of thirteen persons from Caxton Hall to Parliament. But when she was arrested, Muskett did not charge her under this act, perhaps because he feared this would require trial before a potentially sympathetic jury. Because he failed to carry out his threat, Muskett was taunted by Annie

⁸⁸Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 4th ser., Vol. 184 (1908), col. 1330.

⁸⁹Times, February 13, 1908.

Kenney who asked him in court "Why does not Mr. Muskett explain?

He held a sword over our heads the other day, now he is showing the white flag."⁹⁰ A Suffragette newspaper, Woman's Franchise, was also critical in its February 20 issue:

Our venerable magistrates having raked among the scrap-heap of legislative garbage for some instrument of vengeance fitted for the annihilation of women who demand justice, have triumphantly brought to light an act passed in the reign of Charles II.

But tying up police, police courts and prison cells with unrepentent Suffragettes was solving nothing. As Inspector Wells suggested: "What is desired is that order should be maintained, as few arrests as possible being made."⁹¹ To add to Commissioner Henry's anxiety, British newspapers were suddenly filled with gory accounts of the simultaneous assassination of the King and Crown Prince of Portugal.⁹² Due to both domestic and foreign developments, the Commissioner ordered body guards for those ministers who did not already have them; the royal family was already well protected.

The Commissioner returned to the question of how to deal with the Suffragettes in the first days of February. In conferences with his solicitors, the Home Office and senior police officials, Henry reviewed all the applicable legislation and then sent new orders to all Superintendents on February 12. The revised orders required that the Suffragettes be charged with some or all of the following: first, willfully and wantonly disturbing the peace, particularly useful against

⁹⁰Ibid., February 15, 1908.

⁹¹MEPO 2/1145, February 2, 1908.

⁹²Christian Commonwealth, February 5, 1908.

bell-ringers; second, using insulting words or behavior; third, resisting or willfully obstructing the police in the performance of their duty; and last, obstructing the free passage of the highway. The Commissioner also required that the police obtain the services of Messers. Wontner and the prosecution of all Suffragette prisoners.⁹³

By March 21, Muskett found himself obliged to tell the magistrate:

Has not the time now come when this misguided band of women, who are endeavoring to change a Constitution by unconstitutional and illegal means, should not be more severely dealt with?

Muskett went on to say that the Commissioner feared "very serious scenes" of "very great disorder" unless stronger action was taken.⁹⁴

Muskett apparently had failed to clear this statement with Henry, who was by this time convinced that arresting the women played right into their hands by making martyrs of them. Thus he advised Gladstone of his proposed strategy for an imminent meeting:

The ladies will not be opposed unless and until they deliberately transgress by coming in procession. We should break up a procession and we might do so -- but we should endeavor to do so without arrests. Finally if arrests are to be made they will be arrests of persons who in spite of the warnings persist in trying to effect a forcible entry of the House. I hope there may be very few of these if any.⁹⁵

While some of the women continued their pattern of petty offenses, the leaders devoted their time to preparing very large demonstrations for June. The various constitutional suffrage societies joined forces

⁹³Edward Henry to All Superintendents: MEPO 2/1145, February 12, 1908.

⁹⁴Times, March 22, 1908.

⁹⁵Henry to Gladstone, March 26, 1908. Gladstone Mss., Vol. 46065, f. 201-02.

in a procession of ten thousand women on June 13, a parade that stretched two miles long and enjoyed "the paternal assistance of the London police, experienced as they are in such demonstrations."⁹⁶ Then on June 18

With a 'Votes for Women' in place of the 'Jolly Roger', a body of Suffragettes made a piratical descent on the House of Commons in a Thames steam-launch, just when members and their friends were taking tea on the terrace. The police prepared to repel boarders, but the lady who captained the suspicious craft contented herself with a defiant speech, and then the vessel turned and steamed back to its moorings.⁹⁷

This boat was actually an advertisement for the most ambitious demonstration yet planned, this time under the direction of the W.S.P.U.. Their preparations included arranging for twenty special trains to bring contingents from all over England, as well as the erection of twenty speakers' platforms complete with four speakers assigned to each, and for the printing and distribution of thousands of posters and handbills.⁹⁸ Commissioner Henry also took these plans seriously. In addition to suspending all fortnightly leave, he drafted the extraordinary total of two thousand men to patrol this demonstration.⁹⁹

All of these preparations came to a dramatic climax on June 21, 1908. Even the women were amazed at their success. In perfect weather, with all the arrangements working splendidly, London witnessed an unprecedented sight. Even the usually staid Times enthused on June 22:

⁹⁶Times, June 15, 1908.

⁹⁷Daily Telegraph, June 19, 1908.

⁹⁸Times, June 20, 1908.

⁹⁹Police Orders, MEPO 7/70, June 19, 1908.

The organizers of the demonstration had counted on an attendance of 250,000. That expectation was certainly fulfilled. Probably it was doubled; and it would be difficult to contradict anyone who asserted it was trebled. Like the distance and the number of the stars, the facts were beyond the threshold of perception.

A less impressed Morning Post of the same day put the number of between two and three hundred thousand, and reported the police admitted they had never seen so many people at a Hyde Park demonstration before.

A jubilant Votes for Women asserted "... it is no exaggeration to say that the number of people present was the largest ever gathered at one time at one spot in the history of the world".¹⁰⁰

The numbers were undeniably large, but so too were the problems for the police. First, the police were invaluable in marshalling the various contingents of the huge parade. Indeed, "the police and the ladies were on the best of terms ... Cannon-row, like Waterloo, was forgotten during the temporary entente between the force and the voteless politicians...."¹⁰¹ The police set up a command post by Reformer's Tree in the park and stationed a reserve force there. It was summoned several times, once to help keep order near Mrs. Pankhurst's platform.¹⁰² In addition to the anti-pickpocket squad from C.I.D., the police were also called upon for some more strenuous work. With so many people surrounding each platform, many people would from time to time surge forward, without malice, better to hear the speaker. This action would crush the first rows up against the platform. To protect both the plat-

¹⁰⁰ June 25, 1908.

¹⁰¹ Standard, June 22, 1908.

¹⁰² Daily News, June 22, 1908.

forms and the people nearest them, the police moved between the people and the platform: they were rewarded with unintentional but painful crunching. Then too, small groups of opponents seemed to threaten some speaker's platforms; mounted men kept them from getting out of hand.¹⁰³

Accounts of this massive demonstration indicate that the crowd was so large that no one paper had enough reporters on hand to cover all its various incidents and aspects. While agreed about the huge attendance, most newspaper coverage was shaded by the paper's position on women's suffrage. For example, the Pall Mall Gazette of June 22 published a letter from a woman spectator who thought the police were abused:

Vulgar chaff was shouted at the Suffragettes, noisy songs were sung, ugly rushes were made at the platforms until ... many were escorted from the platforms by the much-despised sex. Presently the anxiety increased, and a whistle was blown, and police constables hurried to the rescue. This did no good: it irritated the crowd and they continued to rush at the platform with renewed anger.... I must say it seemed very hard that a minority of troublesome women should be allowed, first, to rouse the crowd to a state of disgust and indignation and then instantly call for the protection of the police because they had got the reward they so richly deserved.

The police, still aware of the recent criticism against them, tried their very best to be helpful, and most newspapers agreed with the Times of June 22 that:

... the conduct of the police was beyond all praise. They were in force, but a force that among that multitude was almost negligible; and yet quietly, but effectively, they managed to assert their influence, without those who submitted to it being conscious of its exertion.

¹⁰³Daily Telegraph, June 22, 1908.

The W.S.P.U. was grateful:

The Police, as ever on these occasions, cooperated most helpfully in directing traffic and making way for processions and speakers.... As a mark of appreciation of the service rendered ... the W.S.P.U. addressed to the Commissioner of Police a letter of thanks with donations to the Police Orphan and Police Relief fund.¹⁰⁴

This meeting concluded with the passing of a resolution by acclamation calling on Asquith, who had become Prime Minister in April 1908, to introduce woman's suffrage. Despite the vast turn-out, Asquith declared that the meeting left him unmoved. Upon hearing this, Mrs. Pankhurst decided that since argument had now been exhausted, the W.S.P.U. had to return to violent demonstrations. She announced plans to present a new petition to the Prime Minister at the Commons on June 30, and the W.S.P.U. issued handbills inviting the public to witness the march.¹⁰⁵

Commissioner Henry realized at once that such a crowd was not only illegal but potentially dangerous. The Commissioner therefore wrote an open letter to the public which most newspapers published:

The W.S.P.U. having called a meeting for 8:00 p.m. on 30 June, the Commissioner of Police thinks it is advisable to warn the public of the danger necessarily created by the assembling of a large number of persons in a restricted area, through which wheeled traffic will be passing, and passages through which must, under Sessional Order, be kept open and unobstructed to afford members of Parliament access to the House.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 95.

¹⁰⁵Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette: The History of the Women's Militant Suffrage Movement, 1905-1910 (New York: Source Book Press, 1970), p. 249.

¹⁰⁶Times, June 30, 1908.

Having little belief his letter would influence any but the most timid, Henry also decided to change his strategy. Since Gladstone had been among the critics of the police policy of breaking up the processions as they left Caxton Hall, Henry advised him:

An embarrassing situation might be created if we attempt to prevent the deputation reaching the House. What I propose is to allow them to reach the door of the House where, on arrival, the police on duty will refuse them admittance and they would then return to ... their meeting. Any subsequent development can be dealt with in the ordinary way.¹⁰⁷

Again Henry summoned two thousand men, and again he needed them. In the afternoon, a small deputation led by Mrs. Pankhurst left Caxton Hall: they were escorted by police to the House, as Henry had planned, where the Inspector on duty refused them admission. Mrs. Pankhurst then returned to report to the other militants at Caxton Hall. That evening was very different. The Suffragettes emerged from Caxton Hall at eight o'clock into a sea of 100,000 people waiting to see what would happen. As little bands of women attempted to reach the House, the scene was essentially a replay of the previous marches: the police simply broke up the women without arresting them. Sylvia Pankhurst insisted it was "harder than ever to get arrested."¹⁰⁸ But there were two differences: first, this time the crowd was more hostile to the women so that 'the policemen, the Suffragettes supposed enemy, often proved to be their salvation."¹⁰⁹ According to Mrs. Pank-

¹⁰⁷ Henry to Gladstone, June 30, 1908. Gladstone Mss., Vol. 46065, f. 320.

¹⁰⁸ Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 286.

¹⁰⁹ Daily Telegraph, July 1, 1908.

hurst, "From the steps of public buildings, from stone copings, from the iron railings of Palace Yard, to which they clung precariously, our women made speeches until the police pulled them down and flung them into the moving, swaying, excited crowds."¹¹⁰ Yet the Times and the Daily Telegraph both insisted the police rescued women over and over again from the angry crowd. Again, the mounted police played an important role: the Times called them "the one influence to which the mob responded instantly", and the Telegraph declared "The mounted men were of splendid service, keeping the dense crowds in motion, and now and again completely clearing the way of rough gangs."¹¹¹

The second difference of this demonstration developed in Downing Street. Outraged by the violence they witnessed, Mary Leigh and Edith New tossed a stone through the window of the Prime Minister's residence. While waiting their trial next morning at Bow Street, they sent a message to Mrs. Pankhurst that since their action was unauthorized Mrs. Pankhurst should feel free to repudiate them; she hurried to the cell to congratulate them.¹¹² The breaking of one window was hardly a major crime, but it was the first violent act, and marks the start, however small, of real militance.

The aftermath brought little criticism of the police. In fact, "the people appreciated the difficulties under which the police laboured."¹¹³

¹¹⁰My Own Story, p. 118.

¹¹¹Both on July 1, 1908.

¹¹²Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 286.

¹¹³Daily Telegraph, July 1, 1908.

For a few brief months, the police returned to favorable publicity and friendly relations with the Suffragettes. Most of the favorable comment followed the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Police. The commission investigated various charges against the police such as corruption and false arrests, and found the charges almost entirely baseless. For example, the Report noted that the police made 127,317 arrests in 1905, of which only one in five thousand was found not justified. The Telegraph was pleased with the report: "No eulogy could be higher, and, we honestly believe, none was any better deserved."¹¹⁴ Even Charles Troup of the Home Office Criminal department was impressed: "This report was written with extraordinary care and thoroughness and gives a definite and clear opinion on every point coming within its reference."¹¹⁵

Then too, even the Suffragettes were kind to the police at this point. For years the Metropolitan police had sponsored an orphanage and other charities primarily through the proceeds of their annual sport show at the Crystal Palace. Scotland Yard had always cooperated with the men by allowing thousands to take their annual leave in time to participate. But in the summer of 1908, the Suffragettes scheduled a meeting for the same day, and the Commissioner was obliged to cancel the leave of two thousand men. As soon as the Suffragettes realized this, they cancelled their meeting and so informed the police.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵HO 45/10523/140292/99; July 2, 1908.

¹¹⁶Daily News, July 2, 1908.

This demonstrates that while both sides may have had momentary grievances, there was still a large reservoir of good will between the antagonists.

The rest of that summer was free of mass demonstrations. The militants were dormant, carrying on only peaceful activities. Small numbers of pickets took up vigils at various places, such as outside the House of Commons whenever it was in session. When the women outside St. Stephen's asked for permission to sit there on campstools, the Commissioner opposed it as setting a bad precedent.¹¹⁷ The police also maintained a guard over Cabinet Ministers, sending plainclothesmen to Churchill's wedding, for example.¹¹⁸ While in fact the ministers were not harmed, the police could never be sure such protection was unnecessary, and without those bodyguards the ministers might have become targets.

The Suffragettes also continued their heckling of Cabinet Ministers. Seeking to justify this unpopular policy, Votes for Women argued on August 6:

The 'People's House' is closed to us. If we send deputations, police bar the way. If we persist in the attempt to effect an entrance, we are arrested and imprisoned. We cannot see (ministers) on our business at his private house. If we write for an appointment, we are refused. If we ring his doorbell, we are arrested and thrown into prison. The only place where women of the country can see public servants who have usurped tyrannical power over them is when these public servants face a public meeting.

¹¹⁷Sir Edward Henry to Home Office, HO 45/10338, July 8, 1908.

¹¹⁸Standard quoted in Votes for Women, September 17, 1908.

But the militants had not given up. They spent much of September and October planning another large demonstration. As part of their publicity campaign, the W.S.P.U. arranged an evening of surreptitious poster handing: women arrived at the Union's headquarters in Clement's Inn by twos and threes, hoping to convince the police they were having just a small party. Then the ladies sneaked out between three and four in the morning so that London awoke on October 12 to find posters glued everywhere, especially on public buildings and the front doors of ministers' homes.¹¹⁹

This was a prelude to the major demonstration planned for October 13. The Suffragettes first conferred with Henry about their plans, and Henry informed Gladstone that the Pankhursts "Promised that there shall be no organized window breaking or violence in other forms, but they cannot be responsible for the acts of individual women over whom they have no disciplinary control."¹²⁰ Meanwhile, the women printed handbills which read: "Men and Women, Help the Suffragettes to Rush the House of Commons on Tuesday, October 13 at 7:30 PM."¹²¹

With both plenty of warning and plenty of experience with the Suffragettes, Henry was able to make extensive preparations. Still believing that the fewer arrested the better, Henry advised the Home Secretary of his plans:

¹¹⁹Theresa Billington-Greig to Mrs. Arncliffe Sennett, October 6, 1908. Sennett Collection, Vol. 5, p. 29; Star, October 12, 1908.

¹²⁰Sir Edward Henry to Gladstone, October 10, 1908. Gladstone Mss., Vol. 46066, f. 65.

¹²¹Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 104.

I propose to keep Parliament Square, that is the green plots and the pavements all round them clear of spectators, who will therefore have to take up their places on the opposite pavement, being separated from Parliament Square by the carriage way on all sides.... (Cordons of police will block all traffic). The public will not be allowed in Downing Street. Special arrangements will be made to facilitate the passage of members who come into Charles Street through the Foreign Office, so that they may reach the House....¹²²

Henry's plan worked to perfection, which tremendously impressed the Daily Chronicle of October 14:

The scene in Parliament Square was extraordinary -- perhaps the most astonishing scene ever seen in this place of history. The police, with masterful strategy, aided by a really vast force of men, had entirely cleared the place of people and they formed a hollow square enclosing an absolute solitude.

But to cordon off such a large area required a vast number of men: while the police admitted having five thousand men on hand, newspaper estimates went as high as eight thousand.¹²³ To concentrate so many men, Henry had to cancel leave for the whole Metropolitan district. Also, Henry was coming to see the great value of the mounted men: for this march, he summoned every mounted man on the force, even from as far away as Croyden and New Barnet. Some of these horsemen started for Westminster just after midnight. The Commissioner also extended the shifts of the day shift and summoned the night watch hours early. He even prepared for an attack by water: he stationed two hundred men on the House of Commons terrace, which faces the river, and placed a

¹²² Sir Edward Henry to Gladstone, October 12, 1908. Gladstone Mss., Vol. 46066, f. 71-72.

¹²³ Daily News, October 14, 1908.

number of police patrol boats on watch.¹²⁴ The massing of all this police power, as usual, upset the Times which on October 14 lamented "the concentration of the police at Westminster is the opportunity of the lawless portion of the population elsewhere." The Pall Mall Gazette quoted a "Scotland Yard expert" on the reasons for all these preparations:

Tonight there will probably be a big turn-out of the rascality of London. These men and youths are out to do anything that comes to their hands, whether it be picking pockets or adding weight to a rush. These gangs must be broken up and kept on the move, and if any unfortunate incident or accident occurs the police are blamed.

If an arrest has to be made, the danger is immensely increased. The mob converges on the prisoner and his or her escort, and there have been occasions when it was only with the utmost difficulty that those in the center could maintain their positions. No one, least of all the Suffragettes, can complain of any lack of patience or self-control on the part of the police but if the threats for tonight are carried out the character of the persons from whom the most trouble is feared will render more vigorous methods than have been employed before absolutely necessary.¹²⁵

In addition to all the usual, if stronger, defensive preparations, the Commissioner also struck out offensively -- he ordered his solicitor to obtain a summons against Mrs. Pankhurst, Christabel Pankhurst and some other leaders of the movement. The legal document handed to the ladies said:

Information has been laid this day by the Commissioner of Police that you ... were guilty of conduct likely to provoke a breach of the peace by initiating and causing to be published a certain handbill calling on and in-

¹²⁴Daily Express and Pall Mall Gazette of October 14; Votes for Women of October 15, 1908.

¹²⁵October 13, 1908.

citing the public to a certain wrongful and illegal act, viz.: to rush the House of Commons at 7:30 p.m. on October 13 inst..¹²⁶

The recipients of the summons decided to go into hiding overnight rather than to report to the court that afternoon as required. When the police learned they were not coming, they immediately obtained bench warrants for their arrests. However, the officers were unable to find the leaders before they presented themselves at Clement's Inn the next day at 6:30 p.m.. The women had chosen to surrender at this hour because they knew the court would be closed, and they hoped to be freed on bail in time to lead the demonstration later that night. But bail was refused, and they spent the night in jail.¹²⁷

Deprived of some of their leaders, Henry may have felt the demonstrators would be easier to control. He was to be disappointed. Since the rush was planned for 7:30 p.m., the cautious Commissioner, wishing to be prepared for surprises, began massing in the area at 2:30 p.m.. But the women came right on time, and as usual, accounts of what happened vary greatly. One Suffragette wrote:

The police, including plain-clothes men (ruffians) posing as the hostile crowd, broke our ranks by shouldering in and pushing us away in every direction, and as each of us tried to proceed singly towards the House, petition in hand, two and three policemen, one on each side taking us by the arm and shoulder, quite unnecessarily pinching and bruising the soft underarms, with the third officer pushing at the back, would run us along a little distance and fling us, causing most women to be thrown to the ground

¹²⁶Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 104.

¹²⁷Emmeline Pankhurst, My Own Story, pp. 120-122.

unless they were big and strong enough, like me,
to lean well back while being run.¹²⁸

Miss Marion was hardly an impartial source, and the violence she described seems to have been an isolated incident. Still following the Gladstone-Henry policy of making as few arrests as possible, the outer perimeter of police, five men deep, simply shoved the women back into the crowd. After hours of this, the mounted men were ordered to clear the square, leaving only twenty-six prisoners, but fourteen persons were treated at Westminster Hospital for various injuries.¹²⁹

The use of so many mounted men, nearly one thousand, was a new feature of the police response. It was quite effective: "tactful horses trained to obey the slightest move of hand or heel" simply rode broadside into the throngs which melted away.¹³⁰ Nearly all the newspapers reported the police arrangements and conduct in favorable terms. The Daily Mirror praised their "tact and patience", the Daily News thanked them for preventing "disasterous rioting", the Daily Chronicle regretted their being given 'difficult and unnecessary work' and the usually detached Standard enthused:

... no praise is too great for the excellent way in which the men under the personal supervision of Sir Edward Henry did their work last night. Kindly, courteously, but firmly, they refused to allow anyone who did not possess credentials to pass through their lines...it was with a fatherly, almost compassionate air that two constables led (a prisoner)

¹²⁸Kitty Marion Mss., p. 173; brackets in original.

¹²⁹Daily News, October 14, 1908

¹³⁰Morning Post, October 14, 1908.

to Cannon-row police station and at its doors -- released her.¹³¹

But the Pall Mall Gazette of October 14 seemed conscious of some of the less obvious repercussions of these demonstrations:

The police are able to cope with any foreseen emergency, but they cannot be everywhere at once, and a concentration of strength in one locality has very obvious dangers and inconveniences. It would be comparatively easy matter to create a false alarm in one quarter of the Metropolis while serious mischief was set afoot in another district left relatively unprotected. There is the further consideration, too, that special duty of this kind, repeated week by week, is a heavy drain on the physical resources of the police force, and must interfere very seriously with the efficient performance of their ordinary duties.¹³²

While newspaper reporters and crowds watched the Suffragettes so too did many of the political leaders. Henry Lucy noted in his diary:

Through the early part of this week the precincts of the House of Commons have more resembled an armed camp than the scene of legislative labors.... Towards half past seven, ... ministers and members strolled down to watch events from safe quarters within the jealously-guarded railings. For fully half an hour the Home Secretary, an unwarlike figure in a tall hat, stood watching....¹³³

Gladstone's curiosity was to land him in court, for Mrs. Pankhurst

¹³¹All on October 14, 1908.

¹³²A few days later, in testimony before the Royal Commission on a Weekly Rest Day for Police, a doctor was asked "Did you see the policemen quite recently when the Suffragette demonstrations were taking place, and did you notice any effect on them? I think they were kept on for three shifts without any rest, were they not?" The doctor replied, "Yes, and I spoke to several of them, and I believe they were utterly fagged out ... in most of the cases where a policeman loses his temper it is because a man has not had proper rest for his nervous system every week." Report on Weekly Day of Rest, October 21, 1908, p. 42.

¹³³Henry Lucy, The Diary of a Journalist: Later Entries (London: John Murray, 1922), October 17.

insisted that both Gladstone and Lloyd George testify at her lengthy conspiracy trial stemming from the October 13 demonstration. As usual, the women used the court as a platform to deliver speeches in favour of women's suffrage. While Christabel Pankhurst was able to use the two ministers as a foil for her arguments, much to their discomfort, they were of little use to the actual defense. Christabel based her case on the right of a subject to petition, a right she asserted the police had unlawfully infringed. Dodging this argument, Muskett emphasized the police duty to keep the area around Westminster clear. He also opposed the women's request to have the case bound over for a jury trial. Perhaps he feared an impassioned plea by these polished public speakers would secure an acquittal, and if that happened, the power of the police to stop these women would be severely crippled, if not totally destroyed. Indeed, even this early, the police seemed to feel that the government's refusal to listen to the Suffragettes was placing them in an increasingly impossible situation. In a private letter to his father, George Wyndham commented:

I am not a cynic and find no real pleasure in the general sordid insanity which seems inherent in the third year of a so-called Liberal administration. Yet the Government's position is diabolically absurd.... The House of Commons is often surrounded by a cordon of police. The public galleries are shut. We live in a state of seige.¹³⁴

But in any event, the opportunity to litigate the question of public order versus the right of petition was lost, at least for the time

¹³⁴George Wyndham (1863-1913); Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1900-1906. J. W. Mackail and Guy Wyndham, Eds. Life and Letters of George Wyndham (London: Hutchinson and Co., N.D.), Vol. II, p. 215.

being. The magistrate found that the publication of the circular had caused six thousand policemen to be placed on special duty, that thirty-seven people were arrested, and that forty people lost their watches or other property. In short, the magistrate found them guilty and the ladies chose jail. While these leaders served their sentences, other members of the movement carried on non-militant work.¹³⁵

Through the last weeks of 1908 and the early part of the following year, various authorities tried to meet the different problems caused by the Suffragettes. The Commissioner of Police closed out his year by asking the Home Office to sanction his hiring of 115 additional men. True to tradition, the Home Office staff found numerous objections. The police had spent £5,000 on bicycles since 1904; that should have improved their efficiency. They had just completed the installation of a telephone system; that should have improved their efficiency. Lastly, the ratio of inhabitants to constables had been 477 to one in 1903, 463 to one in 1905 and 455 to one 1907. The new proposal would bring the figure down to 450 to one. The Home Office staff felt the increase unnecessary and recommended allowing only part of the request.¹³⁶

Parliament briefly turned its attention to the Suffragettes. Although Lord Robert Cecil was sympathetic to the women's goals, he was also upset about the constant interruption of public meetings. In

¹³⁵Times, October 26, 1908.

¹³⁶HO 45/10932/163556/5. December 11, 1908. Also, senior police officials had opposed installing telephones, fearing a man's day would be wasted in answering it. See Walter Hambrook, Hambrook of the Yard, p. 43.

December 1908, he introduced a Public Meetings Bill which was rushed through Parliament in just eleven days. This act made the deliberate interruption of public meetings illegal, but it was seriously deficient in failing to give the police the power to arrest offenders. Instead, the officials of any meeting had to file charges against an interrupter before a Magistrate. This could only be done if the complaintant could identify the interrupter, an unlikely outcome given so many militants disturbing so many meetings.¹³⁷ Without the power of arrest, the police remained reluctant to intervene.

When the passage of the act failed to have the slightest effect on the militants, Gladstone appointed a Home Office Committee in February 1909, to re-study the problem. This committee found that even with the Public Meetings Act, there was still nothing the police could do:

... in the case of meetings held on private premises
... the police have no power to enter except by leave
of the occupier of the premises or promoter of the
meeting, or when they have good reason to believe that
a breach of the peace is being committed. It is no part
of the duty of the police to eject trespassers from
private premises.¹³⁸

Essentially, since disturbing a meeting was not the legal equivalent of disturbing the peace, the police were powerless. Gladstone might have moved to amend this law, but there was no room for any additional

¹³⁷Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons) 4th series, Vol. 193, December 10, col. 779; December 16, col. 1972; December 21, col. 2346.

¹³⁸Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons and Command), 1909, Vol. XXXVI (Reports, vol. 28), Cd. 4673, April 1909, "Report of the Departmental Committee on the Duties of the Police with Respect to the Preservation of Order at Public Meetings," p. 6.

contentious issue in the crowded Parliamentary session of 1909.

Thus the militants retained interruption as a weapon. One of the most successful aspects of their movement was an ability to discover actions which were either not unlawful or so hazily unlawful as to be beyond prosecution, but which nevertheless could greatly annoy the Government and attract publicity. While no specific law seemed to forbid disturbances in the House of Commons, the High Court of Parliament found noise from the galleries not only disruptive but an attack upon its dignity. After a number of disturbances, the Speaker ordered the galleries closed in 1908 until a solution could be found. A Committee of the Commons reported late in the year that while requiring signed promises of good behavior from visitors and the issuance of visitors' passes from a central office would help, order simply could not be guaranteed.¹³⁹

In an attempt to deal with this problem, Attorney General William Robson led the Commons debate on a House of Parliament bill in February. Up until this time, only the House itself could punish those who interrupted its sessions. The new bill proposed a fine of £100 and a maximum of six months in jail for those who were disorderly in the House. Jurisdiction was assigned to magistrate's courts, provided that prosecution was approved by the Speaker or Lord Chancellor. While the Attorney General argued that this bill was badly needed, a hostile House of Commons expressed many objections, including the House's renunciation

¹³⁹Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons), 1908, Vol. IX (Reports, vol. 4), December 1908, "Reports from the Select Committee, 1908, on House of Commons (Admission of Strangers)". pp. 3-5.

of its ancient privilege of policing its own precincts. Another critic pointed out that the bill was too vague: did it apply to members, and what would happen if the Speaker wished to proceed against an offender but the Lord Chancellor did not? It was pointed out that the proposed remedy was "an Aunt Sally for every Suffragette to have a shot at", since jail terms for such offenses were precisely what the militants wanted. Sir Edward Carson clinched the opposition arguments when he observed the bill could actually prevent the government of the Kingdom: defendants would be able to subpoena the Speaker of the House, the Prime Minister, or indeed any Member who happened to be present when the defendant was arrested. The arrest of a handful of militants could paralyze the House. Asquith thought it best to withdraw the bill.¹⁴⁰

There remained some catch-all laws available to the police. As Commissioner Henry had told the Royal Commission on the Duties of the Police, hooligans sometimes stopped short of committing an offense for which the police had the power to arrest, but they were nonetheless disruptive. In such cases, an old law of Edward III proved useful. Originally designed for use against discharged soldiers, it allowed the police to bring persons before a magistrate who could require a surety to keep the peace; if they refused, they could be jailed indefinitely.¹⁴¹ Subject to abuse, the application of this authority was to be hotly contested when the police began to use it in 1909.

¹⁴⁰"Aunt Sally": Richard Hazleton (Irish, North Galway), col. 1419; Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th series, Vol. III, April 20, 1909, cols. 1383-1433.

¹⁴¹Report ... on Police Duties, Vol. II, p. 9.

While all of these measures were being studied, the militants continued their annoying tactics. When the Cabinet met at Downing Street in January to plan for the forthcoming session, a group of persistent women kept knocking on the door until five were arrested for obstruction. As a consequence, extra police were assigned to guard subsequent Cabinet meetings.¹⁴² In February, another deputation marched to Parliament where the police met them:

The officers were thoroughly good-humoured and treated the enemy with every courtesy consistent with necessary dignity. 'Not this way, madam, please' was the stereo-typed remark as woman after woman tried to break through that impregnable barrier.¹⁴³

The Commissioner continued to assign constables to watch the announced Suffragette parades: on February 15 for example, he assigned nearly two hundred men to one march.¹⁴⁴ The women also found new ways to harrass the Government. A February change in the Post Office regulations permitted the posting of a "human" letter. The militants, seizing the chance to get their petition inside the closed doors of Downing Street, immediately posted two women to the Prime Minister. Escorted by a delivery boy, the two were presented at the door where an assistant refused delivery, ludicrously insisting they were "dead letters".¹⁴⁵

On February 24, a deputation of women marching to the Commons

¹⁴²Daily News, January 26 and 27, 1909.

¹⁴³Standard, February 12, 1909.

¹⁴⁴MEPO 7/71.

¹⁴⁵Westminster Gazette, February 23, 1909.

appeared to have caught the police off guard. Coming from Caxton Hall to St. Stephen's, the women for the first time in years found no police cordons blocking their path. Indeed, they actually reached the doorway of St. Stephen's, only to find it blocked by perhaps fifty policemen. Meanwhile, learning that Asquith was dining at Brooks' Club nearby, Mrs. Pankhurst sent two hundred women to see him there. As the ladies marched directly to the Club, the police raced down a side street to surround the Club before the Suffragettes arrived.¹⁴⁶ Sylvia Pankhurst charged that the police were out of line:

Those who were known to the police as leaders were soon taken into custody; the others were treated with great violence, constables seizing them and hurling them bodily into the crowd. One had a thumb dislocated, another an ankle sprained.¹⁴⁷

As for the demonstration in Parliament Square, a Miss Una Dugdale told the magistrate "I wish to protest the inhumane treatment which was meted out to me ... by order of the present Liberal Government."¹⁴⁸ As usual, the question of excessive force was raised. When the Times alleged that some women had deliberately scratched the police, Lady Betty Balfour again denied that the women had resorted to violence.¹⁴⁹

The incessant arrests of peaceful women for mere petitioning was beginning to affect public opinion. A letter published in the Christian

¹⁴⁶Times, February 25, 1909.

¹⁴⁷Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 301.

¹⁴⁸Votes for Women, February 25, 1909.

¹⁴⁹February 26, 1909.

Commonwealth, a paper very sensitive to social questions, made this point clearly:

(Mrs. Despard) simply went to the House of Commons, asked to see Mr. Asquith, was refused admittance, and because she tried to persuade the policemen who blocked the entrance to let her pass, she was, within two minutes of her arrival, arrested.... She did not raise her voice, she did not lift her arm, she did not push or make the slightest physical effort to get through the cordon of police drawn across the door.¹⁵⁰

Further, the perfunctory trials of militant offenders caused worry:

The distressing feeling one has while watching police court proceedings is that it does not matter very much what evidence is produced or what is said after the police have stated their case; thenceforth everything proceeds by remorseless routine. And ... there is in this country more wire-pulling from high quarters, and police espionage and secret influence at work, than the general public are aware of or would generally credit.¹⁵¹

Women's Franchise, supporting this view in its March 9 issue, noted that Mrs. Despard and five other women all testified that she did not use force before she was arrested on February 14; but contrary testimony from just once policeman was sufficient to convict her. But if there was some "wire-pulling" -- in the contact between the Home Secretary and the magistrate, for example -- it had often had a benign effect, as in Gladstone's asking Magistrate Paul Taylor to reduce some sentences.

Individual constables were coming to hate anti-Suffragette duty. Matching brawn with women was not popular among them. The militants realized this: "The Police, it was evident, hated the job, but, of

¹⁵⁰March 3, 1909.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

course, had to obey orders, and orders not to arrest but to keep the way clear were equivalent to orders to use violence."¹⁵² A member of Parliament, Henry Lucy wrote in his diary:

There is something marvelous in the patience of the police in dealing with the Suffragettes.... For the police the outbursts mean extra work, curtailment of holiday time and ordinary periods of daily rest. Sometimes the more violent or hysterical among the women strike and scratch.¹⁵³

In the face of the Government's implacable opposition to the Suffragettes, Gladstone had to answer frequent and increasingly hostile questions in the House. When a member of Parliament named Hugh Law found that his cousin was erroneously arrested as a Suffragette while en route to see him, Law taunted Gladstone: "Will the right honorable gentleman offer me the same protection against my creditors as he affords me against my relatives?" Then too, the debate over the Home Office estimates on June 14, 1908, gave another member the opportunity to protest that it was wrong to keep 296 Suffragettes in jail simply because they refused to give sureties: these women were "not before a jury, not summoned for any crime, not brought before a magistrate, but sent to prison practically without a trial". Gladstone continued to defend the use of the statute of Edward III, but more and more he fell silent before questioning. John Redmond asked Gladstone the basic question:

whether he would not represent to the Prime Minister that it would be a general convenience to the Members of this House, to the public, and to the

¹⁵²Votes for Women, March 30, 1909.

¹⁵³Lucy, Diary of a Journalist, April 10, 1909, p. 264.

world at large, if he would drop the budget, and give votes to women?¹⁵⁴

Gladstone did not reply.

On June 29, the eighth Women's Parliament convened at Caxton Hall and passed a resolution calling on Asquith to give them the vote. A deputation of eight women led by Mrs. Pankhurst was selected to carry the petition to him. The Women's Parliament had been well advertised, and the police had ample time to prepare. Commissioner Henry wrote another open letter asking spectators to avoid the area but with as little success as before. Henry also flooded the area around Westminster with three thousand constables.¹⁵⁵ But this time, another police tactic was tried: as Mrs. Pankhurst and her seven companions approached the police lines, those lines parted, allowing the women to reach St. Stephen's gate. There, Inspector Scantlebury advised the delegation that the Prime Minister refused to see them. Resolved to be arrested but aware that her elderly companions could not endure the repeated rushes necessary to insure arrest, Mrs. Pankhurst cut short the usual procedure by lightly slapping the Inspector. He realized at once she was trying to achieve arrest by her technical assault; his men, however, did not at first grasp the situation and began to push the women away. Mrs. Pankhurst then slapped him again and was arrested.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th series; Law, Vol. II (March 11, 1909) col. 511; "without a trial", Swift MacNeill (Irish member for Donegal), Vol. VI (June 14, 1909), col. 766-767; John Redmond (leader of the Irish Party and Member for Waterford), Vol. VII (June 29, 1909), col. 239.

¹⁵⁵ Daily Mirror, June 30, 1909.

¹⁵⁶ Daily Telegraph, June 30, 1909.

The Daily News of June 29 had predicted that force would be used:

In previous raids on the House of Commons many of the women have fought like furies. They have recognized that their only hope of getting into the House today is by sheer force. The police have in the past treated the women with the greatest forbearance, but in the face of a fierce and well organized attack, such as is projected for today, there will be little alternative but to meet force with force.

Henry had taken personal command at this demonstration, perhaps because "there was a general expectation women would do something desperate. It was even suggested they meant to use firearms."¹⁵⁷ But on this thirteenth march of the Suffragettes to Parliament, no really new problem developed. The women, angered at the arrests of Mrs. Pankhurst and her colleagues, crashed against the police lines. After enduring these rushes for hours, the police began to make arrests. No one complained of police violence; indeed, the Daily Mirror of June 30 noted that "the gentleness of the police ... under exceptionally trying circumstances was remarkable." Even the recently critical Common Cause told its readers on July 1 that:

What scuffling took place was on the part of the crowd who were curious to see the prisoners. The police were almost without exception kind and courteous, but firm in their handling of the crowd, who took it all with great good humour....

Henry also received a compliment from Gladstone:

The Prime Minister wishes me to express to you his high appreciation of the admirable police arrangements last night ... and of the exemplary behaviour, amidst much provocation, of the members of the Force. I take the opportunity of entirely associating myself

¹⁵⁷Daily Express, June 30, 1909.

with the Prime Minister's opinion.¹⁵⁸

While the public image of the police may have improved, some persons were beginning to wonder about the cost of policing these demonstrations. The London County Council was advised on June 29 that the last raid on the House had cost £10,000 in police pay and prison expenses.¹⁵⁹ Since four or five raids of similar size had already occurred, the public had thus far borne a minimum expense of £ 50,000.

This particular demonstration also led to a court test concerning the right to petition. On June 30 Keir Hardie asked the Speaker of the House by what right Mrs. Pankhurst and her companions were denied admission. The Speaker responded that since these women had previously disrupted the House, he had ordered their exclusion. The next day Hardie challenged the legality of the Sessional Order. Most members were familiar with that part of the relevant Charles II statute which forbade tumultuous petitions, but Hardie reminded the House of the rest of that act:

Provided always that this act or anything therein contained shall not be considered to extend to debar or hinder any person or persons, not exceeding the number of ten aforesaid, to present any public or private grievance or complaint to any member or members of Parliament after his election and during the continuance of Parliament.

In Hardie's view, this clearly voided the Sessional Order. Dodging the issue, the Speaker declared that the Sessional Order had been passed

¹⁵⁸MEPO 7/71, Police Orders, July 1, 1909.

¹⁵⁹Daily Express, June 30, 1909.

in its current form for nearly seventy years: the Speaker did not wish to discredit those earlier Parliaments nor to rule on an issue before the courts.¹⁶⁰ So Hardie's efforts were unsuccessful.

The militants took up the issue of the right to petition with vigor. From their point of view, there had to be some point where the right to petition had to yield to public order, but the women felt the leeway they were actually allowed was both insufficient and unlawful. To argue their case, the Suffragettes briefed Lord Robert Cecil. In the magistrate's court, Cecil relied on the Charles II statute, the Seven Bishops' case, and a section of the Bill of Rights which flatly stated: "It is the right of the subjects to petition the King and all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal". Herbert Musckett countered for the police that while the women had a right to petition, they had also formed an obstruction outside St. Stephen's which could not be overlooked. Accepting Cecil's suggestion, the magistrate sent the case on to a higher court and released the women on bail.¹⁶¹

While the case made slow progress through the courts, the Suffragettes tried to petition King Edward. Under the Bill of Rights, they argued the monarch was obliged to receive them. The King's secretary replied that all petitions had to go through the Home Office. Gladstone publicly promised to lay all Suffragette petitions before the

¹⁶⁰Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th series, Vol. VII: June 30, col. 394; July 1, cols. 610-611.

¹⁶¹Times, July 10, 1909.

King, even while the court decision was pending.¹⁶² The peaceful branch of the Suffragette movement led by Mrs. Despard then wrote to the King imploring him to order Asquith to receive their petition.¹⁶³ When Buckingham Palace sent the letter to the Home Office, Gladstone returned it with the advice that the request be refused. After much further correspondence, Charles Troup advised Mrs. Despard that while Gladstone had kept his promise to pass her petitions along, he was also obliged to advise the King against granting them because they were "not in accordance with constitutional usage." Gladstone also promised to pass along any further petitions, although he made it clear that his advice would be the same.¹⁶⁴ Finally Mrs. Despard wrote to Gladstone, protesting that nowhere in the various acts governing petitions was there a requirement that they had to be channeled through the Home Office. To her mind, the right to petition was clear, direct and guaranteed.¹⁶⁵

The first phase of the Suffragette movement may be said to end here. In just three years it had expanded from the simple doorbell ringing of Theresa Billington to a crowd of 250,000 people in Hyde Park. The police had thus far coped with the Suffragettes in essentially defensive ways, using traditional and tried and true methods that had successfully contained so many other movements. But the large

¹⁶²Ibid., July 9, 1909.

¹⁶³Sennett Collection, Vol. VIII (July 8, 1909), pp. 27.

¹⁶⁴Women's Franchise, July 22, 1909. See also July 15 issue.

¹⁶⁵Gladstone to Mrs. Despard, August 9, 1909. HO 45/10338.

and growing strain on the police, the police courts and prisons could not be endured endlessly, and new Suffragette tactics would make new responses imperative.

CHAPTER III

THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE, 1909-1912

The rejection of the Conciliation Bill on its Second Reading division has effected at least two good objects. It has definitely taught the lesson that militant tactics are a failure, and it has saved much time and trouble by destroying ... a bill which ... could never have become law.¹

Until the end of 1908, Suffragettes had been assigned to the "first division" of the prison system. Less restricted than the second or third division, first division prisoners were allowed more frequent correspondence, additional library books, food parcels from outside, and freedom from hard labor. Then magistrates began to sentence Suffragettes to the more rigorous second division. The militants protested this change and demanded to be treated as political prisoners, a category unknown to English law.² In June 1909, Miss Wallace Dunlop³ was sentenced to prison for painting "It is the right of subjects to petition the King, and all commitments and prosecutions

¹E. Crawshay-Williams, "The Position of Women's Suffrage", Contemporary Review, June, 1912, p. 84.

²Suffragettes argued they deserved the same mild treatment that Captain Jameson received after conviction for his leadership of the Jameson raid in South Africa.

³Marion Wallace Dunlop was a sculptor and a "trusted member" of the W.S.P.U.. See Sylvia Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, pp. 307, 353, 359.

for such petitionings are illegal" on the wall of St. Stephen's Hall. When she arrived at Holloway prison on July 2 and was placed in the second division, Miss Dunlop wrote to the Home Secretary, advising him that until transferred to the first division, she would refuse to eat. Gladstone ignored her threat, and to the consternation of the prison authorities, she refused all food. A nervous prison doctor watched her carefully: ninety-one hours into her fast, the doctor advised the Home Office that she was in danger of death. The Home Office then ordered her release, although she had served only one quarter of her sentence.⁴ While many Suffragettes were henceforth to imitate Miss Dunlop, it is important to note that she had acted without instructions from the militant leadership.

On the same day Miss Dunlop was released, fourteen more Suffragette prisoners arrived at Holloway. Learning of the first hunger strike, they advised the prison governor that they refused to surrender their possessions, refused to wear prison uniforms, refused to perform prison labor, refused to keep the rule of silence, and refused to eat prison food. The governor yielded temporarily but advised the women he would charge them with mutiny before the visiting magistrates. When the women received no response to a letter sent to the Home Office and were placed in solitary confinement for breaking the windows of their cells to get fresh air, they also refused food. After five to seven days of fasting, all were released.⁵ From this point on, the hunger

⁴Times, July 14, 1909.

⁵Pankhurst, My Own Story, pp. 149-151.

strike became a major Suffragette weapon. By September 14, C.F.G. Masterman, speaking for the ailing Gladstone, told the House that by hunger-striking, thirty-seven women had obtained forty-one releases; four women had been released, committed a new offense, been retried and resentenced, had hunger-struck again, and been subsequently re-released.⁶

The Ministry's response to the hunger strike became public knowledge on September 25, 1909, when newspapers including the Daily Mail reported that Suffragettes were being forcibly fed in Birmingham jail. A number of members of Parliament showered Masterman with questions on Monday, September 27. Asked if women were being fed by force several times and several ways, Masterman responded without answering the question.

The medical officer of Birmingham prison reported that certain women prisoners have persistently refused to take food. The Prison Commissioners therefore, with the approval of the Home Secretary, instructed the medical officer to apply such ordinary medical treatment as was, in his opinion, necessary to prevent the risk of their committing suicide by starvation.

Keir Hardie finally got Masterman to agree that "the tube is inserted into the stomach and food pumped into it," a fact Hardie termed a "horrible outrage, beastly outrage". Hardie's Labour Party colleague, Philip Snowden, then suggested that Gladstone "make application to Spain or Russia in order to adopt the most brutal and up to date methods of barbarism."⁷ The Labour members were not alone: a letter of

⁶C. F. G. Masterman, Undersecretary of State, Home Office. Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th series, September 14, 1908, Vol. 10, col. 1931.

⁷Ibid., Vol. 11, cols. 924-25.

protest signed by one hundred sixteen doctors was sent to the Prime Minister charging that such feeding was unwise, dangerous, and inhuman. Gladstone countered by presenting a letter from the President of the Royal College of Physicians, Sir Richard Douglas Powell, asserting that if the doctor in charge were competent, the danger was "greatly exaggerated."⁸ A subsequent editorial in Lancet argued that it was the duty of the doctor to force-feed in order to prevent suicide.⁹ "Is it not a fact that all this trouble and revolt might have been avoided if the Prime Minister would only be reasonable and receive a deputation?" asked John Redmond.¹⁰

From this point on, question time in the House of Commons was frequently enlivened by members' attacks on forced feeding. Gladstone's personal frustration was never more in evidence than on August 4. He advised the Commons that in 1906 and 1907, the Suffragettes were routinely assigned to the first division, but when they protested this advantage and persisted in their offenses, they were placed in the second division: now they wanted first division again. He confessed to the House: "I do my best, but whatever I do in this matter is wrong. I am sorry, but I have done my best and can do no more." Charged with moving Suffragettes to damp cells as an additional punishment, he insisted they were moved from the better cells only after they had broken

⁸ Ibid., October 6, 1909; cols. 2000-2001.

⁹ Lancet is the journal of the Royal Medical Society; editorial of January 8, 1910.

¹⁰ Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th series, October 6, 1909, Vol. 11, col. 2002.

the windows: "They would have caught cold, and then I would have been arraigned here for that."¹¹ As Home Secretary, Gladstone had to answer for all treatment of Suffragette prisoners, whether he ordered it or not. For example, one militant barricaded her cell door and was forced away by drenching with a fire hose: Gladstone promised the House he would admonish the responsible persons.¹²

Outside Parliament, Gladstone became a controversial figure. Public opinion divided over the propriety of forced feeding, the Suffragettes of course leading the critics while many newspapers found it a regrettable necessity. One letter to Gladstone blamed the militant leaders:

A hideous responsibility to my mind is lying upon the Pankhursts and the Lawrences. These good women are hypnotized into hysteria and a few good men with them.¹³

Again returning to fundamental liberties as in the right to petition case, Miss Mary Leigh¹⁴ brought an action against Gladstone charging he had no legal right to order her fed. She argued that forced feeding amounted to a medical procedure, and as such, could not be performed without her consent, unless she was first found insane by the Lunacy Commission. The verdict in this case was crucial to

¹¹Ibid., Vol. 8, cols. 1929-1930.

¹²Ibid., November 1, 1909, Vol. 12, col. 1433.

¹³S. A. Byles to Gladstone, October 13, 1909. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss. 46067, f. 235.

¹⁴Mary Leigh was particularly active in the W.S.P.U.; she broke the first windows, threw slate from rooftops, threw a hatchet into Asquith's carriage, etc.. See Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, passim.

both sides. A decision against the Home Office would render the state powerless under existing laws to deal with the situation: a decision against the militants, while it would not destroy the movement, would prolong the human suffering involved. Leigh versus Gladstone was decided in December 1909. Essentially, the Court found that the Prison Commissioners had an obligation to prevent prisoners from committing suicide, and thus had a duty to force-feed them.¹⁵ What appeared to be a victory for the Home Office was actually rather hollow: while it established the right to feed prisoners, the angry militants would soon provide many more to be fed -- and no longer for non-violent offenses.

Other members of the movement were keeping the police busy with their less novel tactics. Commissioner Henry continued to keep a close watch on Suffragette meetings, reporting of one to Gladstone on July 21: "We seized some objectionable literature without provoking a conflict which is satisfying. No arrests."¹⁶ While the nature of what was "objectionable literature" is not known, the question of freedom of the press was continually an issue. Gladstone took the precaution of consulting with Asquith over one pamphlet which was apparently provocatively worded: "What will be said if this incitement to murder is in fact handed about promiscuously (at a forthcoming meeting) under the very eyes of Scotland Yard -- the police having full cognizance of its contents?" Gladstone advised Asquith he intended to order the pam-

¹⁵ Mary Leigh's argument: Pamphlet, "Fed by Force", October, 1909, in the Sennett Collection, Vol. 8, p. 82. Verdict: Times, December 11, 1909.

¹⁶ Henry to Gladstone, Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss. 46067, f. 95.

phlets seized: Asquith replied "I agree".¹⁷

Another problem in the summer of 1909 was the protection of Cabinet Ministers, easy targets as they campaigned first for Lloyd George's budget and later for re-election. Hiding on rooftops, under stairs, beneath stages, in organs, Suffragette hecklers were extraordinarily resourceful in interrupting meetings. They also accosted ministers as they travelled from engagement to engagement, and even as they tried to relax. Punch observed on September 22:

If Cabinet Ministers must have six policemen in attendance when they play golf on Saturday afternoons, then each policeman might nicely carry a club. This would serve a double purpose: caddies could be dispensed with, and the clubs would serve as weapons of offense and defense in case of a Suffragette raid.

Both the Home Office and the Police Commissioner feared what might happen if the militants did get close to an unprotected minister. Periodic bits of intelligence reinforced these fears. For example, on September 23, respectable women reported to the police that two militants had been practicing with pistols, intending to stand among the Suffragette pickets outside St. Stephen's gate and to shoot the Prime Minister when he passed.¹⁸ Serious attention was given to this report. Charles Troup of the Home Office consulted with police officials and then sent a memorandum to the Home Secretary. While Troup realized the tip might be a hoax, an independent check showed that two women had in fact been practicing at a Tottenham Court range, giving

¹⁷Gladstone to Asquith, July 21, 1909. Ibid., Add. Mss. 45989, f. 221.

¹⁸Superintendent P. Quinn to Troup, September 27, 1909. Asquith Papers, Vol. 22, f. 228.

Troup "strong ground" for believing the threat was genuine. Nevertheless, he advised that the pickets at Westminster be left undisturbed: since they had already been there for eight weeks, they could not now be suddenly removed for obstruction. And even if they were arrested, others would surely take their place. Troup also argued that any sudden move would require explanation:

... the serious matter is that we should have to make known the facts leading us to believe there is a conspiracy to murder the Prime Minister. The prominence which would be given to this in the Press would probably act on the minds of these half insane women, and might suggest effectively the commission of the very act which we wish to prevent.

In addition, Troup and the police believed that the best defense against such an attempt would be to alert the constables on duty at St. Stephen's: an attempt from a known spot was, after all, easier to guard against than a more general threat.¹⁹

As a consequence of this and other threats, the Metropolitan police guard around Asquith was increased and expanded to follow him wherever he went, even outside the police district. This protection was effective: for example, Asquith wrote to Gladstone from Lympne Castle, Kent, that although one of the Pankhursts was in the vicinity, "so far your minions have kept her at a safe distance."²⁰ Henry also advised Troup that he would work out "more effective" protection for ministers outside the Metropolitan area, but that "In London we can do

¹⁹Troup to Gladstone, September 27, 1909. Ibid., f. 224-226.

²⁰Asquith to Gladstone, September 12, 1909. Gladstone Papers, Add.Mss. 45989, f. 222 r.

all that is needed."²¹ A few days later the acting police commissioner²² wrote a lengthy memorandum to the Home Office marked "Pressing" which began:

The persistence with which these women maintain their campaign against members of His Majesty's Government make it necessary to take measures to combat their designs and to protect Ministers from insult, annoyance and violence.

After a request for sixteen additional men to form a new unit within the Special Branch of the Criminal Investigation Division, a unit to monitor Suffragette activities, Wodehouse continued:

It is essential that only men of practical experience should be employed on this work, as any tactical mistake would be much criticized and would have the effect of promoting, instead of arresting the progress of the Suffragette propaganda.

Troup's reply was a characteristic worry over finance. The Home Office agreed to sanction this augmentation, but only if the officers involved were given temporary rank and only if the department could absorb them through attrition when their special function expired. In addition, Gladstone seemed to have been annoyed at the reasons cited for creating this special unit. Troup's letter of approval also said:

The Secretary of State would point out that the intervention of the Police in connection with Public Meetings addressed by Cabinet Ministers is required not for the protection of Ministers alone, but also for that of the public attending the meeting whose safety is wantonly endangered by the proceedings of the Suffragettes.

²¹ Henry to Troup, September 10, 1909. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss. 45993, f. 236.

²² Fredrich Wodehouse, assistant commissioner of police, served as acting Commissioner during Henry's brief absences. MEPO 2/1487.

Wodehouse acknowledged Troup's letter but still wanted the new men added permanently:

... I have to point out in view of the obviously non-deterrent nature of the enforcements practically enforceable (sic) against these women, there seems no reason to anticipate any reduction in their activity in the immediate future.²³

The police had their way. The new men were added on October 4. Henry found almost immediate use for them. Just two weeks later, in view of fresh threats against ministers, Henry persuaded the Prime Minister to stop walking to the House, but instead to go by car to the less-used Chancellor's gate. Gladstone agreed to do the same himself.²⁴ Whether there was a genuine threat to these ministers was immaterial. The police had to act as though there were.

Gladstone continued to face hostile questioning in the House. For example, noting that a small force of women kept constant vigil around the House but never saw Asquith leave, a member asked "How does the Prime Minister get out of the House?" Philip Snowden called attention to one case in which the police allowed a handful of women to stand in Downing Street for twenty-four hours before arresting them, while on other occasions women were instantly arrested for the same thing. Gladstone somewhat lamely replied that only the officer on duty could decide when the Suffragettes caused an obstruction.²⁵ On August 23,

²³Wodehouse to Troup, September 15, 1909; Troup to Wodehouse, September 22; Wodehouse to Troup, September 27. MEPO 2/1310.

²⁴Henry to Gladstone, October 16, 1909. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss. 46067, f. 246.

²⁵Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser.; Prime Minister August 19, 1909, Vol. 9, col. 1530; Snowden: Ibid.

Gladstone announced that so far more than three hundred fifty women had been jailed for Suffragette activities.²⁶ The Home Secretary was aware of the increasing tension, but he simply could not understand the militants. In a private letter to a Mrs. E. Richmond, he explained his view:

The alternatives therefore are to go on as now with every prospect of an early dissolution, or ignoring the budget, free Trade and other absolutely essential matters, which no one out of Bedlam pretends can be ignored, to resign and let someone else have a turn. Really I cannot understand the absolute confusion of mind which ignores essentials. ... no violence that unthinking zealots may attempt can alter solid facts. The murder of Cavendish in 1882 destroyed the chance of Home Rule. So it will be if a hair of the Prime Minister's head is touched. Nothing is easier than the expression of violent opinions. Nothing more disastrous than to give them logical effect. Violence breeds violence, especially in England, and it is the duty of all sane people to set themselves against it.²⁷

This letter mirrored the views of many of the statesmen of the day. Concerned over what they felt were more important issues, they would not commit their respective parties over such a divisive question. And the advent of militancy made many reluctant to appear to yield to force. As Herbert Samuel put it, "I was more than half way towards becoming definitely a supporter of women suffrage when the suffragettes stopped me", and A. J. Balfour observed in a letter on October 29, 1909, "I do not object to (women's suffrage) on any abstract or theoretical grounds, but I am not an enthusiast, and recent events have chilled

²⁶ Specifically, 156 for failing to give recognizances or attending unlawful assemblies, and 195 for acts of violence such as breaking windows or assaulting policemen. *Ibid.*, October 4, 1909, Vol. 9, col. 1920.

²⁷ Gladstone to Mrs. E. Richmond, September 27, 1909. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss. 46067, f. 202.

my somewhat lukewarm preference."²⁸ One historian of the Liberal party had argued that Asquith should have supported women's suffrage aa this time, to the probable benefit of the Liberal party.²⁹ But since Asquith believed that women simply had no place in politics, the militants could not sway him:

The idea of converting a human being's reason by parades, marching and fighting the police was incomprehensible to him. The more the women marched, the less his reason marched with them. Therefore the work of the militants strengthened his opposition to the vote.³⁰

To Asquith's objections, to anyone's objections, the militants had counter-arguments. Perhaps the most often repeated theme was that a non-responsive Ministry had made force necessary. Replying to Gladstone's letter quoted above, Mrs. Richmond wrote:

I think it is probably perfectly true, as you say, that Mr. Asquith might have been hurt if he had not been closely guarded.... Only I say how shameful that the guard should have become necessary; and I say too that the circumstances which have made it necessary are not primarily the fault of the Suffragists.... I know if I were Mr. Asquith I would risk anything sooner than go about like the czar of Russia....³¹

²⁸ Herbert Samuel was Post Master General at this time. Herbert Samuel, Groves of Change: A Book of Memories (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1946), p. 161. Arthur James Balfour, a former Conservative Prime Minister: Balfour to Mrs. Templeton, October 29, 1909. Balfour Papers, Add. Mss. 49793, f. 9.

²⁹ Colin Cross, The Liberals in Power, 1905-1914. (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), p. 159.

³⁰ Roger Fulford, Votes for Women: The Story of a Struggle (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 184. Roy Jenkins describes Asquith as "stubbornly unconvinced": see Jenkins, Asquith: Portrait of a Man and an Era (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1966), p. 348.

³¹ Mrs. E. Richmond to Gladstone, October 3, 1909. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss. 46067, ffs. 211-212.

Having thus far produced no change in the Government's attitude, the militants felt obliged to continue their activities. Mrs. Despard and Mrs. Cobden-Sanderson were again arrested in August, this time for trying to submit a petition at the Prime Minister's residence. They sent an account of this incident to the London newspapers which ended on a note of utter frustration: "What course have women open to them but revolt?"³² With the apparent ineffectiveness of such peaceful methods, the militants engineered more forceful demonstrations, such as extensive window-breaking in Newcastle in conjunction with the appearance there of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George:

This is the first time that the fair and fearless opponents of the Government have directed their hostility to the wanton destruction of Government property. [commented the Newcastle Daily Chronicle.] It marks a new development in their tactical operations, and suggests that police in every town where Liberal statesmen speak have further anxieties before them.³³

As a consequence of such raids, the Suffragettes endured a split at this time between those in favor of strictly legal and constitutional means and those willing to break the law. For example, Mrs. Millicent Fawcett wrote to Mrs. Arncliffe Sennett that she could no longer cooperate with the W.S.P.U. since that group had become "injurious to the movement."³⁴ This split isolated whatever restraining influence the non-militants had exercised. The Times asserted on Sep-

³²

Times, August, 1909.

³³

October 11, 1909.

³⁴

September 25, 1909; Sennett Collection, Vol. 8, p. 50.

tember 29 that "Public interest in these proceedings is dying and being replaced by public disgust". The militants were determined to rekindle that interest. The police inspected a house along Asquith's route to a Birmingham meeting and found mop heads soaked in kerosene, but were unable to determine what the Suffragettes who left them behind had intended to do with them. Also, two women were observed pouring a black fluid into ballot boxes in Bermondsey.³⁵

Through the summer and fall of 1909, Mrs. Pankhurst herself was relatively non-militant. Still on bail from her June arrest, she delivered many speeches but avoided being provocative while her right to petition case was pending. That case was finally heard in December. Lord Robert Cecil argued before the Court that the right of petition had three characteristics. First, it implied the right to petition the actual repositories of power. Second, it was the right to petition in person, and last, it had to be exercised reasonably. In Cecil's view, the only question before the Court was whether Mrs. Pankhurst had exercised her right in a reasonable manner. He argued that since the entire deputation totalled only eight women, since they had walked peacefully to the Commons, and since they had remained peaceful until denied admission, the deputation was entirely within its rights and the police had no power to turn them away. The Court was not swayed by this reasoning: in its view, the women had no right to remain after they were told Asquith refused to receive them. Consequently, the women

³⁵Kerosene: Times, September 27, 1909; black fluid: Pall Mall Gazette October 28, 1909.

were found guilty and ordered to pay costs.³⁶

This verdict was a serious blow to the Suffragette movement. It did not diminish the strength of the movement: on the contrary, the bitter disappointment it engendered, the apparent exhaustion of constitutional means, caused an influx of new members and convinced many leaders that militancy was now obligatory and indispensable. But the decision was a setback in that it made the achievement of the ultimate goal seem more distant, requiring higher price in hard work and physical suffering.

With the advent of a new year there also came a reorganized Ministry. The January 1910 election endorsed Asquith's position that the House of Lords should not have rejected the controversial budget submitted by his Government in 1909. Although he won with a reduced majority, Asquith took the opportunity to make a number of changes. He nominated Gladstone as Governor-General of South Africa. The Prime Minister's motive in offering the Home Secretary this post -- to reward or remove -- is not clear. Some writers on the Suffragette movement attribute his transfer to the mild scandal concerning the case of Lady Constance Lytton.³⁷ This Suffragette was arrested several times in 1909 and sent to jail. Each time she was examined by a prison doctor who refused to force-feed her due to heart disease. Believing she was being given special treatment because of her social position,

³⁶Pankhurst, My Own Story, pp. 144-148.

³⁷"It was thought to be largely due to the scandal arising from this case that Herbert Gladstone gave up the Home Office to become the Governor of South Africa." Marian Ramelson, The Petticoat Rebellion (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1967), p. 138.

Lady Lytton disguised herself as "Jane Wharton" and was arrested for disturbances in Liverpool. Imprisoned under this alias she was not medically examined and was force-fed four times.³⁸ When the details of this case became known in early 1910, Gladstone was embarrassed. However, this could not have been a major factor in his leaving the Home Office, because he had accepted Asquith's offer not later than October 6, 1909, long before the Lytton affair.³⁹

In his letter of acceptance, Gladstone advised Asquith he was a bit reluctant to leave, thinking it might appear that Gladstone was running from his Home Office problems: "I don't at all like shifting from your side while this disgusting suffragette difficulty continues."⁴⁰ The militants, on the other hand, were delighted to see him go:

The record of this man -- his cruelty, his petty meanness, his willful and deliberate misrepresentations -- form a sordid chapter in this country's history, and sully a name which had been made famous by his father for traditions of liberty and honor.⁴¹

With Gladstone willing to go to South Africa, Asquith, who had once been Home Secretary himself, gave that office to Winston Churchill. The newspapers generally endorsed Churchill's promotion, attributing it to

³⁸Constance Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners* (London: Heinemann, 1914), *passim*. In his autobiography, Sir Basil Thompson records that as an officer of the Prison Commission, he investigated the Lytton affair and found no harsh treatment of "Edith Wharton" (sic) which together with other factual errors, diminishes the value of his *The Scene Changes* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1937), p. 238 and *passim*.

³⁹Gladstone to Asquith, October 6, 1909. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss. 45989, f. 226.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Votes for Women*, January 28, 1910.

hard work in the election campaign.

With both a new Government and a new Home Secretary, there was at least a chance of resolving the suffrage question. At first, both sides cooperated. After extensive consultation with the Home Office staff, Churchill exercised his authority under the Prisons Act of 1898 to modify some of the prison rules. For those convicted of offenses not involving serious violence, dishonesty, cruelty or indecency, a new rule permitted wearing their own clothes, dispensing with prison haircuts, and obtaining more books and more exercise.⁴² Known as rule 234A, it provided a good deal of relief to the Suffragettes without mentioning them by name.

... these proposals do not take us very far, [commented Votes for Women] nevertheless, they are at least a sign that Mr. Churchill is not bound down by the wooden ideas of his predecessor in office.⁴³

According to the Daily Express of April 8, Churchill had "signalized his advent at the Home Office by proffering the olive branch to the Suffragettes."

The militants also made concessions. Mrs. Pankhurst suddenly proclaimed a truce to all militancy because it had been hinted that "the Government were weary of our opposition and were ready to end the struggle in the only possible way, providing they could do so with-

⁴² A. E. Metcalfe, Women's Effort: A Chronicle of British Women's Fifty Years' Struggle for Citizenship (Oxford: Blackwell, 1917), p. 231. See also, Randolph S. Churchill, Winston S. Churchill, Companion Vol. II, Part II, 1907-1911 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), pp. 1152-1159.

⁴³ March 18, 1910.

out appearing to yield to coercion."⁴⁴ As Mrs. Sennett wrote to Asquith, now was his chance, as he reorganized ministries and programs, to include women's suffrage.⁴⁵

Several people turned this pause in militancy to constructive activity. H. N. Brailsford joined forces with Lord Lytton to form a Parliamentary Conciliation Committee.⁴⁶ This small group of twenty-five Liberals, sixteen Conservatives, six Irish Nationalists and six Labour Party members sought a compromise acceptable not only to the Suffragettes but also to the Conservatives who feared an excessive proportion of new Liberal votes.⁴⁷

Meanwhile the Suffragettes scored a minor triumph reported in Votes for Women of January 14, 1910:

The extraordinary spectacle of the Prime Minister of all England piloted by a secret pathway through a cabbage patch to the back door of the hall where he was to speak; guarded through the meeting by constables, detectives, and hawk-eyed stewards; solemnly steered back again over a little sawdust track to deaden the sound of his foot-fall; smuggled through the gooseberry bushes to his motor-car, where he waits for a cold quarter of an hour to give the crowd time to disperse -- all this is deliciously described by the Bath Chronicle....

Routine Suffragette activities continued. In the week beginning February 13, for example, more than fifty-six public meetings were

⁴⁴Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 166.

⁴⁵Mrs. Arncliffe Sennett to Asquith, February 15, 1910, Sennett Collection, Vol. 8, p. 62.

⁴⁶H. N. Brailsford was a noted journalist and leader writer for the Daily News who left his position when that paper endorsed forced feeding; the third Earl of Lytton was the elder brother of Lady Constance Lytton and the President of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage.

⁴⁷Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 168.

scheduled in London alone.⁴⁸ The ingenuity of the women was demonstrated in new publicity stunts. A wagon painted red to resemble a fire truck was plastered with Suffragette slogans, and sent throughout central London, siren blaring. Friendly constables helped the bogus fire truck pass: "It is true they stopped the traffic to let the Suffragette carriage pass, but they smiled kindly as they did so."⁴⁹ Then for once a victim of a hoax, W.S.P.U. headquarters on March 11 was innundated with deliveries of vacuum cleaners, beer, soda water, coal and a piano -- all ordered by anonymous mischief-makers.⁵⁰

Serious commentators wondered what would happen when the truce expired.

There have been big bills for barracades, [Votes for Women observed on February 11] bigger bills for extra police services, running into thousands of pounds; and the payment for these bills does not come from the women against whom the expenditure is incurred ... while the women's movement increases in determination and strength the cost in hindrance to the traffic is not likely to grow less.

But if militant tactics again become necessary owing to the refusal of the Government to listen to reason [Churchill] will then have to come to a decision. He has given no indication of the line he will take, but it is difficult to imagine that he can deal with the question in a worse fashion than his predecessor.

By June 1910, the Conciliation Committee had produced a compromise measure.⁵¹ Delayed by the complexity of its task and the suspension

⁴⁸Votes for Women, February 13, 1910.

⁴⁹Ibid., March 25, 1910.

⁵⁰Standard, March 11, 1910.

⁵¹The Conciliation Bill would have enfranchised women householders and women occupiers of business premises of a notable value of £10 a year, perhaps one million women in a population of thirteen million women. Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 337.

of political affairs while the nation mourned the death of King Edward,⁵² the bill was given its first reading on June 14. Commissioner Henry foresaw trouble. He expected opponents to interfere with Suffragete meetings in support of the bill, and was aware of his duty to protect the rights of all parties to demonstrate. On June 16, he called the "special attention" of the Metropolitan Police to a paragraph of General Orders:

When a meeting, peaceable in itself, is threatened with interruption by some other assembly, meeting or procession, the former is not to be interfered with merely because it is the cause of a threatened breach of the peace, but measures for the preservation of the peace are to be taken against the aggressive party in the first instance.⁵³

Just a week later, police had to protect the women from a crowd of 300,000, most of whom were "actively hostile", according to the Daily Chronicle of June 22, and even with 6,000 men on hand, "the police seemed quite powerless." The militants were undaunted and continued to hold meetings, many sponsored by the W.S.P.U.. One such meeting was held on June 29, and demonstrating the superb planning of the W.S.P.U., "Although there were at least 140 [demonstrators], each one received typewritten instructions explaining most clearly exactly what we were to do."⁵⁴ This time the demonstrators were divided into small groups, marching at intervals of fifteen minutes in order to

⁵²Edward VII died May 6, 1910 and was succeeded by George V.

⁵³Police Orders, June 16, 1910. MEPO 7/72.

⁵⁴Katherine Roberts, Pages from the Diary of a Militant Suffragette. (London: Garden City Press, 1910), p. 58.

"baffle" the police.⁵⁵ One member of this delegation was Katherine Roberts, whose diary account sheds light on the relationship between the Suffragettes and the police:

'Have you arrested me?', I asked him, very politely.
'Yes, Miss', he replied, 'and a good job, too, to get out of that crowd. You wasn't hurt, was you?' 'Not at all. I have only been in there quite a short time.' I wanted to say how very grateful I felt to him for having arrested me like that at sight, but did not quite like to.⁵⁶

Miss Roberts also reported that one woman was accused of knocking off a constable's hat. Aware she had done no such thing, Miss Roberts asked the woman why she did not challenge the constable's account in court:

'It is a sort of understood thing', she explained, 'that if the police will help us by arresting on sight, as they have been doing tonight, we will not contradict anything they may say as an excuse for having done so. They do help us splendidly now that they understand.'⁵⁷

Thus without any official intervention, a sort of understanding seemed to have developed between the antagonists. Miss Roberts also commented on the frequent charge that the women tried to harm the police:

When one reflects that the life of a Suffragette practically depends on the protection of the Metropolitan Police, and that her ambition invariably is to get arrested as quickly as possible, the absurdity of supposing that she would be so foolish as to strike out or kick the man who, apart from the fact that he is her best friend, is so very much stronger than herself, is surely too obvious to require further comment.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 69.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 71.

With this new wave of large scale demonstrations, Commissioner Henry, still fearful of attacks on ministers, assigned a constable to the residence of all nineteen Cabinet ministers on July 6.⁵⁹ The next day, Herbert Muskett asked the Commissioner to have only Inspectors or higher ranking officers make actual arrests of Suffragettes, because "in practice, such an officer's evidence is found to carry -- and properly so -- more weight than that of a sergeant or constable."⁶⁰ In a fresh summary of laws applicable to Suffragettes issued to the force on July 11, Henry dealt with pamphlet distribution. While lawful in itself, such activity was frequently attracting hostile crowds. Henry told his men to caution the Suffragettes against obstructing the police in the performance of their duty, essentially the same procedure as in 1906. But these new orders were not an invitation to wholesale arrests: "It is not desirable that arrests should be made if that course can be obviated, but police are, nevertheless, to be instructed to act with firmness as well as tact."⁶¹

While the police and militants fenced with each other, Churchill used the time to make a few prison reforms, including scheduling four concerts each winter for the inmates and imposing solitary confinement only if requested by the prisoner. Votes for Women of July 29 was quick to claim the exposure of poor prison conditions by the Suffragettes as the real motive for these reforms. Churchill was also in-

⁵⁹Commissioner Henry to all Superintendents, July 6, 1910. MEPO 2/1308.

⁶⁰Muskett to Henry, July 7, 1910. MEPO 2/1308.

⁶¹Commissioner Henry to all Superintendents, July 11, 1910. MEPO 2/1308.

volved at this time with the Conciliation Bill. H. N. Brailsford recognized that the mere passage of the bill on its second reading was not enough; unless it was also sent to a favorable committee, it would never receive a third reading.⁶² Thus Brailsford tried to line up support for assigning the bill to a grand committee, since to send it to a Committee of the Whole House would effectively kill it.

... it is vital for us to get our bill to a Grand Committee[Brailsford wrote to Churchill.] If it stops short ... that will be of course the signal for revolt. We could do nothing further to check it. As long as the bill is alive Lord Lytton and I have an argument.⁶³

Brailsford's fears were realized when the bill passed its second reading but was assigned to a Committee of the Whole House. Thus the only way to pass the bill was to secure Asquith's support. The Prime Minister had other Government business to consider, and did not like the bill anyway. Warnings came from all sides. From thousands of miles away in South Africa, Gladstone wrote that "the Suffragette question is most serious", and closer to home, Mrs. Pankhurst threatened an end to the truce, warning that if three or four hundred women were imprisoned for new demonstrations, men would turn the Liberals out at

⁶² Bills required three readings: the first was a formality; the second required a vote of the House. If a bill passed the second reading, it went to one of a number of Grand Committees where it was studied, possibly amended, and then either allowed to die or sent back to the House for a third and final reading. When it passed its third reading, it went to the House of Lords or to the King for his consent. One alternative, after passing the second reading, was to send the bill to a Committee of the Whole House. Then the Government had to cooperate by using its procedural power to allot time for debate or the bill would die.

⁶³ H. N. Brailsford to Winston Churchill, July 8, 1910. Churchill, Part 3, p. 1436.

the next election.⁶⁴ The W.S.P.U. prepared to march at a moment's notice, addressing letters to "Dear Friends" stating that if Asquith did not promise facilities for the bill, "We shall march to Westminster, and demand that the Suffrage Bill be carried into law, and shall refuse to leave until this demand is conceded."⁶⁵ The police also prepared for renewed trouble. In what later became a controversial move Henry transferred forty-five men from the rough East End of London to 'A' Division, the area around Westminster.⁶⁶

On Friday, November 18, 1910, Asquith announced that Parliament would be dissolved in ten days and that all remaining time would be needed for government business -- which did not include the Conciliation bill.⁶⁷ This news was rushed to the ninth Women's Parliament, just getting underway at Caxton Hall. Hundreds of women left immediately to protest at St. Stephen's. At first, the handful of police on duty at Westminster tried to protect the women from the fast growing crowd of spectators. But as more and more women arrived and police strength reached one thousand officers, the mood changed dramatically. As the Standard of November 19 reported:

The Police, who had been characteristically good humoured for half an hour, then began to get annoyed and as officers lost their helmets and got black eyes and bruised shins in exchange, they retaliated. It may,

⁶⁴Gladstone: Gladstone to Postmaster-General Herbert Samuel, July 24, 1910. Samuel Papers, A29/F11; Mrs. Pankhurst: Times, October 10, 1910.

⁶⁵W.S.P.U. letter, October 27, 1910. Suffragette Collection (London Museum, Kensington Palace), Z6068/1.

⁶⁶Police Orders, November 12, 1910. MEFO 7/72.

⁶⁷Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th Series, Vol. 20, November 18, 1910, Cols. 83 ff.

as it doubtless will, be said that the police behaved brutally towards some of the offenders, but the aggravation they received was great and in many cases they had to use considerable force to protect themselves from injury.

Mrs. Pankhurst's account was more detailed:

Some of the police used their fists, striking the women in their faces, their breasts, their shoulders. One woman I saw thrown down with violence three or four times in rapid succession, until at last she lay only half conscious.⁶⁸

.... One felt sorry for the police, placed in a difficult position [Votes for Women commented on November 25]. The police evidently under orders to make as few arrests as possible, found themselves between the devil and the deep blue sea; they chose the former, and literally threw the women back into the crowd in the hopes of wearing out their strength.

Those newspapers least sympathetic to women's suffrage underplayed the violence. In their editions of November 19, the Standard announced the women were "foiled by the splendid resources of Scotland Yard" while the Morning Post praised the police who were "used to the handling of crowds in good natured fashion". The Daily Express asserted that "all who desired to be arrested were obliged by the ever-courteous police."

The Times observed:

Several of the police had their helmets knocked off in carrying out their duty, one was disabled by a kick in the ankle, one was cut on the face by a belt, and one had his hand cut. As a rule they kept their tempers very well, but their method of shoving back the raiders lacked nothing in vigour. They were at any rate kept warm by the exercise, and so were the ladies who flung themselves against the defending lines.

Although the newspapers failed to print much of it, there was

⁶⁸ Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 180.

plenty of evidence against the police. An unidentified participant quoted in Christabel Pankhurst's Unshackled observed "our women were knocked about, tripped up, their arms and fingers twisted, their bodies doubled up under and then forcibly thrown, if indeed they did not drop stunned to the ground."⁶⁹ Sylvia Pankhurst wrote a lengthy account in Votes for Women of November 25. After describing little banners that the women carried, she reported that the police ripped the banners:

(one constable) had scratched his hand rather badly doing this. 'You will probably hear afterwards that you did it,' I said (to a suffragette), and sure enough I saw afterwards in the Liberal Daily News that a policeman had been slashed with a knife.

I found out that the picked men of 'A' division ... were this time only on duty close to the House of Commons and at the police station, and that those with whom the women chiefly came in contact had been especially brought in from outlying districts. During our conflicts with 'A' division they have gradually come to know us and to understand our aims and objects, and for this reason, whilst obeying their orders, they came to treat the women, as far as possible, with courtesy and consideration. But these men with whom we had to deal on Friday were of an extremely different type. They had nothing of the correct official manner, and were to be seen laughing and jeering at the women they maltreated. All the worst occurrences ... appear to have been perpetrated by men from suburban districts, who were probably half-trained recruits to the police force.

Kitty Marion was also in this crowd and had difficulty with the same officers.

For several hours did I struggle to get to the House. On my first encounter with the police I had to remind them of 'no hitting below the belt' which highly amused the 'sportsmen' on the safe side of the railing round Westminster Abbey. Even on that day there seemed to be some 'white sheep' in that black flock of police. Sev-

⁶⁹p. 165.

eral said to me, as on other similar occasions, 'for God's sake, woman, go home, don't give us this horrible job to do,' while others seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the job.⁷⁰

The fighting dragged on for five hours. Mrs. Pankhurst observed that the crowd was moved by the plight of the Suffragettes: if they were breaking the law, why were they not arrested; if they were not breaking the law, why were they being manhandled?⁷¹ By as early as six o'clock, one-hundred arrests had been made.⁷² The next morning, a large number of prisoners were taken before the magistrate, where a new policy of Home Secretary Churchill was revealed. As each batch of women was brought in, Herbert Muskett declined to prosecute under Churchill's order, for "no public advantage would be served by prosecuting."⁷³ Churchill's motive was unclear: it may have been "electioneering" as the Pall Mall Gazette, Times and Globe charged:⁷⁴ it may have been to deny the prisoners an opportunity to denounce the treatment they received: it may have been a gesture of conciliation. Whatever the reason, it was unsuccessful because it only further upset the militants. Their usual safety-valve, questions in the House, was closed since the House had risen for the weekend; Churchill had closed their other outlet, speeches from the dock.

⁷⁰Kitty Marion Diary, November 19, 1910. Her division of police officers into good and bad is developed further in an article entitled "Robert" which appeared in Votes for Women. See Appendix E, p.250.

⁷¹Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 181.

⁷²Times, November 19, 1910.

⁷³Ibid., November 21, 1910.

⁷⁴Pall Mall Gazette, November 19; Times, Globe, November 21, 1910.

This demonstration occurred on Friday. The following Monday, on hearing the news that Asquith had just evaded a question about his aiding the suffrage bill in the next session of Parliament, the militants immediately left Caxton Hall for St. Stephen's. Informed that the Commons had risen, they turned instead to the Prime Minister's residence, thus touching off the "Battle of Downing Street". The police, not anticipating trouble, had only forty men nearby.

Several of the police had to give their entire attention to single opponents [reported the Daily Express of November 23], with the result that the cordon, thus weakened, was effectively rushed by the advance guard of the 'deputation' and shrieking women began streaming into Downing Street.... Many policemen were struck with umbrellas, others had their helmets knocked off, and others were carried off their feet by the mad rush.... Then the excited women abandoned themselves to acts of violence, and attacked the police with hands, feet, umbrellas and banner poles. The police handled them firmly but tolerantly, forcing them slowly into Whitehall, while torn scarves, broken umbrellas and banner poles, dishevelled hats and scraps of clothing were left behind as trophies of the fray.

The Daily Sketch on the same day reported that the police had had to rescue many people from being trampled as well as guard Asquith's residence. Kitty Marion recalled "a seething caldron of women" and described her own part:

The police tried hard to throw me down which they always did but never succeeded. I clung to their capes like grim death, though they called me everything but a woman or a Suffragette, and with flames of obscene language and expletives commanded me to let go of their capes. Eventually they arrested me and while taking me to Cannon-row deliberately pinched my arms, which were already black and painful. I asked them not to pinch and each one replied 'I am not pinching' and promptly pinched all the harder.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Kitty Marion Diary, November 22, 1910.

A number of militants were arrested but again Churchill directed the cases be dropped. Both Muskett and Magistrate Sir Albert DeRutzen were shocked, DeRutzen observing that this practice was "simply an incentive to further violence."⁷⁶ Discharging the prisoners was unfair to the police said the Pall Mall Gazette of November 23:

(Churchill) thought to kill a disorderly agitation with kindness; and yesterday the agitators, more disorderly than ever, reassembled, fought furiously, bit and scratched policemen innumerable, knocked Mr. Birrell's hat over his eyes and kicked his shin, and gave the Prime Minister a smack in the face. It is admitted by dispassionate observers that many of the women behaved like demented creatures; and several of them were heard to say openly, 'next time it will be bombs.'

Then the paper took Churchill to task:

The affair is a perfectly natural consequence of Mr. Churchill's contemptable abrogation of his duty as a Minister responsible to the King for the peace of His Majesty's subjects. The Home Secretariship is not an office in a comic opera, where a man can do as he pleases, and increase his popularity with the folly of his acts.... Viewed as a piece of electioneering, it was utterly unscrupulous; and -- save for the additional burden it has cast upon the already sufficiently occupied policemen of London -- we find it impossible to regret it. It has shown that turning government into a farce may also turn it into a tragedy.

A number of other papers, including the Times of November 21, attacked Churchill's stand.

Some newspapers were deeply concerned: Common Cause asserted the police had actually "handed the women over to a coarse and brutal mob", while Votes for Women charged "the treatment which this deputation received was the worst that has been meted out ... since the conflict

⁷⁶Times, November 25, 1910.

... began."⁷⁷ But most papers simply did not pursue the story. The police, too, seemed remarkably unaware that a serious controversy over their alledged violence was brewing. Indeed, some authorities seemed to have been ignorant of the degree of injury inflicted. In a letter to Scotland Yard, with no apparent motive to colour the truth, Herbert Muskett reported:

One is gratified to be able to say that notwithstanding the vast number of cases which came before the court, for all practical purposes the allegations of violence or improper conduct on the part of the police were a negligible quantity, and certainly nothing at all of that character was proved. It seems to speak volumes in favor of the police performance of their difficult tasks to be honestly able to bear such testimony to their generally admirable demeanour.⁷⁸

The next day, Muskett added "Everything (in court) went on smoothly, and no complaints, of any substance at all, were put forward."⁷⁹

While Muskett may not have been aware of improper police conduct, Churchill most certainly was. Deluged with complaints about the police and aware that they had not followed his instructions, Churchill sent the police Commissioner a curt note:

I am hearing from every quarter that my strongly expressed wishes conveyed to you on Wednesday evening and repeated on Friday morning that the Suffragettes were not to be allowed to exhaust themselves but were to be arrested forthwith upon any defiance of the law, were not observed by the police on Friday last, with the result that very regrettable scenes occurred. It was my desire to avoid this, even at some risk; to arrest large numbers and then subsequently to prosecute only where serious grounds were shown and I am sorry

⁷⁷Common Cause, November 24; Votes for Women, November 25, 1910.

⁷⁸Muskett to Chief Clerk, Scotland Yard, November 25, 1910. MEPO 2/1410.

⁷⁹Ibid., November 26, 1910.

that, no doubt through a misunderstanding, another course has been adopted. In future I must ask for a strict adherence to the policy outlined herein.⁸⁰

Of course the Suffragettes blamed Churchill for their maltreatment, and among Cabinet Ministers he became the chief target of their retaliatory strikes. One such attack occurred as the result of Churchill's racing over to the Battle of Downing Street. Upon his arrival, he observed Mrs. Cobden-Sanderson at the head of the street and shouted to a constable "Drive that woman away!" This was overheard by Hugh Franklin, a nephew of Herbert Samuel.⁸¹ A few days later, as Churchill was returning by train to London from a speaking engagement, Franklin tried to hit the Home Secretary with a whip. An alert plainclothesman serving as bodyguard prevented the attack and arrested Franklin.⁸² He was tried in early December with Churchill as the star witness: "A considerable force of police was on duty outside the Court, and when Mr. Churchill alighted from his motor-car ... he was at once surrounded by plainclothes officers."⁸³ The trial was free of interruption but as a consequence of this attempt, the police assigned a guard to Churchill's infant daughter, Diana, especially when she was outdoors with her nurse,

⁸⁰ Churchill to Henry, November 22, 1910. Randolph Churchill, Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume II, Part 3 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 1457. (Hereafter: Churchill, Part 3). A month later, on December 30, Gladstone wrote to Herbert Samuel (see below) that he had considered this non-prosecution policy, but "... I asked Henry whether he could arrest and not proceed. He was strong against it. So was Asquith." Samuel Papers, A 29/18.

⁸¹ Herbert Louis Samuel (1870-1963), Postmaster-General since early 1910.

⁸² Notes of Evidence, November 28, 1910, Bow Street Court. Churchill, Part 3, pp. 1457-1464.

⁸³ Votes for Women, December 9, 1910.

and guards for the rest of his family.⁸⁴ Franklin himself, despite Churchill's appeal to the Court for leniency, was jailed for six weeks, during which time he refused food and so was force-fed. When released, he made a number of inflammatory charges, including a signed article in Votes for Women: "When Mr. Churchill as the chief policeman orders his thousands of trained entrants to become a set of real hooligans, no one is left to act as protectors of law and order." Churchill considered bringing an action against Franklin for this slander, but was dissuaded by his counsel, Sir John Simon⁸⁵;

The cases are very rare in which a Minister ought to defend himself by himself taking action in the courts for injurious statements, and it seems to me that for the Home Secretary personally to pursue a creature who has already been sentenced for an assault upon him would be most unwise.⁸⁶

Franklin continued to make such statements, telling one Caxton Hall meeting that: "The whole force seemed to be under the impression that it is their duty to punish people. That is not the duty of the police. Their duty is to arrest if they think it necessary, but to leave the punishing to a magistrate."⁸⁷

The Home Secretary was not the only target of personal violence. Walking in Downing Street on November 22, 1910, just as a demonstration erupted, Austin Birrell⁸⁸ was knocked to the ground, painfully twist-

⁸⁴Daily Sketch, November 29, 1910.

⁸⁵John Allsebrook Simon, first Viscount Simon (1873-1954), at this time Solicitor-General.

⁸⁶Simon to Churchill, December 14, 1910. Churchill, Part 3, p. 1467.

⁸⁷Votes for Women, January 20, 1911.

⁸⁸Augustine Birrell (1850-1933), at this time Chief Secretary for Ireland.

ing his knee. Six weeks later he recounted his experience to C. P. Scott.⁸⁹

There was no attempt to do me any serious physical injury and if I had lain on the ground I don't suppose they would have jumped upon me, but it was a brutal, outrageous, and unprovoked assault and it may lame me for life.⁹⁰

The Prime Minister personally wrote to Churchill: "The assault on Birrell seems to have been a serious one, and I think that case should be proceeded with: also all cases of serious assaults on the police." Birrell himself did not want his assailants prosecuted, writing to Churchill: "Please therefore let the matter drop, but keep your eye on the hags in question."⁹¹

Among other incidents, a boot was thrown at the door of Herbert Samuel's residence, cracking the door.⁹² As Earl Winterton wrote about this time, "Undoubtedly, but for efficient police protection, some of them would have murdered one or two ministers who had incurred their special emnity."⁹³

As for Churchill, even his effort to reform the prison rules seemed to the militants a ruse.

⁸⁹Charles Prestwich Scott (1843-1932), at this time proprietor of the Manchester Guardian.

⁹⁰Scott's Diary, February 2, 1911. Trevor Wilson, ed., The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott: 1911-1928 (London: Collins, 1970), p. 36.

⁹¹Asquith to Churchill, November 23, 1910, p. 1457; Birrell to Churchill, February 21, 1911, p. 1468, both in Churchill, Part 3.

⁹²Fulford, Votes for Women, p. 233.

⁹³Edward Turnour, 6th Earl Winterton (1883-1963), in his Orders of the Day (London, Cassell and Co., 1953), p. 53.

By (Churchill's) recent concession to political prisoners, he provides for the amelioration of the prison rules with respect to prison clothing, cleaning of cells, employment, food, and other matters. (But if prisoners take advantage of these new rules) they forfeit the remission of one week (for good behaviour) of a sentence of a month or more. Thus the prisoners now serving two months in Holloway for trifling damages, amounting in some cases to less than two shillings, automatically prolong their imprisonment by taking advantage of Mr. Churchill's concession ... it is the cowardly policy of the cowardly school bully who pinches the small boy under the table when the master is not looking.⁹⁴

An increase of violence against and criticism of ministers was one consequence of Black Friday. Another was a settlement of policy differences between the police and the Home Office. In a lengthy letter of January 26, 1911 to Troup, Henry outlined his strategy for a forthcoming Suffragette demonstration. First Henry explained that he did not like to order immediate arrests for a number of reasons. One was that each arrest required two constables to accompany the prisoner to the police station, men not easily spared from the point of disorder. Then the constables had to remain at the station until the formalities of arrest were completed, delaying their return to more urgent duty, especially if the station was swamped with prisoners. And as a matter of policy, Henry wanted to delay arrests so that the police could testify in court that the Suffragettes were arrested only when their removal became "imperative". "Premature action ... would irritate the crowd and certainly would be seized upon as a general ground of defense before the Magistrate." The Commissioner also noted that the militants invited the general public to witness these demon-

⁹⁴Votes for Women, January 6, 1911.

strations, but then complained about inadequate police protection when hooligans in that crowd roughed up the women. Henry closed this letter by protesting that the policy of dismissing charges against arrested women was objectionable because it allowed the Suffragettes to claim they were denied the courtroom opportunity of charging police officers with maltreatment.⁹⁵ In short, despite Churchill's note of November 22, 1910, Commissioner Henry was proposing to carry on as before.

If the Commissioner had difficulty understanding the Home Secretary's instructions, Troup did not. The Undersecretary's reply was short and emphatic.

The police are to arrest all persons taking part in these organized disorders as soon as lawful occasion exists. Any act of obstruction, assaulting or pushing the police in an endeavour to force the cordon constitutes a lawful occasion, especially when the deliberate purpose of the offenders is notorious.

The police are not to allow the women to exhaust themselves in repeated rushes at the entrances to Palace Yard or elsewhere. One rush, one arrest is to be the rule. As long as deputations proceed in an orderly manner they should be allowed to advance until they reach the cordon. After that, they must return, disperse, or be arrested. Any rowdyism, even the slightest rush at a constable, is to be followed by immediate arrest.⁹⁶

In short, the Home Office would have no repetition of what it viewed as the indefensible November fiasco.

The Commissioner responded gracefully, accepting the instructions on all points, noting only that he could not permit the demonstrators to reach the barriers in groups of more than twenty persons, as that was

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This letter from Henry to Troup was headed "Confidential": MEPO 2/1438.

⁹⁶

Troup to Henry, January 28, 1911. MEPO 2/1438.

"not within the discretion of the police," and that since "the demonstrators are women (the Commissioner) will require police under his orders to act with the utmost moderation."⁹⁷ A few days later, Henry informed the Home Office that he found horses particularly effective in dealing with the Suffragettes:

Whenever great crowds are anticipated, police must be drafted to regulate and control them. No reserve exists from which men can be drawn for the purpose, and consequently it is necessary to diminish the available for ordinary beat duty on such occasions. Experience shows that mounted men suitably employed are as effective as a much larger number of foot constables in controlling a crowd; there is no doubt that ten mounted men can clear or hold the end of a street more effectively than fifty men on foot; their employment therefore is economical, as the total number of police required is kept down; and at the same time the outlying districts are less denuded of police on ordinary duty.

Further, should a crowd prove recalcitrant, mounted men are particularly effective, as persons who would resist foot constables will give way before a horse.⁹⁸

Actually, the police had little physical trouble with the militants in 1911. Eschewing direct confrontations, the militants placed their hopes in a private investigation of police conduct on Black Friday undertaken by the Conciliation Committee. H.N. Brailsford and Dr. Jessie Murray,⁹⁹ collected sworn testimony and other evidence from more than a hundred women. Their report contained five main sec-

⁹⁷Henry to Troup, February 4, 1911. MEPO 2/1438.

⁹⁸Henry to Troup, February 6, 1911. MEPO 2/1408. In June 1973 the author was part of a group who stepped into the street outside Buckingham Palace to better see the changing of the guard. We quickly retreated in the face of mounted men, riding horses broadside into us, mainly through fear the horses would inadvertently tread on our feet.

⁹⁹She was a doctor frequently called to treat injured Suffragettes.

tions: unnecessary violence, methods of torture, acts of indecency, after effects, and the state of mind of the police. Among other offenses, the report charged that women were "thrown into a crowd permeated by plainclothes detectives who were sometimes rough and indecent."¹⁰⁰

We cannot resist the conclusion that the police as a whole were under the impression that their duty was not merely to frustrate the attempts of the women to reach the House, but also to terrorize them in the process. They used in numerous instances excessive violence, which was at once deliberate and aggressive, and was intended to inflict injury and pain.¹⁰¹

For the first time, frequently repeated Suffragist complaints were catalogued in massive detail, including bent thumbs, and twisted and pinched arms. The report also listed indecencies:

Several times constables and plain-clothes men who were in the crowd passed their arms around me from the back and clutched hold of my breasts in as public a manner as possible and men in the crowd followed their example. I was also pummelled on the chest, and my breast was clutched by one constable from the front. As a consequence, three days later I had to receive medical attention ... as my breasts were very much discolored and very painful.¹⁰²

The report added: "The action of which the most frequent complaint is made is variously described as twisting round, pinching, screwing, nipping or wringing the breast." Complaints of obscene or profane language appeared throughout the report, as was an account of a sadis-

¹⁰⁰The Treatment of the Women's Deputation by the Metropolitan Police: A Copy of Evidence collected by Dr. Jessie Murray and Mr. H. N. Brailsford, and forwarded to the Home Office by the Conciliation Committee for Women's Suffrage in support of its Demand for a Public Enquiry. (London: Women's Press, 1911), p. 3 (Hereafter: Treatment).

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 8-9.

tic attack on an old woman who was pushed off her tricycle, a common vehicle for the crippled: "It is quite unnecessary to use adjectives about the state of mind of the police. It was such a state of mind as could conceive and execute the idea of tormenting and torturing a lame woman."¹⁰³ In short, the report charged that if only half of this long list of charges were true, then the police code of conduct had been grievously violated, and the authors of the report begged for a Parliamentary inquiry.

This report was hardly based in impartial evidence, and some of its charges are open to obvious criticism. For example, how could the women know which of the men who attacked them were plain-clothes officers? Surely not all the demonstrators could recognize the plainclothes men on the force by sight under such confused conditions. But still, there seemed to be enough evidence to warrant an investigation, if only to exonerate the police. Brailsford may have offended many of his former associates by his espousal of the Suffragette cause, but he was never accused of dishonesty. His participation lent credence to the report. The finished report was circulated to political leaders and newspapers, and a substantial segment of the press pushed for an inquiry. The Guardian argued that "in the face of exceedingly grave charges" Churchill could hardly refuse an inquiry and no doubt was anxious for a full investigation.¹⁰⁴

The decision thus lay with Churchill. Despite the pressure for

¹⁰³Frequent complaint: Ibid., p. 9; state of mind, Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰⁴February 23, 1911.

an inquiry, he decided against it, arguing that since the report had not been published until late February, too much time -- nearly two months -- had elapsed, making an inquiry useless. He told the House on March 1: "I am not prepared to order an inquiry into vague and general charges collected in response to advertisements in Votes for Women and brought forward by irresponsible persons after the event." He strongly implied this was just another Suffragette stunt, and advised the women to take court action against the individual officers allegedly involved.¹⁰⁵

Churchill's speech implied that the Suffragettes had filed no complaints between Black Friday and the publication of the report. This was not true, as he admitted when questioned.¹⁰⁶ For example, Mrs. Drummond had gone personally to the Home Office to complain,¹⁰⁷ and a Mrs. Saul Solomon had her complaint published in several newspapers including Votes for Women on January 6, 1911. In an open letter to Churchill, she had protested:

... the methods applied to us were those used by the police to conquer the pugilistic antagonist, to fell the burglar, to maim the hooligan, or to reduce to inanity the semi-barbaric and dangerous rough ... I was grabbed by the breast ...

At least some members of the House of Commons were not satisfied. On March 10, Churchill was asked to make public the exact wording of the orders he gave to the police before the demonstration of November 18.

¹⁰⁵Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons) 5th Series; Vol. 22, March 1, 1911, col. 368.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., March 8, 1911, col. 1211.

¹⁰⁷Votes for Women, January 6, 1911.

Churchill replied "No fresh instructions, verbal or written, were issued to the police on or before November 18."¹⁰⁸ In light of his letter to Henry of November 23, referring to instructions Churchill gave the police on November 16 and 18, this reply is, at best, "terminologically inexact." Churchill explained to the House:

If a body of four or five hundred men were to endeavor to force their way into the House of Commons, they would, after being duly warned, be dispersed by charges of Police. Many would, no doubt, receive blows from police truncheons; the rest would take to their heels, and very few arrests would be made. In regard to women and because they are women, no such cause is conceivable.

The police had just two choices, to let the women struggle until their arrest became "imperative", or to arrest as soon as lawful occasion permitted.

In this latter case, a large number of arrests must be contemplated, many of these for offenses which in the case of men would have been dealt with by the summary methods of a police charge, and would never have become the subject of a prosecution in the courts.

While he had instructed the police to adhere to the policy of instant arrest, the police had "not fully understood" and had followed the earlier, delayed arrest policy in effect under Gladstone. The Home Secretary concluded that the Metropolitan Police had behaved "with the forbearance, and humanity for which they have always been distinguished", and he repudiated "the unsupported allegations which have been issued from that copious fountain of mendacity, the W.S.P.U."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 22, March 10, 1911. col. 1834.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., cols. 1834-35.

This remarkably frank statement by Churchill made two interesting points. First, the Suffragettes were a special problem in that ordinary police methods -- the baton charge -- were not applicable. Secondly, and in fact substantiating Hugh Franklin's charge, the police did sometimes deliberately beat rather than arrest offenders. While this may have been useful and perhaps even necessary, it was unquestionably illegal. Such corporal punishment was nowhere sanctioned in English law. Churchill's statement lent credence to various complaints such as Mrs. Solomon's protest against "pugilistic antagonists."

In a speech delivered prior to the Home Secretary's statement, Lord Robert Cecil had asked by what right Churchill ordered the police to beat rather than arrest women?¹¹⁰ Churchill had in fact done nothing of the kind, but his refusal of an inquiry made him look all the worse. A letter from Christabel Pankhurst published in the Times of March 2 claimed "the women were brutally and in many cases indecently ill-treated by the police acting under the orders of the Home Secretary." Churchill contemplated a libel action against both Christabel and the Times, but was advised against it.¹¹¹

By March 1911, some of the consequences of Black Friday had become clear. Among the Suffragettes, Churchill was less popular than ever, both as the supreme police authority and for refusing an inquiry. Secondly, two Suffragettes involved on Black Friday were dead. After a heart attack on November 18, Henrietta Williams died on January 1, 1911. Whether this and a similar death were the results of police bru-

¹¹⁰Votes for Women, March 10, 1911.

¹¹¹Churchill, Part 3, pp. 1468-69.

tality, the Suffragettes chose to believe that they were. Consequently, the militants decided that "the cost of the franchise should henceforth be paid by property rather than by battered female bodies."¹¹²

Serving as a damper on militant activities in 1911 was the hope that the Conciliation Bill would soon be passed. On May 5, 1911, the bill passed its second reading by a vote of 225 to 88.¹¹³ This time its supporters asked that it be sent to a Committee of the Whole House, thus forcing the Ministry to take a stand. On May 29, Lloyd George announced that the press of government business precluded action in the current session, but that if the bill passed its second reading again in 1912, the Government would grant it a week of Parliament's time. He also hinted it might be passed under the Parliament Act to prevent its destruction in the House of Lords.¹¹⁴ Somewhat confused by this pledge, the Chairman of the Conciliation Committee wrote to the Prime Minister asking for a more precise commitment. Asquith responded:

... the 'week' offered will be interpreted with reasonable elasticity, [and] the Government will impose no reasonable obstacle to the proper use of the closure, and that if (as you suggest) the bill gets through committee in the time proposed, the extra days required for the report and third reading will not be refused.¹¹⁵

¹¹²Deaths: Votes for Women, January 6, 1911 and Vera Brittain, Pethick-Lawrence, a Portrait (London: George Allen and Anwin, 1963), p. 56. Battered bodies: Brittain, Portrait, p. 56. See also Rover, Women's Suffrage, p. 82.

¹¹³Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 25, May 5, 1911, col. 806.

¹¹⁴Ibid., Vol. 26, May 29, 1911, Cols. 703-05.

¹¹⁵Quoted in Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 196.

Some militants feared a ploy to keep them quiescent during the upcoming coronation of King George V. But "skeptical up to this point, the W.S.P.U. was now convinced that the Government were sincere in their promise to give the bill full facilities in the following year."¹¹⁶ Consequently Mrs. Pankhurst ordered the truce prolonged while at the same time redoubling propaganda efforts. Parades were resumed, such as one six miles long on June 18, guarded by 2,000 policemen.¹¹⁷ These processions put a strain on the police, who were preoccupied with the coronation. After months of planning, seventeen thousand officers were actually on duty, serving around the clock for forty-eight hours, catching only quick naps in police stations, skate rinks, and private houses, while suburban districts were patrolled by a handful of men on bicycles.¹¹⁸ But at least Scotland Yard did not have to deal with a simultaneous outbreak of militancy.

While abstaining from lawbreaking, the militants turned their considerable talents to finding new ways to gain attention. During the national census in April, many women hid in skate rinks, neighbors' houses, and various other places, endorsing the slogan "no vote, no census". Some feared the militants might pose as census-takers, call at homes, receive the census forms and then destroy them.¹¹⁹ Suf-

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 196.

¹¹⁷ Daily Mail, June 19, 1911; Police Orders, June 14, 1911. MEPO 7/73.

¹¹⁸ Daily Mail, June 22, 1911.

¹¹⁹ John Burns (1858-1943), at this time President of the Local Government Board, to Churchill, March 28, 1911. Churchill, Part 3, p. 1471.

fragettes of both schools, militant and constitutional, flooded newspapers and magazines with letters and articles. For example, the Contemporary Review of July published a play whose characters included Joan of Arc, Elizabeth I, Cleopatra and Katherine Parr in a women's role debate with Helen of Troy, Mary Queen of Scots, and Miss (Christabel?) Pankhurst.¹²⁰ Reflecting the changing social climate, and perhaps good business sense, the Standard on October 3, 1911 inaugurated a new column, the "Women's Platform" for the "thoughts, aims, claims, views, hopes, deeds and work" of women, a column which soon became a rotating showcase for authors of the various Suffragette and anti-Suffragette positions.

Nor was the Police Commissioner inactive. Looking to the future, he held extensive consultations in March with the department's solicitors and the Home Office. From these conferences emerged a memo to the force.

The duty of dealing with any obstruction or disorder which may arise (from Suffragettes) is one requiring the exercise of great judgement and discretion, and only experienced officers who may be relied upon to exercise these qualities are to be employed, their duties being carefully and fully explained to them.... Officers effecting arrests are instructed to exercise moderation and to abstain from roughness.¹²¹

Two months later, he learned that the Government was about to receive a deputation from the militants. Fearing they would be dissatisfied with the results of the interview, he wrote the Home Office,

¹²⁰ Evelyn Simms and Katherine Hallows, "Women, Ancient and Modern: A Farce in Three Acts", Contemporary Review, Vol. 100, July, 1911, pp. 91-105.

¹²¹ March, 1911: MEPO 2/1438.

asking for a list of Churchill's public engagements so he could arrange police protection.¹²²

By the fall of 1911, Henry was again working on one of his favorite projects, the creation of a police reserve. Numerous demands on police resources, including a large number of strikes, had reinforced his conviction that a trained reserve was urgently needed. He proposed the enrollment of healthy retired constables as well as army veterans for emergency service. After much careful study the Home Office authorized the formation of a thousand man reserve who when summoned would be guaranteed four weeks work at fifty shillings a week.¹²³

Also in the fall of 1911, Asquith again re-shuffled his Cabinet. Reginald McKenna¹²⁴ was invited to undertake "one of the most difficult and responsible places in the Government,"¹²⁵ the Home Office. Churchill was asked to take McKenna's place at the Admiralty. Newspapers speculated over this exchange: The Daily Chronicle of October 24 believed McKenna was offered the supposedly less strenuous Home Office because he was recovering from a long illness; in addition, his legal training would be helpful there. The Morning Post of the same day held

¹²²Henry to Edward Marsh (Churchill's secretary), May 24, 1911. Churchill, Part 3, p. 1472. A few days later the First Lord of the Admiralty was privately informed that Churchill had ordered ten extra constables to guard the Lodge Hill Naval Magazine, where half the fleet's reserves were kept. Perhaps Churchill feared various groups, Suffragettes among them, might try to steal explosives, but this is uncertain. McKenna Papers, 4/4.

¹²³Henry to Home Office, September, 1911; Troup to Henry, November 28, 1911: MEPO 2/1483.

¹²⁴Reginald McKenna (1863-1943), entered Parliament, 1895; Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 1905; President of the Board of Education, 1907; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1908.

¹²⁵Asquith to McKenna, October 10, 1911. McKenna Papers, 4/1.

another view, that neither McKenna nor Churchill had done well in their current posts. Not fond of Liberal Home Secretaries, the Morning Post said Churchill had "inherited a series of awkward legacies from his predecessor, ... the least successful Home Secretary of modern times," and that Churchill had "interfered with magisterial and other legal tribunals in a way that has not infrequently excited alternate indignation and ridicule." Why McKenna accepted the Home Office is not clear; after all,

Mr. McKenna's lot was much less enviable than that of Mr. Churchill; he had to exchange the exhilarating task of building the greatest navy in the world for the sordid problem of administering enforced nourishment to hunger-striking suffragettes.¹²⁶

McKenna had barely moved into his new office when the militants ended the truce. On November 7, Asquith told a delegation advocating universal manhood suffrage that he intended to introduce such a bill in 1912, one so phrased that Parliament could amend it to include women.¹²⁷ At first glance, this may have seemed a great step forward but in fact was not. Very few members advocated or would vote for universal adult suffrage. Perceptive militants viewed this apparent concession as a Machiavellian delivery of the coup de grace. Newspapers of all shades blasted the maneuver, the Daily Mail calling it "absolutely indefensible" while the Saturday Review charged, "For a naked, avowed plan of gerry-

¹²⁶ Somervell, George V, p. 36. McKenna's son Stephen wrote in his D.N.B. sketch of his father that the senior McKenna took the Home Office when he reached an impasse over naval strategy with War Secretary Haldane.

¹²⁷ Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 206.

mandering, no government surely did ever beat this one".¹²⁸ On November 17, after the Prime Minister had been unable to satisfy a delegation of Suffragists, including some militants, Mrs. Pankhurst proclaimed an end to the truce.

The W.S.P.U. had foreseen this renewal of militancy and went into action almost immediately. Instructions were rapidly passed to members, including a letter headed "Final Instructions to Members of the Demonstration, November 21, 1911". It read in part:

In the event of arrest, you will be taken to Canon Row or another Police Station and charged, where it is advisable to make no statement, as anything said to the police may be used in evidence against you next day.¹²⁹

A group of militants left Caxton Hall intending to protest on the floor of the House of Commons itself. In response to their pamphlet calling on the public to gather in Parliament Square "to see fair play, [and] to protect women ... from being brutally victimized by the police in uniform and plain clothes as they were on "Black Friday ...", a large crowd had gathered.¹³⁰ The police, perhaps having grown a trifle lax during the months of truce, had only seven hundred men on duty.¹³¹ At first, the demonstration was quite orderly: "It was generally a graceful contest as to whether the policemen or the Suffragist should be the more politely pertinacious."¹³² Henry Nevins observed "On the whole, the behavior of the police showed great im-

¹²⁸Quoted in Ibid., p. 207.

¹²⁹Suffragette Collection, London Museum. Z 6068/2.

¹³⁰Times, November 23, 1911.

¹³¹Daily Express, November 22, 1911.

¹³²Ibid.

provement over last year.... I heard no complaint against the police for wilful or malignant violence."¹³³ But while most police strength and public attention was concentrated in Parliament Square, the militants smashed hundreds of windows in Whitehall, the Strand, and along the fringes of Parliament Square itself, forcing the police to call out all the off-duty constables and to place "urgent orders" to outlying districts for reinforcements.¹³⁴ The police were hampered in apprehending the window-breakers by the crowds, but many were arrested:

Whenever the 'bosh' of a stone through a window told the news of another success for the women, there was a frantic rush by a policeman after a scampering window-smasher, a quick capture, and a burst of cheering and laughter from the crowd.¹³⁵

The police had clearly changed their tactics, as another reporter observed:

The police were very considerate all through, and some of the arrests they made were simply with the object of rescuing the suffragettes from their uncomfortable position (between the police lines and the crowd).¹³⁶

This suddenly renewed violence and large number of arrests engendered a great deal of speculation over whether such tactics helped or hindered the movement. In a letter to C. P. Scott, David Lloyd George insisted:

The action of the militants is ruinous. The feeling amongst sympathizers of the cause in the House is one of panic. Whilst not being despondent, I am frankly not very hopeful of success if these tac-

¹³³Votes for Women, November 24, 1911.

¹³⁴Standard, November 22, 1911.

¹³⁵Daily Express, November 22, 1911.

¹³⁶Standard, November 22, 1911.

tics are persisted in.¹³⁷

Writing also to Mrs. Millicent Fawcett, a leading advocate of strictly constitutional means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer added:

The action of the militants is alienating sympathy from the Women's cause in every quarter: ... Tuesday's violence and last night's indecent exhibition, when the Prime Minister supporting a charitable institution was howled down in a place of worship, have between them created a very grave situation.... Anti-Suffragettes are of course exultant and I feel confident that the effort of our agitation will be neutralized by the antics of the militants.¹³⁸

Churchill was also concerned, but for different reasons. He wrote to the Chief Liberal Whip, explaining that if the Liberals forced a Women's Suffrage Bill through the House of Lords by use of the Parliament Act, the Conservatives would be able to force a dissolution of Parliament:

What a ridiculous tragedy it would be if this strong Government and party which has made its mark in history were to go down on Petticoat politics! And the last chance of Ireland -- our loyal friends -- squandered too! It is damnable.¹³⁹

In a letter to Churchill, Asquith argued that even if he wanted to adopt Women's Suffrage, he simply had no room for it:

I am more and more convinced that if we are to escape ridicule and ultimate disaster, we must, coute que coute, lighten our commitments for the year. We cannot get through them except in a session of 10 or 11 months, with two and probably three drastic guillotines. Even if the House of Commons does not mutiny (which is more than likely) the members of the

¹³⁷ November 30, 1911. Lloyd George Papers, Beaverbrook Library. C/8/1/1.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Churchill to the Master of Elibank, December 18, 1911. Churchill, Part 3, p.1473.

Government will be reduced by the end of the year to physical and mental decreptitude.¹⁴⁰

But even as these considerations confirmed Asquith's resolve not to yield to force, some of the long-feared police problems came to a head. Public speaking by Ministers became more and more risky. Asquith could not be heard over his interrupters at City Temple on November 29, and the mere announcement of his speech there led the adjacent shopkeepers to board their windows.¹⁴¹ When Grey and David Lloyd George went to speak there two weeks later, even the windows of the hall itself were boarded.¹⁴² On this occasion, Lloyd George was slightly hurt. George Riddell noted in his diary:

On Saturday, Lloyd George was violently assaulted by a male Suffragist. I called to see him this morning. He had a little cut on his eye, and told me he had been stunned by a leather case bound with metal which had been thrown through the window of his car.... He referred in bitter terms to the fact that those responsible for financing the suffragist movement were engaging bravoos to inflict personal injury upon members of the Government.¹⁴³

The man charged with the assault, only twenty years old, was sentenced to two months imprisonment: the Daily Mail insisted he should have received six months as "This is the very kind of administration of the law which will invite other feather-brained persons to injure

¹⁴⁰Asquith to Churchill, December 23, 1911. Ibid., pp. 1476-77.

¹⁴¹Times, November 30, 1911.

¹⁴²As shown in a picture in the Weekly Dispatch, December 17, 1911.

¹⁴³George Allardice Riddell, Baron Riddell (1865-1934), at this time proprietor of London's News of the World. More Pages from my Diary, 1908-1914 (London: Country Life, 1934), Dec. 17, 1911., p. 34.

ministers of the crown."¹⁴⁴

December also saw the birth of still another form of protest. On the fifteenth, Emily Davidson was arrested for putting burning pieces of linen soaked in kerosene into mail boxes.¹⁴⁵ "Her action cold-shouldered by (the W.S.P.U.) at the time, was the precursor of a new and terrible struggle."¹⁴⁶ It began after the holiday season. The militants were still somewhat restrained, waiting for the King's speech which would highlight February's opening of the new session of Parliament. But on February 16, shortly before that announcement, a junior member of the Government, Charles Hobhouse,¹⁴⁷ delivered some ill-advised remarks to a Bristol audience:

In the case of the suffrage demand there has not been the kind of popular sentimental uprising which accounted for Nottingham Castle in 1832 or the Hyde Park railings of 1867. There has not been a good ebullition of popular feeling.¹⁴⁸

His speech seemed to argue that English history demonstrated that violence, not peaceful petition, secured reform. When the King's speech proved unsatisfactory, the militants took the advice Hobhouse never intended to give and planned a new demonstration for March 4.

¹⁴⁴December 19, 1911.

¹⁴⁵Miss Davidson was chiefly known for her subsequent activities which will be discussed in Chapter IV. Times, December 22, 1911.

¹⁴⁶Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 362.

¹⁴⁷Charles Edward Henry Hobhouse (1862-1941), at this time Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

¹⁴⁸Quoted in Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 214. In 1832, a mob supporting the Parliamentary reform bill burned down Nottingham castle; the Hyde Park railing was knocked down by a mob demonstrating in favor of the reform bill of 1867.

At least the militants announced a meeting for that date, but "while about half a million leaflets were given out to the public, we were privately informed that the demonstration would take place on March 1, so the police were quite unprepared!"¹⁴⁹ The police were successfully misled:

Volunteers for danger duty were organized secretly.... Each, separately, in a private room, was given a hammer and told which windows to break at 5:45 PM in the twilight and lighting-up time when people had finished shopping and were peacefully wending their way home.¹⁵⁰

The results of this scheme were dramatic: at the pre-arranged time, nearly three hundred and fifty women simultaneously shattered windows in Whitehall, Trafalgar Square, Parliament Street, the Strand, Oxford Street, Bond Street, Regent Street and Picadilly. A partial list of damaged shops included Cook's, Burbury's, Kodak, Swan and Edgar, Joy's, Fullers', Hope Brothers.¹⁵¹ And while "Loud blew the whistles, no policemen came in answer for all were blowing."¹⁵² In fact, there was little the constables could do, for chasing one window-breaker gave another the opportunity. The police turned out all available reserves and urged shopkeepers to board their windows -- but could do little else.

From every part of the crowded and brilliantly light-ed streets came the crash of splintered glass. Peo-

¹⁴⁹Mrs. Terrero's Diary, Suffragette Collection, London Museum. 50.82/1116.

¹⁵⁰"Danger duty" was the militant term for conduct likely to provoke arrest. Kitty Marion's Mss. autobiography, Suffragette Collection, London Museum. 50.82/1124.

¹⁵¹Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 374.

¹⁵²Votes for Women, March 8, 1911.

ple started as a window shattered at their side; suddenly there was another crash in front of them; on the other side of the street; behind -- everywhere. Scared shop assistants came running out to the pavements; traffic stopped; policemen sprang this way and that; five minutes later the streets were a procession of excited groups, each surrounding a woman being led in custody to the nearest police station.¹⁵³

Many women were arrested but others prepared for the demonstration of March 4. Commissioner Henry assigned an extraordinary number of constables. Sylvia Pankhurst believed that nine thousand were on duty, but the Daily Chronicle's more probable estimate of six thousand was echoed by the Daily Mail and the Standard.¹⁵⁴ To concentrate so many officers in the embattled area, Henry had to stop all leave and to once again denude the suburbs of their usual protection.¹⁵⁵ The available men were stationed in front of unbroken windows in the hope their presence would intimidate would-be window-breakers. But the police also frankly advised shopkeepers that they could not guarantee protection and suggested the windows be boarded.¹⁵⁶ Many took this advice. But just as the police sometimes had too few men on duty, this time they had too many. Only a handful of demonstrators were present, and these had difficulty making their way through the large crowd of bystanders. Indeed, "the protection of the police alone preserved some of the demonstrators from the application of lynch law."¹⁵⁷ This was

¹⁵³Quoted in Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 217.

¹⁵⁴Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 374: Standard and Daily Mail, March 4; Daily Chronicle, March 5, 1912.

¹⁵⁵Daily Mail, March 4, 1912.

¹⁵⁶Standard, March 4, 1912.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., March 5, 1912.

a new development:

One of the most remarkable features of the demonstration was the attitude of the crowd. On previous occasions the demonstrators received little more than good-humoured chaff; last night the temper of the vast portion was decidedly hostile.¹⁵⁸

This shift in the public mood was of serious concern to the police, for now in addition to guarding society against the Suffragettes, a sufficiently difficult problem, they would have to protect the militants from a vengeful public.

The resumption of militancy naturally attracted a great deal of public attention. George Lefebvre might have described the reaction as another "Great Fear." While actual damage was largely confined to windows, much else was believed threatened. For example, when two militants were recognized outside the British Museum, the gates were closed and the building evacuated. On March 4, the President of the Royal Academy reluctantly announced the close of an exhibition of Old Masters. The State apartments at Hampton Court, Kensington, Kew and Windsor Palaces were closed as well. Charred paper was inserted into mailboxes "to give an impression of militancy that counted as much as the real thing". Some additional violence was real, of course; Miss Ellen Pitfield, for example, was arrested for breaking a Post Office window and pushing through it burning wood shavings soaked in oil. More than one hundred and fifty women were arrested over the first weekend of March.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸Daily Chronicle, March 5, 1912.

¹⁵⁹Museum: Daily Chronicle, March 5; exhibition closes: Times, March 5; State apartments, Times, March 6; "to give impression", Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 232; wood shavings, Times, March 5; arrests, Times, March 6, 1912.

The militants'insistance that the franchise would solve the problem was widely ignored. A group of medical students decided retaliation was in order and broke all the windows in W.S.P.U. headquarters in Clements Inn. More responsible persons began to wonder if Parliament could pass a law making the funds of the W.S.P.U. liable for damages committed by its members. When the question was raised in the House of Commons, Asquith said it seemed a good idea to him and that he would consult the Attorney-General. The Times thought an attack on these funds good strategy, and printed a letter from its solicitor stating that the W.S.P.U. may have already been liable under the Malicious Damages Act of 1861. It printed many letters from shopkeepers whose windows had been broken, expressing sentiments such as "every broken shop window in London today has cost the cause of women's suffrage at least 1,000 possible supporters."¹⁶⁰

Primary responsibility for dealing with such public disorder lay with the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. Not only had modest prison sentences obviously failed as a deterrent, but the militants had again become a major strain on police resources. Already hard pressed by the loan of men to various places due to a coal strike, Henry simply could no longer cope in the ordinary way. One example of the sudden magnitude of the problem was that instead of just Holloway, three prisons had to find space for the hoard of offenders. The Commissioner first appealed to the public in an open letter:

¹⁶⁰ Medical students, March 5; Parliament, March 5; solicitors's letter, March 6; broken windows, March 4: all in the Times.

The efforts of the police to safeguard shop windows could be materially assisted by the active cooperation of the residents of premises. Occupiers or persons employed by them are legally justified in restraining persons who attempt damages, and in holding them until they can be made over to the custody of a constable. Similar action can be taken by any passer-by either to prevent damage or to detain the perpetrator. Such persons need no special powers such as are conferred by enlistment as Special Constables -- their powers under the Common Law being enough.¹⁶¹

In addition, Henry on March 5 ordered the arrest of four leaders of the W.S.P.U. and a raid on their headquarters. Consequently, Fredrich and Emmiline Pethick-Lawrence, Mrs. Pankhurst, and her daughter Christabel were arrested on a charge of "conspiracy to incite certain persons to commit malicious damage to property." Inspector Quinn and a detail from Special Branch had been keeping a close eye on W.S.P.U. headquarters, and moved the moment the warrant arrived.¹⁶² But Christabel Pankhurst, who happened to be elsewhere, escaped arrest. The police issued a wanted bulletin for her and alerted the police at Calais, Ostend and other ports to watch for her, while informants told the police various tales, including one that had Christabel hiding somewhere beneath the House of Commons, prepared to emerge at some dramatic moment.¹⁶³ Actually, she had escaped safely to Paris while

¹⁶¹Times, March 8, 1912.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Standard, March 6 and 7, 1912. Gladstone had considered a similar raid more than two years earlier. Henry approved, feeling that the "tallest poppies being cut off" would "take the heart out of the movement". Troup argued the opposite, that "they will have other leaders and the imprisonment of one or two of the best known will rather increase their energy and ... if anything violent is done, their excuse will be that the Government had provoked it" Gladstone ultimately dropped the idea. Gladstone Papers, Add. Mss. 45993, f. 217-20.

some newspapers reported the police efforts with tongue in cheek:

For two days Miss Christabel Pankhurst has played hide and seek with a hundred detectives. It has been wearying work for the detectives. All through Wednesday night they crouched in obscure corners in Clement's Inn, hoping, conspiring against the lady 'wanted' for alledged conspiracy. They hobnobbed with night watchmen near a hotel in Holborn, shivered at the quay at Dover and Newhaven, lounged about the railway stations in London, and longed for the dawn in various other parts of the City.¹⁶⁴

In addition to arresting the leaders, the police also talked with the printer of Votes for Women. It was hotly disputed whether they terrorized him, as charged by Mrs. Pankhurst, or merely pointed out to the printer his liability if he published incitements to various crimes. The result was that the next issue of Votes for Women had blank column after blank column, nearly one-third of the text deleted. For example, the editorial page was headed "A Challenge" and signed at the bottom "Christabel Pankhurst" -- with not a word in between.¹⁶⁵

The arrest of these leaders seemed to have little effect. On March 7, another band of women broke more windows, some of which had just been replaced. Nor did the announcement by the London Plate Glass Company that it would sue the W.S.P.U. treasury deter the militants. Between Hobhouse's February speech and March 10, according to one estimate, windows to the value of more than £15,000 had been broken and more than one hundred twenty women arrested. At least some London citizens reacted violently. A woman delivering Suffragette newspapers

¹⁶⁴Standard, March 8, 1912. See also Israel Zangewill's comments in Appendix E, p. 250.

¹⁶⁵Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 375.

to a vendor in Oxford Street had her papers torn to shreds, was roughed up by a crowd, and had to be rescued by the police. The Suffragettes opened a new office at Lewisham which was promptly bombarded with eggs and flour by a mob of three thousand. Even the Magistrates reacted: with two hundred seventy women awaiting trial by March 20, the Courts began to impose sentences of hard labor. By mid-March, so many London militants had been imprisoned that one group had to be jailed as far away as Reading. Many had to wear their own clothes: there were not enough prison uniforms to go around.¹⁶⁶

Most of these window-breaking raids were advertised as manifesting support for the Conciliation Bill which came up for its second reading on March 28. It failed to pass by just fourteen votes. Constance Rover has recently pointed out a number of reasons for the vote. First, the Irish Nationalists defected, fearing the success of this bill would lead to Asquith's resignation, thus imperiling the chances of Home Rule for Ireland. Thirteen Labour members were absent, off in their constituencies discussing the current strikes. Finally, at least some supporters switched their votes to protest the window-smashing.¹⁶⁷ Concerning the charge that excessive militancy defeated the bill, Mrs. Pankhurst wrote to the Times of April 1:

The W.S.P.U. regard as entirely frivolous the statement that the rejection is due to the recent militant protest. The refutation of that statement is to be

¹⁶⁶Windows, March 8; damage estimate, March 11; vendor, March 8; Lewisham, March 11, all in the Standard. Number in prison: Times March 20; hard labour: Times, March 6; own clothes and Reading, Standard, March 16, 1912.

¹⁶⁷Rover, Women's Suffrage, p. 95.

found in the fact that the infinitely greater devastation wrought by the miners' strike has not hindered but has actually secured the passage of the Minimum Wage Bill.

Whether militancy helped or hindered is a difficult question, with much evidence on either side. Years of peaceful petitioning had achieved nothing. Kitty Marion recorded a popular Suffragette song of 1910:

We went up to St. Stephens with petitions year by year; 'Get out' the politicians cried', we want no women here!' M.P.'s behind the railings stood and laughed to see the fun; and bold policemen knocked us down because we would not run.¹⁶⁸

Commenting on the switch from massive confrontation to attacks on property, a sympathetic Daily Chronicle warned on March 5, 1912 that "If mild methods are slow, militancy is proving fatal." Lloyd George wrote privately in 1912: "The Suffragettes have lost their opportunity. They have ruined their cause for the time being. A poll would show three out of four against them."¹⁶⁹ The whole point of militancy was to move Asquith, directly or indirectly, to grant them the suffrage, yet militancy struck him as so illogical that he is supposed to have said "A man might as well chain himself to the railings of St. Thomas's Hospital and say he wouldn't move until he has had a baby."¹⁷⁰ Yet when the militants accepted the advice to back down, as they did with the two truces, nothing happened. The mili-

¹⁶⁸Kitty Marion Mss. Autobiography, p. 207. Suffragette Collection, London Museum. 50.82/1124.

¹⁶⁹David Lloyd George to Lord Riddell, July 27, 1912. Riddell, Diary, p. 86.

¹⁷⁰Quoted in Geoffrey Marcus, Before the Lamps Went Out (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), p. 84.

tants came to view the Prime Minister, and properly so, as the main obstacle. As Israel Zangwill wrote in 1912:

Almost as gross an incarnation of Tory prejudice as Squire Western, who laid it down that women should come in with the first dish and go out with the first glass, Mr. Asquith is all that stands between the sex and the suffrage.¹⁷¹

How could they move him? Thus far neither war nor peace had worked, and their only alternative to abandoning the effort was to create such widespread disruption that the Prime Minister would be forced to yield or resign. But the more they pressed, the more critics insisted that the state could not yield without encouraging any group to employ similar methods to achieve its goals. Thinking this all through, rotating in this vicious circle, the militants were still resolved to force Asquith to yield -- either his opinion or his position.

Thus there was to be no respite for the police or the Home Secretary. The March window-breaking marked McKenna's first intensive encounter with the militants, although they had bothered him before. When he went to Queen's Hall on January 28, 1912 to address a rally, "one found the position held by clusters and lines of constables innumerable as the stars in the milky way...." While Hugh Cecil could write privately that McKenna was "a man of no tact or judgement," George Riddel observed that he was a "kindly man with lots of courage and determination. He often looks harassed, as well he may, He has a rotten job."¹⁷² Israel Zangwill pointed out the irony of the Home

¹⁷¹"The Awkward Age of the Women's Movement", Fortnightly Review, Vol. 92, November, 1912, p. 904.

¹⁷²Queens Hall: Votes for Women, Jan. 28, 1912; Cecil: Hugh Cecil to Mrs. Arncliffe Sennett, July 2, 1912: Sennett Collection, Vol. 18, p. 78; Riddel: his Diary, February 22, 1912, p. 124.

Secretary's position:

... the comedy of the situation was complicated and enhanced by the fact that the Home Office, so far from being an Inquisition, was more or less tenanted by sympathizers with Female Suffrage, and that a Home Secretary who secretly admired the quixotry of the hunger strikers was forced to feed them forcibly. He must either be denounced by the suffragettes as a Torquemada or by the public as incapable.... There was no place like the Home Office, and its administrator, like the Governors of the Gold Coast, had to be relieved at frequent intervals. As for the police, their one aim in life became to avoid arresting suffragettes.¹⁷³

In any event, Suffragettes were now McKenna's responsibility.

One of the most unusual of these problems was the case of William Ball. He had been sentenced to jail in December 1911, for breaking windows. But after a short time in prison, where he was force-fed, he began to hear voices, see visions, and otherwise manifest mental illness. He was transferred to a mental hospital on the advice of prison doctors. Ball became a cause célèbre where various militant leaders charged he was being shanghaied, that his symptoms, if they existed at all, were caused by forced feeding and other maltreatment. These charges gained wide currency and were apparently readily believed by the militants. Realizing the importance of resolving the matter, McKenna wrote to the President of the Royal College of Physicians, asking him to nominate a distinguished doctor to fully investigate the charges. Sir George Savage accepted this duty and looked closely into the case. He interviewed the various prison doctors and guards as well as Home Officials and Dr. Mansell Moullin, who had examined Ball and then sup-

¹⁷³"Awkward Age ...", Fortnightly Review, November, 1912, pp. 905-906.

ported the charges of maltreatment.¹⁷⁴ But Moullin had earlier asserted that forced feeding was inhuman, and Savage's report of his interview with Moullin indicated Moullin had no specific evidence of maltreatment.

He (Moullin) considered the conduct of the prison authorities blameworthy in sending Ball to the asylum so hurriedly. I (Savage) pointed out that the wife had time to take steps before Ball was removed to the asylum, and I understood, with all her anxiety, she had not visited, or tried to visit him, while in prison. Mr. Mansell Moullin said this may have been due to the difficulty of approaching the prison officials. He spoke of Ball's admission to the Home in an emaciated state. I pointed out that the weights showed this was not true. He suggested that the prison weighing machine was not exact. I pointed out that the weights in prison and asylum agreed. I said I approached the question with only the wish to get the truth and ascertain the action of public officials.¹⁷⁵

Savage concluded his report:

In my opinion both in the prisons and in the asylum Ball was kindly and properly treated, and his insanity could not be attributed to any treatment to which he was subjected.¹⁷⁶

Thus McKenna secured the complete exoneration of all involved.

Needless to say, the Savage report did not make McKenna any

¹⁷⁴George Henry Savage, M.D.: specialized in insanity: Charles William Mansell Moullin, M.D.: Vice-President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and active in Suffragette affairs. Who's Who, 1912.

¹⁷⁵Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons and Command), 1912-13, Vol. LXIX (Accounts and Papers, vol. 21), Cd. 6175, "Case of William Ball: Report by Sir George Savage, MD., F.R.C.P., to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Home Department Regarding the Treatment of William Ball in His Majesty's Prison, Pentonville, and the circumstances connected with his removal to Colney Hatch Asylum", p. 6. (This report was dated March 19, 1912).

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 1.

more popular among the militants. And with the large number of prisoners taken in March, McKenna was obliged to curtail some of the privileges granted under rule 243A, partly due to sheer administrative difficulties. In addition, due partly to Parliamentary pressure, he moved Mrs. Pankhurst and a few other leaders back into the first division. When she learned that all other militant prisoners were still in the second division and at hard labor, she began a hunger strike. She stopped, however, when she perceived a hint of better treatment on a quid pro quo basis in a Home Office message.¹⁷⁷ But the issue of forced feeding made McKenna a target for militant criticism:

Who will be the next Home Secretary? This is a question of immediate interest, because Mr. McKenna is impossible. Already two Home Secretaries, Lord Gladstone and Mr. Churchill, have covered themselves with disgrace by their treatment of Suffragette prisoners. Mr. McKenna has beaten even their bad record, and he too must go. His ineptitude and his cruelty equal theirs, and he has shown less honor and worse faith.¹⁷⁸

McKenna was unmoved by such remarks and had no intention of resigning.

The trial of Mrs. Pankhurst and the Pethick-Lawrences for conspiracy was finally heard in May. The police spent many hours sifting through mounds of documents seized at Clements Inn. Their time was wasted, because the defendants spent little time rebutting the charges, instead taking the opportunity to expound their cause. Mrs. Pankhurst professed to believe that much of the evidence against her came from unusual sources. As she later wrote, her trial disclosed

... the startling fact that there exists in England a

¹⁷⁷Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 220.

¹⁷⁸Votes for Women, April 19, 1912.

special band of secret police entirely engaged in political work. These men, seventy-five in number, form what is known as the political branch of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Police. They go about in disguise, and their sole duty is to shadow Suffragettes and other political workers. They follow certain political workers from their homes to their places of business, to their social pleasures, into tea rooms and restaurants, even to the theatre. They pursue unsuspecting people in taxicabs sit beside them in omnibuses (sic). Above all they take down speeches. In fact the system is exactly like the secret police system of Russia.¹⁷⁹

It is hard to say why Mrs. Pankhurst was so "startled"; police officers in plain clothes, conspicuously equipped with note pads, had been attending Suffragette meetings for years. And if the total number of seventy-five officers is exact, they must have been stretched pretty thin as their other duties included monitoring Irish Nationalist and other politically active groups. Then too, plain clothes are hardly a "disguise", if this is what she meant, and although following persons to their "social pleasures" may sound obnoxious, the Suffragettes had so often used ordinary occasions for extraordinary demonstrations that the police could hardly be blamed for being cautious.

In any event, the evidence against the trio was more than enough to convict. But the defendants' speeches so moved the jury that although they returned a guilty verdict, they unanimously recommended that considering the purity of the defendants' motives, the judge impose the minimum sentence. The judge felt otherwise. Empowered to imprison for up to three years, he sentenced them to nine months in the second division and ordered them to pay court costs amounting to nearly £5,000.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁸⁰Standard, May 24, 1912.

There were protests from members of Parliament and St. Lo Strachey, the editor of the Spectator, wrote "they ought to be treated as children and not as responsible people."¹⁸¹ In protest, the militants resumed window-breaking and hunger-striking. By June 24, McKenna was advising the House of Commons that of the seventy-one suffragette prisoners then in jail, forty-six had been force-fed at least once.¹⁸²

A railway car, upon arrival in London, was discovered with smashed windows and slashed seats; signs left there read "We wish the release of our leaders". Lloyd George advised Asquith not to attend any more public receptions. Two weeks later, a male Suffragette attacked Lloyd George but only managed to knock him down before a police detective came to the rescue.¹⁸³ "It is a subject of comment in political circles [observed the Times] that it should be necessary for our policemen to use extraordinary precautions to avoid assaults by militant suffragettes." But other than maintaining their bodyguard around ministers, there was little else the police could do.

They could, however, plan in other areas. With the fall session of Parliament impending, Superintendent Wells of 'A' Division proposed the addition of twenty-three men to his command as a reserve to hurry over to Parliament if needed. The Commissioner felt this was inadequate.

¹⁸¹ St. Lo Strachey (1860-1927), a newspaper proprietor, to Henry Nevinston, May 23, 1912. Strachey Papers, Beaverbrook Library: S/17/3/9. Also, the sentencing judge's two daughters joined the W.S.P.U. just two weeks after the trial. Fredrich Pethick-Lawrence, Fate Has Been Kind (London: Hutchinson, 1943).

¹⁸² Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 40, col. 38.

¹⁸³ Railway car: Times, June 26; Advice to Asquith: Riddell, Diary, June 28, p. 73; attack on Lloyd George: Riddell, Diary, July 14, 1912, p. 81. Times: July 19, 1912.

quate and instead persuaded the Home Office to sanction the addition of thirty-seven men for this duty.¹⁸⁴

An easily overlooked aspect of the Suffragette problem grew alarmingly at this point. Many women were Suffragettes without being militant, but too often average citizens failed to distinguish between the law-abiding and the lawless. While English law guaranteed the right of expression to the non-militants, that right became harder to exercise and harder to protect, as an incident at Llanystumdwy illustrated. As David Lloyd George spoke there on September 22, some militants persistently heckled him until the crowd turned on the militants, and one woman had a particularly rough time:

... her hat was torn away, and armed with cabbage stumps and sticks the crowd struck the unfortunate woman on the head, in the face, and on other parts of her body.

The difficulty of the police can hardly be imagined. When one woman was being rescued police were needed hundreds of yards away by another woman.¹⁸⁵

The harsh treatment this woman received was widely reported. But the militants seemed to have turned even this violence to their advantage. One newspaper reported that a girl attending this meeting even had her hair pulled out, but a local official reported to Lloyd George that he had found a woman's hat — stuffed with false hair.¹⁸⁶ The London police did what they could, sending more than four hundred men to patrol a Victoria Park meeting on November 10, for example, but this

¹⁸⁴Wells to Henry, September 26; Home Office to Henry, October 3, 1912. MEPO 2/1511.

¹⁸⁵Daily Mirror, September 23, 1912.

¹⁸⁶E. W. Evans to Lloyd George, October 19, 1912. HO 45/10684/228470/14.

did not satisfy the militants, who began to charge that the police were sending "agents provocateurs" to break up otherwise orderly crowds.¹⁸⁷

The increasing violence worried Emmiline and Fredrick Pethick-Lawrence. They wanted to return to more peaceful means, believing that conciliation was now in order. In contrast, Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel believed an increase of violence was order. After a series of secret meetings between the leaders, a split was announced. While the Pethick-Lawrences renounced violence and retained control of Votes for Women, the Pankhursts endorsed violence and launched a new paper, the Suffragette. The schism was announced by Mrs. Pankhurst at Albert Hall on October 17, 1912. She also announced "There is something that governments care more for than human life, and that is the security of property, and so it is through property that we shall strike the enemy."¹⁸⁸ Perhaps recognizing that this split meant the last moderating force was now gone, the Times observed on October 21 that there was "in all this silliness an element of increasing gravity and danger which no responsible person can wish to overlook."

The demonstrated ingenuity of the militants coupled with the announcement of the W.S.P.U.'s new policy led to another wave of fear. For example, borough council elections were scheduled in London for late October. Reacting to hints from the militants, McKenna feared they might somehow damage the ballots. On October 25, the Home Secre-

¹⁸⁷ Meeting: Police Orders, November 8, MEFO 7/74; agents, Report of C.I.D. to Home Office, December 19, 1912: HO 45/10695/231366/6.

¹⁸⁸ Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 265.

tary sent instructions to the police authorizing the unusual step of placing constables inside the polling place if requested by the local officials. These constables were instructed to look for the official stamp on the actual ballot, and to allow only the individual voter to place that slip in the ballot box.¹⁸⁹

McKenna may have feared attacks on the ballot boxes because of attacks on letter boxes. Earlier and occasional deposits of corrosive substances in letter boxes had been kept rather quiet. But on November 29, newspapers finally reported the story that for the preceding ten days, militants had been damaging letters by the hundreds. In a synchronized attack from 5:30 to 6:00 P.M. on November 28, acid was dropped into a number of letter boxes in the heart of the business district. The police response was prompt but as in so many cases, only marginally effective. Constables on patrol were told to stand near letter-boxes.¹⁹⁰ The Post Office authorities confessed helplessness: "There is nothing to be said. We know of nothing to be done. We have no suggestions to offer to prevent or lessen such outrages in the future."¹⁹¹ In a rare public statement, the police disguised the same sentiments under blustering words:

Scotland Yard is alive to the necessity of preventing any recurrence of this mean and unpardonable form of vandalism. There is a special branch of the Criminal Investigation Division under Inspector Quinn, which deals solely with this class of offenders. It is reckoned as a political crime and the suffragette perpe-

¹⁸⁹McKenna to Henry, October 25, 1912. MEPO 2/1527.

¹⁹⁰Standard, November 29, 1912.

¹⁹¹Ibid., November 30, 1912.

trators are ranked with anarchists and spies. The work of this branch is general supervision and investigation but precautions against a repetition will be left in charge of the divisional superintendent.¹⁹²

The Standard reported that many of its readers had suggestions for dealing with this problem, but that all had insurmountable drawbacks. For example, making the holes smaller would not prevent pouring a fluid into the boxes. The militant newspapers made the obvious suggestion that the franchise could cure the problem.¹⁹³

In a rare display of confusion, the militants had at first denied any responsibility for this campaign. But on November 30, Mrs. Pankhurst endorsed it; on December 2, Mrs. Drummond called it the "best and most effective way" to achieve their goals while Annie Kenny explained:

We have got to make public life so uncomfortable that public opinion will go to the Government and say look here, we never receive our letters, our windows have been broken, you men had better get this question settled and give women the vote.¹⁹⁴

The postal and police authorities took what steps they could. The Post Office offered a reward for anyone helping to arrest offenders while the police tried to find the supplier of the acid. But stopping women as they approached a letter-box was out of the question. As one superintendent commented, "We cannot possibly arrest them for suspicion, because, so far as we know, they are simply posting a letter." The end result was the defacing of thousands of letters, but most remained

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Votes for Women, December 6, 1912.

¹⁹⁴Mrs. Pankhurst: Times, November 30; Mrs. Drummond and Annie Kenny quoted in a C.I.D. report to Henry dated December 3, and then sent to the Home Office. HO 45/10695/231366/2.

legible enough to insure delivery.¹⁹⁵

In the midst of this letter-defacing campaign, a great variety of other incidents demonstrated that the Suffragettes remained determined and ingenious. On November 6, a nineteen year old girl was arrested for putting phosphorus in a letter-box. On November 28, fear over the safety of public officials was reawakened when a disgruntled taxi driver shot Commissioner Henry as he walked up his front steps. Although totally unrelated to the Suffragettes, this incident stood as both an example and a warning of the possibilities open to agitated persons. On November 30, the police discovered three militants armed with bombs in a hall adjacent to one where Lloyd George was speaking. Even worse, a Miss Gilliatt delivered a speech on Wimbledon Common on December 8 which was reported to the Home Office by the attending C.I.D. officers as suggesting the assassination of a Cabinet Minister. But the evidence was slim, and Troup decided "it would be undesirable to prosecute (for incitement) even if there were a reasonable chance of success. A prosecution would give her remarks a wider currency, and might lead some half-mad woman to act on them."¹⁹⁶

Incidents continued: on the night of December 10, ten false fire alarms were pulled in London. On Christmas eve, railroad signals were

¹⁹⁵Reward: Times, November 30; acid: Standard, December 2; Superintendent: Votes for Women, December 6, 1912. Of 5,999 letters damaged, only 13 letters and seven postcards were neither forwarded or returned from October 1 to December 9, 1912 according to Postmaster-General Herbert Samuel. Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), vol. 45 cols. 75-76.

¹⁹⁶Phosphorus: Times, November 6; Commissioner shot: Standard, November 28; bombs: Daily Herald, November 30; assassination and Troup: HO 45/10695/231366/6.

tied in an erroneous position, endangering the lives of passengers. A message left at the scene read "The only way to stop this trouble is to remove the cause by giving votes to women". Finally, a court decision denied the claims of the plate glass insurance companies against the funds of the W.S.P.U., thus blocking a once promising counter-attack against the militants' treasury. In short, by December 1912, the militants' activities and the fear of these activities had become a critical problem.¹⁹⁷

The efforts to defuse the militants had thus far produced dismal results. The policy of ignoring them, part of Gladstone's response, had failed. The policy of releasing them after arrest, part of Churchill's response, had failed. The policy of acting as the needs of the moment dictated, McKenna's response, had failed. Minimal arrests, massive arrests, raids on their headquarters, minimal sentences, maximum sentences -- all had failed. By the end of 1912, no answer had yet been found, and in the minds of many, it was time -- high time -- for a more effective policy. Both sides knew either more stick or more carrot had to come. But each side was convinced it had the strength to thwart the other. The militants had to go on as before or give up. The Liberals had to truly suppress the militants, or give them the vote. Thus the stage was set for the last phase of the Suffragette struggle.

¹⁹⁷Fire alarms: Times, December 11; railroad, HO 45/10695/231366/7; court: Daily Herald, November 29, 1912.

CHAPTER IV

MONTHS OF OUTRAGE, 1913-1914

But in the process of time the campaign developed into a species of vendetta of personal violence, in which dog whips and red pepper were among the favourite weapons of the so-called Suffragettes.... Even our children had to be vigilantly protected against the menace of abduction. The resources of the law were severely taxed by the fact that the outrage-mongers were for the most part women intoxicated by a genuine fanaticism.¹

When in January 1913 Parliament reconvened after its holiday recess, one of the problems waiting attention was the Manhood Suffrage Bill which had been introduced by the Prime Minister. Two months earlier, Asquith had promised to permit an amendment extending the vote to women. This amendment was to be introduced on January 17. Militants continued their agitation until January 12 when Mrs. Pankhurst declared another truce to allow the Government one last opportunity.² But after the amendment was introduced, A. J. Balfour asked the Speaker if the amendment was in order. Since it made such a radical change in the bill, did it not constitute a new bill and should it not therefore be reintroduced? On January 27, apparently against precedent, the Speaker ruled that the bill required reintroduction. The Prime Minister could

¹Earl of Oxford and Asquith (Prime Minister Asquith), Fifty Years of British Parliament (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1926), Vol. II, p. 141.

²Emmiline Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 271.

have easily solved the problem by bringing in a new bill while ample time remained in the session. But "For the Prime Minister who had denounced women's suffrage as a 'national disaster' to be compelled not only to accept it but to press it through ... would be an impossible position."³ Asquith withdrew the bill and promised Government support for a private member's bill in the next session.

As far as the militants were concerned, they had been swindled again. Asquith's apparently solid promise had evaporated. While Asquith may have felt he had redeemed the letter of his promise, he had certainly violated its spirit. Having foreseen this development, the militants had begun planning counter-measures at least two weeks before it occurred. On January 20, Mrs. Pankhurst addressed a "Private and Confidential" letter to her followers. After announcing that she expected the amendment to fail, she went on:

If any woman refrains from militant protest against the injury done by the Government and the House of Commons to women and to the race, she will share responsibility for the crime. Submission under such circumstances will itself be a crime.⁴

Scotland Yard prepared for a resumption of militancy. The Pall Mall Gazette reported on January 20 that the police entertained the "gravest fears" for the lives of ministers: "It is all very well for the leaders to talk about the sacredness of human life, but the peril lies in the individual action of women who, even if they are sane, are highly hysterical". The paper noted that the Prime Minister now drove

³Balfour and the Speaker: Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th series, Vol. 47, col. 1020. "Impossible position": C. P. Scott, Diary, January 20, 1913, p. 67.

⁴Suffragette Collection, London Museum, Z 6068-3.

about with a car full of police both in front and behind him, while the once-injured Birrell had two detective bodyguards even on the train. A week later, the Daily Telegraph reported that "carefully preserved secret measures" had been taken to guard members of the cabinet. "The guardianship is so unobtrusive and tactful" it noted "that it causes little or no embarrassment to the Minister, who is probably quite unconscious of it on most occasions."⁵ According to the Globe of January 27:

Each minister is accompanied by two plain-clothes officers wherever he goes. If he drives off in a motor car the officers either ride in the car or follow in a taxicab. If he plays golf a detective walks around within fifty yards of him. Night and day a uniformed officer is stationed outside his private residence. Those ... who spent the weekend out of town were accompanied by Special Branch (officers)....

Home Secretary McKenna was not very cooperative with his protectors although he was a likely target:

'There were a couple of strange men hanging about a short time ago', one of his brothers warned him when he motored down to luncheon in the country 'but I don't know what has happened to them.' 'My bodyguard, to whom I gave the slip in London', McKenna replied, 'and they are now in your kitchen, drinking your beer and alarming your servants with apocryphal stories of my escapes from kidnappers.'⁶

Commissioner Henry also augmented the force around Parliament. Fearing a new march he ordered all leave stopped, one hundred horsemen to Parliament Square, and five thousand constables to the vicinity.⁷ But

⁵January 27, 1913.

⁶Stephen McKenna, Reginald McKenna, 1863-1943: A Memoir (London: Eyre and Spottinswoode, 1948), p. 157.

⁷Globe, January 27, 1913.

the days of massive concentration had by and large passed by. Instead, the militants resorted to new and devious attacks on property, termed "outrages". On January 31 they used acid to burn "Votes for Women" onto a golf green.⁸ The same day a few women rode about London on the uncovered upper decks of buses, occasionally flinging stones at store windows. On February 2 a militant broke the glass case protecting some of the jewels in the Tower of London, a move which prompted the immediate closing of Kensington, Hampton Court, Kew and Holyrood palaces. Additional police were placed on duty at Buckingham Palace. On February 5 four men were hurt in a Dundee post office when mail addressed to the Prime Minister suddenly burst into flames. The next day several ministers opened letters that had been packed with snuff or other irritants: "Some ministers were prudent enough to handle the missive carefully and throw it in the fire, but others, less cautious, have had prolonged sneezing bouts in consequence of this attention on the part of the ladies."⁹ On February 8 a handful of militants broke into the orchid house at Kew Gardens and damaged valuable plants while switching the species labels on others; the cold air let in through broken windows also hurt many plants. On February 10, many windows were broken, with fine impartiality, in the Carlton, Junior Carlton, Oxford, Cambridge and Reform Clubs.¹⁰

⁸Times, February 1, 1913. Increasing golf course outrages led Lloyd's to offer a new damage insurance policy with an annual rate of £2 10 s. for each £500 of coverage. The policy sold well. Times, February 21, 1913.

⁹Each of these incidents was reported in the next day's Times.

¹⁰Orchids and windows: Suffragette, February 14, 1913.

These were only a few examples of the militants' February activities. Some were petty and only mildly irritating. Others were quite serious and none more so than the Walton Heath outrage. Just across the green from the Walton Heath golf course Lloyd George was having a house constructed. By his less than spirited support for the cause, the Chancellor had earned the special enmity of the Suffragettes. On the night of February 18, militants entered the nearly finished house and planted two bombs, apparently canisters of gunpowder with a lit candle as the fuse. At 6:10 AM on February 19, the first bomb went off, doing extensive damage. The seriousness of this outrage was twofold. The workmen were due to arrive just twenty minutes later, and might have been killed. Had the blast from the first bomb not blown out the fuse of the second, it would have gone off later, making a workman's death even more likely.¹¹ Mrs. Pankhurst announced to a Cardiff meeting that night:

... We have blown up the Chancellor of the Exchequer's house.... Last night while an army of men were guarding golf links very popular with ministers, to show how really clever their tactics are, the golf links were neglected in that neighbourhood, but a very successful piece of guerilla warfare was accomplished on the unfinished house of Mr. Lloyd George.¹²

This and similar speeches seemed to make Mrs. Pankhurst liable to charges of incitement to commit a felony. Yet jail seemed a feeble solution:

¹¹Times, February 20 and 27, 1913. The loss did not fall on Lloyd George; his wife was to sign the lease later that day. Figaro, quoted in the Standard, March 6, 1913.

¹²Report from Special Branch, C.I.D., to the Home Office, February 19, 1913. HO 45/10695/231366/27A.

... nobody makes any suggestions what to do (sic) with a woman like Mrs. Pankhurst, who will starve herself if sent to jail, has a heart too weak to be forcibly fed without danger to her life, would become a martyr if she died and would be imitated by a score of others, and would promptly come back to England if we deported her (having passed an Act of Parliament to do so). Meanwhile they say 'the Government must be firm' without facing any of the facts of the situation.¹³

Based on such considerations, it at first appeared that the Home Office had decided against arresting her. But newspapers including the Globe of February 22 demanded to know:

What is Mr. McKenna waiting for? The patience of the nation is on the verge of exhaustion. If, owing to the inaction of the Government, reprisals should begin, a state of affairs might ensue which no decent person would care to contemplate.

By February 24, those favoring arrest had prevailed, and Mrs. Pankhurst was released on bond, her trial scheduled for April 7. And it was at this point that the Police Chronicle,¹⁴ the "Official Organ of the Police Mutual Assurance Association", began to speak out strongly on the militant issue:

Now that the Government has taken action against Mrs. Pankhurst for the Walton Heath outrages, we sincerely hope they will go further and give more definite support to the police in their efforts to preserve the public peace. The lamentable laxity accorded to the Suffragette offenders by the Home Office has, without doubt, led the militant leaders to defy the authorities and treat the police with contempt. Were the matter not so serious the alternating attitude of the constables towards the Suffragettes would be one of the funniest things in our national life. At one moment

¹³Herbert Samuel, February 23, 1913, quoted in John Bowle, Viscount Samuel: A Biography (London: Victor Gollancy, 1957), p. 108.

¹⁴As the police had no union, this paper was one of the few organs which could speak out in their name without fear of reprisal from offended police or political authorities.

he is guarding the public against the attacks of the Suffragettes, at the next against the public. And the old warnings as to what happens to him who comes between two foes is particularly applicable to the police. The women alternately regard the constables as paid hirelings pitted against them, and as a very present help and protection in time of trouble; while the public look to them to protect their property then execrate them for protecting the Suffragettes! How can they be expected to perform their many other duties satisfactorily, when the mad militants are allowed to wander about privileged by political considerations to smash windows, blow up property, burn down business premises, and destroy letters in the post.

This was a good example of "nobody having any suggestions".

Meanwhile, the arrest of Mrs. Pankhurst, which the Police Chronicle endorsed, only triggered further outrages. On February 20 a pavillion burnt to the ground at Kew Gardens, but the prompt arrival of the police ensured the capture of the arsonists.¹⁵ The same day the Pall Mall Gazette reported that a non-flammable envelope had been invented and would soon go on sale for "the benefit of those who at the present time feel qualms whenever they drop a letter in the box". On February 21 many Birmingham residents found their door keys would no longer fit; the locks had been stuffed with lead pellets.¹⁶ On February 22 the Standard reported it had been informed on the highest authority that:

... the militant Suffragettes, in addition to other contemplated coups, had laid plans for kidnapping certain Cabinet Ministers. This plot has come to the knowledge of the authorities, and means are being taken to defeat any nefarious designs....

¹⁵Standard, February 20, 1913.

¹⁶Times, February 21, 1913.

It is not likely that any attempt will be made to kidnap Mr. McKenna, for the militants feel that whilst he remains as Home Secretary, they can pursue their hunger tactics with impunity.

On February 24, the Times reported that within the preceding twenty-four hours, telegraph wires near Newcastle and phone wires in Birmingham had been cut while in London letters were destroyed and Suffragette slogans painted on the doors of residences. Two days later Hugh Franklin again got into trouble, this time for setting fire to a train compartment, while on the same day the windows of Croyden W.S.P.U. headquarters, which an angry mob had shattered on February 24, displayed a new sign: "Smashed by voters (men). No arrests!"¹⁷ Summarizing the tactics of militants thus far, the Standard printed a list of outrages on February 20, 1913 which included breaking up political meetings, raids on the House of Commons, window smashing, assaults on ministers, pillar box destruction, railway signal interference, pepper posted to ministers, false fire alarms, cut telephone and telegraph wires, the bombing of several houses and damage done to art works, golf greens and museum displays.

The police seemed paralyzed. For example, the Special Branch reported a speech by Mrs. Pankhurst on January 30 that made her "clearly guilty of inciting to commit crime", but McKenna himself countersigned a Home Office memo stating "as we cannot punish, I suppose it is useless to prosecute."¹⁸ Considering the repeated cycles of offense, arrest, trial, imprisonment, hunger strike, forced feeding and release, McKenna's

¹⁷Franklin and Croyden windows: Times, February 26, 1913.

¹⁸Special Branch, C.I.D. to Home Office, January 30; McKenna's endorsement, February 4, 1913. HO 45/10695/231366/16.

was a pessimistic but now unrealistic reflection. In March the militant pressure increased. On the first day of the month, the militants sent a fake telegram from Cardiff to Pontypool ordering the mobilization of the Territorial Army. This was well underway by the time the hoax was discovered. This same Saturday was the first in weeks without some outrage being committed on Richmond Palace, while Kew was heavily guarded with extra men watching the most vulnerable points. On March 3, the Metropolitan Police, now more than ever caught between the militants and the public, had to force a passage through an angry throng of men preventing militants from entering their meeting in the London Pavilion.¹⁹ On March 7, the Police Chronicle disclosed that 1,783 men were now assigned to private persons and places. At first glance that figure, nearly ten percent of the entire force, seems incredibly high, but it included the thirty-one men stationed in the British Museum, others at Dudley House and a force protecting Russia's Grand Duke Michael at Kenwood House. On March 8, an incident occurred in Poplar, which, if the militant accounts are correct, showed some of the frustration the police must have felt. When that borough's council refused to rent the local hall to the militants, a group of women began a march to the residence of a borough councilor. A strong force of police waited for the women in the darkness preserved by unlit street lamps, and then allegedly attacked the crowd:

There were cries and shrieks, and people rushed panic
stricken into the little front gardens of the houses....
But wherever the people stopped the police hunted them

¹⁹All reported in the Pall Mall Gazette on the dates indicated.

away.... A boy of eighteen was so brutally kicked and trampled on that he had to be carried to the infirmary for treatment. A publican who was passing was knocked down and kicked, and one of his ribs broken. Even the bandsmen (who accompanied the women) were not spared. The police threw their instruments over the garden walls. The big drummer was knocked down and so badly used that he is still on the list for sick insurance benefit....²⁰

On March 9 two railway stations were burnt down.²¹ The next day, as King George V rode to Westminster for the opening of Parliament, militants rushed towards his carriage to present a petition. The attempt was foiled by the twenty constables stationed just outside Marlborough House. The same officers had to rescue the women from the bystanders who wanted to throw them into St. James Park lake.²² Ignoring the provision of the Bill of Rights that stated subjects had the right to present petitions to the monarch, the police jailed them for "obstruction of the police in the performance of their duty".²³ Then on March 11 the militants posted a large number of letters without stamps. The recipients, seeing that the letters contained a coin, readily paid the postage, only to find a mere halfpenny wrapped in Suffragette literature. Next, the police arrested a woman for arson on March 14: searching her home, they found hidden under the floor a gallon of letter-staining fluid, five sets of telegraph wire cutters, leg irons and clamps to climb poles, saws and drill bits, bottles of corrosive fluids, five lighters, flints and stones, ropes, and false motor car identifica-

²⁰ Women's Dreadnought (Sylvia Pankhurst's new paper), March 8, 1913.

²¹ Saunderton and Croxley: Times, March 10, 1913.

²² Standard, March 11, 1913.

²³ HO 45/10695/231366/38.

tion plates. Finally, on March 17, the police arrested a woman for throwing a can of green paint through a Home Office window.²⁴

When the House of Commons began to consider the Home Office estimates on March 18, several members attacked McKenna's failure to end the outrages. It was charged that the Home Secretary had no remedy beyond "barbaric and cruel" forced feeding, and that McKenna had "displayed a spirit of apathy and infirmity of purpose, with truculence, that it would be very difficult to find equalled in any barbaric country of the middle ages."²⁵ McKenna was also taken to task over the Lilian Lenton case. Force-fed by prison doctors, she had, three hours after one such feeding, developed symptoms of a lung infection, and McKenna had ordered her immediate release. Her own doctors asserted her condition was due to food misdirected into her lung but the prison doctors vigorously denied this charge. This case was cited as an example of the brutality of forced feeding, while on quite a different tack, Sir Alfred Cripps insisted McKenna had no legal right to release her even if she was ill. It was Sir Fredrich Banbury's opinion that McKenna should simply let the militants die.²⁶

McKenna, replying that he "absolutely declined" to let them die, defended his policy. Since January 1, 1913, he revealed, sixty-six

²⁴Letters: Times, March 12; searched house: Daily Chronicle, March 14; paint: Times, March 17, 1913.

²⁵"barbaric and cruel": Harold Smith (Conservative, Warrington), col. 879; "infirmity of purpose": Oliver Locker-Lampson (Conservative, Ramsey), col. 926; Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser., Vol. 50.

²⁶Sir Charles Alfred Cripps (Unionist, Wyncombe), col. 927-930; Sir Fredrich George Banbury (Conservative, City of London), col. 923; Lilian Lenton case, cols. 901 ff.; Ibid., Vol. 50.

militants had been imprisoned. Of those, fifty-eight had served or were serving their sentence: only eight had secured early release, four due to hearts too weak to risk forced feeding, and the other four for similar medical reasons. Thus McKenna denied the widespread failure of law and order as his critics charged. And with regard to forced feeding, McKenna announced that only twelve of the sixty-six had been continually force-fed, while others had been fed less often, if at all. He promised to bring in new legislation to deal with the militants.²⁷

By this point it has become crystal clear that only a comprehensive counteroffensive would stop the outrages. By March 1913, the authorities were developing a host of new ideas. Herbert Samuel contributed the suggestion that the printers of the Suffragette be prosecuted: "If the printers were deterred from publishing incitements to violence, the movement itself would be hampered not a little". But that proposal seemed to tamper with freedom of the press, and it was forwarded to the Attorney-General for consideration.²⁸ McKenna himself was working on another idea, one which looked more promising. Riddell noted in his diary:

McKenna told me that the Militant Suffragettes were now few and that he hoped soon to have them all by the heels. He is a resolute sort of man. He says he is very tired and worn.²⁹

One of the problems making him "tired and worn" was forced feed-

²⁷Decline to let them die, col. 904; statistics, cols. 896-97; new legislation, col. 907. Ibid., Vol. 50.

²⁸HO 45/10695/231366/31.

²⁹Riddell, Diary, March 16, 1913, p. 128.

ing. Nobody liked it: members of Parliament objected; physicians objected; the staff required to carry it out objected; the King objected. But as McKenna told the House on March 18, just as Gladstone had done three years earlier, the Courts held that the Home Secretary had a duty to prevent imprisoned persons from starving themselves. The pattern was simple: the convicted militant refused food and was force-fed, but forced feeding was so poorly tolerated that a rapid weight loss and general deterioration of health soon placed the militants in jeopardy of their lives. The Home Office, too humane to condone death and too realistic to help crown martyrs, felt obliged to release them. Once released, such prisoners usually committed fresh crimes to start the cycle all over again.

On March 25, McKenna moved to break this cycle by bringing in the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health) Bill, which Votes for Women immediately tagged the "Cat and Mouse" Bill. The provisions were simple: the Home Secretary would be authorized to release prisoners for a certain period if their health warranted; when their health improved, they could be returned to prison, without warrant or court proceedings, to complete their sentences. Released prisoners would be given a license specifying the date they must return: in addition, prisoners had to inform the police of their residence while on license, and could not leave that residence for more than twelve hours without notifying the police in advance. Finally, prisoners on license had to refrain from all illegal action or else be subject to immediate reimprisonment.³⁰ Many

³⁰These provisions became clear in the debate on the second reading: Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser., Vol. 51 (April 2, 1913), cols. 405 ff.

hoped this bill would end forced feeding:

The King desires me to write to you upon the question of 'forcible feeding'. His Majesty cannot help feeling that there is something shocking, if not almost cruel, in the operation to which these insensate women are subjected through their refusal to take necessary nourishment. His Majesty concludes that Miss Pankhurst's description of what she endured when forcibly fed is more or less true. If so, her story will horrify people not otherwise in sympathy with the Militant Suffragettes. The King asks whether in your 'Temporary Discharge of Prisons (sic) Bill' it would not be possible to abolish forcible feeding.³¹

McKenna may have had this letter in mind then he described the "unprecedented set of circumstances" in his remarks on the second reading of the bill. "Alternately (militants) shock us by the violence of their outrages, and attempt to enlist our sympathies by the tales of their sufferings", he noted. The Home Secretary had earlier informed the House that of the two hundred and forty women sentenced in 1912, eighty-four -- nearly one in three -- had been released before serving their full sentence. He needed these new powers to enforce the law.³² In response to a direct question, he announced he would retain his power to feed forcibly, and when necessary would use it. There were a number of criticisms of this bill. Lord Robert Cecil compared it to lettres de cachet while Viscount Wolmer thought the problem lay in treating the women as criminals: "They are not criminals; they are simply politicians who are prepared to go to all lengths to enforce their

³¹Lord Stamfordham (King George V's secretary) to McKenna, March 27, 1913. Harold Nicolson, King George V (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1953,) p. 212.

³²"Unprecedented circumstances" and "alternately they shock us", Vol. 51, Col. 405; statistics, Vol. 50 (March 26), col. 1663: Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser.

principles." But many of McKenna's detractors, judging from the subsequent vote, seemed to agree with J. D. Rees: "To do (McKenna) justice, though I have frequently complained of his leniency to what are miscalled political prisoners, I will say on the present occasion he has stuck to his guns, and I mean to support him".³³ The bill passed its second reading by 296 to 43 votes, and its third reading on April 23 by 294 to 56 votes, and became law on April 25.³⁴

While the Cat and Mouse Bill made its way through Parliament, much of the militants' activity focused on Hyde Park demonstrations. Observing a tradition common to many English reform groups, the women went there on Sundays to deliver speeches. But as their tactics turned more and more citizens against them, the militants found it increasingly difficult to secure a hearing. On March 16, the police had to rescue some militant speakers in the Park from a hostile crowd.³⁵ The next day, a member of Parliament objected to "armies of police" having to perform this extra duty.³⁶ In another meeting on April 6, mounted police had to escort the militants away from a hostile crowd of some fifteen thousand. Apparently, sightseers now came to the Park disturbances as they formerly went to see raids on Westminster. And the disorders grew in size and number: on April 6, militants were rescued on Hampstead Heath, in

³³Cecil: April 2, col. 433; Viscount Wolmer (Unionist, Newtown), April 2, col. 458; Rees (Unionist, Notts), April 8, col. 1110; Ibid., Vol. 51.

³⁴Second reading: Vol. 51, April 8, col. 474; third reading: Vol. 52, April 23, col. 414; Royal Assent: Vol. 51, April 25, col. 763. Ibid.

³⁵Times, March 17, 1913.

³⁶Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser., Vol. 50 (March 18), col. 876.

Hyde Park and at Wimbledon Common.³⁷

As a consequence of these meetings, McKenna held a high level conference at the Home Office on April 14. Participants included the Home Secretary, Undersecretary Charles Troup, Commissioner Henry, and Archibald Bodkin³⁸ from the Director of Public Prosecution's Office. Their discussion ranged over all the problems presented by the militants. Commissioner Henry proposed that the Department of Works, which had jurisdiction over Hyde Park, be asked to forbid the entry of wagons into the park, wagons the militants used as speaker's platforms. McKenna vetoed this, fearing the women would defy the ban, bring the wagons, and be attacked by the crowd. Henry also reported that since the meetings were now all but beyond his control, he proposed to use his lawful authority to ban them. This action was approved. The Home Office, it was announced, had informally asked the Post-Master General if he would honor a request to cut off telephone service to W.S.P.U. headquarters, since orders to commit crimes were given over the phone. But the Postmaster General replied he could not cut the phone service unless he first had a "judicial opinion". Finally, the Attorney-General's office reported gathering evidence against both the leaders of the W.S.P.U. and the publishers of the Suffragette.³⁹ The results of this meeting were rather meager, only the endorsement of Henry's proposed ban on meetings. On the other hand, this may have marked the point where

³⁷Times, April 7, and 13, 1913.

³⁸Sir Archibald Henry Bodkin (1862-1957), subsequently involved in the prosecution of Roger Casement and Director of Public Prosecutions, 1920-1930. D.N.B.

³⁹HO 45/10700/236973/2.

chivalry was replaced with a firm resolution to crush the movement.

Henry wasted little time. The next day he sent a letter to the W.S.P.U. explaining that since no police arrangements could alleviate disorder, militant meetings in Hyde Park and several other parks were henceforth prohibited.⁴⁰ He also announced this new policy in an open letter to the press. The Police Chronicle rejoiced that constables would no longer have to give up their day off to protect "seditious assemblies", a duty that they hated: "Only the skillful organization of our constables prevents them from receiving the chastisement from the loyal and outraged listeners which they richly deserve", wrote one correspondent.⁴¹ In orders to the force on April 18 marked "Confidential", Henry instructed that such meetings were to be "prevented" in order to "preserve the peace and maintain good order," and added that "all necessary steps" were to be taken including prohibiting vans or other platforms.⁴²

English law justified Henry's action. The Police Commissioner had ample authority to so preserve the peace, especially where sanctioned by the Home Secretary.⁴³ The militants chose to emphasize another aspect of the problem, the right of free speech. On the first Sunday

⁴⁰ Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 457.

⁴¹ April 18, 1913.

⁴² HO 45/10700/236973/16.

⁴³ In response to a question by Keir Hardie, McKenna took full responsibility for the ban on meetings: "... I think I am justified in directing the Commissioner of Police to instruct the Metropolitan Police to take such steps as are necessary and within their powers to prevent such meetings being held." Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th Ser., Vol. 51 (April 16, 1913), col. 2085.

after Henry's announcement, they again tried to hold a meeting in Hyde Park, but were stopped by the police. Some usually responsible newspapers suggested that the police abstain from rescuing militants, instead leaving them to the mercy of the crowd. The Pall Mall Gazette explained on April 21:

We cannot see why some hundreds of police should have the extra work thrown upon them of protecting those who are engaged in trying to break police regulations. The law owes nothing to those whose main purpose is to evade and defy it. At a time when the forces of order are apparently inadequate to the protection of property criminally endangered, the law-abiding part of the population should certainly have first claim upon their services.

While the Commissioner fortunately ignored this invitation to turn the militants over to lynch law, the park problem continued. A Mrs. Merivale Mayer reported that although she was a constitutional Suffragette, the police hustled her out of Hyde Park on April 27. Henry advised the Home Secretary that his men had actually rescued her from a hostile throng. On the same day a militant complained that each time she tried to address the crowd, the police took her to the edge of Hyde Park and left her in the midst of the "lowest mob".⁴⁴

On April 2, Mrs. Pankhurst was tried for her part in bombing Lloyd George's house. Specifically, she was charged with being an "accessory before the fact" under the Malicious Damages to Property Act of 1861. She was found guilty and sentenced to three years in prison. She hunger-struck for nine days and was then released for fifteen days

⁴⁴Mrs. Mayer: HO 45/10700/236973/21; "Lowest mob": Votes for Women, May 2, 1913.

under the Cat and Mouse Act.⁴⁵

Mrs. Pankhurst's trial and conviction coincided with another attempt to pass a Suffrage Bill in Parliament. In the drawing for Private Member's Bills, W. H. Dickinson secured a high number and brought in a Women's Suffrage Bill. But without Government backing, it stood no chance of passage, and it also suffered from the competition of a second bill to expand the male franchise.⁴⁶ The result of these events was to further exacerbate the militants. They renewed and expanded all their activities. When they began parading outside Holloway jail where Mrs. Pankhurst was imprisoned, they were mobbed by a crowd of two thousand on April 9 and rescued by the police. One magistrate could not understand why the militants taunted these mobs:

Have they any idea what a furious mob means? They are entirely indebted to the police for their safety and if the police are to be obstructed in their duty, it is impossible to say what horrible things might take place. An infuriated mob acts like a pack wild beasts.⁴⁷

The militants persisted in these disturbances outside Holloway, attracting additional hostile elements including irate local residents. When roughly handled by the crowds, the women complained that their right of free speech was not protected: "... the police who are present remain on the outskirts of the throng, and do not check the disturbance in the beginning, when it could be stopped easily."⁴⁸ After investiga-

⁴⁵Pankhurst, My Own Story, pp. 285 ff.

⁴⁶Willoughby Hyett Dickinson (Liberal, St. Pancras): Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser., Vol. 51, (April 3, 1913), col. 584.

⁴⁷Times, April 9, 1913.

⁴⁸April 11, 1913. HO 45/10695/231366/50.

ing a number of such complaints, Commissioner Henry reported to Troup that "a correct presentment of the facts is that the proceedings of the Suffragettes have disturbed the neighborhood rather than that the Suffragettes are disturbed by youths and others." Henry added his men had "at all times done their utmost to prevent disorder or any breach of peace." The Home Office drafted a reply to a complaining Member of Parliament asserting that "women demonstrating their sympathy with persons who have been convicted of deliberately and persistently promoting lawlessness provoke reprisals", but McKenna himself substituted a milder response.⁴⁹

In addition to shepherding the Cat and Mouse Act through Parliament, the Home Office worked during much of April on further counter-measures. The Seventh Annual Report of the Women's Social and Political Union, published that month, triggered another round of conferences. This report contained thinly veiled encouragements to "hit and run" tactics: "Guerrilla tactics will be pursued" said the report, "the militants will henceforth be concerned to produce the maximum of effect while retaining their liberty as long as possible." Consequently, the Home Office launched another systematic review of its methods. First, the problem was broken into four categories: officers of the W.S.P.U., printers of incitements to violence, subscribers to their literature, and the W.S.P.U. treasury. The officers were easy targets for arrest, as they were all well known to the police, and the imminent passage of the Cat and Mouse Act seemed a likely means to control them. Printers were to be henceforth held strictly accountable for any incitements in militant publica-

⁴⁹Henry to Troup, April 25 and McKenna's note: HO 45/10695/231366/56.

tions, even if that upset the more responsible press. A great deal of support, both financial and in carrying out crimes, came from the subscribers, but the staff was unable to find any applicable legal prohibition. Finally, the funds of the W.S.P.U. seemed secure: while the authorities felt the W.S.P.U. was a criminal society, no law made their funds liable for damages inflicted by members.⁵⁰

Whenever the Home Office moved energetically it encountered great opposition from the most respectable quarters, and anticipation of these objections goes far to explain why the authorities were reluctant to act more forcefully. One example of this was the revised application of a law enacted in 1360. Just after the peace of Bretigny, England had been flooded with freshly discharged soldiers. To maintain peace and order, magistrates had been authorized to summon individuals to post a bond for good behaviour. Persons refusing to post the bond could be jailed without trial or any further court proceedings for up to six months. Thus with neither jury trial nor right of appeal, a magistrate could find a person "not of good fame" and jail him. This act, sporadically applied to the militants, was now invoked more frequently. While obviously a useful tool in jailing incorrigibles, many observers found it gave the police too much discretion in a world six hundred years removed from the brigands of Bretigny. The New Statesman attacked use of the act in April 1913 to jail Annie Kenny. What would prevent its use against any speaker the Home Office opposed? It was "wholly unjustifiable". McKenna might be at his "wit's end", but "What of the Prime Minister and

⁵⁰HO 45/10700/236973/1.

the Lord Chancellor, and those other 667 gentlemen who sit at Westminster as the volunteer guardians of our liberties? Have they all allowed the Suffragettes to wreck their principles as well as their nerves?"⁵¹

On April 26 women set fire to a railway carriage in Teddington station. Three days later a bomb was found in the men's room of the Picadilly underground station.⁵² Hoping to stop these outrages by jailing leaders, the police arrested George Lansbury, Mrs. Flora Drummond and Annie Kenny on April 26, and charged all three with inciting others to violence. A police inspector testified at their hearing that in response to speeches by the militant leaders, twenty-two cases of window-breaking, six cases of arson, four attacks on golf greens and four hundred twenty letter box outrages had been reported since January 1.⁵³ Four days later, in a carefully planned raid, Inspector Quinn of Special Branch led a raid of fifty C.I.D. officers and fifty uniformed men on W.S.P.U. headquarters. Each officer was shown a floor-plan of the building and was assigned a particular room. When they arrived, each officer rushed to his assigned place to prevent the destruction of any compromising documents.⁵⁴ In addition, simultaneous raids, all authorized by search warrant, were conducted on the residen-

⁵¹New Statesman quoted in the Suffragette of April 26, 1913.

⁵²Teddington fire: Pall Mall Gazette, April 26; bomb: HO 45/10700/236973/36.

⁵³George Lansbury (1859-1940), a labour leader and politician, resigned his seat in Parliament in 1912 and sought re-election on the straight issue of Women's Suffrage, but was not re-elected; he also helped found the Daily Herald in 1912. Pall Mall Gazette, April 26, 1913.

⁵⁴Globe, April 30, 1913.

ces of the militant leaders:

There have been few previous occasions, indeed, on which the Police have worked out such an elaborate and swift plan of campaign.... [noted the Daily Mirror]. On the previous night every available man in the Special Branch and the Criminal Investigation Department was ordered to report himself at Scotland Yard at nine o'clock. Superintendent Quinn alone possessed the secret of this unusual order, and he was as mute as a sphinx until the time for decisive action came. All the official documents at the offices were seized, and the leaders' private houses were closely searched. It will be impossible for Suffragettes' work to be carried on at the Union's offices as heretofore.⁵⁵

The police also went to George Lansbury's Victoria House Press, which had just taken over the printing of the Suffragette. The copy on hand was seized as an incitement to violence. When the various prisoners taken in these raids were brought up at Bow-street magistrate's court on May 1, a new prosecutor took over for Herbert Musckett. The cases were now considered so serious that Archibald Bodkin appeared for the Director of Public Prosecutions. In what became widely quoted remarks, Bodkin told the court that the Suffragette "must be put a stop to, as a continued danger to society.... If there is any printer who can be found after this warning to print and publish the literature of the ... W.S.P.U., he will find himself in a very awkward position as the aider and abettor of these persons." He added that anyone speaking in favor of the W.S.P.U.'s tactics or contributing to its funds would also be "in a very awkward position if discovered."⁵⁶ Adding teeth to this warning, the manager of the Victoria House Press was arrested. He

⁵⁵ May 1, 1913.

⁵⁶ Bodkin: Daily Mirror, May 1. McKenna told Parliament that Bodkin's remarks had "my full sanction". Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 52 (May 5), col. 1666.

was released when he promised not to print the Suffragette.⁵⁷

Some newspapers cheered these strong initiatives. The Cat and Mouse Act became law on April 25, just before these raids. The Daily Mail of May 1 welcomed Bodkin's speech and endorsed the new Act: "the ringleaders power for mischief is paralyzed"; "the penalty has at last been made fit the crime". The Standard of May 1 thought W.S.P.U. headquarters should be raided each time it was re-established and happily reported, "Now that the authorities seem to be in earnest, the complete suppression of the movement can only be a matter of a few days or weeks."

... rich supporters of the militants, who have so far escaped all responsibility, can no longer safely finance a syndicate of crime ... the true means to the suppression of militant outrages lies, as we have always suggested, less in the punishment of the person than in the punishment of the purse....

On the other hand, some reputable newspapers were deeply troubled about freedom of the press. Foremost among these was the Manchester Guardian which argued there was a great difference between suppressing an issue of a paper which incited to crime and suppressing the whole paper permanently.⁵⁸ George Lansbury's Daily Herald was extremely upset:

Yesterday morning the satraps of Loranorder donned their amplest boots and rallied forth, with grim, set faces, to nip the hideous dragon of Women's Suffrage in the bud, ere its destroying waves overwhelm the nation ... in one vast conflagration.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 460.

⁵⁸Quoted in the Daily Herald, of May 6.

⁵⁹May 1, 1913.

The next day the same paper printed a news item headlined "Who the Devil is Bodkin"?:

Some lawyer person by the name of Bodkin is reported to have appeared at Bow-street Police court and, usurping the power of the Almighty, threatened with fire and eternal damnation anybody who is found giving a cooper towards the militant campaign in favor of Votes for Women. But who the Devil is this Bodkin that the people of this country should sacrifice their rights of free speech at his behest?

The same issue reported another incident:

'I must warn you' said a Suffragette seller yesterday to the writer 'that if you buy a copy you are liable to prosecution for contributing to the militant funds'. Conquering a tendency to faint on the spot the writer reflected that Loranorder is an awful bungler in these matters, and bought two --, to make sure.

Meanwhile, the National Labour Press, owned by the Independent Labour Party, agreed to print the next issue of the Suffragette. The manager, Edgar Whitely, and his counsel read the copy and decided it was lawful. Nevertheless, Whitely was arrested the day after publication. At his hearing, the magistrate was told that the Government considered it a crime to print a paper inviting support for W.S.P.U. policies. Keir Hardie and Ramsey MacDonald then offered to print the paper, but Christabel Pankhurst, not willing to submit to their censorship, gave the printing contract to others. However, the press reaction was so strong against this sort of guilt by association that the Home Office had to back down, announcing anyone could print the paper "provided that, after publication, no incitement to crime or destruction of property was to be found in its columns."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, pp. 460-61; Emmiline Pethick-Lawrence, My Part in A changing World (London: Gollancy, 1938), p. 299.

While the Home Office had to yield on the printing issue, it kept up the pressure in other ways. On May 2, Troup again pressed the Post Office to cut telephone service to W.S.P.U. headquarters but the Prime Minister personally vetoed this idea.⁶¹ On May 8, McKenna approved of Troup's memo which noted that if the Suffragette was printed on the Continent and then shipped to England, the customs authorities could not prevent its landing. They could, however, rush a copy to Commissioner Henry and if he found it objectionable perhaps the whole batch could be seized before it was distributed.⁶² Further, the Director of Public Prosecutions wrote in response to a query from the Manchester police that printers, vendors, and railway newstand operators should all be warned that they would be held accountable if they sold copies of the Suffragette which incited to crime.⁶³ Various governmental bodies which owned or controlled permits for various halls began turning down W.S.P.U. applications for use of their premises. Westminster City Council closed Caxton Hall to militants, as did the proprietors of Essex Hall.⁶⁴

For months the target of criticism for inaction, the Home Office was now showered with criticism for its actions, many feeling the medicine worse than the disease. For example, the police ban of militants

⁶¹Troup to General Post Office, May 2, 1913: HO 45/10700/236973/23; Asquith's note, 236973/2.

⁶²HO 45/10700/236973/33.

⁶³Director of Public Prosecutions to Chief Constable, Manchester: May 8, 1913. HO 45/10700/236973/34.

⁶⁴Times, May 9, 1913.

from Hyde Park led to the formation of a loose coalition called the Free Speech Defense League. The League held Sunday meetings addressed by various militants as well as by Keir Hardie, George Lansbury and others. It presented additional problems for the police, both in enforcing the usual rules governing open air park meetings and in protecting the speakers from often hostile audiences. For example, Daily Orders of May 2 assigned three hundred twenty officers to one such meeting, a force increased to six hundred and fifty the next day.⁶⁵ The speakers at these meetings were extremely conscious of the police. If the police were present in force, they were "intimidating"; if they were not, they were abrogating their duty. The whole purpose of these meetings was to criticize the Government. "I put it to every Socialist and Liberal alike [said Keir Hardie on May 4]: we cannot allow the Home Secretary to say what is and what is not illegal speech. We demand before a speech is held to be illegal it shall be proved such in an ordinary court of law."⁶⁶

Particular problems developed at Trafalgar Square. For many years, police regulations had prohibited speaking from the south plinth of the monument there, since addresses from that spot caused the maximum interference with traffic. On May 4, an unauthorized speaker began addressing the crowd from this location. Keir Hardie, who had been speaking on another corner of the square, tried to persuade the man to move. But when he was unsuccessful, the police removed him. Since

⁶⁵MEPO 2/1556.

⁶⁶MEPO 2/1556.

many bystanders were ignorant of the regulations the police were enforcing, it appeared the police were arbitrarily silencing him. One member of Parliament who witnessed this incident reported to McKenna that:

... the disturbances were entirely caused by the police sent to keep order ... a posse of mounted police added to the excitement by charging up and down the street as though posing for the cinema, or on the eve of civil war.

This complaint was forwarded to Henry, who replied that the police had always kept the south plinth clear of speakers and that his men clearing the crowd away after the meeting had only acted in the accepted fashion.⁶⁷ This did not convince the Daily Herald: "The demonstration was marked throughout by attempts, on the part of the guardians of Loranorder, to provoke a riot. A number of persons were manhandled in the most brutal fashion by the police...."⁶⁸ The London Times of May 5 presented a less partial account:

... fist fights erupted between the police and the crowd. Several attempts were made to drag the mounted men from their horses, and those on foot were frequently struck. The policemen replied with spirit ... they made vigorous charges, sweeping before them all -- and there were many -- who resisted.

The complaints basically charged overactivity by the police. Yet when the police refrained from intervention, they were condemned just as loudly, often by the same people. When Suffragettes attempted to address a crowd of twenty thousand in Victoria Park on May 25 and the police did not intervene, Mrs. Sennett complained as a "taxpayer"

⁶⁷Josiah Wedgewood, M.P. to McKenna, May 5; Henry's note, May 9, 1913; HO 45/10700/236973/31. Superintendent Wells reported to Henry "I submit my action (in clearing the crowd away after the meeting) was right and in accordance with the usual practice." Wells to Henry May 27, 1913: MEPO 2/1556.

⁶⁸May 5, 1913.

to Troup: "Filthy abuse and cath's were hurled at us, stones thrown, our cart dragged all round the park. We barely escaped with our lives". Mrs. Sennett demanded compensation for the damages her group suffered. Forwarded the complaint, Henry observed "An adequate force of police was kept in readiness outside the park gates so that upon their services being required inside they might be readily available." But Henry also noted that responsibility for policing that park lay with the London County Council; consequently, Troup advised Mrs. Sennett to contact the council for damages.⁶⁹

Following the arrests of the various militants in April, Bodkin spent a number of days in court prosecuting them. He told one court on May 5 that the militant reaction to the raid on their headquarters included the breaking of nearly eight hundred windows and attacks on five hundred sixty letter-boxes damaging more than eight thousand letters. From the mass of correspondence seized, Bodkin read some of the more bizzare examples to the court, including a vague but threatening letter:

With regard to (your letter's proposal), the sum is really insufficient compared with the splendid result to our cause if the job comes off all right. It will cost not less than £20 for the material and two men, and ... I fear the dockyard police would suspect a lady visitor, so I propose to be the brains this time and not the hands. At any rate, the damage caused would be not less than £40,000, and therefore I trust the committee will approve the proposal mentioned.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Mrs. Sennett to Troup, May 25; Henry to Troup, May 31; Troup to Mrs. Sennett, June 5, 1913. HO 45/10700/236973.

⁷⁰Pall Mall Gazette, May 5, 1913.

Bodkin's prominent role in these prosecutions made him a favorite target of the Daily Herald which reported on May 8:

But for all practical purposes the Cabinet have placed Bodkin and the police above the law. They have instructed them to intimidate the press that is most interfering with their gambling and plundering of the poor. They have instructed the police to smash up public meetings of protest against the infringements of the rights of free speech.

We should not be surprised if they have instructed the police to follow the methods of the Police in Barcelona and Chicago, and plant "bombs" in sacred places with a view to justifying the policy of repression.

The Daily Herald had a great deal more to say about the police, and how they were employed:

... what is wrong with the police is not so much that they are more evil than anybody else; it is rather that they have got more opportunity for doing evil. They have undertaken (for very poor wages) an unsatisfactory trade; a trade that brings out the most vicious side of a man's nature. The trade of ordering people about tends to make a man a bully ... Of course, they are human, too. They were ordered to make the crowd do this or that; they took a professional pride in carrying out their instructions, and got overexcited, and charged about obeying orders which merely caused more confusion than ever. About six policemen could have kept the traffic open in Trafalgar Square. Six hundred upset the traffic and made a small riot. It has been much the same in Hyde Park. Some official, without any knowledge of psychology, gave instructions that there were not to be meetings. Immediately, as anyone but a noodle might have known, thousands went to the park instead of hundreds. Even then, no harm would have happened if the police had stayed away. The vast majority of sensible people would have dealt with the few pickpockets and youths who wanted to have a row. We are quite prepared to risk having our pocket picked. But human nature resents having its dignity picked by a few domineering autocrats who deny the right of free speech.⁷¹

The Police Chronicle denied constables were the "Cossacks of

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May 7, 1913.

Trafalgar Square". They used only their fists, not nightsticks, they were to be congratulated for their "calm behaviour under circumstances in which one could have been forgiven them losing something of their customary calm."⁷²

Meanwhile after one young girl, making the customary curtsy on being presented at court, had shouted a Suffragette slogan at the King:

There has been a good deal of agitation about Suffragettes, and endless detectives are employed outside the Palace. The Lord Chamberlain (as he views their name-cards) scrutinises closely those ladies whose faces he does not recognize, and his anxiety is most marked.⁷³

More seriously, "Bombs are now being discovered pretty well every day", such as one discovered in St. Paul's church on May 8.⁷⁴ And more dangerously, a bomb was mailed to Magistrate Curtis Bennett as he presided over the trial of Mrs. Pankhurst.

In view of the incident special arrangements have been made for affording police protection to Mr. Curtis Bennett. Two plain clothes officers on bicycles followed his carriage when he drove from the court yesterday afternoon, and the officers will be in constant attendance upon him for some time.⁷⁵

Just two days later, the Times noted that "In view of the many bombs (and supposed bombs) that are being found in London, the police have received special instructions as to the manner in which clock-work bombs should be disconnected." By the end of May, Inspector

⁷²May 9, 1913.

⁷³Pall Mall Gazette, May 17, 1913.

⁷⁴Bombs discovered: Daily Herald, May 8,; St. Paul's: Times, May 8, 1913.

⁷⁵Times, May 15, 1913.

Quinn's office in Scotland Yard was filled with defused bombs, and his staff was becoming quite proficient at dismanteling them.⁷⁶ In the 1910 edition of General Orders, the section dealing with "infernal machines" directed that they be removed to an open place "very gently without shaking or turning over".⁷⁷ But in view of the great number of bombs discovered in these months and the comparative few that exploded, the militants must have intended them to frighten more than to damage. Certainly they had the means to insure arming the bombs. The few that did explode seemed to be timed for hours and places where the likelihood of personal injury was minimal, reflecting the often-proclaimed militant policy of attacking property but not life. It is clear from the militants' correspondence that unbalanced people often offered to commit very serious outrages, but the militants never availed themselves of these services.⁷⁸ But the police could never be sure that such restraint would continue permanently thus forming still another motive for taking this movement very seriously. Punch's Parliamentary correspondent

Anticipated that much would be said about the women who during the past twelve months have supplied object-les-

⁷⁶Police Chronicle, May 30, 1913.

⁷⁷General Orders, Section XXI, par. 26. MEPO 8/7.

⁷⁸An example is an undated letter probably written about this time in the Suffragette Collection, London Museum: "I have the means to assist you in your plots as I have the means to obtain admission to Royal Dockyards and could cause thousands of pounds damage easily. Write and I will forward particulars. I as a guarantee of good faith will deposit until deed is accomplished my parchment papers worth to me over £100. You must pay sum of few pounds for expenses first and what you think fit afterwards on completion." There is no record of a response to this offer. Z6083.

sons of the fitness of their sex to exercise the franchise by blowing up houses, assualting Cabinet Ministers, attempting to burn a crowded theatre, polluting pillar letter boxes, and turning their private residences into laboratories for concoction of infernal machines.⁷⁹

Despite the influential persons involved in the Free Speech Defense League, Henry's men removed another speaker from the south plinth on Trafalgar Square on May 19. Another letter of complaint and a question in Parliament resulted, to which Henry quite properly replied that the officers were simply doing their duty.⁸⁰ Perhaps Henry's strongest quality was his persistence. He was unmoved by complaints that the police did not interfere with orderly Hyde Park meetings on Sunday mornings, but moved only in the afternoons, when the militants, the larger crowds and, the police believed, the pickpockets and rowdys arrived.⁸¹

On the other hand, when complaints based on misinformation were received from responsible sources, the authorities usually tried to set the record straight. For example, on June 5 the Fawcett Society, whose letterhead identified them as an "Organization for Protecting and Promoting the Interests of the Postal Sorting Force", protested the suppression of newspapers and the threatening of subscribers to certain societies as a "dangerous precedent that could extend to Trade Union and other Labour Organizations." The Home Office drafted a reply which stated that neither papers had been suppressed nor funds

⁷⁹May 14, 1913.

⁸⁰Henry to Home Office, May 19, 1913. MEPO 2/1556.

⁸¹Votes for Women, May 23, 1913.

threatened, that no law authorized such steps, but that some specific issues of the Suffragette had been suppressed "with a view to the enforcement of the law."⁸²

On June 4, 1913, the militants were shocked to learn that they now had their first martyr. Miss Emily Davison, whose motto was "Rebellion against tyrants in obedience to God",⁸³ threw herself into the path of the horses in the Derby race. The lead horse, which happened to be owned by the King, struck her. Both horse and rider were thrown to the ground. Miss Davison was rushed to nearby Cottage Hospital in critical condition. But even as Doctor Mansell Moullin operated on her the police had to rush reinforcements to the hospital to prevent a mob from lynching her.⁸⁴ To interfere with the Derby was upsetting to many Englishmen, but to attack the King's horse seemed to compound the offense. Miss Davison must have known she was gravely endangering her own life before she entered the track, but she seemed to have sought death. While in prison for earlier militant offenses, she had three times attempted suicide by jumping over the corridor railings, saved only by the wire net strung forty feet below the top level. In fact, "She had long believed that the deliberate giving of a woman's life would create the atmosphere necessary to win the victory, and bring all the suffering of the militants to an end."⁸⁵ Certainly her deed attracted

⁸²HO 45/10701/236973/51.

⁸³G. Colmore, Life of Emily Davison (London: Women's Press, 1913), p. 40.

⁸⁴Marian Ramelson, The Petticoat Rebellion: A Century of Struggle for Women's Rights (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1967), p. 140.

⁸⁵Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 467.

wide attention:

It is becoming quite impossible to regard some of these militants as persons who are responsible for their acts, and we must take this case as a particularly instructive example. Looked at from any point of view, it is almost the acme of folly. To throw oneself in the way of a racer going at top speed is to court immediate death, and the smallest reflection must surely suggest to any person capable of thought that stupendous folly of this sort cannot help convince any human being that the person guilty of it is entitled to take up a share in the government of the State. Moreover, we can imagine few things better calculated to make the cause of Women's Suffrage unpopular than an attempt by one of its advocates to spoil the greatest race of the year. We presume these frantic women do not desire to make popular feeling rigid against their claims, and therefore when we see them doing things which any sane person must see can have no other effect, we are bound to assume that, in this respect at all events, they are the victims of dementia. Surely it would be best to treat them on that footing.⁸⁶

On June 8, despite brain surgery performed by Dr. Mansell Moullin, Miss Davison died. In order to maximize the effect of her death, the militants organized an extraordinarily tasteless funeral procession and sent notice of their arrangements to Scotland Yard. Officials there tried to discourage the mammoth cortege:

Having regard to the traffic conditions in the streets through which the funeral procession has to pass, I am directed to warn you that, as all reasonable facilities must be given to the ordinary traffic, the progress of the proposed funeral cortege may be greatly hindered if the crowd of sightseers is more than usually large.

In order to convey the remains from one railway station to another in a seemly and reverent manner, the hearse should be accompanied by a limited number of mourners only and taken through streets where traffic conditions will not interfere with its progress.⁸⁷

⁸⁶Globe, June 5, 1913.

⁸⁷Chief Clerk, Scotland Yard to W.S.P.U., quoted in the Daily Herald, June 14, 1913.

Ignoring this advice, the W.S.P.U. organized the largest funeral since that of King Edward VII in 1910. Eleven sections of mourners paraded through London, nearly five thousand women taking part in the two-hour procession that escorted the casket to the train for ultimate burial in Scotland.⁸⁸

Unfortunately Miss Davison's death had no perceptible effect other than encouraging retaliatory militancy, including a series of petty but potentially grievous outrages in the House of Commons. On June 1 a man threw a sack of flour from the Gallery which landed close to the Prime Minister; this was repeated two days later. After a careful review of applicable law, Troup advised McKenna that the only redress was to have the Prime Minister file charges of attempted assault. But since this would require the personal attendance of Asquith in court, Troup advised taking no action.⁸⁹ Then on July 11, a man was arrested in the Gallery for firing a pistol-- only after police desperately rushed him did they discover it was a toy pistol. Moments later, a second man threw toy mice down to the floor of the House. These men were held in the House until it rose, when they were taken to Canon-Row police station, while feverish conferences over what to do with them went on. Finally, Bodkin reluctantly ordered their release rather than risk losing a prosecution against them.⁹⁰

The shooting of even a toy gun in the Gallery of the House had been

⁸⁸Ibid., June 14 and 16, 1913.

⁸⁹HO 45/10701/236973/55A.

⁹⁰HO 45/10701/236973/74.

a foolish act. In July 1913, due to a series of recent shootings at police officers, a return was presented to the Commons revealing that in the four years ending in November 1912, there had been fifteen incidents of shooting at policemen, with one officer killed.⁹¹ In other words, shootings were becoming more common, and this troubled the police. Had the guards in the Gallery been armed and unable to reach the man with the "pistol" before he shot a second time, perhaps they would have shot him. Perhaps that was his real aim, to become another martyr.

In any event, the first few months after the passage of the Cat and Mouse Act were a time of watchful waiting as the Home Office fervently hoped this new tool would finally end the outrages. Militants continued their usual activities, such as another march on Downing Street on June 29,⁹² while the police spent a great deal of effort enforcing the Act. As the end of a license period approached, the police would watch a woman's residence to prevent her escape. Kitty Marion observed "The house was under police guard day and night. The cat watching the mouse-hole, not only for me but for other mice, and everyone going in and out was closely scrutinized."⁹³ The militants made this police duty as difficult as possible. On one occasion, a number of women simultaneously left a house with a veiled figure in their midst. Since Sylvia Pankhurst was staying there, the police arrested the veiled lady as she

⁹¹ Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Papers (House of Commons), 1913, Vol. LII (Accounts, Vol. 12), "Return of Cases in Which Firearms have been used against Police Officers during 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911 and 1912."

⁹² Votes for Women, July 4, 1913.

⁹³ Kitty Marion's Mss. Diary, June, 1913, p. 250. Suffragette Collection, London Museum.

attempted to leave and did not discover they had arrested George Lansbury's daughter Daisy until long after Sylvia had left by the rear door.⁹⁴ The militants used many "ingenious and courageous" ways to escape. "One prisoner escaped in broad daylight when a crowd of women, all dressed alike, the prisoner among them, suddenly rushed through the door and fled in all directions, the police on duty not knowing which to follow."⁹⁵ Prime attention was given, of course, to Mrs. Pankhurst:

As I lay in bed, being assisted by every medical resource to return to life and health, these special police, colloquially termed 'cats', guarded the nursing home as though it were a besieged castle. In the street under my windows two detectives and a constable stood on guard night and day. In a house at right angles to my refuge three more detectives kept constant watch. In the mews at the rear of the house were more detectives, and diligently patrolling the road, as if in expectation of a rescuing regiment, two taxicabs, each with its quota of detectives, guarded the highways.⁹⁶

Fights were not infrequent.

... quite late one night, when two detectives were on the doorstep and others within call, three taxicabs drove to the house and several women jumped out and dashed to the house door, through which suddenly came a number of other women. Here was the bodyguard! Whistles blew and police seemed to spring from the earth. The police drew their truncheons. The bodyguard fought too, and while they held the police at bay (Mrs. Pankhurst) quietly passed through the door entered a taxicab, and drove away.⁹⁷

⁹⁴Henry to Home Office, November 6, 1913. HO 45/10701/236973/136. See also Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 257, and George Lansbury, Miracle of Fleet Street (London: Victoria House Press, 1925), p. 80.

⁹⁵Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 253.

⁹⁶Emmiline Pankhurst, My Own Story, pp. 308-309.

⁹⁷Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 266.

While Special Branch tried to keep a close watch on the "mouse holes", unwatched militants perpetrated further outrages. On June 19, a Harold Herwitt ran in front of the leading horse at the Ascot race, injuring the horse, the rider and himself. Herwitt's Suffragette flag carried in one hand left little doubt he had been inspired by Emily Davison. Then on June 27, Mrs. Pankhurst added still another weapon to the militant arsenal. Returned to Holloway when her license expired, she began a hunger and thirst strike, which of course hastened her next release.⁹⁸ And on July 8, the London County Council was informed that in the three months ending June 30, 1913, almost one hundred "false and malicious" fire alarms had been turned in,⁹⁹ and the next day the Times reported that so far the Suffragettes were blamed for £115,000 of arson.

By the summer of 1913, the authorities finally seemed to have the upper hand. On June 7, one court ruled that window damages inspired by militant leaders could be charged to W.S.P.U. funds.¹⁰⁰ Then too, the militant leaders were suffering greatly from their frequent imprisonments, and were able to provide only sporadic leadership. The militants also had reversed tactics, renouncing massive confrontation in favor of frequent but anonymous smaller attacks. Indeed, by July 1 the Lord Chamberlain was prepared to reopen Windsor Castle to tourists, provided the police on duty were increased from eight to twenty officers and the bands of tourists were restricted to twenty, rather than fifty,

⁹⁸ Herwitt: June 19; Mrs. Pankhurst, June 27, both in the Times.

⁹⁹ Minutes of Proceedings, London County Council; July 8, 1913, p. 147.

¹⁰⁰ Times, June 9, 1913.

at a time. Still the police maintained a careful surveillance of Suffragette meetings. Special Branch arrested Annie Kenney and Mrs. Pankhurst as they tried to address a London Pavilion audience on July 14, but the enraged spectators made the job all the harder by beating the officers with chairs and umbrellas. Arresting a "mouse" from among friends was becoming more and more serious: "... women plucked pins from their hats, dealing vicious blows in every direction. Hundreds of hatpins were afterwards picked up on the pavement and the road", and five days later, militants turned a fire hose on officers attempting to arrest Sylvia Pankhurst.¹⁰¹ On July 22, the London County Council was informed that since the last report just a month earlier, Suffragettes had turned in an average of more than one false fire alarm per day: while the engines were off on false alarms, the danger was that a real fire might begin and spread. On the same day, from a Suffragette boat, remarks were addressed to those Members having tea on the House of Commons Terrace, while on the next day there was another toy pistol incident in the Commons. On July 24, a mass meeting of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies required the services of nearly fifteen hundred officers. Finally, on July 28 two women in a crowd outside Holloway prison fired two shots and were arrested by some of the sixty officers on duty there.¹⁰² In short, there were almost daily outrages

¹⁰¹ Windsor Castle: Lord Chamberlain to Assistant Police Commissioner Wodehouse, July 1, 1913, MEPO 2/1562; notes of meeting, HO 45/10701/236973/71; London Pavilion: Times, July 15; hatpins, Standard, July 15; fire hose: Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement p. 481.

¹⁰² Fire alarms: Minutes of Proceedings, London County Council, July 22, p. 239; boat: Times, July 23; toy pistol: Times, July 24; meeting: Police Orders, July 24, MEPO 7/75; Holloway: Times, July 29, 1913.

consuming a vast amount of police time.

But how long are the authorities intending to allow the suffies to pull the police to pieces? [complained the Police Chronicle]. At Sylvia Pankhurst's meeting a bucket of water was thrown down on to the constables and detectives, and helmets were sent flying. One of the women urged upon her dear, gentle sisters to 'use all your force upon their faces and leave your marks upon their eyes'. Another of these angel sisters suggested that 'when the police come, as they will come, let them have a taste of your fists'. At Mrs. Pankhurst's meeting the women fell upon the police in a crowd, whacked them hip and thigh, shrieking and yelling the while. Yet it is the police who have to protect these women from the public when indignation runs high: it is surely about time that the socio-comic element was dropped and the Police began to 'make good'. They have been kicked and stoned too long already.¹⁰³

Many of the suggestions for dealing with the militants came not from the highest levels but from the men who had the day-to-day responsibility of dealing with them. On July 29, Superintendent Sutherland asked the Commissioner's permission to meet with the Board of Directors of the London Pavilion in order to discourage leasing that hall to the militants. As the Pavilion's Victuallers and its Music and Dance License would soon be up for renewal before the London County Council, the Superintendent felt the Directors would prove accomodating unless they were prepared for his adverse testimony before the usually cooperative Council. Sutherland collected a long list of disturbances at the Pavilion, beginning with a militant meeting broken up by medical students in March 1912. Then too, pedestrians have also assembled outside the hall and shewn a very hostile attitude towards the Suffragettes when entering and leaving the meetings, owing to the acts of

¹⁰³Police Chronicle, July 25, 1913.

damage and incendiarism committed by various members of the party". Then when Annie Kenney was arrested on July 14, 1913, "Police were violently attacked by the women and their male supporters who used umbrellas, sticks, etc., against the police." Similar scenes occurred on July 21 and 28, prompting Sutherland to write:

These occurrences have occasioned inconvenience to the general public and obstruction of the footway, also dislocation of traffic, and such a state of affairs is a source of annoyance to the residents and other persons who carry on business in the immediate locality. In addition, the holding of the meetings has necessitated the special employment of a considerable force of Police, including aid of Reserves from other Divisions, who have had to be withdrawn from their regular duties, week after week, to protect these militant suffragettes from violence by the crowd, and for the purpose of preventing disorders in the neighborhood of Picadilly Circus.

Scotland Yard approved of Sutherland's suggestion, and he persuaded the Board of Directors to cancel the meetings scheduled for August 5 and 11. But when no disturbances accompanied similar meetings in Kingway Hall, the Pavilion's manager informed the police he would reopen the hall to militants. Consequently, Sutherland collected a force of one hundred fifty men for the meeting scheduled for October 6. When Annie Kenney tried to address that meeting, Special Branch officers tried to arrest her on the stage:

Her arrest was the signal for a scene of great disorder; ... the officers were using every endeavor to get their prisoner into a cab. Before the cab could move off it was surrounded by a large number of infuriated women whose conduct can only be compared with that of wild animals. These women threw themselves onto the cab, placed themselves in a body in front of it to prevent its moving off, screeched and fought with the police who interfered and tried to move them on. One of the

women ... (tried) to puncture the tyre of the cab with some sharp instrument and was arrested....¹⁰⁴

This sort of attack on arresting officers was becoming more and more common. On October 14, for example, George Lansbury wrote to the Home Secretary that he had rented a hall for a meeting the previous night, but:

To my utter amazement this morning I am informed that without any disorder having arisen and without being invited, a posse of police with drawn truncheons, entered the hall, stormed the platform and caused the break-up of the meeting.¹⁰⁵

Lansbury was alluding to the principle that the police had no right to enter the hall. But as Troup observed, the police had at least two good reasons for entering: first, it was a public meeting, and the police formed a segment of the public: more importantly, the police entered to arrest Sylvia Pankhurst, illegally at large and on stage to address the meeting. The C.I.D. reported what happened after Sylvia spotted the approaching officers and jumped into the audience:

In a moment there was a great uproar, chairs were hurled at us by some men who were seated on the balcony overlooking the stage and the men and women on the stage also used chairs as weapons to prevent us following Sylvia Pankhurst.... Some of the constables drew their truncheons to protect their bodies, but I did not see any used.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Superintendent Sutherland to Commissioner Henry, July 29 and October 4; Special Branch to Henry, October 7, 1913. MEPO 2/1560. In order to effect this one arrest, 'F' and 'D' division each lent twenty-three men to 'C' division, while a similar number of 'C' and 'B' reserves stood traffic duty in place of the regular 'C' men; the 'L' and 'M' reserves which had been placed on stand-by were not called.

¹⁰⁵ October 14, 1913. HO 45/10710/236973/127.

¹⁰⁶ C.I.D. to Home Office, October 14, 1913. HO 45/10701/236973/129.

A similar scene occurred on November 5, when two hundred constables were attacked by a crowd: the fray lasted fifteen minutes until mounted constables charged the crowd.¹⁰⁷

Clearly the amount of personal violence connected with this movement was growing. There were two main reasons for this. The first and less serious was attacks on the militants by hostile citizens. As early as March 1913, McKenna had been advised of a "Retaliation League", which had been formed:

... for the purpose of suppressing violent tactics on the part of militant suffragettes. The people of England have suffered long enough at the hands of these violently disposed females. As the authorities seem powerless to punish them, ... every act of violence perpetrated by these women ... will be answered by this league by attacks on the private houses and property of Militant Suffragettes.¹⁰⁸

This circular coincided with a meeting on Wimbledon Common when thirty constables had to rescue some militants from five thousand men shouting "kill, kill": "But for the splendid and courageous conduct of the police which cannot be too highly praised, some terrible tragedy must surely have occurred." The Home Office staff looked closely at this matter but concluded "Neither the circular of the Retaliation League nor the disturbance on Wimbledon Common gives any ground for apprehending very serious mischief".¹⁰⁹ While the Home Office certain-

¹⁰⁷Times, November 5, 1913.

¹⁰⁸Quoted from a circular given to W. B. Stoakley, editor of the Wimbledon Borough News and forwarded to McKenna on March 6, 1913. HO 45/10695/231366/35.

¹⁰⁹Courageous conduct: Stoakley to McKenna, March 6; mischief: undated Home Office staff memo. HO 45/10695/231366/35.

ly hoped this would go no further, the possibility of continued militant outrages provoking a lynch-law response remained a genuine concern.

The second force adding to the violence at this time was the militants' response in kind to what they considered excessive police violence. In November 1913, Sylvia Pankhurst formed the "People's Army". At first merely a few bodyguards for militant leaders, it grew rapidly in size and scope. A handbill circulated in mid-November invited all concerned persons to "JOIN THE PEOPLE'S ARMY", since, "The only way to meet the brutality of the Government is by armed resistance."¹¹⁰ The militants turned to Major Sir Francis Vane to organize and drill their new army.¹¹¹ At a meeting on November 12, a constitution for the group was debated by three hundred people. A list of member's duties was included, and the fourth duty insisted:

They (the members) will be prepared to act with their comrades even against the Government Police in case of obvious injustice. This will not occur, however, when the People's Training Corps is in existence, because injustice is only possible when force is only on one side.

One speaker, a Miss Zelia Emerson, told the audience:

Next time we go to Downing Street they will have to call out the Horse Guards against us.... We are going to imprison Cabinet Ministers in their houses until they give us what we want.¹¹²

Special Branch was not sure just how seriously to take this new

¹¹⁰ November 12, 1913. HO 45/10701/236973/140.

¹¹¹ Major Sir Francis Patric Fletcher Vane (1861-1935). Saw service with the Scots Guards in Boer War, wrote for Westminster Gazette and Manchester Guardian; founded "World Order of Socialism" in 1913. Who's Who, 1914.

¹¹² HO 45/10701/236973/140.

development. In a report from the C.I.D. to Henry, Troup and McKenna, Vane was quoted as saying to a meeting "The governing classes armed themselves to surpress the workers, and the workers must retaliate." George Lansbury followed Vane, thanking Vane for his plan to arm themselves against the police. Then the editor of the Daily Herald, Charles Lapworth, "held up a formidable cudgel saying they must be trained to use it."¹¹³ The immediate effect of this "army" was to make forceful resistance to arrest even more common.

The Suffragettes are at present making a dead set against the police. [The Police Chronicle lamented on November 14.] They are more bitter towards the force then they are towards the Government. Small armies are to be organized to fight the police, and some of the women are talking about carrying rolling pins. It does not seem to strike the women that the constables are merely doing their duty, and they would prefer a pleasanter job at all times.... The police, of course, are most reluctant to deal harshly with these particular women, and recent history proves that they have allowed themselves to be scratched, and mauled, and thumped, before even retaliating.

A week later the same paper added:

The 'Suffragette Army', whose weapons are rolling pins and banister ends, cause no alarm at Scotland Yard, and the so called 'drilling' of the volunteers is regarded as the joke it is. There is one element of satisfaction in this latest movement: our Suffragettes are getting quite domesticated in deciding to use so homely an article as a rolling pin to hit the policemen with.

The police also complained that while the militants gave them plenty of extra work, causing plenty of overtime, they were given no extra pay.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Meeting on November 5, 1913. HO 45/10701/236973/139.

¹¹⁴ Police Chronicle, September 12, 1913. Policemen instead received time off at the convenience of the Force.

On the other hand, the militants had specific grievances against the police. While at times professing sympathy for the individual constables, caught between obedience to orders and his inclination to treat the women generously, they nevertheless berated the constables who arrested them for "obstructing the police in the performance of their duty". In an article entitled "Legal Fictions in Politics: Obstructing the Police" in Votes for Women of August 1, 1913, the militants argued that an officer could stand for half an hour, listening to a speaker: but if he tired of the argument or recognized a pick-pocket, he could begin crying "Pass along, please" and arrest for obstruction those who failed to heed his command. To the militants, this "offense" was an outrageous fiction, entirely created by the officer, an infringement on the militants' right to free speech occasioned by an incidental development beyond the speaker's control. This article continued:

London police are probably the finest body of men in the world -- courageous, tactful, gentle, patient, kindly, sensible, when they are not, as they have been in this movement, encouraged to brutal violence and to extravagant perjury for political ends. But they are very few in number and it is necessary that they should be intrusted with enormous powers, and that their evidence should not be questioned as against the criminal class.

The Suffragettes, this article continued, were not criminals, and should not be treated as such: their testimony should be given reasonable credence in court. Citing one case in which Magistrate Sir Albert DeRutzen convicted a woman on the testimony of just one constable who contradicted the testimony of six women, the article asserted that since 1906, not one independent witness had endorsed the constable's version. The conclusion was that the Government had instructed the police to misapply the law in order to extinguish this "inconvenient political movement."

The militant press returned to this theme over and over again in 1913. In a leader entitled "The Police Danger" in Votes for Women of November 14, the militants again complained that the constable's word was automatically accepted, and that complaints of excessive police violence were now met with the stock response that the force used, no matter how much, was justified. Then too, the police were now "storming platforms with drawn batons to capture a speaker", something they would not have done even a short time earlier. In short, the police "seemed to feel themselves above the law, and the Home Secretary and Courts seemed to agree."

Occasionally militants complained about the conduct of individual officers, but they were seldom able to prove their charges. In August 1913, two women filed charges against Constable Harry Trudgell, claiming he had pushed his knee into a woman's back. But one of their own witnesses, brought face to face with Trudgell, denied he was the officer responsible. In addition, several officers testified that Trudgell was elsewhere when the incident allegedly took place, and his own record of seventeen years of blameless service completed his defense.¹¹⁵ While the laws of probability dictate that some constables at some points must have been out of line, the militants were never able to make an accusation stick.

There were a number of other developments concerning this movement in the summer of 1913. One was a renewal of protests against forced feeding. Although many hoped the Cat and Mouse Act would make this

¹¹⁵August 7, 1913: HO 45/10701/236973/97. See also Votes for Women and Police Review of August 8.

unnecessary, it was still used. The Clarion of August 1 complained about the administration of the Act: "No doctor has anything to do with administering the act; (McKenna) leaves detectives, the kind of man one calls in about a lost dog, to decide when the prisoners are sufficiently recovered to be dragged back to prison and starvation...." Many who were not militants were also concerned about this: in a letter to Lloyd George, C. P. Scott wrote:

When I saw you the other day you told me that Mrs. Pankhurst would be released after 24 hours -- McKenna had previously told me the same thing. Yet she was allowed to 'hunger strike' for three days. There seems no sense in this. The woman is obviously being killed by inches and the Home Secretary is merely dodging death. She won't die on his hands, but she will die right enough. The only thing that matters is to prevent her from parading at public demonstrations and that could be done with only the briefest terms of imprisonment. Can you help in the matter or tell me anything I can do? Forgive me for troubling you, but it seems a pity to drive things to unnecessary extremes....¹¹⁶

On the other hand some felt the authorities were following the only possible policy. Addressing a medical congress on August 12, Dr. H. Nelson Hardy observed:

If conduct is the true test of mental condition, what conclusion, save one, can we form as to the mental condition of these women, many of them well educated and carefully brought up, who commit crimes worthy of savages, who show by their actions their disregard of all laws, human and divine, that stand in their way and who even profess their intention to treat as null and void the Almighty's canon, against self-slaughter?

The doctor's conclusion was that the militants were suffering from "an epidemic of mental disorder".¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ July 28, 1913. Lloyd George Papers, C/8/1/5.

¹¹⁷ Standard, August 13, 1913.

While the public continued to debate the merit of McKenna's policies, the police developed further expertise. For example, one Member of Parliament tried to enter Westminster Palace unnoticed, to test the police measures against militant surprises. He entered undetected. Consequently, McKenna sanctioned the hiring of three more constables to help guard Parliament.¹¹⁸ Officers were also assigned duty -- boring duty -- in Westminster:

The duty Scotland Yard does complain of is that of sitting night after night in the Stranger's Gallery of the House of Commons in order that they might be on hand to eject anyone who may let off a pop-gun or create any other form of disturbance. As everyone knows, there is a goodly sprinkling of plain clothes men in constant attendance in the Stranger's Gallery. They do not mind it for the first night or two, but afterwards, when the novelty of the proceedings wears, they find Parliamentary oratory distinctly tedious.... Scotland Yard has apparently formed the opinion that the Parliamentary debates might be brightened up by the introduction of a piano or barrel-organ.¹¹⁹

Occasionally, the police still had sharp clashes with the militants at St. Stephen's such as one reported in the Clarion of August 1:

I do not know whether you have ever seen an elderly and heavily built lady thrown down a flight of steps by a half-dozen policemen. And when you look again and see two more elderly ladies behind her are being thrown from side of side as dockers pass sacks of grain into a hold, the sensation increases. It may be that then it should happen to you as it happened to me, that a policeman in a state of hysteria with quivering eyelids and twitching Adam's apple should strike you in the throat. But that is not essential to the thrill. Sufficient is the climax, which is reached when the first elderly lady is pitched forward onto the dirty pavement and is seen to be Miss Margret McMillan....

¹¹⁸ Wedgewood Benn (Liberal, St. George's Division of Tower Hamlets) to Lionel Earl (Office of Works) August 7; Henry to Office of Works, August 9; McKenna's sanction, September 5, 1913. MEPO 2/1568.

¹¹⁹ Police Chronicle, August 8, 1913.

The police, who are reduced to nervous wrecks by the constant nagging of Cabinet Ministers and their underlings, lost their heads at the sight of Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence and decided to clear the lobby.¹²⁰

This was hardly an impartial account, of course, but it was fairly typical of the sympathetic reporting in some non-militant publications. In another encounter on August 25, the Morning Post simply reported that the file of constables on duty pushed the invading militants out of the building without much difficulty.

The police made a number of minor changes at this time. One was to put rubber strips on the rear hoofs of police horses: this apparently trivial change allowed the horses to walk on the pavement, a great aid to crowd control.¹²¹ Another special problem was that the militant leaders often fled from the "mouse castles" in speedy automobiles. Ordinary taxis, the only vehicle available to the pursuing police, were usually easily outrun. As a result, the Police Commissioner asked the Home Office to allow him to rent the motor-bike of one of his constables. The Commissioner, aware of the reluctance of the Home Office to spend money on any untested idea, wisely proposed a three-month trial period. But at the end of that time, he reported that the motor-bike was:

... not quite adequate for the purpose required, inasmuch as in the absence of any self-starting apparatus, the rider was temporarily stopped by traffic or other causes, was unable to resume the pursuit immediately the way was clear, owing to the time necessarily occupied in restarting the engine.¹²²

¹²⁰It was noted elsewhere in this account that Miss McMillan was a well known pioneer in child education.

¹²¹Police Chronicle, August 15, 1913.

¹²²Henry to McKenna, October 20, 1913; Henry to McKenna January 27, 1914. MEPO 2/1566.

The police also continued their routine surveillance of meetings, the C.I.D. reporting a speech by Annie Kenney on August 12, for example, when she said "What have we got to do? We have got to fight on. I should like to see sandwich-boards all over London, and on the top of them, 'Wanted, more window-smashers'".¹²³ In addition, the bodyguards were maintained for the Cabinet Ministers. The Prime Minister and Lloyd George were each assigned five. McKenna and Churchill had three each, while Harcourt had two and all other ministers had one, except for Burns and Hobhouse who refused them. The families of Asquith, Lloyd George and Churchill were also protected. Just as the ministers' temperaments were very different, so too were their reactions to the bodyguards. Grey was 'loath' to move without his, while Harcourt tried to elude his,¹²⁴ and "McKenna never bothers about police protection".¹²⁵ Nevertheless, the ministers were guarded on Henry's orders. The police were not fond of this additional duty:

The police are being compelled to do a good deal of disagreeable work, but the 'Suffies' are all to blame. The police have a duty to perform and perform it they will. Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence told the police 'You are the men for whom we pay rates and taxes!' Very cheap! And very small!¹²⁶

¹²³C.I.D. to the Home Office, August 12, 1913. HO 45/10701/236973/90.

¹²⁴Police Chronicle, August 15, 1913.

¹²⁵Riddell, Diary, September 30, 1913, p. 81. "Cabinet ministers who have children experience no difficulty now in obtaining nurses. Owing to kidnapping threats, Scotland Yard is providing the nurse with an officer whenever she takes the children out. In consequence, there is a great rush for nursing jobs." Police Chronicle, June 13, 1913.

¹²⁶Police Chronicle, August 1, 1913.

One of the questions raised over and over again in Parliament concerned the cost of this extra police duty. In 1913, questions centered on the cost of shadowing the militants under the Cat and Mouse Act. Neither McKenna nor his predecessors ever answered this question. McKenna told the House it could only be computed through long and difficult calculations. When McKenna was given notice of a pending question on the cost of shadowing the militants, Troup sent him a possible response: "If pressed, the Secretary of State might say that the number (of officers) is not great nor the cost serious. While (convicted?) prisoners are at large under the Temporary Discharge Act, they are not watched continuously."¹²⁷

The question of the actual cost is certainly no easier to compute now than it would have been then. For example, the total strength of the force on March 31, 1914 was 19,088 of which 1,932 men served on "Special Duty".¹²⁸ The officers assigned to the Special Branch of the Criminal Investigation Division had the most frequent and sustained contact with the militants, but whether these men formed part of those on "Special Duty" is unclear. On the other hand, the more than thirty officers on duty at the British Museum were considered on "Special Duty", and part of their salaries came from special funds. Then too, if one constable on regular patrol apprehended a militant arsonist, what fraction of his time or wages should be included? The problem is clear: neither the number of man hours devoted to militants nor the cost of those

¹²⁷July 31, 1913. HO 45/10710/236973/84.

¹²⁸MEPO 5/285. See Appendix C, p. 248.

man hours, if such a number would provide the answer, was then nor now can be computed. In short, the question, while interesting, is unanswerable.

Although few outrages have been mentioned thus far as part of the militant campaign of 1913, there were many. Just a few of the more original would include breaking the windows of the Governor of Holloway's apartment on July 29, the interruption of worship by forty chanting women at St. Paul's on August 4, the assault on a prison doctor by militants on October 12, the interruption of a Synagogue service attended by Herbert Samuel on October 12, and the detonation of two small bombs against the outer wall of Holloway prison on December 18.¹²⁹ One of the oddest events occurred in November when Votes for Women reported the death of a William Edward Bethell, supposedly from injuries he sustained at the hands of stewards of a meeting he interrupted. But a C.I.D. investigation discovered no inquest was held, no doctor pronounced him dead, no one knew where the body was buried and no death was registered under that name.¹³⁰ The Daily Mail of November 29 summed up the case:

A pathetic tale of the sad death of a young 'Suffragist martyr'... has been told in Votes for Women. Unfortunately a great difficulty has arisen. Despite the wide publicity which has been given to the case, the most exhaustive inquiries have failed to discover where W. E. Bethell died, who saw him die, who certified the death, or where he was buried.

¹²⁹Governor's apartment: Times, July 29; St. Paul's: Standard, August 4; doctor: October 12; Synagogue: October 13; bombs: December 19, 1913, all in the Times.

¹³⁰C.I.D. to Henry, December 6, 1913. HO 45/10712/245464.

Devoid of deaths other than Emily Davison's, yet aware of their propaganda value, at least some militants were prepared to fabricate them.

The conflict between the police and the militants subsided somewhat over the year end holidays and declined further as the new session of Parliament, scheduled to open on February 3, 1914, approached. The success of the Cat and Mouse Act, by making militant leadership harder to exercise and keeping more active militants on the defensive, helped bring about another change. Devoid of faith in the Ministry, the militants again turned their attention to their last refuge, the king himself. Late in December 1913, three militants secured a theatre box opposite the King's: during the performance, they shouted comments about the "torture" being carried out in his name on militants.¹³¹ Perhaps inspired by this scene, Mrs. Pankhurst wrote to the King in January announcing she would lead a deputation to the Palace:

The deputation will lay before Your Majesty a complaint of the medieval and barbarous methods of torture whereby Your Majesty's Ministers are seeking to repress women's revolt against the deprivation of citizen rights -- a revolt as noble and glorious in its spirit and purpose as any of those past struggles for liberty which are the pride of the British race.... Our right as women to be heard and to be aided by Your Majesty is far stronger than any such right possessed by men, because it is based upon our lack of every other constitutional means of securing the redress of our grievances.¹³²

While some militants seemed to have genuinely believed in this petition, many others were less naive. While the militants did not know the King had already complained about forced feeding to the Home

¹³¹E. Pankhurst, My Own Story, pp. 334-336.

¹³²Ibid., pp. 337-338.

Secretary, they ought to have known there was little he could say to the petitioners. While the monarch might influence ministers, as he had already tried to do, he could hardly order Asquith to reverse his policy and give votes to women. After all, in theory the Prime Minister represented the majority will of the nation. The Suffragettes claimed, of course, that they formed no part of Asquith's majority, nor for that matter did any political party in Parliament represent them. But the point is that constitutional usage was such that the King was virtually powerless, that any attempt to enlist his aid would merely embarrass him. The more intelligent militants must have seen this as just another stunt.

As the King was to ride in state to open Parliament on February 3, Herry took special precautions to see that no one approached the monarch. More than five thousand police lined the royal route, including two hundred plainclothes men mingling among the spectators. The police were alerted to the militants' plans:

Superintendents are to take special care to prevent any person attempting to throw or present any letter or memorial to the King or any of the Royal Personages and instructions are to be given to the Police to stand to attention while they are passing. It is important that they keep strict observation on bystanders in order to carry out these instructions, and not fix their attention on the carriages.¹³³

Perhaps due to the Police precautions, there were no incidents.

The failure of the King's Speech to deal satisfactorily with the Suffrage question led the militants to resume their outrages. With

¹³³Police Orders, February 3, 1914. MEPO 2/1582.

Mrs. Pankhurst in jail when not under observation and with Christabel still in France, Sylvia Pankhurst became the most troublesome member of the family. Operating largely in London's East End, she led a vigorous wing of militants, and even began her own newspaper, the Women's Dreadnought, in March 1914. In long feature articles, she recounted her escapades and escapes, leavening the columns with remarks about police maltreatment. She also kept her "People's Army" going, and soon most of the militant leaders had their own bodyguard. At the conclusion of one army meeting on February 27, for example, the audience rose to form ranks. The police waded in among them but the army linked arms and passed through the officers, thus showing the friendly crowd "how effective it would be against a police cordon."¹³⁴ But Sylvia's policy of resisting the police was spreading quite rapidly: after police broke up a Trafalgar Square procession on March 8, the prisoners were found to have "a collection of knotted ropes and sticks.... Some of the weapons were of a dangerous character, for the knots at the ends of the sticks were loaded with lead."¹³⁵ The Police Chronicle complained on March 20:

One of Miss Sylvia Pankhurst's supporters, by name Nora Smyth, displayed her womanly charm by kicking (a constable) on the ankle, and striking (another) in the neck with a drumstick. Miss Smyth is one of the ornaments of Miss Pankhurst's 'army'. She has been fined £17 in all, or a month -- which is infinitely less than such violence merits -- vulgar violence that one usually associates with the drunk and disorderly. It is time there was an understood difference between a woman and a female.

But Sylvia insisted that the militants took up arms only in self-

¹³⁴Women's Dreadnought, February 27, 1914.

¹³⁵Times, March 9, 1914.

defense, and her paper printed a note from a Ruth Bentinck on March 21:

I did not know that there were as many police in the world as were assembled last Sunday for the East London Federation meeting in Trafalgar Square. To talk of conscription is nonsense. I feel convinced that every able-bodied man is now in the police force.... Our men are not Cossacks, but by nature, kindly, good hearted fellows, who work themselves up into what nurses call a 'dreadful state' precisely because they know they have got to do things they loath doing. They become somewhat hysterical, and from hysteria to brutality is but a short step. I am sorry for them, but still sorrier for those they handle when in such a condition.

Under Syliva Pankhurst's leadership, the East End branch of militants grew rapidly. By March 25, she was able to proclaim a meaningful boycott of local merchants who did not advertise in her paper, and some businessmen felt that such advertisements served as an insurance policy against broken windows, a situation close to blackmail.¹³⁶ And this Pankhurst had as much ingenuity as any of her relatives. When her followers were denied permission to hold a Hyde Park rally on May 1:

... a small organization of men at once sprang into being, in order to secure a permit for a platform it did not intend to use. Permits are, of course, always granted without question to organizations of men!¹³⁷

The constant arrest and imprisonment of the militants kept them

¹³⁶ Ibid., March 25, 1914.

¹³⁷ Women's Dreadnought, May 9, 1914.

from committing too many outrages.¹³⁸ But as the other militants came to believe their leaders were being slowly executed, their frustration increased. So too did the number and severity of the outrages. Any attempt to list them all would be both very lengthy and repetitious. But with outrages reaching an average of more than one a day, some of the more notable should be mentioned. For example, as Mrs. Pankhurst addressed a Glasgow audience, a militant kept police at bay by firing a pistol. Only after they overpowered her did they realize it was, again, just a starting pistol. On March 10, a militant slashed the well-known Rokeby Venus, "Venus with the Mirror", in the National Gallery, despite the fact that "For the last twelve months the ordinary staff of attendants has been supplemented by police constables, and plain clothes officers have been engaged to watch all the rooms". As a consequence, many cultural attractions, including the National Art Gallery, the National Portrait, the Tate, and the Guildhall art galleries were closed, along with Windsor, Hampton Court, Holyrood, Kew and Kensington Palaces.

¹³⁸For example, Mrs. Pankhurst was sentenced to three years imprisonment for the Walton Heath bombing, but was only jailed as follows:

Imprisoned	Released	Days Served
April 3, 1913	April 12	9
May 26	May 30	4
June 14	June 16	2
July 21	July 24	3
December 4	December 7	3
December 13	December 17	4
March 9, 1914	March 14	5

Thus she served only one month out of nearly a year. At this rate, she would still be serving her sentence in 1949, had she lived.
 Dates: Times, March 16, 1914.

Then on March 16 six women were arrested for breaking windows at McKenna's house, while two days later there was another interruption of a play the King attended.¹³⁹

At this point, McKenna announced he would ask Parliament for further powers to deal with the militants. He proposed that the police be authorized to search militants for money to pay their fines, thus avoiding imprisoning them. He also wanted to make the defendants pay the cost of prosecution even in magistrates' courts: this was already the practice in higher courts. He further proposed that women sentenced to four days or less be kept in station cells, rather than in prison. Lastly, he wanted to broaden the magistrates' jurisdiction and grant them further sentencing powers.¹⁴⁰ While these measures may have helped some, they were not enough to halt the movement.

On April 3, the National Gallery decided to reopen but now with one constable, one detective, and two attendants to every room:

If a woman paused for a moment close in front of a picture the detective slid round as unobtrusively as possible, and was to be found just behind her, gazing with deep and critical interest at the same canvass. Eyes, eyes, eyes, every where and all of them mistrustful, suspicious.¹⁴¹

The National Gallery might risk opening with such ample protection, but not all of London could be so well protected. On April 5, a bomb went off in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields Church, Trafalgar Square, just as one had gone off in St. John the Evangelist, Westminster, the previous

¹³⁹Pistol: E. Pankhurst, My Own Story, p. 342; Rokely Venus: Times, March 11; closings: Votes for Women, March 13; McKenna: Times, March 16; King: Times, March 18, 1914.

¹⁴⁰Votes for Women, March 27, 1914.

¹⁴¹Police Chronicle, April 3, 1914.

March 1. With the attention thus shifted to churches, a militant attacked a display in the hitherto immune British Museum on April 9. The museum officials were particularly upset because this was the first day it had opened since removing its extra force of guards.¹⁴² These damages were mounting rapidly: the Daily Telegraph reported on April 21 that £250,000 of damage had been caused by the militants in 1913 alone.

During this time the Home Office continued to do what it could to stop the militants. For example, Henry, Troup and McKenna all wanted to prosecute a Miss Wright for incitement in light of a speech she made:

If shooting is justified at all, as it apparently is in Ulster, I think that anybody who shot down McKenna and the doctors who administer drugs, would be quite justified in doing so.

But Muskett advised that since only one constable had overheard this remark, there was insufficient evidence to assure a conviction.¹⁴³

There are factors which help to explain the less than brilliant record of the Home Office. The first of these was frequently voiced by McKenna himself: what else could he do? Although often criticized in Parliament for forced feeding,¹⁴⁴ no one ever suggested a practical alternative. Another important consideration was that the Home Office,

¹⁴²Bombs: Times, April 6 and March 2; British Museum: Times, April 10, 1914.

¹⁴³Militants charged they were sometimes given tranquilizers during forced feeding. The speech was delivered April 5; Muskett's comment, April 22, 1915. HO 45/10701/236973/155.

¹⁴⁴"In the House and outside, public opinion was enflamed: against the militants for their own repudiation of law and order, against the Government for its helplessness in coping with a 'pack' of 'mice' women, against the prison authorities for a failure they made no attempt to conceal and against McKenna at one moment for 'torturing' his prisoners and at another for not 'torturing' them, for endangering their lives and for not letting them commit suicide." Stephen McKenna, Reginald McKenna, p. 154.

just as the police, was never able to devote full attention to this problem. As the Permanent Undersecretary testified in the perhaps simpler days of 1906, over two hundred matters crossed his desk on any given day.¹⁴⁵ Selecting entirely at random volume 51 of the Parliamentary Debates (March 31 to April 18, 1913), one finds McKenna speaking on a vast number of topics: a partial list includes cement trade accidents, coroner's inquests on children, coal output, pit ponies, the Royal Commission on Divorce, the Welsh Church Bill, the Factories Acts, the legacy duty on hospital gifts, the legality of newspaper lotteries, prison officials' pay, London Shop Act prosecutions, workmen's compensation, and so on. And perhaps most important of all, there were other major problems vying for the Government's attention. Foremost among them, at least at this point, was the Irish situation. Briefly stated, the northern six counties, with the support of the Conservative Party, feared that the Liberal Ministry was preparing to place those counties under the jurisdiction of the much larger part of Ireland which wanted independence from Britain. Extremists on all sides had exacerbated the issue to the point that pro-British Ulstermen were smuggling guns into Ireland, threatening to use them to remain a part of England.¹⁴⁶ This

¹⁴⁵Sir M. D. Chalmers before the Royal Commission on the Duties of the Metropolitan Police: Report on Police Duties, Vol. III, question 47594, p. 1105.

¹⁴⁶The militants ceaselessly pointed out that while they were often prosecuted for incitement, the Irish extremists were not, even after they smuggled guns into Ulster. Earl Winterton, an Ulster sympathizer, asked the House of Commons "What possible connection or parallel can there be between a small band of crazy women who burn houses and destroy pictures and the disciplined force of 100,000 men who have helped to keep the peace rather than break it?" Sir H. Dalziel answered instantly: "They are both illegal". Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 63 (June 11, 1914), col. 542. In any event, the Asquith Government never moved against the Ulster gunrunners.

along with recurring Trade Union disturbances meant the Home Office was swamped with important matters, of which militant problems formed a small part.

In any event, the Home Office kept trying to deal with the militants. Some help was forthcoming from non-militant women who felt the violence had gone too far. For example, on April 22 one woman wrote to the Home Secretary warning that militants planned to go to Hyde Park lake and rent all the boats in order to deprive others of the chance for a bit of entertainment. To guard against violence, the C.I.D. sent along some extra men.¹⁴⁷ The Home Office also received a large number of requests to advise whether this or that remark by a militant was actionable. For example, could incitement proceedings be taken against those who told meetings "Those in Darkness shall see a great light," and "No votes, no peace"? On April 24, McKenna approved of proceeding against Mrs. Drummond and others, but he left the specific charges up to Muskett, who decided "disturbing the peace" was the most appropriate. But quite typical of any action the Home Office took, some newspapers objected: "We want to know why, if the law of Edward III is to be applied to (militants), it has not also been applied to Mr. Bonar Law, Sir Edward Carson, Sir William Moore and others, who have openly urged the people of Ulster to rebellion?"¹⁴⁸

A portrait of Henry James by Sargent was slashed in the Royal Academy on May 5. A bomb went off in the Metropolitan Tabernacle six

¹⁴⁷HO 45/10701/236973/159.

¹⁴⁸Slogans: April 22, HO 45/10701/236973/160; Muskett: HO 45/10701/236973/162; newspaper: Labour Leader, April 24, 1913.

days later. On May 22, five Old Masters were attacked at the National Gallery, but only the frames were injured. Three days later, the Home Office received a complaint from a woman who said she observed a militant being beaten by a group of men: when she reported it to an Inspector, he said: "and serve her right, too". Henry commented on this charge: "I have not the slightest doubt that the incidents are grossly exaggerated if they occurred at all".¹⁴⁹

The last great militant demonstration took place on May 21. Mrs. Pankhurst had conducted a lengthy correspondence with McKenna since January over presenting a petition to the King, but the Home Secretary steadfastly refused to allow her to go in person. He feared the precedent of allowing a convicted felon seemingly to force an interview, and he may have feared for the safety of the King. A mysterious telegram sent to the Palace read "For God's sake receive the Women's deputation more hangs upon this than Your Majesty or Ministers can know."¹⁵⁰ McKenna followed the precedent set by Gladstone and Churchill: he promised to forward petitions but not petitioners.

After months of fruitless exchanges, Mrs. Pankhurst finally announced she would lead a deputation to the King on May 21. Letters sent to W.S.P.U. members said "The afternoon rather than the evening has been chosen in order that any attempt on the part of the police to repeat the outrages of Black Friday may be the more easily detected."¹⁵¹ The

¹⁴⁹ Portrait: Times, May 5; bomb: Times, May 11; Old Masters: Pall Mall Gazette, May 22; complaint: HO 45/10720/249187/13.

¹⁵⁰ March 6, 1914. HO 45/10720/249187/4.

¹⁵¹ May 6, 1914. Suffragette Collection, London Museum. Z 6068/4.

public announcement of the deputation gave Henry plenty of time to prepare. In fact, "Never before in the exciting period that covers the various militant demonstrations have Scotland Yard arrangements been made on so thorough and so elaborate a scale."¹⁵² Henry formed a protective triangle by lining men along the front of the Palace with lines from each corner meeting at the Victoria Memorial. A second triangle stood inside the first, and additional officers protected the sides of the Palace. Almost fifteen hundred officers were deployed in this small area, while the Horse Guards, according to some accounts, were prepared to assist the police if necessary.¹⁵³ Reports on the resulting clash vary widely. According to the Pall Mall Gazette of May 21 the police used "great restraint", the women attacked the mounted police with truncheons and tried to unhorse them; then the police retaliated with their truncheons. The Morning Post of May 22 likewise contended that the women attacked first, armed with bottles, truncheons, sulphur, adhesive powder and a "preparation which burst on striking the police". Another account said "the women were armed with eggshells filled with red and yellow paint to throw at the police."¹⁵⁴ The Daily Mail of May 22 asserted that the police "behaved with perfect good temper and discretion" and "used no more force than was necessary to put the women under arrest."

A very different picture emerges from the women's press. Mrs. Pankhurst charged "The conduct of the police plainly showed that they

¹⁵²Daily Telegraph, May 22, 1914.

¹⁵³Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 551.

¹⁵⁴Basil Thomson, The Scene Changes, p. 241.

had been instructed to repeat the tactics of Black Friday..., indeed, the violence, brutality and insult of Black Friday were exceeded on this day, and at the gates of the King of England." Sylvia Pankhurst echoed her mother's charge: "The old order had been given to drive them away with as few arrests as possible...."¹⁵⁵ The Evening News of May 21 endorsed the militants' accounts:

... when the women attempted to force the gates (of the Wellington Arch) they were shown no mercy by the constables. They were knocked down, ridden down by the mounted men, and thrown into the crowd with the utmost force. Several of the women who seized the bridle of the horses were struck at by the riders and when they refused to let go the men drew their truncheons and struck them wildly.

The Daily Herald of May 22 contained a graphic description:

The palace itself was held by stalwart Grenadiers, with fixed bayonets. ... about four o'clock the petitioners reached the Constitution Hill entrance to the Park. Authority, in a blind funk, banged the gates leaving two unhappy mounted cops to bear the brunt of the women's indignation. Although the constables drew their truncheons and laid about them frantically they were hustled about like shuttlecocks until the gate opened and a squad of police poured out to the rescue of their beleaguered comrades.

The Home Office records contain a lengthy but apparently impartial letter to McKenna which merits quotation in full:

Although an American citizen, and as such not concerned with British methods of administration, I feel it my duty to call public attention to a distressing feature of the recent riots in St. James' Park, and to ask, without any desire to present a brief for or against the Suffragettes, which is a greater offense, militancy, inspired by a principle, right or wrong, or mere rowdyism?

I witnessed several cases in which the women, finally

¹⁵⁵ Mrs. Pankhurst in My Own Story, p. 348; Sylvia in The Suffragette Movement, p. 551.

arrested, was first hustled by these gangs of hooligans, and worked into a fury which caused her arrest, but in no case was there any attempt to restrain the violent, and in many cases, brutal hands of these men.

In the evening, in front of the Palace, I happened to hear an argument between a Suffragette and a male opponent, who was becoming worsted and losing his temper, and appealing more to his prejudice than to his reason. He muttered some remark which brought a sharp and none too polite retort from the woman when a crowd of fellows with the cry 'Let's hustle her along!' bumped and jostled her along the fence, arousing her wrath and collecting thereby a large and growing crowd. Having seen several similar instances during the afternoon, I walked over to a group of smiling policemen and asked why rowdies of that sort weren't as subject to arrest as a militant Suffragette. The only answer I received was that I would have to see an Inspector for that. The remonstrance of a couple of women finally caused them to walk over to the scene of the debate (which grew steadily worse) -- to look over the heads of the people and come back smiling, with the remark 'O, she's all right!'.

As things grew worse and the crowd hustled and followed her along, a policeman from another quarter crawled into the fray -- and led the woman away under arrest. I called the other policemen's attention to the result as I had predicted, and again demanded why the men who with violence began it all were not equally subject to arrest, and I received this answer: 'O, we do things differently from you Yankees. In England every true Englishman is expected to assist us in putting down these women, and every true Englishman is glad to!' And one of the officers, stirred by some inner feeling, added: 'If we had these women in Wales we'd dump the whole lot over the cliffs!' It seemed to me the police were at no time as an organization in need of assistance, outnumbering the Suffragettes as they did 3 to 1, and each one individually twice as strong. If traffic was blocked, as they complained, it seemed to me it was blocked much more by the 'Antis' and by the idly curious, such as myself, who outnumbered the militants greatly. As I told the officers -- in New York, we disperse the entire mob.

Never in my life have I heard so much vileness and filth from the mouths of men in a public place in the presence of women here hurled at other women who I find designated merely as creatures, certainly as disgusting and as besmirching as mere paint or even a fist hurled by a militant at a policeman, and as subject to

the calm, soothing arm of the law. The whole thing seemed a bit absurd.¹⁵⁶

That same Home Office file also contains two photographs showing one constable holding a woman by the throat; a second constable is holding another woman by her shoulder and collar. This photo neither proves nor disproves police brutality. The officers may have been reacting to attacks with weapons, although none were visible. The picture does indicate, however, that at least some violence was employed.

As might be expected, a number of persons filed complaints about the police with the Home Office. One woman complained of maltreatment by the mounted men, while a committee of three women doctors filed charges with Troup against specific officers:

(One doctor) saw S 662¹⁵⁷ take a woman by the hair and shake her outside the gate at Constitution Hill. He first hit her on the chest, turned her around, then shook her by the hair and pushed her into the crowd. (Another doctor) saw S 718 knock down an old woman twice -- a white-haired woman.... (A third witness) saw A 11 holding a woman in a long green cloak by her dress and vigorously shaking her. Afterwards, when clearing the pavement, he hit a woman in the back with his closed fist.... 'S' division generally was brutal.¹⁵⁸

Commissioner Henry was invited to reply to these charges, and he did so in typically lengthy fashion:

It had been publically announced that a deputation of women would proceed to Buckingham Palace with a view to interviewing the King. As by the rules under the

¹⁵⁶Harry Townsend to Reginald McKenna, May 25, 1914. HO 45/10720/249187/11.

¹⁵⁷Officers wore shoulder tabs showing their division letter and individual number.

¹⁵⁸Quoted from Troup's notes of the interview: HO 45/10720/249187/8.

Parks Regulation Acts no unauthorized processions are permitted in the Royal Parks, a force of Police were stationed in the neighborhood of Buckingham Palace, and at the entrances to the park, with the object of preventing the passage of any such procession. ... on learning of the approach of the procession the gates (to the park) were closed and a number of men were stationed outside the gates, the intention being to inform the leaders that the procession could not be allowed to enter, and that no deputation could be received at the Palace, as had already been formally notified to Mrs. Pankhurst. No opportunity was given for explanations, however, as on arriving at the gates the women and their supporters rushed at the police, and there ensued what can only be described as a violent and disgraceful riot. The women were armed with truncheons of various kinds, India clubs, etc., which they used freely, also with formidable pruning scissors with which they cut the reins of the horses, and with bags of paint which they threw in the faces of the men. As instances of the violence of the women I would mention that men had their helmets broken and their clothes torn from their backs in the struggle. One horse, through unskillful handling of the pruning scissors was cut, whilst the bit was forcibly dragged from another horse's mouth and used as a weapon.... Under these circumstances it is needless to say that it was inevitable for those engaged in the struggle on both sides to receive some rough handling; but in this respect I have to point out that ... no woman received any injury of a serious nature.... It appears that organizers of this disorder had arranged that persons should be present for the purpose of taking notes on the conduct of individual police officers, with a view to lodging complaints afterwards ... if any act of unjustified violence took place, the matter is one (for) either a civil or a criminal court.... I think it undesirable that official encouragement should be given to persons who come out armed for the purpose of giving every kind of provocation to the police, and afterwards resort to complaints of this character with the obvious intention of thereby intimidating men from the fearless discharge of duty. If I had good reason to believe that any act of real excess had been committed by a police officer, I should of course be anxious to inquire into it....¹⁵⁹

Based on Henry's report, the Home Secretary decided no investigation was warranted. However, the police themselves were still upset over

¹⁵⁹Henry to Troup, May 29, 1914. HO 45/10720/249187/14.

the affair:

The atrocious conduct of the Suffragettes towards the police is getting beyond human endurance. The Force has so far shown the utmost tolerance, permitting themselves to be beaten and abused. If they have retaliated their action has never gone beyond self-defense, as in the disgraceful scene before Buckingham Palace. But the question is now being asked -- how long is this sort of thing to continue? The policeman simply stands to be beaten and scratched, and he must not hit back. The effect is to encourage these wild women to be more abusive and desperate in their outrages.... In any other country very few Suffragettes would now be left to tell the tale.¹⁶⁰

Commissioner Henry was no happier with the beatings his men were enduring. On May 21 he ordered raids on various militant houses. In one raid conducted on a flat in Maida Vale, 'X' division and Special Branch officers found fifty pounds of pebbles, black bags to carry stones, three hammers, tubes loaded with gunpowder and "important documents".¹⁶¹ One of these documents, disclosed at a subsequent trial, was a list of libraries, including the British Museum, Bishopgate Institute, Guildhall, and Zion College, apparently targets for future arson.¹⁶²

Just a few days after these raids and despite the ban on park meetings, Sylvia Pankhurst attempted to demonstrate in Victoria Park. But in view of her bodyguard, the police modified their tactics:

As the procession neared the gates of the park the Police cleared a space as if to let them through, but as Miss Pankhurst and her bodyguard entered it the mounted men beat off the outer guard, scattered the on-lookers, and closed in on the little band, forcing

¹⁶⁰Police Chronicle, May 29, 1914.

¹⁶¹Morning Post, May 22, 1914.

¹⁶²Ibid., June 13, 1914.

them into the boating enclosure and locking the gates behind them. Then the C.I.D. men and the police set upon the women, who made a plucky defense of their leader, but seeing that there were more than fifty representatives of law and order out to arrest one frail woman the issue could not be doubtful.¹⁶³

By June 1914, Commissioner Henry had adopted a "harrying" policy: raids were ordered on militant headquarters as often as they were discovered. On June 9, for example, eighty officers raided the Westminster Office of the W.S.P.U.; a similar raid occurred four days later. Not only did these raids hinder the leadership, they also gave the police valuable information about future plans as well as evidence for incitement proceedings. Henry was also in frequent touch with the owners of meeting halls, warning them not to rent to the W.S.P.U.. When the Commissioner's authority to do this was challenged, McKenna defended him, asserting this was only "an ordinary exercise of common sense."¹⁶⁴

While the leaders were well-known to the police, the constant influx of recruits insured the movement's continuing ability to strike. When a house was set fire on June 6, for example, the Pall Mall Gazette headlined the story "Today's Outrage". On June 14, a bomb went off in St. George's Church, Hanover, and another bomb went off near the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey.¹⁶⁵ On July 3, the Police Chronicle noted a huge increase in the sale of rubber gloves: "Scotland Yard is now wondering whether these gloves are being bought by burglars or

¹⁶³Women's Dreadnought, May 30, 1914.

¹⁶⁴Raids: Standard, June 9, 1914; McKenna: Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 63 (June 23, 1914), col. 1639.

¹⁶⁵Times and Morning Post of June 15, 1914.

Suffragettes." Then on July 11, shouting militants interrupted the Bishop of London's garden party.¹⁶⁶

All this led to another Parliamentary debate on June 11. The Home Secretary announced that he was the recipient of massive correspondence proffering advice. He broke the suggestions down into four main themes: to let the militants die of self-inflicted starvation while in prison; to deport them; to treat them as lunatics; to give them the vote. McKenna noted that the last was a matter of Government policy and therefore irrelevant. He announced that to let them starve seemed the most popular. Indeed, the exasperated Times of June 6 had actually suggested in an editorial:

Why not let them starve if they choose to do it?
... the reason (that cannot be done) is that the prison authorities are legally liable for the lives of those in their charge, and bound to do everything in their power to keep them alive. The remedy seems to be a short Act of Parliament releasing them of responsibility for persons who refuse to take food. This would get rid of forcible feeding, which is an odious expedient only necessitated by the present law, and would place the responsibility entirely on the prisoner.... While the law remains as it is (militants) have the key of the gaol in their pockets and are free to commit any crime -- even to murder -- with the certainty that by refusing food they can procure their release. It is an absurd position, and it ought to be ended.

But McKenna refused this suggestion. "For my part I could never take a hand in carrying out such a policy."¹⁶⁷ Nor was deportation, consistently favored by Lord Hugh Cecil, any better, because wherever the place of exile, the militants would be rescued and returned to their

¹⁶⁶Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 546.

¹⁶⁷Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 63, col. 531.

comrades, or else starve themselves. Lunacy proceedings were out of the question, because no matter how unpopular, the women were not insane.

These deep divisions in public opinion were the most serious obstacle to any remedy McKenna and Henry attempted. Action or inaction provoked vociferous response. Any new action against the militants provoked more outrages, of course, but also from diverse elements among the law-abiding. Forced feeding provoked memorials from doctors,¹⁶⁸ some members of Parliament, even the King. Suppression of the Suffragette drew thunder from the Labour Leader, Daily Herald and the Guardian, while inaction provoked the Opposition in the House of Commons and demands to "do something" in the Times and other major papers. But McKenna was seldom if ever offered a useful suggestion. The Police Chronicle could vaguely hint on June 12, "The police know what should be done with the women, and would do it -- if allowed". But McKenna could never sanction police retaliation.

Then too, the militants had a diabolically clever talent for turning all things to their advantage. On June 11 McKenna went on to tell the House that now the W.S.P.U. had ordered only those in poor health, those with weak hearts, mental deficiencies, epilepsy, and so on to wait for arrest, knowing these could not be force fed. But McKenna also argued that the Cat and Mouse Act was successful, that while there

¹⁶⁸ On July 1, 1914, seventy-one doctors signed a forced feeding protest, asserting among other things that it was "a system of torture based on violence and pain." In an unusual reply sent on July 8, Troup wrote asking if the doctors proposed any alternatives. HO 45/10726/254037.

now were fewer outrages, they were more serious. He concluded his remarks to the Commons by announcing he intended to take action against contributors to militant funds, both criminal indictments for "incitement to crime" and civil actions to recover damages from subscribers.¹⁶⁹ The Police Chronicle of June 12 was delighted with this last announcement:

Persons suffering injury or loss at the hands of women who now appear to be completely abandoned to hysteria should certainly be entitled to recover damages from those who have found the money on which the campaign of violence and destruction is run.

The militants had long foreseen this possibility and had prudently altered their bookkeeping:

In the 1912 balance sheet (of the W.S.P.U.) the names of peeresses and well to do men contributing were printed in bold type, but in the latest balance sheet these and similar names are indicated by initials or pseudonyms.¹⁷⁰

Money was as necessary for the militants as for any other organization. While the bulk of the members gave rather than received, full time leaders drew modest salaries. There was also a considerable overhead for office rents, printing literature and newspapers, and there were substantial postage bills. Since the income of the W.S.P.U. for the twelve months ending March 25, 1914 was £36,000 while damages at-

¹⁶⁹Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 63, cols, 531 ff.

¹⁷⁰Daily Mail, June 5, 1914. A complete financial disclosure would have embarrassed many innocent people. "At one meeting (in the fall of 1908) near a famous golf links, I saw a gentleman listening attentively; I recognized A. J. Balfour. He stayed until the end of the meeting, when he spoke courteously to us in admiration of our courage and put a generous donation in the collecting box." Geoffrey Mitchell, ed., The Hard Way UP: the Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel (London: Faber and Faber, 1968) p. 172.

tributed to them in the same period totalled more than £300,000,¹⁷¹
 McKenna had good reason for announcing that if the funds were made liable,
 "I am convinced that the days of militancy are over."¹⁷²

A few militants still retained their appreciation for the difficult
 position of the individual policeman. As Kitty Marion rode to jail
 after her arrest on June 6, 1914, she chatted with her captors:

Of course all were in favor of Votes for Women, but
 if they refused to arrest us, as I suggested the whole
 force ought, they would simply lose their jobs, which
 others would only be too glad to step into and treat
 us worse than they did.¹⁷³

The Police Chronicle had sympathy for Henry's position:

The Suffragette outrages in London have caused considerable anxiety to the Chief Commissioner. These women break out in a fresh place almost every time, and it is well nigh impossible to anticipate their next move. The responsibility of it all, including the protection of the King and the public buildings, rests upon Sir Edward Henry, and it is no light matter. The ordinary duties of the day, in normal times, occupy every hour. The strain is considerable and the erratic crimes of the Suffragettes adds greatly to the difficulties.¹⁷⁴

But the same paper was not as kind to McKenna, who by July 10
 had not yet approved of the attacks on the W.S.P.U. funds:

¹⁷¹Suffragette, March 25, 1914. The W.S.P.U. income in other years was as follows:

1906-07 - £ 3,000	1910-11 - £29,000 (9 month truce)
1907-08 - £ 7,000	1911-12 - £25,000 (truce)
1908-09 - £20,000	1912-13 - £28,000
1909-10 - £32,000	

Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 222.

¹⁷²¹⁷²Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), Vol. 63 (June 11, 1914), col. 332.

¹⁷³Kitty Marion Mss. Autobiography, p. 254. Suffragette Collection, London Museum.

¹⁷⁴June 19, 1914.

Police officials feel their impotence acutely, and are powerless to alter it. The whole matter rests with the Home Office. If Mr. McKenna will not give them the needful powers, will not help the women in prison to serve their sentences, and will not take steps to impound the cash which makes the campaign of destruction possible -- well, what can the Police do? Never before was law and order at such a low level. These women are even being allowed to destroy the dignity and decorum of our courts, and the magistrates and judges, like the police, are powerless. The Home Secretary undoes all their work.¹⁷⁵

The police continued to have problems with mobs attacking the militants. On June 15, the police rescued a militant woman in a crowd that wanted to throw her in Hampstead Heath lake; on the same day they rescued militants in Hyde Park. On July 17, police intervened when a crowd threw clumps of grass, flowers and pieces of wood at militants meeting in Holland Park Hall.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, some members of Parliament took the sixty-three officers usually on duty at Westminster to a Hampton Court outing in gratitude for their constant service:

The constables at the House have to keep their eyes well skinned. Suffragettes present themselves in many guises, and it is exacting work to keep these ladies out of trouble. There are generally two or three of them in waiting. They send in messages to members, and give the latter a tough time when they appear. It needs a most vigilant eye to keep the tamest of the Suffragettes in the place apportioned to them.¹⁷⁷

On July 13, 1914, the Morning Post printed a lengthy summary of the militant outrages thus far. The purpose was to examine McKenna's statement of June 11 that "Since the beginning of 1913 the number of individual offenses has been greatly reduced. On the other hand, we see

¹⁷⁵July 10, 1914.

¹⁷⁶Hampstead Heath and Hyde Park: June 15; Holland Park, July 17, all in the Morning Post.

¹⁷⁷Police Chronicle, July 31, 1914.

that the seriousness of the offenses is much greater." In cases where estimates of damage by arson were made, the Morning Post found a total of £271,000 for 1913, and £113,000 for the first six months of 1914. In addition, since April 1913, bombs were exploded in six churches and discovered in six others. More than fifty residences were wholly or partially destroyed, and a like number of recreational buildings, such as race course stands and tea pavilions suffered the same fate. Similar attempts were made on more than fifty schools, timber yards, and railway stations. From June 1913 to April 1914, 4,014 letters were damaged with 114 completely destroyed in the Metropolitan Police District alone. Six attacks were made on paintings in London, while there was an extensive cutting of telegraph, telephone, and railway signal wires, not only giving rise to great inconvenience and loss of trade, but adding materially to the risks of railway travel. The article concluded:

While the outrages were in progress, there was a continuous interruption by brawling women of Church services, theatre performances, and public meetings, the militants carrying their mad propaganda ultimately into the very home of the King and causing the Sovereign the utmost personal annoyance. Mr. McKenna once said he was contemplating the prosecution of those who subscribed to the funds of the organizations which support the incendiaries. Why has this not been done?

McKenna was finally ready to do just that. He had been waiting for a strong test case, one he felt certain of winning. The Trustees of the National Gallery brought such a case to him on August 1. In view of the damage done to one of their paintings, they proposed to file a civil suit against the forty chief subscribers (and their husbands) to the W.S.P.U. funds. McKenna approved of this plan on

August 2.¹⁷⁸

Whether this financial attack would have finally ended militancy would never be known. When the European crisis degenerated into war on those first days of August, a truly remarkable change took place: "Militancy ceased, as if by magic...."¹⁷⁹ As Mrs. Fawcett wrote,

Immediately war was declared, by instinctive common sense, the women of Great Britain recognized that their first duty was by every practical means in their power to strengthen the resources of their country in the gigantic struggle in which she was engaged.¹⁸⁰

Kitty Marion recorded that on the first Sunday of August, she received telegraphed orders from W.S.P.U. headquarters to "Stop all activity".¹⁸¹

Thus all the years of petitioning, of parades, of demonstrations, of outrages ended in an instant. Yet despite all the years of effort, the thousands of arrests, the hundreds who endured forced feeding, the death of Miss Davison, the tremendous burden to the police--- despite all of these hardships, still not one woman in England had the right to vote.

¹⁷⁸HO 45/10725/252949.

¹⁷⁹Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Fifty Years, vol. II, p. 141.

¹⁸⁰"Women's Work in Wartime", Contemporary Review, Vol. C (December 1914), p. 776.

¹⁸¹Kitty Marion Mss. Autobiography, p. 208.

CHAPTER V

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSIONS

In any society the tactics of a privileged order are always the same.... Declare, in the first place, that the demand is impossible; insist when it has proved to be possible that the time for its translation into statute has not yet come; then when it is clear that there seems to be an urgency about it say that the time is coming but that this is not yet the time: then when an angry clamour surrounds the demand, insist that you cannot yield to violence; and when finally, you are driven to yield, say that it is because you have been intellectually convinced that the perspective of events has changed.¹

With the coming of the war, women's suffrage, like most divisive issues, was placed in cold storage. After twenty-six months of war, political leaders turned their attention to the question of voting rights for soldiers. Lord Robert Cecil and Labour Party leader Arthur Henderson, an "unlikely combination", advised Prime Minister Asquith that women's suffrage should be part of a soldier's franchise bill.² Asquith himself seemed to have been undergoing a change of attitude: shortly before the war began, he had agreed to receive Sylvia Pankhurst. "Everyone felt this an omen of the turning of the tide."³

Asquith was no longer Prime Minister when women finally obtained

¹Harold Laski, "The Militant Temper in Politics", quoted in Constance Rover, Women's Suffrage, p. 101.

²Jenkins, Asquith, p. 424.

³Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 571.

the vote. He was succeeded by Lloyd George in 1916, and a bill enfranchising women over thirty years of age was enacted in time for the 1918 general election. Ten years later, the Conservative Baldwin Ministry "almost absent-mindedly and without any agitation" lowered the voting age for women to twenty-one, thus giving them equality with men.⁴

The participants in this struggle subsequently experienced mixed fortunes. Both Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel spent the post-war years living quietly in North America, while Sylvia Pankhurst remained active in various causes. Annie Kenny remained in England but out of public life, while Mrs. Fawcett continued to lead the Constitutional Suffragettes and witnessed the passage of the franchise act of 1928.⁵ The police found that the war added to their burdens the regulation of aliens, enforcement of the blackout, and the protection of vulnerable points. "Leave was limited or completely stopped and some members of the senior ranks did not have a day off in years."⁶ To help cope with these new duties, the police began employing women in 1914.⁷ Conditions declined so much that the Metropolitan police actually went out on strike shortly before the war ended. Although the strike was quickly

⁴T. O. Lloyd, Empire to Welfare State: English History 1906-1967. (Oxford: University Press, 1970), p. 153.

⁵Mrs. Pankhurst died in 1928, Christabel in 1958, Sylvia in 1960, Annie Kenny in 1953, Mrs. Fawcett in 1928. D.N.B.

⁶Martin and Wilson, The Police, p. 37.

⁷William H. Hewitt, British Police Administration (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1965), p. 37.

settled by a promise of higher wages, Commissioner Henry was forced to resign -- not because his men struck, but because he failed to see it coming.⁸ His successor, General Neal Macready, wrote:

It is not an easy or pleasant theme to write about, but the machine which to outward appearances seemed so spic-and-span was in reality rusted and in many respects out of date, a possibility which may overtake any concern, public or private, which is not kept abreast of the times.⁹

Despite the long struggle, no permanent legacy of bitterness remained between the police and the militants. At a testimonial dinner for Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence in 1936, for example, retired Inspector and Mrs. Jarvis were honored guests.¹⁰

Prime Minister Asquith never again held office, and his continuing differences with Lloyd George after the war helped prevent the Liberal Party from returning to power. Reginald McKenna served briefly as Chancellor of the Exchequer before entering private banking. Perhaps militant opposition was a major factor in the eclipse of the Liberal Party; perhaps a timely franchise bill before the war would have brought them fresh support. But on the other hand, perhaps enfranchisement of the women would have reaped Disraeli's reward for his reform bill of 1867, ouster from office by the very persons enfranchised. The question is unanswerable, but a study of militancy does help one understand how George Dangerfield could view militants as one reason for the Strange Death of Liberal England.

⁸ See G. W. Reynolds and Anthony Judge, The Night the Police Went on Strike (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968).

⁹ Macready, Annals of an Active Life, Vol. II, p. 308.

¹⁰ E. Pethick-Lawrence, My Part in a Changing World, p. 233.

There are a number of conclusions that may be drawn. First, militant Suffragettes were a unique experience for the Metropolitan police. No previous movement was so predominantly composed of women: women founded, organized, led and executed militancy. Not only was such widespread civil disobedience unprecedented, but never before had so violent a movement lasted so long. From Scotland Yard's point of view, this was a massive union of offenders, perpetually trying to thwart the twin goals of the police, the protection of life and property. And the fact that they were women made traditional responses inapplicable. As police reports emphasized over and over, and as Churchill told the House in 1910, had a group of men tried to rush the House, they would have been dispersed with a baton charge, leaving no prisoners, no congested courts, no packed prisons. But the police simply could not treat the women in this way.

From the first, the police tried to downplay this movement. Experience with similar groups had taught the police that most such protest groups quickly faded away. To react strongly in the early days would only draw public attention and additional followers. Benign neglect was the traditional policy. The police looked the other way as long as possible, ignoring door-bell ringers until residents complained, ignoring street corner speakers until unruly crowds collected. Ignored by police and politicians, the women took bolder action. At first they held meetings and processions chaperoned by the police. Still ignored, the militants began making life as uncomfortable as possible for Liberal ministers. The police continued to react with as much restraint as possible. Despite protests by prominent persons, for example,

Commissioner Henry kept his men out of public meeting halls, leaving the militants free to heckle speakers. Henry's men had no legal right to enter, but he did not request legislation empowering them to do so. In short, already weighted down with ample responsibilities increased by each session of Parliament, Henry sought no additional duties.

But the less attention the militants were accorded the more problems they caused. When the militants began seriously to disrupt London, the Commissioner did all in his power to thwart them. Marches to Parliament were stopped by Henry's men enforcing the Sessional Order. Yet the Commissioner was very much aware that every constable summoned to protect Westminster was taken from necessary duty elsewhere. The police were quite successful against some militant tactics. Excepting a few incidents in the Galleries, the House of Commons was never seriously interrupted. Despite numerous attacks on ministers, none was ever seriously hurt. Even the incidence of minor attacks was sharply curtailed after the full implementation of police bodyguards. The families of ministers were also unharmed. While many attempts were made to force petitions upon the King, none were successful, due largely to efficient police protection. In addition, the police learned a great deal more about crowd control, particularly in the use of rubber soled horses for mounted men and in reviewing demonstrators' plans before a demonstration. Surveillance of the militants such as that carried out by Special Branch proved very useful, and Scotland Yard finally managed to establish a police reserve.

The police also made some mistakes and learned not to repeat them. The suppression of the Suffragette seemed to be a good idea, but reac-

tion was so hostile that the police instead suppressed particular items rather than the whole publication. Orders not to arrest the militants -- which resulted in Black Friday's beatings -- were changed to a policy of arresting the moment the law was broken. The police also began to deal with the problem of chasing criminals who fled in fast automobiles, although the first experiments with a motorcycle were unsuccessful. On the other hand, the police learned to repeat successful tactics, such as the frequent raids on W.S.P.U. headquarters.

Militants had an important effect on the Metropolitan police in a number of ways. From their point of view, militancy was irrational, yet it was imitated on a smaller scale by subsequent groups. Militancy marked the inaugural contact of the police with massive civil disobedience, a difficult problem at any time. Militancy also highlighted some peculiarities in English law. The regulations governing admission to the Stranger's Gallery of the House of Commons were updated as a result of disturbances there, and court decisions confirmed the duty of the authorities to prevent prisoners from starving themselves. Searching for adequate tools to deal with the militants, the police enforced antique laws, one over six hundred years old. But the courts found that these laws, intended for very different situations, were quite applicable. And the very fact that such old laws were invoked, that no Parliament had seen a need for additional legislation on the same problems, further highlighted the uniqueness of the militants.

The militants challenged the accepted interpretation of the subject's right to petition. The police did not want the monarch made subject to personal visits by potentially hostile individuals, nor did the

Home Office want each irate citizen to have personal access to the sovereign. But the militants sought a revival of the ancient right of petitioning the King in person as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. The Courts ruled in favor of the authorities, recognizing the obvious need to support the system as it had evolved. This is one of many examples of court decisions which went against the militants in favor of what the court saw as the common good.

In other respects the police were less successful against the militants. Against massive letter box outrages or window breaking campaigns the police were ineffective. The Metropolitan police simply could not protect each pane of glass in London. And when militancy moved to burnings and bombings, a mere eighteen thousand men scattered one-third at a time over seven hundred square miles were simply unable to cope with the situation. Even when the police managed to arrest militants, they were unable to deal with them effectively. At first, Gladstone recommended minimum sentences, but this only encouraged more women to participate. The subsequent variety of responses ranged from Churchill's discharging arrested militants without trials to the long-term sentences imposed while McKenna held office. From the outbreak of militancy until the passage of the Cat and Mouse Act, the authorities floundered. This left the police trapped between a public which demanded quick and effective action and a legal system not equipped to deal with women who first courted imprisonment and then refused to suffer it.

Once militancy was well underway, a purely police solution was insufficient. A political solution was required. The police were under the political direction of the Home Office. But that department's re-

sponsibilities had long since outgrown the talents of any one man. Originally a simple office with vague but limited powers, the Home Office had become innundated with an incredible variety of duties and simply could not provide sufficient leadership to all its subordinates. When sustained attention was required, only sporadic interference was provided. Gladstone and Churchill were heavily involved with other great issues of the day. Only McKenna spent a good deal of time on militant problems.

The main contribution of the Home Office was the passage of the Cat and Mouse Act. This was a mixed blessing. While it helped the police keep the leaders from leading, it infuriated other militants, encouraging more outrages.

The police were obliged to deal with a problem only politicians could resolve. This meant that Prime Minister Asquith held the key. Throughout all the years of militancy, he held the highest office. Several times in those years the overwhelming majority of the House of Commons was pledged to women's suffrage and would have enacted it if given the merest encouragement from him. It never came. Since by 1913 it was obvious that the agitation would not cease, the Prime Minister bore the main responsibility for not acting. This is not to condemn him for opposing women's suffrage: he certainly had every right to his personal conviction that women should not vote. But the leader of a party traditionally the champion of individualism and the will of the majority imposed his preference on Parliament by never permitting a free vote on the issue. Instead occasional debates took place, but always under a shadow: Lloyd George and others would circulate rumours that if

women's suffrage passed, Asquith would feel repudiated and resign.¹¹

Thus the Irish feared that endorsing women's suffrage would cost them Home Rule while many Liberals feared a return to years in the wilderness.¹² And as session after session of Parliament failed to enact women's suffrage, the outrages became more serious, allowing members of Parliament to assert that they voted against women's suffrage to discourage violence. In this atmosphere, debates in the House of Commons were a travesty of the real function of Parliament -- to express the will of the nation, not the fears of politicians.

On a basic level, this was a contest of wills: the women of Britain, or at least a large portion of them, against the Prime Minister. The police and Home Office were only buffers between these two. Asquith's Cabinet, believing that the other issues over which they agreed were more important, never challenged his position. Circumstances thus combined to put Asquith in a nearly impregnable position.

What was the effect of militancy? Most authorities believe it hurt the cause. "H. G. Wells, in a characteristically truculent remark, thought that the sole achievement of militancy was that it led to improved conditions in prison for the female malefactor."¹³ Foreign

¹¹Christabel Pankhurst, Unshackled, p. 161; Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 370 and passim. "A hopeless Parliamentary tangle with the Cabinet tied in a knot in the middle of it ... We cannot have one Cabinet on Home Rule and two on Women's Suffrage...." Daily Chronicle, January 11, 1912, quoted in Suffragette Movement, p. 370.

¹²Churchill to Master of Elibank, supra, p. 140; Gladstone to Mrs. Richmond, supra, p. 98; Sylvia Pankhurst, Suffragette Movement, p. 370.

¹³Roger Fulford, Votes for Women, p. 177.

Secretary Grey felt that militancy in 1911 through 1913 hurt the cause, while a recent study concludes "If the militant Suffragettes had not overreached themselves, some measure of female suffrage would probably have been achieved, but their violence exacerbated fears of what women might do with the vote if it were granted."¹⁴ Perhaps this is true. But a case may also be made for another opinion. For forty years before 1905, women had peacefully agitated the vote without success. The mild demonstrations of 1906 through 1908 brought national attention but little else. When 250,000 petitioners asked for a women's suffrage bill in 1908, Asquith simply replied that he was "unmoved". If the essence of politics is reasonable compromise, Asquith certainly failed this particular test. Militancy began in earnest in 1909 and continued for years. Many critics said this hurt the cause, but peace did them no good either. When the militants suspended their activity during the two truces, nothing -- absolutely nothing -- resulted. Was it reasonable to expect the women to drop their demand, to wait passively for some vague future time when the government would change its mind? Or was it more reasonable to expect the militants to imitate the men who burned down the Nottingham Castle in 1832 or the men who tore up the Hyde Park railings in 1867? The English tradition seemed clear to the W.S.P.U.. Violence or the fear of violence rather than demure petitions, compelled reform.

¹⁴Grey: G. M. Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon: The Life and Letters of Sir Edward Grey, afterwards Viscount Grey of Fallodon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937), p. 198. Recent Study: D. E. Butler, The Electoral System in Britain: 1918-1951 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 6.

Since the war intervened and gave more reasons for enfranchising women, the long-term results of militancy can only be conjectured. Whether it helped or hurt simply cannot be known. But there is no question that militancy put a severe strain on the already overworked police, and that the average constable often blamed the Government for placing him between the militants and their goal. Perhaps the most interesting development was the restraint shown by the police. Despite intense provocation, very little personal violence seems to have been inflicted. Excepting Black Friday and a few scattered incidents, the police were remarkably controlled. That in itself was a major achievement.

APPENDIX A

THE SESSIONAL ORDER

Ordered, that the Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis do take care that during the Sessions of Parliament the passages through the streets leading to this House be kept free and open, and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of members to and from this House, and that no disorder be allowed in Westminster Hall or in the passage leading to this House during the sitting of Parliament, and that there be no annoyance therein or thereabouts, and that the Sergeant-at-Arms attending the House do communicate this order to the Commissioner aforesaid.

Source: Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser., Vol. I, February 16, 1909, col. 10.

APPENDIX B

The following extract from Police Orders of June 11, 1908 is typical of the detailed instructions which the Commissioner of Police issued concerning Suffragette processions.

1. A procession of about 5000 women will assemble on the north side of the Victoria Embankment (commencing at Northumberland-avenue and extending to Bridge-street, Whitehall, and Horse Guards-avenue) at 2.30 p.m., and march at 3 p.m. to the Albert Hall, by way of Northumberland-avenue, Cockspur-street, Waterloo-place, Lower Regent-street, Piccadilly, and Knightsbridge. Carriages and motor cars will form up on the Victoria Embankment east of Charing Cross Railway Bridge, and follow the procession to Albert Hall.

2. The police detailed to accompany the procession from the Victoria Embankment to the Albert Hall are, upon arrival there, to be at once distributed for reserve at Jay's Mews.... After the procession has passed, police on duty between Hyde Park Corner and the Albert Hall, under Superintendent B, may be formed into a reserve at a convenient place if Superintendent B considers it desirable.

3. Superintendents of Divisions are to make such arrangements as may be necessary to prevent obstruction and disorder in their Divisions, and at places of assembly, and on the line of route of any contingent that may be hereafter ascertained. It is essential that Superintendents arrange for an effective number of police to accompany any contingent from its starting place to the Victoria Embankment or to the Albert Hall.

4. Vehicular traffic may be diverted during the formation and passing of the procession, as the Superintendents in charge may consider necessary.

5. The procession is to pass along near the kerb, and wheeled traffic is to be allowed to run, one line in each direction, on the opposite side of the road, where it is possible.

6. The procession should not be stopped between the Victoria Embankment and Albert Hall except when absolutely necessary to allow vehicular and foot traffic to pass, but every endeavor is to be made to facilitate the progress of the procession.

7. Should any procession be preceded or followed by a crowd not actually in the procession, it is very important that such persons should be accompanied by police, as well as those forming the procession, to prevent disorder arising, and Superintendents or the officers in charge of police accompanying any procession will see that this precaution is taken, and, if necessary, obtain assistance from the reserves for the purpose.

8. Officers in charge of streets where patrols are placed, are to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the general police arrangements, especially with respect to the situation of the reserves, and they are to communicate immediately with the Superintendent under whom they are placed should any matter of importance come to their knowledge. In the event of disorder arising, they will at once form up their patrols, and, if necessary, send for assistance to the nearest reserves.

9. Constables of experience and discretion are to be selected for patrol duty. They should be placed in the streets gradually as the necessity arises, care being taken to provide for the proper regulation of traffic.

10. Police are expected to show good temper and forbearance in dealing with crowds, but they must take prompt measures to check deliberate attempts to provoke disorder, and if riotous proceedings, such as the breaking of windows, ensues, are to act immediately with vigour, arresting the offenders if possible and dispersing the crowd.

11. Officers in charge of detachments of police are to pay the closest attention to any movement of large parties, or small parties detaching themselves therefrom, and will at once inform the Superintendent in charge or the nearest superior officer. They are to cause police to follow any such parties for the purpose of preserving order, with instructions to act promptly, if necessary, and disperse them.

12. The officer in charge of a gate or exit from a place of meeting will be held strictly responsible that no body of persons leaves such place without being accompanied by a sufficient number of police, and will if necessary detail some of the police under his charge to accompany the party.

13. General reserves are posted in suitable localities, and officers in charge are to report (by wire) direct to Commissioner's Office immediately on arrival at their position and will also acquaint the Chief Constable and Superintendents on duty (on form 152A) in the immediate vicinity. They are held responsible that the men are ready to turn out at a moment's notice, and that immediate assistance is rendered upon application of any police officer.

14. It is the duty of the officer calling out any portion of a general reserve to report his action immediately to C.O., stating the numbers and position to which taken and whether the necessity of filling the places of the men withdrawn is urgent. The return of such men to their original position is also to be wired to C.O..

15. Every officer in charge of a general reserve is to have one or more P.Cs. (Police Constables) in plain clothes at his disposal to maintain communication with the Chief Constable and Superintendents on duty in the streets as directed. Reserves are to be kept out of the public view as much as possible, and when placed inside a building, a P.C. should be posted outside to facilitate communication. The plain clothes P.Cs. are to be furnished by the Division upon which the reserve is situate.

16. Superintendents are to detail a sufficient number of police in plain clothes for the purpose of obtaining information as to the movement of crowds or any unusual occurrence, and as a means of communication with the reserves which are not in telephonic or telegraphic connection with the Commissioner's Office or a police station. Cyclists may be employed if considered desirable.

17. Any matter of importance (such as a crowd proceeding in a specified direction, etc.) becoming known at a station or to any officer, is at once to be forwarded by wire or any other rapid means to the Commissioner's office, and care is to be taken that the recorders and telephones at stations are carefully watched during the passing of the procession in order that important matters may receive immediate attention.

18. In telephoning or telegraphing news of progress of bodies or crowds, the routes by which they are advancing should be specified. When the message refers to any contingent proceeding to the place of meeting, the name of the contingent is to be stated in order that its progress from the starting place may be followed. Great care is to be taken that competent telegraphists are employed.

19. It is most essential that the telephonic and telegraphic connections between stations and C.O. should be free and open for immediate use during the meeting or procession. Superintendents will therefore instruct station officers that they are to avoid sending unimportant messages from one station to another, thereby blocking the lines of communication, and they are authorized to employ an additional P.C. qualified in telephone and telegraph duties, at Chief Stations, if considered necessary, to assist during the progress of the meeting or procession.

20. Orders of importance should if possible be written; when verbal messages are dispatched they are to be subsequently verified in writing, the time of the sending being carefully noted. It is to be specially impressed on every officer that promptitude in taking immediate steps whenever necessary, and in sending information of anything unusual to the officer in charge/is of vital importance.

21. Chief Constables are to arrange for a system of communication with the Superintendents on order that they may be acquainted with any matter of importance arising. Foot or cyclist P.Cs. in plain clothes, or mounted P.Cs., may be employed for this purpose as considered desirable.

22. Superintendents supplying police for duty in other Divisions, will assure themselves that the Inspectors in charge of such detachments are acquainted with the position they are to take up and with the instructions in this order. Each Superintendent upon taking up duty will satisfy himself that the ground is covered as detailed, and will maintain such a position as will ensure his being readily found at any time.

23. The Superintendents on duty on the Victoria Embankment are to instruct the police to protect the young trees, flowers and ornamental grounds and railings from injury as far as possible.

24. When the meeting is over or a procession has passed out of the locality in which they are on duty, Chief Constables will wire to the Assistant Commissioner, reporting as to the general condition of the streets, the action taken with regard to the withdrawal of police, and the necessity or otherwise of further police arrangements. Pending directions, police may be collected at convenient places, but no police should be actually dismissed without authority from the Commissioner's Office. Similar steps may be taken at any period of the proceedings if in the opinion of the Chief Constable concerned police may be safely dispensed with.

25. Mounted men will carry truncheons; swords are not to be worn.

26. The Chief Constable, Western District, will be on duty.

* * * * *

At first glance, it may appear that a vast amount of work went into the preparation of these orders. But in fact, meetings of this kind were so common that these orders were essentially a repeat of orders which were given many times before and since. It should also be noted that after these demonstrations, senior participating officers were invariably asked to suggest any changes in these orders in the light of experience, and that such changes were incorporated for the next similar event.

Source: MEPO 7/70.

APPENDIX C

STRENGTH OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE FORCE, 1909-1914

<u>Year Ending March 31:</u>	<u>Estimated Population, Metro. Police District</u>	<u>Strength</u>		<u>Persons per Constable on Ordinary Duty</u>	<u>Cost in £ to each 1,000 Inhabitants</u>	<u>Rate</u>
		<u>Special Duty</u>	<u>Ordinary Duty</u>			
1909	7,402,817.	1,918	16,249	455	286	9 d.
1910	7,510,273.	1,985	16,672	450	282	9 1/2 d.
1911	7,205,277.	1,792	17,626	411	341	9 3/4 d.
1912	7,321,424.	1,793	18,195	402	323	10 1/4 d.
1913	7,393,969	1,831	18,698	395	330	11 d.
1914	7,467,307.	1,932	19,088	391	329	10 3/4 d.

Source: MEPO 5/285.

APPENDIX D

THE NEW YORK "SUN" ON THE MILITANT OUTRAGES

Among the many messages sent to Home Secretary McKenna concerning the militant suffragettes was this editorial from the New York Sun.

How long will British courtesy to women, official stupidity or public sense of humour, which must be pretty well exhausted by this time, put up with the public nuisances? ... In the name of equality these British furies are committing all sorts of mischiefs, dabbling gayly in attempts at murder, filling England with terror, and, worse than that, making it a laughing stock to the ends of the earth for the Donkey patience with which it endures riots, explosions, arson, petty annoyance and grave public dangers.

No man of any class ... could do for a minute the things these petticoat rowdies are doing every day. One law for men, none for women, and this in the name of patience and equality for women! If our British friends don't want to have their tight little island reduced to the condition of Lemnos in the legend, all whose menfolk were killed by their womenkind, they will stop these women of war before they do any more destruction. Do they want to wait until Westminster Abbey is blown up or vitrol thrown into the royal nursery? Let every offender be punished for her offenses, sent to the workhouse or the hospital for the criminal insane, as the alienists decide, and be treated like a man misdemeanant or criminal. As for the 'hunger strike', never fear. There is a deal of pose under all these mouthings and threats. Don't doubt that the dear creatures will consent to nutriment on the sly or think there is any danger that they will deprive the world of their radiant presence. If they did, small loss. But they will live, and more than that, many of them, and all of them, we hope, will get common sense. Which may the British get might soon!

Source: Foreign Office to Home Office, March 12, 1913, enclosing a clipping from the Sun of February 22, 1913.
HO 45/106955/231366/40.

APPENDIX E

A LITERARY POTPOURRI

The Suffragettes enjoyed the support of a number of the most talented writers in Britain. Below are some additional examples of this often entertaining support.

In "The Awkward Age of the Women's Movement" (Fortnightly Review, XCII, November, 1912), Israel Zangwill (supra, p. 47) observed:

When the Cabinet of Clement's Inn, perceiving that if a Women's Suffrage bill did not pass this session, the last chance -- under the Parliament Act -- was gone for this Parliament, resolved to rouse public opinion by breaking tradesmen's windows, it overlooked that the English are a nation of shopkeepers, and that public opinion thus roused would be for the first time almost unreservedly on the side of the Government. And when the Cabinet of Downing Street, moved to responsive recklessness, raided the quarters of the W.S.P.U. and indicted the leaders for criminal conspiracy, it equally overlooked an essential factor of the situation. The Cabinet of the conspiracy was at least as much a restraint to Suffragettes as an incentive. It held in order the more violent members, the souls naturally daring or maddened by forcible feeding.... Crime was controlled by a circulum and temper steadied by a time-table. The interruptions at meetings were distributed among the supposed neuropaths like parts at a play, and woe to the maenad who missed her cue. With the police, too, the Suffragettes lived for the most part on terms of cordial cooperation, each side recognizing that the other must do its duty. When the Suffragettes planned a raid on Downing Street or the House of Commons, they gave notice of time and place, and were provided with a sufficient force of police to prevent it. Were the day inconvenient for the police, owing to the pressure of social engagements, another day was fixed, politics permitting.... And the comedy of the situation was complicated and enhanced by the fact that the Home Office, so far from being an Inquisition, was more or less tenanted by sympathizers with Female Suffrage, and that a Home Secretary who secretly admired the quixotry of the hunger-strikers was forced to feed them forcibly.

He must either be denounced by the Suffragettes as a Torquemade or by the public as incapable.... There was no place like the Home Office, and its administrators, like the Governors of the Gold Coast, had to be relieved at frequent intervals. As for the police, their one aim in life became to avoid arresting Suffragettes.

In June 1913, Mrs. Arncliffe Sennett wrote an apparently overzealous letter to George Bernard Shaw, asking for his help in the Suffragette cause. He replied on June 2, 1913 (Sennett Collection, Vol. 23):

Dear Madam,

If I could do all these wonderful things with a stroke of my pen, you would have the vote and Mrs. Pankhurst be in Parliament. Do you suppose I would wait to be asked if I had the magical powers which you attribute to me? Do you suppose that the walls of Jericho, which stand against Mrs. Pankhurst's devotion and suffering, will fall at a wave of my pen or a clever platform speech? Such credulity makes me despair of the movement. Do be sensible.

* * * * *

Some of the militants wrote in verse. The following was published in Votes for Women on August 2, 1912. (Punctuation altered).

A stands for Asquith who makes such nice pledges,
Then he waits and he sees and he hedges and hedges.

B for the bites that have never been bitten
Thought the journalist finds they pay when they're written.

C is for Christabel -- fugitive leader,
If you think you can find her, just try, gentle reader.

D is for Downing, a street full of police
Each cabinet member has 1,000 apiece.

E for a beautiful bright epaulette
Now why does that word make one say "Suffragette"?

F for a fountain that flows with veracity
(When truth is unpleasant, you call it medacity).

G stands for George, preceded by Lloyd
By Liberal principles quickly annoyed.

H is for Hobhouse, and deny it, who can?
But for US who would ever have heard of the man?

I is for the Inn where the Suffragettes plot
And J for the Judge who imprisons the lot.

K for McKenna who replies in the negative
And calls torture in prison a medical sedative.

L for the Liberals who suffer from shock
Each time the militants put back the clock.

M for the millions of women they quote
When they want an excuse to refuse them the vote.

N for the nervous breakdowns they get
If they unexpectedly meet one Suffragette.

O for the others who were always in favour
Till they witnessed our rude and impatient behavior.

P stands for Pankhurst, Pethick and Prison
Through these a great cause out of darkness has risen.

Q for the quiet the world won't enjoy
Till it offers a girl the same chance as a boy.

R for the Reform Bills that omit half the nation --
The Liberal Concept of Representation.

S for the sentence the magistrates give
Assuming that women are not fit to live.

T for the Tories who in secret, we're told
Encourage our tactics and give us their gold.

U is for us, who seek cheap notoriety
And in prison, they tell us, find change and variety.

V is for votes, Votes for Women, this session!
And also for valour, better part of discretion.

W is for W.S. and P.U.
"Oh drat it", says Asquith, "That's nothing new".

X is for the xtra police force required.
When a cabinet minister's being admired.

Y is for youths, who get what they don't ask for
What women, demanding, get taken to task for.

Z is for Zangwill, a good suffragist
So he makes the right end to this nice alphabet.

* * * * *

Many times Home Secretary McKenna announced he would release any Suffragette prisoner upon her promise to refrain from further law-breaking. One prisoner wrote on the wall of her cell in Wilson Green Prison on June 19, 1912:

A Reply to Mr. McKenna who implores us to be bound over for twelve months:

I wouldn't leave my little yellow cell for you,
I've got one home and I don't want two.
It's bare and small
Without warmth at all
It's no feather bed
But a plank instead
Yet I wouldn't leave my little yellow cell for you.

Source: Suffragette Collection,
London Museum: Z 6083.

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- Balfour Papers (British Museum).
- Robert Cecil Papers (British Museum).
- David Lloyd George Papers (Beaverbrook Library, London).
- Herbert Gladstone Papers (British Museum).
- McKenna Papers (Churchill College, Cambridge).
- Samuel Papers (House of Lords Record Office, Westminster).

Mrs. Arncliffe Sennett Collection (British Museum).

(This is a 25-volume collection of newspaper clippings, correspondence, handbills, posters and personal comments by Mrs. Sennett which totals over 2,500 pages).

Suffragette Collection (London Museum, Kensington Palace:

this collection will move to a new location in 1974).

Major items include: Mrs. Terrero's Diary, Kitty Marion Mss. Autobiography, Olive Walton's Dairy.

Strachey Papers (Beaverbrook Library).

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Clarion

Christian Commonwealth

Common Cause (merged with Women's Suffrage in 1913).

Daily Chronicle

Daily Express

Daily Herald (1912)

Daily Mail

Daily News (Daily News and Leader after May, 1912)

Daily Sketch

Daily Telegraph

Globe

Guardian (Manchester)

Liberal Magazine

Liberal Yearbook

Morning Post

National Union Gleanings

Pall Mall Gazette

Police Review and Parade Gossip

Police Chronicle

Punch

Standard (also called Evening Standard)

Suffragette (October, 1912)

Suffragist

Times

Tribune

Women Citizen (March 1908 to September 1913)

Women's Dreadnought (March, 1914)

Women's Franchise (July 1907 to July 1911)

Women's Suffrage (June to September, 1907)

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