

SECTION 2 WORK AND FAMILY, 1880 - 1914CHAPTER 7THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF FAMILY LIFEWork and Family: An Introduction

Consideration has already been given to the way in which employment in Leeds was structured along sex lines and how this in turn affected the conditions of employment experienced by both male and female workers. It is the intention of this section to explore in greater depth the divisions which existed within the female labour force, which were based on age, on marital status and on ethnic and family background, through a study of the complex interrelationship between work and family life during the period 1880-1914. It is hoped that this will shed some light on the relationship between the individual characteristics of female workers, the type of work undertaken and the extent of wage earning among different groups of women, as well as suggesting the way in which women's experience of work affected their view of themselves as women and as workers.

In recent years research into the relationship between work and family life has increased and has challenged the view, widespread in sociological literature on the family, that work and family should be seen as separate spheres.<sup>1</sup> This view is based largely on the work of Talcott Parsons. He argues that, with industrialisation, the potential strains between the kinship system and the occupational system were minimised by

the development of an internal structure of family life based on the segregation of sex roles.<sup>2</sup> This meant that men performed instrumental roles in the world and women fulfilled expressive ones within the family which reduced the possibility of competition between the sexes.<sup>3</sup> More recently, critics of Parsons have argued against the idea that work and family can be usefully considered as separate spheres. They suggest that women's role in the home should not be seen simply in cultural terms.<sup>4</sup> Veronica Beechey, for example, stresses the continuing economic importance of women's role within the family under industrial capitalism. She argues that women provide a very specific reserve army of labour, that they play a crucial role in the reproduction and maintenance of the labour force and that they have a central part to play in deciding family consumption patterns.<sup>5</sup> Beechey also suggests that the relationship between reproduction, production and consumption must be seen as a historically specific one. She argues that the emphasis on one activity over another in different periods must be seen as the outcome of political decisions, trade union strategies and changes in the mode of production.<sup>6</sup>

Studies of work and family life undertaken by sociologists and historians in recent years have tended to reinforce the view that the two spheres should be seen as closely interrelated. Nevertheless, beyond this common area of agreement they raise very different questions and adopt a variety of approaches in attempting to analyse and explain the precise form of this relationship. One approach seeks to emphasise the continuing importance of the family in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in affecting both the extent and the type of work undertaken by women.<sup>7</sup>

It is suggested that family priorities dominated and remained primary in women's decision to enter the labour force after industrialisation, and in some cases in their choice of employment.<sup>8</sup> In their study of women's work and family life in Europe since 1750, for example, Louise Tilly and Joan Scott argue that industrialisation did not isolate work and family spheres, but brought a new form of interaction between them.<sup>9</sup> They suggest that families made a series of strategic decisions about where and to what extent female members should engage in wage earning. Furthermore, in allocating the time of women between household labour and waged work, families were influenced both by the demand for labour in local areas and also by the supply of women for work. The latter was itself closely related to demographic patterns and to the prevailing structure of family life in specific localities.<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, Tilly and Scott agree that families made decisions according to the opportunities for work available to all family members which determined the family's need for wages. But the decisions made were also affected by values derived from a pre-industrial society, and therefore involved a compromise between traditional and new organisational and social structures.<sup>11</sup> Tilly and Scott explain women's desire to work in the nineteenth century, therefore, by the persistence of pre-industrial peasant values rather than by the pressures resulting from low paid, low skilled work in a new industrial economy.<sup>12</sup>

One problem with a focus on family strategies is the tendency to emphasise the coherence of the family unit, and to minimise the potential for conflict both between family members and also between family commitments and the individualistic ethic of the market place.<sup>13</sup> Tilly and Scott's

analysis is also firmly rooted in a materialist explanation of the relationship between work and family. They are less concerned to explore the attitudes of female workers or to raise questions about the extent to which waged work affected women's status and consciousness.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, a weakness of their book lies in the seemingly passive way that people submitted to the process of industrialisation, leading one reviewer to remark that there is no sense of "who was doing what to whom, let alone what anyone might have felt about it".<sup>15</sup>

Patricia Branca's study of women in Europe during a similar period also stresses the continuing interrelationship of work and family and the importance of family life and values in affecting the extent and the type of work that women did.<sup>16</sup> Unlike Tilly and Scott, however, Branca does address the question of changes in women's consciousness. She approaches this through the framework of modernisation theory. The core of her work is concerned to examine the extent to which women expressed a new sense of individuality and a desire to enhance their own personal well-being at the workplace and in the family, and the extent to which they contributed to "modernising" both spheres.<sup>17</sup> She argues that throughout the nineteenth century women continued to identify with family life and that the main objective of single women was to be married. This meant that they had little job commitment, because "women simply did not define their lives through work".<sup>18</sup> When they had to earn wages before marriage, Branca suggests that they chose work, such as domestic service, which had features that were similar to those found in a family setting. Moreover, they were always reluctant to enter factory employment which "was never their preferred work".<sup>19</sup> She argues that in the late

nineteenth century women were eager to enter the new white-blouse occupations because they were still "seeking to combine work with a quest for personal contact and for socialisation". She then goes on to suggest that this showed a willingness to seize "on the leading economic trends of a maturing economy ... service work at lower levels proved compatible with women's work goals and constituted a highly viable economic adaptation".<sup>20</sup> In the case of married women Branca argues that there was a tendency for them to withdraw from paid employment, for "men, and presumably women, found it inappropriate and degrading for married women to take outside jobs". Thus, married women would not accept employment if it "conflicted with family centred goals".<sup>21</sup> As with Tilly and Scott's analysis, Branca's study implies that modernisation simply takes place and that women are then presented with options over which they can exercise some choice. In making choices, for example about whether to seek paid employment, they are influenced by personal taste, economic pressures or traditionalism, although even traditional areas of work can enable them to adapt to modern ways of life.<sup>22</sup> Branca pays little attention, therefore, to changes in the forms of production, to the struggles which took place over how such changes should occur and to the varied ways in which individuals and groups expressed a challenge to industrial capitalism.<sup>23</sup>

Branca's emphasis on the importance of family values underestimates the effect that the experience of work itself could have on the extent and type of employment that women did. Earlier studies tend to argue that paid employment outside the home for women, both during and after industrialisation, presented the possibility of altering the balance of

power between the sexes.<sup>24</sup> Recent research suggests that the experience of work is more likely to reinforce women's domestic role and subordinate status within the home. In a study of contemporary office workers, for example, Fiona McNally argues that the lack of opportunities for promotion or interesting work offered in the labour market, combined with low rates of pay, are just as important in explaining women's willingness to accept a subordinate status in the family and in the workplace as their attachment to the home.<sup>25</sup> She suggests that women's orientations to work are not fixed solely by their upbringing and by their education, but that they can "be sustained, modified and frustrated by the experience of work itself".<sup>26</sup> Leslie Woodcock Tentler's examination of women's work in America between 1900 and 1930 also stresses that the predominant features of female employment, such as low pay, monotony and lack of promotion prospects, along with a low status in the occupational hierarchy, did nothing to alter women's expectations of future marriage. She claims that it served instead to reinforce their identification with a domestic role which at least had the attraction of giving them control over their own lives and the lives of others.<sup>27</sup>

Tentler's work is important for highlighting the ways in which work, both at a practical and at an ideological level, could reinforce women's commitment to domesticity. But she tends to overestimate the extent to which women were attracted by the possibility of exercising freedom and control within the home. For many women, family life meant a constant battle to make ends meet on low male wages and the need to take on casual, often heavy employment to supplement family income. Moreover, it involved the likelihood of several pregnancies and poor health.<sup>28</sup> Her

study also fails to give a sense of whether the relationship between work and family life changed during the period, in particular under the impact of war and economic depression.

And yet the relationship between work and family life can only be fully understood in the context of broader social and economic changes. A strength of Tilly and Scott's study is that they do attempt to locate their examination of work and family within a more general context. They suggest, for example, that family life changed during the early twentieth century in a way which served to reduce the importance of married women's wage earning and to distinguish even more sharply between the male role as breadwinner and the responsibility of women for domestic duties and child care.<sup>29</sup> They relate this change to a rise in living standards which placed greater emphasis on the consumption needs of working-class families. At the same time, the expertise needed to manage money in a complex urban environment reinforced the pressures on working-class women to give a full-time commitment to domestic affairs.<sup>30</sup> Tilly and Scott also point to a decline in opportunities for married women's work which, combined with higher male wages, reduced the importance of the woman's contribution to family income.

They offer few explanations, however, for the changes that they claim took place. Underlying the analysis is the assumption that industrialisation was a neutral force which created work either for men or for women. Little attention is given to the conflicts which took place between employers and workers over the allocation of work between the sexes. Moreover, the extent to which the concentration of women in

low paid, low skilled work was partly the outcome of trade union strategies to protect the privileged position of the male worker at the workplace and in the home, tends to be ignored.<sup>31</sup> Tilly and Scott also disclaim any intention to consider the ideological context in which changes in the sex division of labour at work and in the family took place - yet this was a particularly important dimension in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>32</sup> The actions of male trade unionists, for example, were not simply based on material self interest. They were also justified in terms of a deep-seated belief in the need for women to remain at the centre of working-class family life, in order to ensure stability and happiness.<sup>33</sup> Stearns even suggests that by this period the working class had come to adopt a pedestal image of women which affected the extent of married women's employment.<sup>34</sup> Pressures also increased from middle-class reform groups who, in their concern with infant health and welfare, attempted to promote the importance of a full-time commitment to motherhood. This not only affected women at the level of ideology but also had a practical effect on the content of social welfare policies. This again helped to reinforce women's identification with the home.<sup>35</sup>

The arguments outlined above can most usefully be discussed and tested by examining the relationship between women's work and family life at a local level. This aspect is not fully dealt with by historians such as Branca. Her assumptions about the priorities and attitudes of nineteenth-century women are rarely examined systematically or backed up with convincing evidence. By looking at several European countries



over a long period of time she has little room to explore variations in local experiences of work and family life. Her emphasis on the importance of family commitments for women fails to take account of the way in which relationships and values in family life were subject to change. Moreover, women's choice of work is rarely placed within a specific local context. And yet there is evidence that the attitudes of male and female members of families towards women's work, and the nature of working-class family life, varied considerably between different occupational groups. Both family priorities and women's preferred work could have a different meaning in different local contexts.<sup>36</sup>

Regional variations in the pattern of women's work and the attitudes of family members towards it must be located in the local changes in the labour process and the sex division of labour, the employment opportunities available to family members, the prevailing patterns of working-class family life and local traditions and customs. Although choices were constrained by local economic structures, there was considerable scope for variations in individual and family development.<sup>37</sup>

It is the purpose of the three chapters in this section to explore the issues raised above concerning the relationship between work and family life in the specific context of Leeds in the period 1880 to 1914. The remainder of the first chapter considers the general context in which changes in work and family life took place in Leeds. In particular, it focusses on the growing argument put forward in the period by middle-class reformers and by members of the labour movement that married women should give a full-time commitment to the family. A second chapter considers family living standards in Leeds, the part that women played

in establishing these and the effects that they had on women's role as wage earners. This provides the context for the third chapter, which seeks to examine the type and extent of women's employment in Leeds. It explores the reasons why women chose to enter specific occupations and makes some suggestions about the way in which the conditions and experience of work affected their views of themselves as women and as workers. The way in which women's position, both in the family and also at work, affected their consciousness as waged workers, and the consequences of this for their involvement in the labour movement, will, however, be more fully discussed in the last section of the study.

#### The "cult of motherhood"

In the period 1900 to 1914 voluntary organisations, some politicians, and many working in local government health services led a concerted campaign to improve infant and child health. Their attention was increasingly focussed on the importance of the mother.<sup>38</sup> The emphasis on the mother was so great that Anna Davin has argued that a "cult of motherhood" developed in these years which served to underline the domestic role of women and to further marginalise their role in paid employment.<sup>39</sup> This had a particular significance for working-class women, since it came at a time when, it has been suggested, other factors were also tending towards a decrease in married women's employment and their increasing identification with the domestic sphere.<sup>40</sup>

Infant and child welfare had been recognised as areas of social concern by doctors and individual reformers throughout the nineteenth century,

but the poor health of recruits to the Boer War, combined with subsequent military defeats, made this concern more widespread.<sup>41</sup> A sense of urgency was further imparted by the increasing military and economic competition with Germany in the early twentieth century which raised fears for the security of the Empire.<sup>42</sup> In this context, infant and child welfare were raised in status to matters of national importance. It was frequently argued that both the quality and the quantity of the population must be improved if Britain were to remain strong as a nation. Historians such as Davin have stressed the close connection between imperialism and the renewed interest in infant welfare in this period.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, reform groups also expressed concern about economic efficiency and racial strength. Moreover, a long standing interest in questions of health and welfare could seem to have a different meaning simply because arguments were couched in terms of imperial greatness.<sup>44</sup>

Although many aspects of child health and welfare came under consideration in the period, the focus of attention was directed towards the high rate of infant mortality. This stood in stark contrast to the marked improvement in more general death rates.<sup>45</sup> A high rate of infant mortality appeared even more alarming in the context of a falling birth rate which raised the spectre of population decline.<sup>46</sup> Herbert Samuel, the Liberal MP, expressed the fears of many when he wrote:

In the competition and conflict of civilisations it is the mass of the nations that tells ... the ideas for which Britain stands can only prevail so long as they are backed up by a sufficient mass of numbers.<sup>47</sup>

Infant mortality was brought to public notice after 1906 by a series of conferences on the subject and by the growing number of investigations into the causes of infant mortality. These were carried out by local medical officers of health, prominent doctors and lady factory inspectors.<sup>48</sup> They added to the fund of statistical information on the subject and also gave the question of infant mortality considerable publicity.

The surveys were concerned to identify the immediate causes of infant deaths, usually singling out diarrhoea for special emphasis, as well as considering the underlying reasons why infants were susceptible to such illnesses.<sup>49</sup> A range of explanations were put forward for this including low family income, inadequate housing and a dirty environment, but it was the role of the mother that was most frequently highlighted and emphasised.<sup>50</sup> Working-class women received most attention in all the investigations. Close links were drawn between their ability to perform domestic duties and their experience of paid employment. Some investigators still tried to establish a direct link between married women's employment and a high rate of infant mortality, an issue which had caused considerable concern throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> The more detailed surveys undertaken into this in the pre-war period, however, produced conflicting results. This meant that many local medical officers of health and other researchers were reluctant to confirm that widespread married women's employment was necessarily a major factor in the explanation of high infant mortality rates.<sup>52</sup> Instead, by the early twentieth century the focus of attention had shifted to the importance of maternal ignorance in contributing

towards infant deaths.<sup>53</sup>

Ignorance was thought to come partly from a lack of training in hygiene and child care and from a too ready acceptance of unsuitable advice given by older women in the community.<sup>54</sup> Partly, however, it was thought to stem from employment at an early age in factories and in other unsuitable work. There was a growing acceptance in the period that well-regulated factory work could provide superior conditions for employment and a healthy discipline for female workers compared with areas of sweated work. Nevertheless, concern was still expressed that factory life encouraged independence in the workgirl and made her reluctant to settle down to family responsibilities.<sup>55</sup> A further criticism was that factory employment provided no training in the domestic skills that girls would need in their future roles as wives and mothers.<sup>56</sup> The solutions to high infant mortality rates most favoured by the infant welfare movement, therefore, were the education of the working-class mother and the promotion of a higher status for motherhood. John Burns, President of the Local Government Board and chairman of the first national conference on infant mortality, said that "they must concentrate on the mother, for what the mother was, the children were; let them glorify, dignify and purify motherhood by every means in their power".<sup>57</sup> Competent mothering was no longer to be seen as a benefit merely for individual families, but was now crucial for the well-being of the state and the nation. May Tennant, the factory inspector, expressed sentiments common within the infant welfare movement when she urged that the period of prohibition from work after giving birth should be extended; "for the mother would then serve her husband and children

by her presence within the home ... and in that way she would best serve the state".<sup>58</sup> Most speeches and articles stressed the complex tasks involved in mothering, which was most frequently referred to as mothercraft, for it formed one of "the most skilled occupations in the world".<sup>59</sup> This meant that the natural instincts of mothers had to be supplemented by training and certainly required a full-time commitment if efficiency were to be achieved.<sup>60</sup> It was hoped that the training for motherhood would take place in schools, where working-class girls would be taught domestic science and child care. It was also suggested that mothers could be given advice by health visitors in their own homes or by trained workers in baby clinics, many of which were established before 1914 by local authorities and voluntary groups.<sup>61</sup> Babies were weighed and examined in the clinics, but the main emphasis was on the education of the mother through leaflets, lectures and personal advice.<sup>62</sup>

The emphasis on the importance of the mother in this period can partly be explained by the attention given to diarrhoea as the most common direct cause of infant deaths, for this was closely associated with dirt and unsuitable feeding methods.<sup>63</sup> Jane Lewis argues, however, that doctors chose to focus on this cause of death because it could be more easily connected with maternal responsibilities. She suggests that this must be explained in terms of the prevailing ideology of separate spheres which strongly associated women with the care of homes and children.<sup>64</sup> Lewis also notes, however, that there were practical reasons why health officials focussed on the role of the mother, for "with great effort she could often manage to preserve infant life

despite the insanitary surroundings".<sup>65</sup> At a time when laissez-faire principles, involving a stress on individual responsibility, were still prevalent, it was far easier, cheaper and less disruptive of existing economic and social relationships to focus on the education of the mother than on the more general and complex questions of inadequate family income and overcrowded housing.<sup>66</sup>

Other groups interested in the health and welfare of infants, drawn largely from the labour movement, also campaigned to improve social conditions in the period. They did not, however, necessarily accept all the assumptions and solutions outlined above. The Fabians in particular recognised the need to raise family income if infant mortality rates were to fall, and therefore sought economic assistance for families through their policy of an endowment of motherhood. However, they also hoped that this would remove the need for women to work and would ensure their presence within the home.<sup>67</sup> Members of the Women's Labour League shared many of the assumptions of the wider infant welfare movement, in particular that the mother's role was crucial for the well-being of the nation.<sup>68</sup> Their attitudes did differ, however, from those of health workers and more charitable organisations. They stressed the need to concentrate on the health of the mother as well as on that of her children, and they pushed for reforms "in the interests of the working class and the community" rather than just for the sake of the Empire.<sup>69</sup> They disliked the patronising atmosphere prevalent in most baby clinics and, aware of the material difficulties faced by working-class mothers, urged the establishment of municipal clinics which would offer free treatment as well as advice.<sup>70</sup>

Majority opinion within the labour movement was in favour of the improvement of maternity services, housing and the general environment as a way to recognise the importance of women's domestic role and to improve their position within the home. There was a considerable conflict between labour women, however, over the relationship between women's role in the home and their role within production. The Fabian Women's Group, the Women's Cooperative Guild and individuals within the Women's Labour League argued that women had a right to work. They challenged the concept of a male family wage which reinforced women's economic dependence and their identification with the home.<sup>71</sup> They urged that training and job opportunities for women should be widened and advocated economic assistance to enable women to work and to provide for adequate child care.<sup>72</sup> In the event, however, these issues were sidestepped, in particular by the Women's Labour League. The League was concerned to minimise points of conflict with male trade unionists in the interests of labour unity, and members concentrated instead on attempting to improve the conditions of women within the home.<sup>73</sup> This helps to explain why the League failed to support the Fabian plan of economic assistance for families, since it was feared that this would undermine the man's responsibility for earning a family wage and could reduce union bargaining power.<sup>74</sup>

Infant mortality rates did decline during the early twentieth century, in particular after 1909, and contemporaries related this firmly to the activities of the infant welfare movement.<sup>75</sup> Subsequent studies, however, have found the reasons for the decline to be more obscure. It has been difficult to disentangle the effects of child welfare services



from those of other social changes such as a lower birth rate and higher living standards.<sup>76</sup> During the rest of this chapter, consideration will be given to the infant welfare movement in Leeds and to an assessment of its effectiveness, both in reducing infant mortality rates and also in promoting an ideology of motherhood which served to confirm women's identification with the home.

Paralleling developments at a national level, a greater interest was shown in infant mortality in Leeds in the early twentieth century, both by the local medical officer of health, Dr Cameron, and also by voluntary groups working largely under the auspices of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education.<sup>77</sup> Membership of the various committees of the Council tended to be interchangeable, with active members being drawn from some of the leading professional and manufacturing families in Leeds. Mrs Rawlinson Ford, wife of the solicitor brother of Isabella Ford, Mrs Kitson Clark, the wife of the head of a large engineering firm, several members of the family of John Barran and Mrs Eddison, married to a director of the engineering firm Messrs John Fowler & Co, were all active on a number of committees and provide a typical sample of members.<sup>78</sup>

In their concern with infant welfare members of the YLCE used language which mirrored that adopted at a national level, where infant welfare was frequently linked to imperial strength. In her history of the Leeds Babies' Welcome Mrs Kitson Clark recalled that "England was slowly awaking to a sense of responsibility towards its infants. 'The Empire moves forward on the feet of little children' and 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world' were clichés much used at the time and many

individuals wished to assist the cause of maternity and child welfare".<sup>79</sup>

At the same time, attention was also drawn to the more general need to promote efficiency among the workforce.<sup>80</sup>

Although many of the arguments for improving infant mortality rates were couched in terms of imperial greatness and national efficiency, an interest in this issue stemmed naturally from the work on behalf of the health and welfare of working-class women and children which had preoccupied the YLCE since its inception. Drawing support from all shades of political and religious opinion, the YLCE had been established in 1875 to promote the "education, welfare and useful employment" of women and girls of all classes through the county of York.<sup>81</sup> One aspect of the Council's work was to press for the extension of higher education for women. The YLCE aimed to open up job opportunities for middle-class women by pressing for the appointment of female health visitors, social workers and sanitary inspectors and by establishing training schemes that would fit them for such work.<sup>82</sup>

A second area of interest lay in the health and welfare of working-class women and girls, in particular in educating such women and in safeguarding their moral welfare. The local press and many manufacturers, notably those involved in the ready-made tailoring trade, actively promoted the view that purpose-built factories in the city provided a superior working environment and a respectable moral atmosphere. Nevertheless, members of the YLCE were still concerned with the moral welfare of the factory girl, although this was often related more to the fact that girls were leaving home than to the harmful effects of factory life

itself. As the clothing industry expanded in the 1880s, girls flocked into the city to find work and the Council made a number of attempts to establish lodging houses for them.<sup>83</sup> It was suggested that this must be done to safeguard their morality and care was taken to differentiate such lodgings from those set up for fallen women in the city.<sup>84</sup> It was further suggested that the monotony of factory life itself could have dangers, for girls were encouraged to seek immediate pleasures and amusements after work, often spending their leisure hours unsupervised on the streets.<sup>85</sup> This led the YLCE to take an interest in the National League for Physical Education which sought to organise this leisure time into more productive channels.<sup>86</sup>

In its work for destitute and friendless girls the YLCE always stressed the importance of training in household skills and tried to place girls in domestic service. After the late 1880s, however, there was a growing recognition that some girls were better fitted for machine or day work and attempts were made to place such girls in factory employment.<sup>87</sup> Throughout the period men and women involved in the YLCE had an ambivalent attitude towards the factory worker. As late as 1912, Henry Barran, son of the wholesale clothing pioneer John Barran, warned that the establishment of lodging houses could encourage young girls to leave home in order to enjoy greater independence.<sup>88</sup>

Apart from setting up sub-committees that were primarily concerned to protect the moral welfare of working-class girls, such as the committee for the help and protection of friendless girls, the YLCE was also concerned to teach household skills.<sup>89</sup> A health committee was formed

to "teach the laws of health to women and girls working in the Leeds mills and factories and the first principles of sanitary science to the housewives of Leeds".<sup>90</sup> Classes were actively promoted in poorer areas; in 1904, for example, six nursing lectures were given to 38 "very poor working women" who showed "great interest and intelligent appreciation of the lectures", while a further six nursing lectures were given at the Hartley Avenue Cooperative Stores to 30 wives of "labouring men".<sup>91</sup> A later group, the Public Health and Welfare Association, set out to continue the work of promoting the education of the people on health matters by the "dissemination and publication of useful literature, or by lectures, talks and consultations for those engaged in social work".<sup>92</sup> Along with another all-party pressure group, the Sanitary Aid Society, the YLCE was successful in obtaining the appointment of female sanitary inspectors in 1899.<sup>93</sup>

The YLCE's interest in infant mortality, which resulted in the establishment of Babies Welcomes, was prompted indirectly by government legislation concerning midwives and more directly by the increasing efforts of the local medical officer of health who was under pressure from the Local Government Board. The Midwives Act of 1902 made the provision of trained midwives compulsory by 1910, and, fearing that this would not be achieved in time, the YLCE consulted with the medical officer of health about a scheme to promote the training of midwives.<sup>94</sup> In the course of investigating this problem the Council found that it was bound up with the wider question of the provision of nurses. This prompted the YLCE to develop a larger scheme for "the formation of a county nursing association which should consider the training of midwives and the

organising of health centres for mothers and babies".<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, in 1902, the YLCE and the Sanitary Aid Society were approached by Dr Cameron to help organise the distribution of sterilised milk to South East Leeds, the area with the highest infant mortality rate in the city. Although the scheme was initially successful, it was abandoned in 1905 through a lack of financial backing from the City Council.<sup>96</sup> A final stimulus came after 1906 when Dr Cameron, following instructions from the Local Government Board, carried out an investigation into infant mortality rates in South East Leeds; his findings received publicity in the press and aroused widespread interest in the city as a whole.<sup>97</sup>

The medical officer of health concentrated initially on the effects of the employment of mothers on infant mortality. Taking 1,291 mothers who had lost at least one child aged under two in the previous two years, he found that the 750 who were not at the time of the enquiry, nor had recently been engaged in working for wages outside their own homes, had had 3,424 live children, of whom 51.7 per cent were already dead. Among the 441 who were engaged in a recognisable occupation, there were 1,699 children, of whom 57.4 per cent were already dead.<sup>98</sup> When these figures were broken down to show those children who had died under three months old and whether their mothers had worked or not, a relationship between infant deaths and the employment of mothers was not immediately obvious. This led Dr Cameron to conclude that "the employment of mothers does not seem to have been the determining factor of this high infant mortality, although it may in some cases have contributed to it".<sup>99</sup> He argued instead that the causes of high infant mortality rates were similar to those causing a high general mortality in the ward, namely

"poverty, hunger, dirt, overcrowding and alcoholism, ignorance and superstition that the woman who has already lost half the children born to her is competent to advise the young mother as to the care of her offspring".<sup>100</sup>

Despite the complex of causes put forward to explain the high rate of infant mortality, the work of the local authority and of voluntary groups concentrated on the ignorance of mothers. In line with national developments, their efforts were directed towards providing health inspection for babies and education for mothers. The work for infant welfare in Leeds provides just one example of the way in which social welfare work and educational training was still based on a mixture of local authority provision, partial funding by the local council and voluntary effort. There was close cooperation between the medical officer of health, the female sanitary inspectors and the YLCE in infant welfare work. The female sanitary inspectors were responsible for infant welfare in the city, but visiting the newly born and advising mothers was only one of a number of tasks which included the inspection of midwives, outworkers and workshops and the investigation of infectious diseases.<sup>101</sup> By 1909 there were only eight female sanitary inspectors in Leeds and only 8,908 of their 16,090 visits during the year were made to infants, largely in South East Leeds.<sup>102</sup> The work of this slender staff was made more difficult by the late notification of births in Leeds. This meant that "the child was often seven weeks old before the inspectors were informed", a crucial issue when out of 1,313 infant deaths in 1909, 471 occurred in the first month of life.<sup>103</sup> Despite pressure from Dr Cameron and the YLCE, the Notification of Births

Act was not adopted in Leeds until 1914, partly because of opposition from doctors and partly through fears of the expense that it might entail.<sup>104</sup> Dr Cameron constantly made unfavourable comparisons between Leeds and other towns and cities where there had been more vigorous action by local authorities. He argued that this had led to the appointment of an adequate number of trained staff to concentrate on infant welfare, while their work had been greatly facilitated by the adoption of the Notification of Births Act.<sup>105</sup> He believed that such actions had materially reduced infant mortality rates in areas in which other social and economic conditions were similar to those found in Leeds.<sup>106</sup>

It is not surprising that, faced by a City Council reluctant to provide resources, the medical officer of health should have been enthusiastic about the decision of the YLCE to open a Babies' Welcome in Leeds in 1908 under the control of Mrs Eddison.<sup>107</sup> Dr Cameron was closely involved from the outset, suggesting that the first clinic should be set up in South East Leeds. Moreover, a female sanitary inspector attended "once a week to assist in weighing babies, filling in charts, giving simple talks to mothers".<sup>108</sup> Henry Barran paid the rent on the first Welcome and Mrs Kitson Clark was appointed president of the first committee. Altogether, eighteen Babies' Welcomes were established throughout the city between 1908 and 1916.<sup>109</sup> They were usually run by a paid superintendent with nursing qualifications who also used the help of unpaid volunteers.<sup>110</sup> The work of the Welcomes is summarised in the following extract from a pamphlet on infant mortality in Leeds:

These Welcomes arrange for weekly meetings for the weighing of babies, for health talks and for general advice on the rearing of children. Time is set apart in the morning for mothers to have private interviews with the superintendents who also visit mothers in their own homes, and separate afternoons are also arranged for young, expectant mothers.<sup>111</sup>

The emphases of the voluntary workers involved in the Welcomes related very closely to those which had run through the work of the YLCE since the early 1870s on behalf of the health of working-class women and children. The importance of individual responsibility and the power of educational training in helping to solve social problems was stressed, while great faith was placed in the power of personal example.<sup>112</sup> It was hoped that the Welcomes would show "the people of the neighbourhood what could be done in the most squalid surroundings if in the home itself cleanliness, order, health and beauty were established".<sup>113</sup> To this end, the first superintendent was to live in a flat above the Welcome. However, the practicality of this attempt to transform the slum was put into doubt when her health broke down after a year and it was found that the second superintendent "worked better in the close streets of the city if she slept in the purer air of the suburbs".<sup>114</sup>

Finally, there was a constant emphasis on the need for thrift. Clinics ran savings and clothing clubs. Mothers were discouraged from expecting gifts of food, clothing and money, and were offered advice but not treatment.<sup>115</sup> Although the YLCE's work to promote the education and training of middle-class women involved it in frequent conflicts with established attitudes and institutions, its attitudes towards, and work on behalf of, working-class women contained an emphasis on personal



responsibility, thrift and morality which was common to all members of its class engaged in philanthropic work.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, those involved in Babies Welcomes did recognise that the problems of infant welfare were too great to be dealt with simply by voluntary organisations, and therefore they sought Government aid and intervention. They campaigned, for example, to improve the legislative framework for their activities, calling on the Leeds City Council to adopt the Notification of Births Act and to appoint more female sanitary inspectors and health visitors.<sup>117</sup>

It is difficult to assess the extent to which these activities had any effects, either on infant mortality rates in the city or on the attitudes of working-class women. It has already been noted that infant mortality rates fell both nationally and in Leeds after 1909. Both Dr Cameron and the workers in the Babies' Welcomes attributed this to their own welfare activities. However, even near contemporaries were sceptical of such claims, pointing to the fall in the birth rate, higher wages and better diets as contributory factors. They also noted that infant mortality rates had fallen just as much in towns where there was little welfare activity.<sup>118</sup> Only a small proportion of working-class mothers had any contact with the Welcomes. In 1911 600 mothers with babies aged under a year and over 160 expectant mothers had been regular attenders at the clinics.<sup>119</sup> Dr Cameron thought that those who needed the most help tended to be left untouched:

There are a large number of women who won't come, sometimes on account of their own clothes, sometimes on account of indifference to these institutions, and much of the work of our lady inspectors in the two districts ... is amongst

those who are too poor or too ignorant to attend or appreciate the advantage of the Welcome.<sup>120</sup>

One reason for the refusal of women to attend must have been rooted in the resentment against intrusion into their traditional way of life and the often patronising attitudes that they encountered from middle-class voluntary workers. An interesting insight into these attitudes can be found in Mrs Kitson Clark's description of one Welcome superintendent who turned out, at least in her eyes, to be most unsuitable. Although she handled the babies lovingly, was kind and understanding with the mothers who "talked to her affectionately and trustingly", she constantly flouted the rules. She "prescribed treatments, although we always maintained that our work was preventive and not curative. She prescribed alcohol for the mothers and gave them, at her own expense, port wine and other delicacies. She gave other things, clothes, money etc, although we had carefully established that mothers must not come to the Welcome expecting gifts".<sup>121</sup>

While some women must have welcomed a place to meet other mothers and to discuss their problems, this was only one aspect of their needs. Faced with the material problems of low income and inadequate housing, some of the suggestions made must have seemed impossible to follow. Moreover, it was less than satisfactory to be offered advice on the ill health of children which was not then followed up by free treatment.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, many women resented the accusation of ignorance when they were unable, for example to breast feed, because they were ill rather than because they were unwilling to do so.<sup>123</sup> They also failed to eat the most

appropriate food when pregnant because they lacked the resources to pay for it. One working-class woman expressed her feelings on this in a letter to the Women's Cooperative Guild:

I feel sure that it is not so much lack of knowledge as lack of means which entails so much suffering ... I had knowledge of what to eat to produce milk etc but could only confine myself to cocoa and oatmeal, which I often felt sick at the sight of, but could afford nothing else as I made this for the rest of the family also.<sup>124</sup>

The extent to which the infant welfare movement affected the attitudes of working-class women towards their role as mothers is even more difficult to determine. What is important is that it provided yet one more justification among many in the period for a stress on the importance of women's full-time presence within the home. It also helped to ensure that when social legislation was introduced it would be based on the assumption that women were economically dependent rather than meeting their needs as waged workers.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, the development of a cult of motherhood provided a ready framework for those in the labour movement who were equally keen to restrict women's role to the domestic sphere, in particular once they were married, and who simply substituted the needs of the community and the working-class family for the needs of Empire in their arguments.<sup>127</sup> As far as working-class women themselves were concerned, the message of the Babies Welcomes may have been sympathetically received by the wives of well-paid workers who had the material means to carry out the advice. For other women, however, struggling to make ends meet and frequently thrown on the job market, it had far less relevance to their overall needs.<sup>128</sup>

## CHAPTER 7, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.)

1. For a review of the current literature, see E H Pleck, "Two Worlds in One: Work and Family", Journal of Social History, X, 2 (1976), and L A Tilly and M Cohen, "Does the Family have a History?", Social Science History, VI, 2 (1982).
2. Parsons's views are developed in T Parsons, Essays in Sociological Theory (New York: Fress Press, 1954), and in T Parsons and R F Bales, Family: Socialisation and Interaction Process (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956). For a discussion and critique of his ideas, see V Beechey, "Women and Production: A Critical Analysis of Some Sociological Theories of Women's Work", in A Kuhn and A M Wolpe, eds. Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production (R.K.P. 1978).
3. Beechey, "Women and Production", p 160. She suggests that the instrumental role involves "goal attainment and adaptation" and concerns the relationship of the family to the wider society, whereas the expressive role "involves integration" and is defined in terms of internal family structure and relationships.
4. For examples of authors who emphasise the close relationship between work and family and women's economic importance within the household, see Beechey, "Women and Production"; J W Scott and L A Tilly, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth-Century Europe", Comparative Studies in Society and History, XVII, 1 (1975); P Branca, "A New Perspective on Women's Work: A Comparative Typology", J. Soc. Hist. IX, 2 (1975); M Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); V Yans-M.cLaughlin, "Patterns of Work and Family Organisation: Buffalo's Italians", in T K Rabb and R I Rotberg, eds. The Family in History: Interdisciplinary Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); B Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem (Virago, 1983); S Burman, ed. Fit Work for Women (Croom Helm, 1979).
5. Beechey, "Women and Production", pp 165, 184-95.
6. Ibid. p 19.

7. For example, see L A Tilly and J W Scott, Women, Work and Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978); P Branca, Women in Europe since 1750 (Croom Helm, 1978); Yans-MacLaughlin, "Patterns of Work and Family Organisation"; V Yans-MacLaughlin, "A Flexible Tradition: South Italian Immigrants Confront a New Work Experience", J. Soc. Hist. VII, 4 (1974).
8. Ibid.
9. This point is made by M S Hartman, "Review of Tilly and Scott , Women, Work and Family and Branca, Women in Europe", J. Soc. Hist. XIII, 4 (1980), p 647.
10. Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, pp 5-6. For a further development of their argument concerning family strategies, see L A Tilly, "Individual Lives and Family Strategies in the French Proletariat", Journal of Family History, IV, 2 (1979).
11. See the summary of their ideas by M Katz, "Preface", in Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, p xi.
12. Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, pp 104-05. A similar argument is made by authors interested in immigrant groups. Yans-MacLaughlin, for example, argues that the decision of Buffalo's Italian women to seek work, and their choice of employment, were guided by traditional family values which had their origin in the peasant society of southern Italy. Women's work was chosen, therefore, on the basis that it did not disrupt traditional family relationships. For Yans-MacLaughlin, ethnic values operate independently of class and therefore create different behaviour patterns among groups sharing similar economic and social circumstances: Yans-MacLaughlin, "Patterns of Work and Family Organisation", pp 112-17. It could be argued, however, that variation in immigrant household behaviour is a "product of the mix of economic resources and skills that each group brings" and that they faced problems as part of the working class in their need for all family members to contribute to family income. Moreover, after a few years, family patterns of behaviour in different ethnic groups tended to converge: Tilly and Cohen, "Does the Family have a History?", pp 152-3. Tentler also argues that sex and class were of more importance in women workers' lives than residence or nationality: L Woodcock Tentler, Wage-Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-30 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp 6-7.

13. Hartman, "Review", p 649.
14. Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, p 8.
15. Hartman, "Review", p 648.
16. Branca, Women in Europe, chapter 2.
17. Ibid. chapter 1.
18. Ibid. p 46.
19. Ibid. pp 50-1.
20. Ibid. p 67.
21. Ibid. p 33.
22. Branca suggests, for example, that domestic service helped to modernise women's work and should not be seen simply as a "traditional" area of employment: ibid. pp 34-9. For a stringent attack on modernisation theory, and for some of the criticisms raised in the text, see T Judt, "A Clown in Regal Purple: Social History and the Historians", History Workshop Journal, 7 (1979), p 71.
23. Judt, "A Clown in Regal Purple", pp 68-70. He suggests that there is a paradox in the studies of women written by modernisation theorists. Although "the historical process unfolds unquestioned, women retain, apparently, a free choice as to their role within the process. Thus we learn from Patricia Branca that what caused domestic manufacture to persist was 'sheer traditionalism' ", ibid. pp 70-1.
24. I Pinchbeck, Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1780-1850 (G Routledge, 1930), p 313, for example, suggests that paid employment outside the home was a distinct gain for single women in social and economic independence. R M Hartwell, "The Rising Standard of Living in England, 1800-50", Economic History Review, 2nd series XIII, 3 (1961), p 416, suggests that

- "it was during the Industrial Revolution, moreover, and largely because of the economic opportunities it afforded to working-class women, that there was the beginning of that most beneficial of all social revolutions of the last two centuries, the emancipation of women". See also E Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (Fontana, 1977), pp 254-62, and H Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880 (R.K.P. 1969), p 157.
25. F McNally, Women for Hire: A Study of the Female Office Worker (Macmillan, 1979), p 4.
  26. Ibid. p 6.
  27. Tentler, Wage-Earning Women, pp 9-10.
  28. For example, see C Black, ed. Married Women's Work (G Bell, 1915), and A Martin, The Married Working Woman (National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, 1911).
  29. Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, chapter 8.
  30. Ibid. p 176.
  31. For a discussion of this point, see above, pp 163, 170-5.
  32. Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, p 8.
  33. For a discussion of this point, see C Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour': The State, the Labour Movement and Working-Class Mothers, 1900-18", in R Brunt and C Rowan, eds. Feminism, Culture and Politics (Lawrence & Wishart, 1982), and R Gray, The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Britain, c.1850-1914 (Macmillan, 1981), pp 38-9.
  34. P Stearns, "Working-Class Women in Britain, 1900-14", in M Vicinus, ed. Suffer and Be Still (Methuen, 1980), p 113.

35. For example, see A Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", Hist. Workshop J. 5 (1978). For the practical impact of the infant welfare movement, see E Wilson, Women and the Welfare State (Tavistock, 1976), pp 107-16, and C Dyhouse, Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England (R.K.P. 1981), chapter 3. Dyhouse discusses the ways in which members of the middle class increasingly attempted to emphasise, and in practical ways reinforce, the identification of working-class girls with domesticity, in particular in terms of the school curriculum.
36. For example, see P Rushton, "Women and Industrialization: A Critical View" (unpublished paper presented to the Annual Conference of the Social History Society, York, 1980), pp 6-13, and S Alexander, A Davin and E Hostettler, "Labouring Women: a Reply to Eric Hobsbawm", Hist. Workshop J. 8 (1979).
37. Rushton, "Women and Industrialization", p 13.
38. The development of the infant welfare movement and the focus on the role of the mother are fully discussed in Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up, chapter 3; J Lewis, The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-39 (Croom Helm, 1980), chapters 2 and 3; Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood".
39. Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", p 56.
40. For example, see Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, chapter 8.
41. Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up, pp 95-8, and Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", pp 14-15.
42. Ibid.
43. Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", especially pp 14-18.
44. Lewis, Politics of Motherhood, chapter 1, discusses the wide variety of concerns expressed by social reform groups.



45. Deaths per 1,000 of the population fell by 15 per cent between the 1860s and 1900: Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up, p 95. The infant mortality rate for the United Kingdom fluctuated and did not show a consistent tendency to fall until after 1908. Between 1861 and 1870 the infant mortality rate was 154 per 1,000 births, between 1881 and 1890 it was 142, between 1891 and 1900 it was 154. and between 1901 and 1908 it was 133: H Blagg, A Statistical Analysis of Infant Mortality and its Causes in the United Kingdom (P S King, 1910), Table 1.
46. In the 1870s the birth rate was 35 per 1,000 of the population, in 1905 it was 27.3 and by 1910 it had fallen to 25.1: H T Ashby, Infant Mortality (Cambridge: C.U.P. 1915), p 7.
47. H Samuel, "Preface", in Women's Cooperative Guild, Maternity: Letters from Working Women (G Bell, 1915), p vi.
48. One of the most widely quoted studies was G Newman: Infant Mortality: A Social Problem (Methuen, 1906). Newman had been a medical officer of health for ten years before being appointed as chief medical officer of health to the Board of Education in 1907: Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", p 31. Medical officers of health were instructed by the Local Government Board to investigate the causes of infant mortality in their local areas. Their findings are summarised in the Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the Local Government Board - Supplement to the Report of the Medical Officer of Health containing a Report on Infant and Child Mortality by A Newsholme (PP 1910, XXXIX). For a discussion of these local studies, see C Dyhouse, "Working-Class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England, 1895-1914", J. Soc. Hist. XII, 2 (1979), pp 254-5.
49. For example, see the Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the Local Government Board - Supplement on Infant and Child Mortality (PP 1910, XXXIX), and the Forty-Third Annual Report of the Local Government Board containing a Third Report on Infant Mortality Dealing with Infant Mortality in Lancashire (PP 1914, XXXIX).
50. For example, see Newman, Infant Mortality, pp 221, 257, and the Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the L.G.B. Supplement on Infant and Child Mortality (PP 1910, XXXIX), pp 70-4.
51. For a discussion of the nineteenth-century concern, see M Hewitt, Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry (Rockliff, 1958).

52. For example, see the results of the research of the lady factory inspectors into Dundee, Preston, Burnley, Blackburn, Hanley and Longton: Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Appendix V. Memorandum of the Lady Factory Inspectors on the Employment of Mothers in Factories and Workshops (PP 1904, XXXII). Also, see the report by Dr Robertson, medical officer of health for Birmingham, in the Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the L.G.B. Supplement on Infant and Child Mortality (PP 1910, XXXIX), p 73.
53. The concern with maternal ignorance is fully discussed in Lewis, Politics of Motherhood, chapter 2. The ignorance of working-class mothers was thought to have particular importance because "there are ignorant, indifferent ... women in every class but it is more dangerous in the working class where there is no paid help as a substitute": Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the L.G.B. Supplement on Infant and Child Mortality (PP 1910, XXXIX), p 73.
54. Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the L.G.B. Supplement on Infant and Child Mortality (PP 1910, XXXIX), p 71.
55. For example, see the evidence to the Inter-Dept. Committee on Physical Deterioration. Minutes of Evidence. Vol 2 (PP 1904, XXXII). Witnesses were asked questions on whether the sociability of factory work prevented women from settling down to family life. Most witnesses, including Charles Booth, Adelaide Anderson, the factory inspector, and the leaders of girls' clubs replied in the affirmative: for example, see QQ 1087, 1619, 4937. Anderson, however, claimed that it was a serious problem in some districts, but not in others: Q 1621.
56. See the evidence of Adelaide Anderson to ibid. Q 1623. She thought that girls should have more training in domestic skills while they were still at school.
57. The Times, 14 June 1906.
58. M Tennant, "Infant Mortality", in G M Tuckwell et al, Woman in Industry from Seven Points of View (Duckworth, 1908), p 90.
59. Mrs Donaldson, "Waste", in M E MacDonald et al, Wage-Earning Mothers (Women's Labour League, c.1909), p 23. Mrs Donaldson was a clergyman's wife from Leicester.

60. Contemporaries were concerned, however, to ensure that practical schemes to improve infant mortality rates should not take the place of maternal instincts. John Burns, president of the Local Government Board, argued that "in all their work they should remember that they could not supersede the mother, and they should not by over-attention sterilize her capacity to do what every mother should be able to do herself": The Times, 5 August 1913. See also Blagg, Statistical Analysis of Infant Mortality, p 27, who suggested that anything which raised the ideal of motherhood would reduce infant mortality.
61. For information on health visiting and infant welfare centres before 1914, see the Ministry of Reconstruction, Memorandum by Miss A M Anderson on Subsidiary Health and Kindred Services for Women (H.M.S.O. 1918), pp 7-10, and J E Lane-Clayton, The Child Welfare Movement (G Bell, 1920), Introduction and chapter 5.
62. Ibid.
63. Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the L.G.B. Supplement on Infant and Child Mortality (PP 1910, XXXIX), p 38.
64. Lewis, Politics of Motherhood, p 68.
65. Ibid. p 65.
66. For example, see Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", p 56. She also links the emphasis on the mother with a desire on the part of social reform groups to preserve a specific form of family life at a time of political and social instability.
67. H Harben, The Endowment of Motherhood, Fabian Tract No. 149 (Fabian Society, 1910), especially pp 14-15.
68. For example, see J R MacDonald, Margaret Ethel MacDonald (George Allen & Unwin, 6th edition, 1929), pp 157-71, 198-200, and A Hilton, "The Good Home Maker", Labour Woman, July (1913).
69. Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", p 17. Davin points out the range of different solutions that were put forward by socialists.

70. Miss L M Irvine, for example, was suspicious of Mrs Pember Reeves's scheme that attendance at clinics should be made compulsory, because poor people were "over-inspected". Instead, she advocated the compulsory provision of clinics: League Leaflet, March (1912). See also S Ferguson, "Labour Women and the Social Services", in L Middleton, ed. Women in the Labour Movement (Croom Helm, 1977), pp 44-8.
71. C Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party, 1906-20", Feminist Review, 12 (1982), pp 79-80. For an account of the support of the Women's Co operative Guild for the economic independence of married women, see Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!'", pp 69-73.
72. B L Hutchins, "The Capitalist Versus the Home", New Statesman, Special Supplement on the Awakening of Women, 1 November 1913, pp xiv-xv. See also Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party", p 80.
73. Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!'", pp 74-5.
74. Rowan, "Women and the Labour Party", pp 80, 90.
75. Between 1901 and 1908 the average rate of infant mortality in the United Kingdom was 133. In 1909 it was 109, in 1910 it was 105, in 1911 it was 130 and by 1912 it had fallen to 95: Ashby, Infant Mortality, p 3. The higher rate of 1911 can be attributed to the exceptionally dry summer which increased deaths from diarrhoea. For Newsholme's view that the infant welfare movement was responsible for the decline in infant deaths, see the Forty-Second Annual Report of the L.G.B. A Second Report on Infant and Child Mortality by A Newsholme (PP 1913, XXXII), pp iii-iv.
76. Lewis, Politics of Motherhood, p 107, and Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up, p 100.
77. The Leeds medical officer of health had already conducted a small investigation into the relationship between married women's employment and infant mortality as early as 1893. This was a by-product of a more general investigation into deaths from diarrhoea and was also prompted because "it had been frequently remarked that the cotton and lace making towns, where women are much employed, have usually a very high infant mortality": Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1893, p 112.

78. Of the 13 subscribers to one committee of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, the Leeds Ladies' Association for the Protection of Friendless Girls, three were related to J.P.s, two to surgeons, two to architects and one to a timber merchant, a carpet manufacturer, a professor and a clergyman respectively in the 1890s: Leeds City Archives, Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education Papers, Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls, Annual Reports 1884-1904. See also I Jenkins, "The Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, 1871-91", Thoresby Society Publications, LVI (1978), pp 42-3, where it is noted that the active members of the Y.L.C.E. came from "a small number of professional and manufacturing families in Leeds who shared common intellectual and cultural standards".
79. L.C.A. Kitson Clark Papers, Mrs Kitson Clark, "Leeds Babies' Welcome Committee: Some Early Chapters in its History, 1908-26" (hereafter Leeds Babies' Welcome) (unpublished typescript, n.d.), p 7.
80. For example, see W Hall, A Plea for the Supply of Humanised Milk to the Infants of the Poor (Leeds: Y.L.C.E. c.1903), p 5. Hall pointed to the ill health of children and exclaimed, "And these children are to be our future artisan citizens! Our stalwart soldiers! ... our patriotism demands that we should care for the vigour of the race". He was keen to use these arguments against those who thought that free milk would tend to pauperise the recipients.
81. L.C.A. Kitson Clark Papers, Mrs Kitson Clark, "Notes on the Origins of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education" (unpublished paper, n.d.).
82. A number of standing committees of the Y.L.C.E. were established to promote training and the opening of jobs to women. The Yorkshire Bureau for the Employment of Women aimed to find information on work for educated women, to raise standards of women's work and to open up new fields of employment. The Leeds branch of the National Union of Women Workers pressed the medical officer of health to appoint female sanitary inspectors. The Public Health and Welfare Association was keen to obtain training for health visitors and social workers in conjunction with the university. See the reports and minutes of these organisations in the L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers. The educational work of the council is described in Jenkins, "Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education".

83. L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, Girls' Night Shelter, Annual Report for 1887, p 4, and Annual Report for 1889, p 8.
84. Ibid. Annual Report for 1890, p 6.
85. L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, typewritten sheet from the National League for Physical Education (n.d.).
86. A branch of the League was established in Leeds in 1907: L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, minutes of a meeting of the National League for Physical Education, 27 March 1907.
87. L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, Girls' Night Shelter, Annual Report for 1888, p 6. See also the Annual Report for 1896, p 6.
88. L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, minutes of the Sub-Committee on Lodging Houses for Women, 8 May 1912.
89. Jenkins, "The Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education", pp 52-71.
90. L.C.A. Kitson Clark Papers, Mrs Kitson Clark, "Leeds Babies' Welcome", p 2.
91. L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, Report of the Technical Instruction Committee, 31 July 1904. During that year the committee organised three cookery, three dressmaking, 21 health and three needlework courses. In one area 12 lessons were given in cookery to machinists and 10 lessons in needlework were given to Jewish girls. Jenkins, "The Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education", p 60, argues that in the last years of the nineteenth century the Council's work in teaching "health laws" to working people became less important. This was partly because of a broadening of the school curriculum by trained teachers of physiology which the Y.L.C.E.'s own work had encouraged. Partly, however, it was because the Council turned to more social questions such as the training of midwives and the improvement of infant mortality rates.
92. The aims and objects of the Association are set out in the Public Health and Welfare Association, Some Notes on Infant Mortality in Leeds and a Plea for putting the Notification of Births Act into Operation (Leeds: Y.L.C.E. 1911).

93. L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, minutes of the annual meeting of the Leeds branch of the National Union of Women Workers, 23 November 1898.
94. L.C.A. Kitson Clark Papers, Mrs Kitson Clark, "Leeds Babies' Welcome", pp 4-5.
95. Ibid. p 5.
96. Ibid. pp 2-3.
97. Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1909, p 18, showed that in South East Leeds the average rate of infant mortality for the period 1905 to 1909 was 185.2. This compared with a rate of 139.9 for the city as a whole. Hunslet had the second highest rate of infant mortality with a figure of 154.8. Arthur Greenwood wrote a series of influential articles which drew extensively on Dr Cameron's findings: A Greenwood, "The Wastage of Child Life in Leeds, 1, 2, and 3", Yorkshire Post, 1, 2 and 3 June 1909.
98. Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1906, pp 45-6.
99. Ibid. p 141. 7.91 per cent of babies born to housewives in Dr Cameron's survey died under the age of three months. Women who worked within the three months before birth, but not in the three months afterwards, lost 12 per cent of their babies under the age of three months. The corresponding figure for women who worked within three months before and after birth was 10 per cent: ibid. p 136.
100. Ibid. p 49.
101. Public Health and Welfare Association, Infant Mortality in Leeds, p 5.
102. Ibid. Three female inspectors were detailed to infant visiting. The entire female staff consisted of a chief inspector, five assistants and two probationers.
103. Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1909, p 17, Table 5a. The adoption of the Notification of Births Act would have ensured the registration of babies 36 hours after birth.

104. The Leeds Labour Party concentrated on the problems of child health in its 1911 election campaign. It accused the City Council of identifying the problems, but then refusing to take measures to deal with them because of the cost: Leeds Weekly Citizen, 28 October 1911. The Public Health and Welfare Association also argued that the City Council should take more vigorous action, and suggested that this would save money in the long term by preventing ill health: Public Health and Welfare Association, Infant Mortality in Leeds, p 8.
105. Huddersfield and Sheffield adopted the Notification of Births Act in 1908 and 1909 respectively. Each birth was followed up by a visit from a local authority worker and subsequent visits were made by voluntary helpers. Infant mortality rates in Huddersfield declined from 135 in 1906 to 112 in 1908 and to 96 in 1909. The Leeds medical officer of health attributed this to the welfare measures adopted: Public Health and Welfare Association, Infant Mortality in Leeds, p 6.
106. Ibid.
107. Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1909, p 106.
108. Ibid.
109. L.C.A. Kitson Clark Papers, Mrs Kitson Clark, "Leeds Babies' Welcome".
110. Ibid.
111. Public Health and Welfare Association, Infant Mortality in Leeds, p 7.
112. See, for example, L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, Mrs James Kitson, Sanitary Lessons to Working Women in Leeds during the Winters of 1872 and 1873 (Leeds: Y.L.C.E. 1873), pp 12, 17. She argued that, if ignorance about sanitary laws could be dispelled, then a great deal of suffering would be prevented. She also suggested that, if people were warned of the evil effects of drinking alcohol on the digestive organs and the blood, this would reduce drunkenness.
113. L.C.A. Kitson Clark Papers, Mrs Kitson Clark, "Leeds Babies' Welcome", p 7.



114. Ibid. pp 14-15.
115. L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, Proposed Babies' Welcome and School for Mothers (Leeds: Y.L.C.E. c.1908). The pamphlet suggested that there would be a provident club to save for the birth, a thrift club for older children and a babies' clothing club.
116. The Y.L.C.E. committees engaged in work on behalf of working-class girls emphasised the teaching of domestic skills, the placing of girls as domestic servants and the need to save them from immorality. The Leeds Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls, for example, grew out of a small committee of the Charity Organisation Society which had been set up to befriend young girls and to help them find work as servants. The new Association catered for girls who were friendless or who came from "dangerous surroundings", educated them under a "good religious woman", taught them domestic subjects and then placed them as servants. It was suggested that "numbers of girls have been saved from evil and trained to become good and respectable women": L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, "A Short History of the Leeds Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls" (unpublished handwritten manuscript, 1918).
117. Public Health and Welfare Association, Infant Mortality in Leeds, p 8.
118. In 1926 Mrs Kitson Clark sent statistics to the Medical Research Council which suggested that there was a different mortality rate among babies attending the Welcomes from those of others in the wards. The reply from the Medical Research Officer, dated 16 January 1926, expressed scepticism about the statistical methods used. He pointed to the need to consider other variables such as a falling birth rate and higher wages. Karl Pearson also wrote expressing caution after receiving similar data and arguments. See his letter dated 14 February 1923: L.C.A. Kitson Clark Papers, Miscellaneous Correspondence.
119. Public Health and Welfare Association, Infant Mortality in Leeds, p 7.
120. Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1912, pp 22-3.

121. L.C.A. Kitson Clark Papers, Mrs Kitson Clark, "Leeds Babies' Welcome", pp 21-2. The Leeds branch of the Women's Labour League complained of the patronising atmosphere in clinics and called for the establishment of a municipal clinic: L.W.C. 3 February 1912. The guarded reaction of working-class women to "do-gooders" is also referred to in Martin, The Married Working Woman, pp 30-5.
122. The Leeds W.L.L. pointed out that parents were expected to take children to private doctors, which they could not afford, or to hospitals, where they had to wait for long periods. This was often impossible for working mothers. The W.L.L. campaigned, therefore, for clinics to combine advice with free treatment: L.W.C. 28 October 1911.
123. For example, see the letters from working women in the Women's Co operative Guild, Maternity. The Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1893, pp 129-33, included a survey of the feeding of 156 infants who had died aged under one year. Many of the mothers had been ill, either before or after the birth, and, of those who worked, a high proportion lived in housing which was not severed from the sewer or where there were offensive middens nearby.
124. Women's Co-operative Guild, Maternity, Letter 62, p 88.
125. For a discussion of these issues, see E Wilson, Women and the Welfare State, chapters 1 and 6; M McIntosh, "The Welfare State and the Needs of the Dependent Family", in S Burman, ed. Fit Work for Women (Croom Helm, 1979), pp 163-71; H Land, "Women: Supporters or Supported?" in D L Barker and S Allen, eds. Sexual Divisions in Society: Process and Change (Tavistock, 1976).
126. For a further discussion of this point, see below, pp 595- 7, 640- 1.
127. Lewis, Politics of Motherhood, p 82.

CHAPTER 8THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF WORKING-CLASS LIFE IN LEEDS,  
1880-1914

It is commonly argued that in the period from the 1890s to 1914 a decline in the opportunities for married women's employment, an increase in male wages and a rise in working-class living standards all combined to associate working-class women with domesticity. Further, it is held that women were encouraged to look upon waged work as marginal and temporary, which in turn made the sex division of labour in working-class families between a male breadwinner and a female homemaker more rigid.<sup>1</sup> Generalisations of this kind are useful for drawing attention to long term changes at a national level, but they fail to indicate the importance of regional differences in the extent and timing of such changes. The nature of women's contribution to family income and the importance of waged work in their lives, for example, could vary considerably between different local areas.<sup>2</sup> The following two chapters examine the generalisations made about women's work and family life through a study of working-class living standards in Leeds between 1880 and 1914, and through an analysis of the extent and type of women's work in the city. It is not intended to give a systematic account of local living standards, but rather to indicate the social and family context from which different groups of women entered paid employment. Consideration is then given to the extent to which this affected their choice of specific occupations and their view of themselves as waged workers.

Any examination of living standards raises problems concerning the

criteria to be used and the evaluation of available evidence, although real wages are usually taken as a starting point. Most studies use the wage and price indices of A L Bowley and G H Wood, which were derived from government statistics, as the basis for determining national trends in real wages.<sup>3</sup> This has resulted in a broad agreement that real wages rose sharply in the 1890s, by between 8 and 11 per cent in the period 1892 to 1896, and that wages then stagnated in the following two decades. Within these two decades real wages actually fell between 1899 and 1905 and 1908 and 1913 as prices increased.<sup>4</sup> The use of official data on wages and prices, however, is fraught with problems. Trade union leaders were critical of the use of wholesale prices in the cost of living index. They argued that retail prices did not necessarily show a corresponding decrease and that the index included many items that were rarely purchased by working-class families.<sup>5</sup> The official wage figures were also criticised for failing to take sufficient account of unemployment, ill health and unpaid holidays which reduced average weekly earnings over the course of a year.<sup>6</sup> Nor did national trends necessarily reflect working-class experiences in different local areas which could vary according to the type of work available. Research undertaken so far indicates that there were greater fluctuations in earnings from year to year at a local level than studies based on London or national data imply.<sup>7</sup> Gourvish suggests, however, that, on the whole, local research reveals a similar overall pattern of changes to that occurring at a national level.<sup>8</sup>

Leeds was seen by many contemporary observers as a prosperous city, in particular when compared to areas of casual employment such as the East

End of London. In his evidence to the Royal Commission on Working-Class Housing, for example, the local medical officer of health, Dr Goldie, suggested that the high standard of housing in the city could be attributed to:

the opulence of the working class in Leeds; there are a great many trades and we never suffer from a panic ... they are all well to do people; all people earning good wages.

Q9814. There is no substratum that is not pretty well off? Not of that poverty of which I have seen cases twenty years ago in the East End of London; we have not that wretched squalor ..<sup>9</sup>

The variety of trades, which reduced the risk of a general depression, the opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled work for men, the extensive employment of female labour in industry and the low level of rents were cited repeatedly in contemporary accounts as the reasons for high living standards in Leeds.<sup>10</sup>

The emphasis by contemporaries on wage rates, rents and prevailing opportunities for work in differentiating between the living standards of local areas does appear to have been justified, since local retail prices were remarkably similar. The Board of Trade enquiry of 1908 noted that the highest prices were to be found in the south of England and the lowest in a number of Lancashire towns, but the difference between the maximum and minimum index numbers for prices was only eighteen points.<sup>11</sup> Rents showed greater variations. Those in Leeds were roughly equivalent to rents in other Yorkshire towns, but fell well below the rents in London and in areas of heavy industry in the north.<sup>12</sup>

The male labour market in Leeds was characterised by the variety of trades available and by the opportunities offered for skilled and semi-skilled employment. Engineering, employing around 20 per cent of all male workers throughout the period, was the single most important male trade, but building, clothing, textiles and transport also employed between 6 and 11 per cent of the male labour force at different census dates.<sup>13</sup> The Board of Trade enquiries of 1906 and 1908 into earnings and hours and into the cost of living give some indication of the average earnings of men working full time in the major Leeds trades.<sup>14</sup> In 1905 bricklayers, masons and plasterers had a weekly average wage of 39/2, carpenters, joiners and plumbers earned 37/1½d, painters averaged 28/10½d, while builders' labourers ranged between 26/10 and 28/10½d. Similar wage rates were recorded for printing and the furnishing trades, with compositors receiving 35/6, cabinet makers from 35/1 to 39/4½d and upholsterers 37/2.<sup>15</sup> The figures given below refer to the average wages of full-time workers in the last pay week of September 1906.<sup>16</sup>

Engineering: Fitters, 33/-; Turners, 33/-; Smiths, 34/-; Patternmakers, 37/-; Labourers, 20/4.

Ready-Made

Boot & Shoe: Clickers, Lasters, Finishers, 28/-; Pressmen, 25/-.

Wool and

Worsted:

Spinners, 24/7 (time) 32/7 (piece); Warpers, 23/10 (time) 28/9 (piece); Weavers, 25/8; Average Wage, 29/2.

Ready-Made

Tailoring:

Foremen, 47/5; Cutters (hand) 30/9 (machine) 32/7; Pressers, 26/4 (time) 32/11 (piece); Warehousemen, 30/-; Average Wage, 31/11.

It is difficult to assess the proportion of men who could earn the higher wages, because census figures do not differentiate on the basis of skill. National surveys of the engineering industry, however, suggest that by 1914 60 per cent of engineering workers could be classed as skilled and a further 20 per cent as semi-skilled.<sup>17</sup> Given the place of engineering in the city's economy, it was bound to have an important influence in establishing local living standards.

One third of male workers in ready-made tailoring, 41 per cent of male wool and worsted workers and 56 per cent of engineers and boilermakers included in the 1906 returns for Leeds were recorded as earning over 30/- a week.<sup>18</sup> However, as table 8.1 illustrates, the rates for skilled workers fell below those paid in many other towns and cities.

Table 8.1 Average Wages in Selected Industries for One Week in 1905, as a Percentage of Wages in London<sup>19</sup>

	<u>BUILDING</u>		<u>ENGINEERING</u>		<u>FURNISHING</u>	<u>PRINTING</u>
	<u>Skilled</u>	<u>Labourers</u>	<u>Skilled</u>	<u>Labourers</u>		
Birmingham	98	100	91	83	86	85
Bradford	81	85	87	96	83	88
Huddersfield	83	85	77	--	81	90
Leeds	87	94	85	--	87	86
London	100	100	100	100	100	100
Liverpool	98	78	93	81	87	86
Manchester	95	92	91	83	88	86
Newcastle	90	89	89	89	90	94
Coventry	93	94	92	92	--	77
Hull	91	101	92	94	81	82

Trade unionists explained the lower rates of wages in Leeds by the weakness of union organisation in the area.<sup>20</sup> It may also have been related to

the widespread employment of women, although the relationship between the two is not easy to determine.<sup>21</sup> It is also difficult to gauge the extent to which the proportion of more highly paid workers increased or decreased over the period. There was a slight increase in the proportion of the male labour force engaged in engineering, and a decrease in those employed in the lower paid textile trade, but this was offset to some extent by an increase in less skilled work in transport and municipal service.<sup>22</sup>

It is misleading, however, to focus on average wages at any one point in time. Weekly earnings varied both during the course of the year and also between different periods. Moreover, real wages fluctuated according to the level of prices. One historian has argued that "Leeds suffered severely in short term depressions but there was no long term decline in the level of manufacturing activity", and that there was "comparative prosperity" in the years of the "Great Depression".<sup>23</sup> However, this optimistic picture tends to gloss over the real suffering experienced, even by the families of skilled workers, at times of unemployment, short time and ill health.<sup>23</sup> Leeds suffered severe unemployment between 1892 and 1895 and during the first few years of the twentieth century; in both periods this prompted campaigns led by members of the labour movement on behalf of the unemployed.<sup>24</sup> 1893 was a year of exceptional distress, with a total of 12,000 people out of work. From 1896 to 1904 the rate of unemployment among the most skilled and best organised workers fell between 2 and 5 per cent.<sup>25</sup> Two of the major trades in the city, textiles and clothing, faced severe difficulties throughout the 1890s. Wool and worsted manufacturers responded to



foreign competition by systematic wage reductions. Fierce competition between ready-made clothing manufacturers, and the introduction of young workers into the cutting room, put pressure on all but the most skilled male workers' wages.<sup>26</sup> In these circumstances union leaders in textiles and clothing maintained that their members had not been able to benefit from the fall in prices in the early 1890s.<sup>27</sup>

In a number of skilled trades the workpeople suffered from regular wage reductions through seasonal variations in employment, in particular in the bespoke sections of the clothing trade and in the building industry.<sup>28</sup> Building workers suffered most from the severe frost of the depression year, 1895, and were also subject to cyclical changes in demand for their labour.<sup>29</sup> The number of builders expanded rapidly in Leeds during the 1890s, only to fall off again after 1901.<sup>30</sup> Skilled workers were able to draw on union benefits when they were sick or unemployed, but these were never equivalent to a full week's wages.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it would have been particularly difficult for skilled workers to adjust easily to other kinds of employment.<sup>32</sup>

Gourvish suggests that prices rose by approximately 23 per cent in the period 1896 to 1913, outstripping the average rise in money wages of 20 per cent.<sup>33</sup> At a time of rising prices, it was the best organised workers who were most able to maintain the gains made in the early 1890s by pushing up wage rates.<sup>34</sup> Engineers and boilermakers gained an increase of 25.9 per cent in wage rates between the two wage enquiries of 1886 and 1906.<sup>35</sup> The Board of Trade was wary, however, of putting too much emphasis on any comparison based on the two enquiries. There had

been changes in the proportion of men employed in particular tasks and in the methods of remuneration used. Moreover, 1886 was a year of depression and this contrasted with the greater prosperity of 1906.<sup>36</sup> The wages of male wool and worsted workers in Leeds showed an increase of only 15 per cent between the enquiries of 1886 and 1906.<sup>37</sup> This does give some weight to the views of union leaders in textiles and clothing that the pressure on wage rates meant that real wages were falling. Owen Connellan echoed these views in his annual report to the Leeds Trades Council in 1910. He argued that frequent short-time working between 1900 and 1910 had reduced real wages in the city to a level below that of the 1890s.<sup>38</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the demand for higher wages to compensate for rising prices was a central concern of workers in most industries during the period of labour unrest in Leeds between 1910 and 1913.<sup>39</sup>

Although there were widespread opportunities for skilled employment for men in Leeds, the city also had its share of less skilled workers who were often omitted from contemporary accounts of local prosperity. Just over 45 per cent of male wool and worsted workers in the Board of Trade returns for Leeds averaged less than 25/- a week in 1906, while 10 per cent of engineers and boilermakers received between 20/- and 22/-.<sup>40</sup> Builders' labourers were returned as having an average wage of between 26/- and 28/-, but these averages were considerably reduced in winter through short-time working.<sup>41</sup> The local press repeatedly referred to the low wages of iron workers.<sup>42</sup> One Hunslet Guardian and JP, who was unlikely to have exaggerated the extent of low pay, claimed that labourers could earn 18/-, but that they averaged 15/- with holidays. He

thought that 4,000 men were on 15/-, mainly at the ironworks.<sup>43</sup> These workers were particularly vulnerable at times of sickness and unemployment, since they had little margin for saving and rarely had union benefits to fall back on.

Overall, therefore, the opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled work in a range of industries did ensure that living standards for a high proportion of Leeds families were above those of areas where casual employment for both sexes predominated. Nevertheless, unemployment, sickness and the problems facing specific industries could put pressures on the living standards of even skilled workers' families, in particular when prices rose after 1896. At the same time, the diversity of trades and the large size of the labour force meant that Leeds was a city of contrasts, although this was not always highlighted in contemporary accounts. Less skilled male workers, widows and other women who were responsible for the support of family members took home wages that were barely sufficient to keep them above the stringent poverty levels laid down by contemporary social investigators.<sup>44</sup>

The skill and the level of wages of individual workers cannot give a full picture of the income available to families, since contributions could be made by several wage earners. The diversity of work in Leeds meant that there was a considerable variation in family income. This depended on the number of wage earners, the type of work that they did and the position of families in the life cycle. A large number of dependent children, for example, tended to reduce living standards regardless of overall trends in real wages.<sup>45</sup> The use of the term

family can itself be misleading. It conveys a picture of parents with two or three dependent children where the man was, more often than not, the sole breadwinner. This was the type of family on which many contemporary social investigators based their "poverty lines" and their notion of a family wage. Yet a number of surveys suggested that such families were often in a minority, and that income could be derived from a variety of sources.<sup>46</sup> It is far more satisfactory, therefore, to use the term household. This implies a more varied pattern of relationships and contributions to weekly income and allows some account to be taken of the importance of lodgers.<sup>47</sup>

It is not possible to determine the precise contribution made by individuals to specific working-class households, but Bowley's study of earners and dependants in working-class families, based on the census schedules of 1911, does give an indication of the extent to which working-class households relied on different types of wage earners.<sup>48</sup> His findings are summarised in the following table:

Table 8.2 Working-Class Households in Selected Towns Classified According to Earning Strength, per 100 Households in Each Town<sup>49</sup>

	<u>One Man Over 20</u>	<u>One Man &amp; One or More Children</u>	<u>Man and Wife, With or Without Children Earning</u>	<u>Other Cases Including A Man</u>	<u>No Man Earner</u>	<u>No Earners</u>
Bethnal Green	42	21	16	9	11	1
Shoreditch	37	22	13	10	14	4
Stepney	49	22	6	8	13	2
Bristol	44	27	6	10	9	4
Newcastle	51	26	3	13	6	1
Leeds	39	31	8	12	8	2
Bradford	33	31	12	11	11	2
Bolton	39	29	6	10½	12½	3
Warrington	48	28	3½	13	4½	3
Reading	48	26½	6	6½	7½	5½
Northampton	40	32½	6	11½	6½	3½
Stanley	60	21	½	8½	4	6½

Bowley's survey indicates the regional variations in the composition of household income. It suggests that households supported entirely by a male breadwinner were in the minority, except in areas of heavy industry where there were few work opportunities for women. This is underlined still further by the fact that his survey was based on census schedules which underestimated the extent to which married women made an economic contribution to the family. In Leeds, therefore, as late as 1911, only 39 per cent of working-class households depended on a single male wage earner. In 31 per cent of households children added to the male earnings and in at least a further 8 per cent married women also made a contribution. In 8 per cent of households there was no male earner.<sup>50</sup>

The varied industrial structure of Leeds meant that there was a high

demand for the labour of girls, boys and young people, who all made an important contribution to family income. Children began their wage earning at an early age, although after 1880, the introduction of compulsory education and successive amendments to the factory acts raised the age at which children could be legally employed.<sup>51</sup> There was a decline, therefore, between 1881 and 1911 in the proportion of children employed in England and Wales as a whole.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, a revival in the textile and clothing trades led to a slight increase in employment for the age group 10 to 14 between 1901 and 1911, both in Leeds and in other textile towns, which is shown in the following table:

Table 8.3 Percentage of Children Aged between 10 and 14 <sup>53</sup>  
Occupied in Selected Towns in 1901 and in 1911

	<u>1901</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
England & Wales	10.3	5.2	6.9	3.5
Leeds	13.8	8.3	15.1	11.3
Blackburn	29.3	29.4	30.1	29.6
Halifax	30.9	28.9	30.6	28.0
Bradford	26.6	23.1	26.4	24.5
Burnley	30.4	29.2	30.6	28.0
Huddersfield	17.1	12.5	15.1	11.3
Sheffield	12.8	5.2	12.8	4.7

The proportion of children employed in Leeds fell below that of other textile towns because there was only a handful of half-time workers in the city.<sup>54</sup> By the age of 13, however, 59.9 per cent of boys and 45.7 per cent of girls were employed in Leeds in 1911. By the age of 14 82.8 per cent of boys and 67.3 per cent of girls were employed.<sup>55</sup> It

is also likely that young children were more extensively engaged in wage earning than these figures suggest. Descriptive accounts of the period note that young children helped their mothers in the homework trades, ran errands for neighbours and shopkeepers and were employed as street traders.<sup>56</sup> Children from low income families were expected to seek full-time work as soon as they were legally able to do so.<sup>57</sup> In some instances children managed to obtain employment when they were under-age. For example, one case was reported in the local press of a man who was prosecuted because his daughter had falsified her birth certificate in order to enter full-time waged work.<sup>58</sup> It is not possible to compare the proportion of young people employed in 1911 with the earlier censuses of 1881 and 1891 because the age structure of the labour force in local areas was not given. Nevertheless, the expansion of the ready-made tailoring industry in the 1880s suggests that the demand for young workers was equally as high in the earlier period.<sup>59</sup>

Young people could immediately earn between 2/6 and 5/- a week as learners in both the textile and the ready-made clothing trades in Leeds. Wages rose to between 7/- and 10/- for girls before the age of 18 and to approximately 9/- for boys. By the age of 16 some girls in textiles and clothing could be earning over 10/- if they were quick and had some ability.<sup>60</sup> The extent to which households benefited from these wages varied between different local areas and between individual households. Using budgets collected by the Board of Trade, Peter Stearns suggests that by the first decade of the twentieth century girls kept a significant proportion of their wages, that is 45 per cent, for their own use.<sup>61</sup> But research undertaken into Lancashire and Yorkshire

textile areas indicates that the practice of handing over wages to mothers and receiving money back for spending was still a common practice for both sexes in the early twentieth century.<sup>62</sup> These and other studies also suggest that girls had less control over their own earnings than boys and were expected to put family needs first.<sup>63</sup> Older children were more likely than younger ones to pay board and lodging, either to their parents or to another household, and this could range from 5/- to 8/- a week according both to the level of the young person's wages and also to the services that they received.<sup>64</sup> The importance of such contributions clearly varied with the individual household, but were crucial where the adult male was unskilled or where there were no male wage earners.<sup>65</sup> The following cases of families receiving poor relief in Leeds suggest that the earnings of children could form a substantial proportion of family income among poorer groups.

Case 1. Widow, able bodied, 41. Earns nothing. Seven children

- a) daughter, 18, earns 5/- to 8/6 as a printer's folder.
- b) daughter, 14, earns 5/- to 7/- as a machinist.
- c) daughter, 13, earns 4/- as a paper bag maker.
- d) son, 17, earns 6/6 to 7/- as a labourer.

Given out relief of 3/- money and 3/6 in kind.

Case 2. Widow, 53, occasional charing. Four children.

Son, 18, earns 8/- to 11/- as a labourer.

Three dependent children, aged 13, 8, 6.

Given 2/- relief.<sup>66</sup>

Many working-class women, whose husbands' wages were irregular or spent largely on drink, found that children's wages provided a reliable source of income for the first time in several years.<sup>67</sup>



The census figures suggest that only a small proportion of married women took on full-time paid employment in Leeds, but there is little evidence that their wage earning steadily declined over the whole period. It has been argued elsewhere that the extent of married women's employment fluctuated over time and that their contribution to family income remained important up to the outbreak of war, in particular when their more widespread irregular employment is taken into account.<sup>68</sup> A minority of adult women in textiles and clothing could earn over 20/- a week (although the majority averaged between 10/- and 15/-). This would have made a considerable difference to living standards in families in which the male wage earner was unskilled, as well as raising the level of comfort of the families of skilled workers.<sup>69</sup> The earnings of women engaged in work outside factories and large workshops tended to be lower than those of inside workers. In casual domestic work women were paid 1/6 to 2/- a day for charing or laundering a load of washing and 2/6 a day for minding a child.<sup>70</sup> Homeworkers' earnings are difficult to quantify because each woman worked for a different number of hours each week. However, the time wasted in travelling to collect and deliver work, the waiting time at the factory and the expenses of heating and light reduced weekly earnings below those of inside workers.<sup>71</sup> Most casual and home workers in Leeds appear to have been widows or married women who took on work when their husbands were sick, on short time or unemployed.<sup>72</sup> Their contribution, therefore, was vital for family survival. Married women also contributed to household income by taking in lodgers, an economic activity that tends to be omitted from census statistics, and this was particularly important in the 1880s when young people flocked to the

city to find work in the clothing industry.<sup>73</sup>

Throughout the period 1880 to 1914 household income in Leeds was derived from a variety of sources. Children and young people made an important contribution across almost all types of working-class households. Married women were not extensively employed in full-time wage earning outside the home, but those who did take on such work were able to raise family living standards substantially. Moreover, the more widespread casual wage earning among married women continued to play a crucial part in keeping individual families above the poverty level.<sup>74</sup> It is difficult to identify a "typical" Leeds family or household in the period and there are numerous examples of households which did not conform to the popular stereotype of the "nuclear" family. These included wives who had been permanently or temporarily deserted, unmarried sisters who lived together and widows with lodgers or wage-earning children.<sup>75</sup> It is difficult to assess the precise number of such households, but their undoubted existence contributed to the variety of living standards and family patterns to be found in Leeds.<sup>76</sup>

Most recent studies emphasise the need to look beyond household income and to include health statistics, sanitary conditions, housing provision, infant mortality rates and patterns of expenditure in any assessment of living standards.<sup>77</sup> It has been suggested, for example, that the level of family income cannot automatically be equated with high or low standards of living. From a detailed study of working-class budgets Oddy argues that working-class families did not

necessarily experience an improvement in health when incomes rose, because they chose to spend their money on different items than food.<sup>78</sup> He shows that it was only when incomes exceeded 30/- a week that families spent a greater proportion on nutritious food, whereas the diets of families in the income range of 21/- to 30/- were little better in nutritional terms than those of the very poor.<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Roberts argues a similar case from a different standpoint.<sup>80</sup> Her study of living standards in Barrow and Lancaster reveals that although family income was usually low, the population was healthier than average.<sup>81</sup> She explains this by reference to activities that are impossible to quantify, such as the choice of nutritious food, housekeeping skills, the use of articles which were never purchased through retail outlets and the resort to charity and credit.<sup>82</sup> All of these were strategies which enabled low wage families to make ends meet and were frequently noted in contemporary surveys.<sup>83</sup> But, by emphasising the way in which they enabled families to survive above the poverty level, Roberts provides a view of working-class life which minimises the hardship and daily grind that was entailed in the process. Ernie Benson's account of his childhood in Hunslet, for example, reveals the hard life of men and women who had to scrape a living on an inadequate income.<sup>84</sup> When Ernie's father had an accident at the steel works his children were entitled to free dinners at the ragged school. On Sundays, however, they had a meagre diet at home. This varied between cod's head soup with watered milk and parsley bread, and "penny ducks", which were faggots made of mince, onions and sage.<sup>85</sup> When they were unable to afford coal, Ernie's parents braved the "icy blasts" of the colliery tips at Middleton where they went to "scrat for coil".<sup>86</sup> Free dinners

at times of trade depression or strike activity did enable children and adults to survive, but the food was monotonous and often given in circumstances that shattered the pride of individual families.<sup>87</sup> Although working-class families could use waste material from factories to make clothing, blankets and rugs, this could not compensate for the lack of high and regular wages, while the resort to credit in low wage areas meant the constant pressure of mounting debts.<sup>88</sup>

In Barrow and Lancaster low family income did not necessarily mean poor health and low standards of living, but this was not the case in Leeds. The contrasts afforded by a large city in levels of wages and types of employment were also apparent in more general social conditions. In the inner city wards of East, South East and North East Leeds, families with low incomes also suffered the most insanitary environment, the most inadequate housing and the highest infant mortality and general death rates. In these areas unskilled labouring predominated for men, male and female wages were low and Jewish and Irish immigrants made their homes.<sup>89</sup> The inner city wards can be contrasted with the outlying wards to the north of the city, which were largely residential in the 1880s. To some extent, they can also be contrasted with the areas of heavy industry south of the River Aire - Hunslet and Holbeck - where engineering firms, iron works, railway yards and chemical factories predominated.<sup>90</sup> The contrast between different areas of the city were noted by contemporaries. One article in the Yorkshire Factory Times, for example, compared the "splendid buildings and grand clothing factories" in parts of the city with the "hovels in the East End" of Leeds.<sup>91</sup>

Leeds as a whole had a reputation in the 1880s and 1890s for its polluted environment. This feature is graphically captured in the description of Ourtown by Gurth, the pseudonym of the socialist Tom Maguire:

Dismal, dirty, manufacturing Ourtown is a "great industrial centre" in the leaders of its local press ... it hugs to its bosom all the odours, gases and plagues which its hundred thousand inhabitants and their industries are capable of generating. It possesses a river, a few inches of the surface of which flows: the main bulk of it is slime - a devil's paste for sticking and fruitful of the carrion fly. Ourtown has its share of suicides but even the lunatics and philosophers who seek death by drowning are careful to avoid the river - death by poisoning is not that popular.<sup>92</sup>

This description was echoed in an article in the Tailor and Cutter which claimed that "Leeds has in our opinion a general aspect of grime, smoke and unrelieved ugliness that no other 'workshop of the world' can compete with".<sup>93</sup>

The general environment and housing provision did vary widely throughout the city, but the most prevalent type of accommodation for all working-class families was back-to-back housing. It was estimated that back-to-backs provided homes for 214,000 out of a total of 350,000 people in 1891.<sup>94</sup> Back-to-back houses were widely condemned because they lacked any through ventilation. This was thought to be responsible for high death rates and ill health amongst the working class.<sup>95</sup> Influential members of the City Council, however, continued to support the building of such houses throughout the period. They

argued that no systematic enquiries had been undertaken into the connection between back-to-backs and ill health, that they were cheaper to rent and that alternative housing also had drawbacks.<sup>96</sup>

Back-to-backs were usually rented lower than through houses, but varied greatly in quality.<sup>97</sup> The older type often had only one living room, a cellar kitchen and one bedroom. These were rented at 2/3 to 3/- in 1906.<sup>98</sup> The 1866 Improvement Act established that new back-to-backs should be built in terraces "four pairs long with gated yards containing water closets and ash pits between. Roads were to be 36 feet wide".<sup>99</sup> The scullery and living room were to be on the ground floor with two bedrooms above and an attic storey. After 1890 private gardens and water closets were included as well as a ground floor kitchen, and these were rented at between 3/9 and 5/6 in 1906.<sup>100</sup> Supporters of back-to-backs argued that their size made them difficult to sub-let which reduced overcrowding. In 1891, however, 16.4 per cent of Leeds households lived in overcrowded conditions. This had improved only slightly by 1911 when the figure stood at 11 per cent.<sup>101</sup>

The oldest types of back-to-backs were most prevalent in the inner city areas of East, South East and North East Leeds.<sup>102</sup> It was not just the condition of the houses themselves which produced slum conditions, but the fact that they were densely packed together in rows near to factories, warehouses and slaughterhouses. They opened on to narrow courts and alleyways where they were filled with the smells from open sewers and ash pits.<sup>103</sup> In the Leylands, the Jewish quarter of the East End, houses were overcrowded, closely packed together in narrow cobbled

streets and many were used as workshops.<sup>104</sup> The "Bank", in York Street, the home of Irish immigrants, was described by the local medical officer of health as "about as unhealthy a slum as there is in Leeds".<sup>105</sup> Hunslet and Holbeck, however, also had their share of slums and insanitary conditions. Ernie Benson claims that the wide variety of manufacturing enterprises created smells, smoke and polluted the river, while the open sewage trough which ran through his street gave off a foul smell before it was cleaned out.<sup>106</sup>

The general death rate for the city began to decline after 1870 and Leeds was well down in the Registrar General's table of death rates for major towns and cities.<sup>107</sup> This encouraged complacency in the city but, as Hennock points out, the figures for Leeds were based on an area which included a large amount of open land, whereas those for Manchester, Liverpool and other cities covered only densely populated districts.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, the infant mortality rate in Leeds did not compare well with other areas and remained above the national average up to the First World War.<sup>109</sup> There were considerable variations within the city both in general death rates and also in infant mortality rates, with the South East district coming out highest on both counts throughout the period.<sup>110</sup> Table 8.4 gives details of the infant mortality rates in the different districts of the city:

Table 8.4 Infant Mortality per 1,000 Births in the Different Districts in Leeds, 1905-9 and 1909<sup>111</sup>

	<u>1905-9</u>	<u>1909</u>
North	157.9	137.6
West	135.8	120.6
South East	185.2	152.8
Hunslet	154.8	135.4
Holbeck	143.9	117.8
Wortley	137.2	130.1
Kirkstall	98.5	69.0
Bramley	99.4	98.9
Chapelton	94.6	89.3
City Death Rate	137.7	123.1
England & Wales	122.0	109.0

The birth rate declined steadily over the whole period from 1880 to 1914, but individual families remained large, and again were usually found among the lowest income groups in the inner city areas.<sup>112</sup>

In 1889 an outbreak of typhoid in the wealthy suburb of Headingley prompted public interest in the overall sanitary and health conditions of Leeds. The epidemic was traced to the incompetence of the local medical officer of health, Dr Goldie, which was hardly surprising since "he had been appointed during the economy campaign of 1872-3 at a paltry £400 per annum".<sup>113</sup> The Leeds Mercury demanded the appointment of a new medical officer of health on a salary high enough to attract someone competent, and a more energetic replacement was found in Dr Cameron.<sup>114</sup> His schemes for improvement were given a boost by the gas strike of 1890 which revealed further incompetence on the part of local government. It ensured that candidates for municipal office



from both parties could no longer afford to neglect issues of public health.<sup>115</sup> Dr Cameron sought the City Council's approval for the adoption of the Infectious Diseases Notification Act, for the appointment of additional sanitary inspectors and for the complete clearance of the notorious East End slum area of Quarry Hill, Marsh Lane and York Street.<sup>116</sup> The Council was slow to act on all these measures, although opinion did not simply follow party lines. Many councillors feared the expense involved, others were concerned about threats to individual freedom, while yet others were involved in property companies and feared the implications of slum clearance.<sup>117</sup> On health issues Dr Cameron also faced the frequent opposition of the medical profession.<sup>118</sup> In the event, the Infectious Diseases Act was not adopted until 1894, and it was only in 1899 that seven additional sanitary inspectors were appointed.<sup>119</sup>

By the early twentieth century some improvements had been made in health, housing and the environment. The general death rate continued to decline, although infant mortality remained particularly high until after 1909.<sup>120</sup> Greater emphasis was given to the building of superior back-to-backs, roads were widened and densely populated areas were opened up by selective demolition. More attention was paid to the provision of a clean water supply and the paving of streets.<sup>121</sup> Cheaper transport, combined with low rents, encouraged firms to set up factories in the more outlying districts from the mid 1890s. By the end of the period, therefore, the bulk of the city's population lived in the suburbs.<sup>122</sup> Conditions in the inner city slum areas, including parts of Hunslet and Holbeck, do not, however, appear to have improved before the outbreak of war. The Labour Party paper, the Leeds Weekly

Citizen, ran a series of articles on housing in 1913 and 1914 in which the descriptions of "squalor, bad paving, bad lighting" and the density of housing matched those of the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>123</sup> The projected clearance of the Quarry Hill area finally took place just before the outbreak of war, but this was not followed up by a comprehensive programme of re-housing. It seems likely, therefore, that it merely exacerbated overcrowded conditions in adjacent areas.<sup>124</sup>

Not only families on low incomes were found in unsatisfactory housing in slum districts. Jewish families with higher incomes, for example, often remained in the Leylands through fear of the prejudice against them in other areas. They were also unwilling to leave a community based on shared religious and social values.<sup>125</sup> Similarly, families of less skilled workers, who experienced a rise in living standards once their children became wage earners, were reluctant to move away from family and friends.<sup>126</sup> There was also a considerable shortage of housing in the healthier districts of the city and skilled workers complained that they were unable to find accommodation for which they were prepared to pay 5/- to 10/- a week.<sup>127</sup> Discontent over the conditions of available housing came to a head in 1913 when landlords demanded a rent increase ranging from 6d to 9d. A Tenants' Defence League was formed to organise the non-payment of rent and the Leeds Labour Party argued that there should be a municipal housing programme to meet a shortfall of 5,000 houses.<sup>128</sup>

In Leeds as a whole, therefore, widespread opportunities for men to obtain skilled and semi-skilled work, combined with plentiful industrial

employment for women and girls, did keep family income above that of many other towns and cities. It would be misleading, however, to paint too rosy a picture of working-class life in the city, for even the families of skilled workers faced a reduction in income at times of illness and unemployment. Weak trade union organisation in many trades meant that wage increases did not always keep pace with rising prices, in particular after the late 1890s. Furthermore, all families suffered from an insanitary and polluted environment which the City Council was slow to remedy. The growth of suburbs and the building of superior back-to-backs did improve the conditions of life for families on higher incomes, although infant mortality rates remained high up to 1909, even in districts outside South East Leeds. Less skilled workers, female headed households and immigrants all continued to form a group with low family incomes. They lived in unhealthy slum conditions and endured the highest rates of infant mortality throughout the period. This contributed towards the great diversity of working-class experience of living standards in the city between 1880 and 1914.

## CHAPTER 8, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.)

1. For example, see L A Tilly and J W Scott, Women, Work and Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978), chapter 8, and P Stearns, "Working-Class Women in Britain, 1890-1914", in M Vicinus, ed. Suffer and Be Still (Methuen, 1980), pp 112-20.
2. Local patterns of women's work are discussed in S Alexander, A Davin and E Hostettler, "Labouring Women: A Reply to Eric Hobsbawm", History Workshop Journal, 8 (1979).
3. The studies most frequently used are A L Bowley, Wages and Income in the United Kingdom since 1860 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), and G H Wood, "Real Wages and the Standard of Comfort since 1850", reprinted in E M Carus-Wilson, ed. Essays in Economic History Vol III (Edward Arnold, 1962). For a discussion of the way in which historians have used Bowley and Wood, see T R Gourvish, "The Standard of Living, 1890-1914", in A O Day, ed. The Edwardian Age (Macmillan, 1979), pp 13-16.
4. Gourvish, "The Standard of Living", p 14. See also E H Phelps Brown and M Browne, A Century of Pay (Macmillan, 1968), Period 1, 1860-1913.
5. K Laybourn, 'The Attitude of Yorkshire Trade Unions to the Economic and Social Problems of the Great Depression, 1873-96' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1972), pp 52-5. For a critique of Bowley's sub-index of rents, see Gourvish, "The Standard of Living", pp 16-17.
6. See the discussion above, pp 251- 5.
7. Examples of local studies include G J Barnsby, "The Standard of Living in the Black Country during the Nineteenth Century", Economic History Review, 2nd series XXIV, 2 (1971); S Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1959); E Roberts, "Working-Class Standards of Living in Barrow and Lancaster, 1890-1914", Econ. Hist. Rev. 2nd series XXX, 2 (1977).
8. Gourvish, "The Standard of Living", p 28. Gourvish agrees, however, that the fortunes of particular industries and of different groups of workers did show variations, both at a national and at a local level: ibid. pp 22-8.

9. Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes (PP 1884-5, XXX), QQ 9801, 9814.
10. For example, see the evidence of Dr Eicholz to the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Minutes of Evidence. Vol 2 (PP 1904, XXXII), Q 447; C Collet, "Women's Work in Leeds", Economic Journal, 1, 3 (1891), pp 468-9; E M Elderton, Report on the English Birth Rate. Pt I. England North of the Humber (University of London. Eugenics Laboratory Memoirs XIX and XX, 1914), p 113. Elderton noted that in Leeds, "the distress during the nineties was considerably modified by the multitude of industries in the borough".
11. Board of Trade, Enquiry into the Cost of Living of the Working Classes (PP 1908, CVII), p xxviii. London prices were indexed as 100 and those for Leeds as 93. Wigan had the lowest index number at 83 and Dover the highest at 106.
12. Ibid. p xv. Examples of rent index numbers are London, 100; Leeds, 56; Macclesfield, 32; Gateshead, 66; Burnley, 53; Hull, 48. Although this shows relative rent levels, it does not indicate the amount actually spent on rent or the type of housing that was available in particular towns.
13. See Table 1.5 above, p 55.
14. Board of Trade, Enquiry into Earnings and Hours of Labour of Workpeople in the United Kingdom. Textiles in 1906 (PP 1909, LXXX); The Clothing Trades in 1906 (PP 1909, LXXX); Metal, Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades in 1906 (PP 1911, LXXXVIII), and Board of Trade, Enquiry into the Cost of Living (PP 1908, CVII). The latter contains information on wages taken in one week in October 1905.
15. Board of Trade, Enquiry into the Cost of Living (PP 1908, CVII), p 258.
16. Board of Trade, Enquiry into Earnings and Hours. Textiles (PP 1909, LXXX), p 88; Clothing (PP 1909, LXXX), pp 102, 137; Metal, Engineering and Shipbuilding (PP 1911, LXXXVIII), p 69.
17. J Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p 61.

18. Board of Trade, Enquiry into Earnings and Hours. Textiles (PP 1909, LXXX), p 88; Clothing (PP 1909, LXXX), pp 102, 137; Metal, Engineering and Shipbuilding (PP 1911, LXXXVIII), p 69.
  
19. Board of Trade, Enquiry into the Cost of Living (PP 1908, CVII), p xxxiv.
  
20. See, for example, the statement of T Cripwell of the Wheelwrights' Union: Leeds Weekly Citizen, 5 September 1912. There is considerable controversy among historians, however, about the relationship between union density and wage levels. For a discussion of the different views, see G Anderson, "Some Aspects of the Labour Market in Britain, c.1870-1914", in C Wrigley, ed. A History of British Industrial Relations, 1875-1914 (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), pp 14-16.
  
21. Hunt, for example, explores the extent to which female employment affected regional variations in male wage rates. He concludes that it is doubtful whether a high economic activity rate among women affected male earnings significantly: E H Hunt, Regional Wage Variations in Britain, 1850-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), chapter 3.
  
22. See Table 1.5 above, p 55.
  
23. J Buckman, "Later Phases of Industrialisation to 1918", in M W Beresford and G R J Jones, eds. Leeds and Its Region (Leeds: British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1967), p 164.
  
24. For the distress of the 1890 s, see the Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment. Second Report. (PP 1895, VIII), pp 36-40, and the Leeds Trades Council and Leeds Independent Labour Party, The Unemployed. A Discussion of the Causes and Remedies for Scarcity of Employment, with Special Reference to Leeds (Leeds: Crowther, 1895).
  

For the early twentieth century, see the trade reports in the Yorkshire Factory Times, in particular 1 January 1904, 24 January 1904, 15 July 1904. In 1904 the unemployed agitated for the local authority to take more vigorous action to improve employment in the city.

  
25. T Woodhouse, "The Working Class", in D Fraser, ed. A History of Modern Leeds (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p 379.

26. The conditions in both industries are discussed above, pp 209-11. For examples of the introduction of boys into the cutting room in ready-made clothing factories, see the Half-Yearly Reports and Balance Sheets of the Amalgamated Union of Clothing Operatives, 1894-7.
  
27. Laybourn, thesis, p 56.
  
28. S Webb and A Freeman, eds. Seasonal Trades (Constable, 1912).
  
29. The Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment. Second Report (PP 1895, VIII), p 33, noted how the severe weather had affected outdoor workers more than any other group. G Silk, secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Card and Blowing Room Operatives, reported that in Oldham outdoor workmen such as masons, navvies, and bricklayers' labourers could not work more than thirty weeks in the year: see his evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), Q 606.
  
30. See Table 1.5 above, p 55.
  
31. For example, see A E Musson, The Typographical Association: Origins and History up to 1949 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp 272-81, and the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), Appendix XI, Rules of the West Riding Power-Loom Weavers' Association. Friendly Societies also tended to pay benefits which were far below the wages of skilled workers: G Crossick, An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society: Kentish London, 1840-80 (Croom Helm, 1978), pp 176-7.
  
32. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix VIII. Minutes of Evidence on Unemployment. (PP 1910, XLVIII), Appendix LXXV, p 565. K G J C Knowles and D J Robertson, "Differences between the wages of skilled and unskilled workers, 1880-1950", Bulletin of the Oxford Institute of Statistics, XIII, 4 (1951), p 113.
  
33. Gourvish, "The Standard of Living", p 14.
  
34. E J Hobsbawm, "The Labour Aristocracy", in Labouring Men (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), pp 290-5. Hobsbawm notes that, although the differential between the wages of the skilled and the unskilled widened in some cases, it narrowed in others,

notably in engineering. It has already been suggested that strong trade union organisation may not have been the main factor in affecting skilled wage rates, and Hobsbawm notes that the wages of the less skilled fell fast in times of slump, when there was a glut in the labour market.

35. Board of Trade, Enquiry into Earnings and Hours. Metal, Engineering and Shipbuilding (PP 1911, LXXXVIII), p xv.
36. Ibid. pp xv-xvi.
37. Calculated from the Board of Trade, Return of Wages in the Principal Textile Trades of the United Kingdom (PP 1889, LXX), pp 69-70, and the Board of Trade, Enquiry into Earnings and Hours. Textiles (PP 1909, LXXX), p 88.
38. Y.F.T. 9 June 1910. Connellan's report detailed the small wage increases which had been obtained in some trades, and then went on to discuss the extent of short time in the years of depression. He also noted the rise in the price of food most frequently purchased by the working class.
39. For example, see J E Williams, "The Leeds Corporation Strike in 1913", in A Briggs and J Saville, eds. Essays in Labour History. Vol. 2 (Macmillan, 1971); H Wilmott, "The 'Labour Unrest' and the Woollen Trades", Socialist Review, November (1910).
40. Board of Trade, Enquiry into Earnings and Hours. Textiles (PP 1909, LXXX), p 88; Metal, Engineering and Shipbuilding (PP 1911, LXXXVIII), p 69.
41. Board of Trade, Enquiry into the Cost of Living (PP 1908, CVIII), p 258.
42. For example, see Y.F.T. 14 September 1906 and 20 May 1909.
43. See the evidence of Dr Hawkyard to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix IV. Minutes of Evidence for Liverpool and Manchester, West Yorkshire, Midland Towns (PP 1909, XLI), QQ 42509-53.



44. Rowntree, for example, suggested that 21/8 was a necessary income for a family of four to five persons if they were "to obtain the minimum of necessaries for the maintenance of mere physical efficiency": B S Rowntree: Poverty: A Study in Town Life (T Nelson, 2nd edition, 1901), p 143. For the wages of female workers in Leeds, see above, pp 262-65.
45. Tamara Hareven, for example, argues that it is particularly important to consider the family cycle, rather than taking a cross sectional analysis of family structure. She suggests that this reveals how individuals passed through several forms of family organisation at different stages in their lives. For example, even if an individual headed a household for most of his or her adult life, the composition of that household would change over the life cycle: T K Hareven, "The Family as Process: The Historical Study of the Family Life Cycle", Journal of Social History, VII, 3 (1974), especially pp 323-5.
46. For example, see A L Bowley, "Earners and Dependants in English Towns in 1911", Economica, May (1921), pp 107-8, and E Smith, Wage-Earning Women and Their Dependants (Fabian Society, 1915).
47. There was often a confusion in census schedules about what constituted a household. The convention adopted was that boarders should be considered as part of a family or household, but that lodgers should be seen as separate and should have their own forms. Boarders were defined as those using the same kitchen as their landlord or landlady: for a discussion of this, see L Davidoff, "The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century England", in S Burman, ed. Fit Work for Women (Croom Helm, 1979), pp 74-8.
48. Bowley based his information on the original census schedules of 1911, and, for Bolton, Northampton, Stanley, Warrington and Reading, he used data collected for his book: see A L Bowley and R Burnett-Hurst, Livelihood and Poverty: A Study in the Economic Conditions of Working-class Households in Northampton, Warrington, Stanley and Reading (G Bell, 1915).
49. Bowley, "Earners and Dependants", p 106. The column headed Other Cases Including a Man refers to co-residing brothers, brothers and sisters or lodgers.
50. Calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1913, LXXIX), Leeds Occupations, Table 13.

51. The 1891 Factory Act raised the half-time age to 11 and this was raised again to 12 in 1901.
  
52. In 1881 22.9 per cent of boys aged 10-15 and 15.1 per cent of girls were occupied in England and Wales. In 1911 the proportions were 18.3 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively: Census of England and Wales, 1911. General Report (PP 1917, XXXV), p 162.
  
53. Census of England and Wales, 1911. General Report (PP 1917, XXXV), p 163.
  
54. The small number of half-time workers in Leeds was noted in the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1893 (PP 1894, XXI), p 321, and Y.F.T. 2 May 1890.
  
55. Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1913, LXXIX), Table 23.
  
56. For examples of the children of labourers and iron workers who were sent into street trading, see L.W.C. 22 August 1913. The way in which children were used to help homeworkers was noted in the Yorkshire Evening News, 4 July 1907, and Y.F.T. 7 October 1909. For the variety of trades entered by children, see the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Employment of Schoolchildren. Report (PP 1902, XXV), pp 12-17.
  
57. Autobiographies and oral interviews suggest that children from low income families had to earn wages as soon as they were able to do so: for example, see <sup>D</sup> Vincent, Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Autobiography (Methuen, 1982), chapter 4, and J Liddington and J Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement (Virago, 1978), chapter 3.
  
58. Y.F.T. 14 August 1891.
  
59. For the expansion in the number of tailoring workers in Leeds in the 1880's, see Table 1.11 above, p 64.
  
60. For the earnings of young people in Leeds, see above, pp 256-58.

61. Stearns, "Working-Class Women", pp 110-11. Although Stearns suggests that the Board of Trade sample was a large one, only 30 budgets were included. In six cases girls paid all their wages to their mothers or to married sisters and received back spending money: Board of Trade, Accounts of Expenditure of Wage-Earning Women and Girls (PP 1911, LXXXIX).
62. For the practice in Lancashire and Yorkshire of "tipping up" wages and receiving back spending money, see J Hannam, "Radcliffe Interviews" (unpublished oral interviews undertaken in 1973 and 1974), and J Bornat, "An Examination of the General Union of Textile Workers, 1883-1922" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1980), pp 134-6. Bornat's own interviews relate to the Colne Valley, but she also makes use of the interviews collected from all parts of the country and lodged at Essex University to show that there were wide variations in the practice of "tipping up" in the early twentieth century according to region, social origins and family composition.
63. Bornat, thesis, pp 135, 138, and L Woodcock Tentler, Wage - Earning Women: Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900-30 (Oxford: O.U.P. 1979), chapter 4. Tentler argues that girls handed over their wages through loyalty and affection to the family unit. However, there were tensions over the amount of spending money that they received and over the question of personal freedoms.
64. From the budgets collected by the Board of Trade, it appears that some girls paid a fixed amount for board and lodging, while others varied the amount according to changes in their own or their mother's circumstances: Board of Trade, Accounts of Expenditure of Wage-Earning Women and Girls (PP 1911, LXXXIX). In Birmingham it was found that less skilled girls paid 5/- to 7/- for board and lodging, although the average wage for a girl under 17 was only 10/-: E Cadbury, M C Matheson and G Shann, Women's Work and Wages: A Phase of Life in an Industrial City (T Fisher Unwin, 1906), p 189. In Bristol Clara Collet found that one girl paid 5/- to her mother out of a wage of 9/- and another, aged 20, paid 4/- out of a wage of 7/6: Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 36.
65. There were numerous examples in the local press of girls who supported older relatives. One retired weaver wrote a letter about his four daughters who supported the family: Y.F.T. 14 February 1890. The importance of children's earnings when parents were low paid was noted in the Y.F.T. 26 July 1889.

66. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Miss C Williams and Mr T Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief on Wages and the Conditions of Employment in Certain Unions in England (PP 1909, XLIII), p 133.
67. Hannam, "Radcliffe Interviews"; Bornet, thesis, pp 136-8; Vincent, Bread, Knowledge and Freedom, pp 82-4.
68. See above, pp 72- 4.
69. For women's wages in textiles and clothing, see above, pp 244-50.
70. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), pp 134-6. W H Drew, however, claimed that his wife paid 5/- to have their child minded: Royal Commission on Labour: Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXIV), Q 5508.
71. For a discussion of the earnings of homeworkers, see above, pp 263- 5.
72. See the evidence of J Young to the National Insurance Act (Outworkers) Committee. Minutes of Evidence. Vol.2 (PP 1912-13, XLII), Q 1210. Most of the examples of homeworkers given in the press referred to widows or married women from low income families. For examples of a homemaker who was a widow with four children and an outside finisher who had an unemployed husband and children to support, see Leeds Daily News, 17 October and 26 October 1889.
73. Unmarried women appear to have paid similar amounts for board and lodging regardless of whether they stayed within their own families or lodged in other households: for example, see the Board of Trade, Accounts of Expenditure of Wage-Earning Women and Girls (PP 1911, LXXXIX), and Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, p 232. The Leeds Poor Law Union insisted that male lodgers paid a minimum of 3/- a week to women receiving relief. Female lodgers had to pay a minimum of 2/-. In both cases they were expected to find their own food. The Union noted one case in which two female lodgers paid a total of 13/- for rent and food: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), pp 135, 137.

74. Casual wage earning among women was particularly important given the fluctuations in male wage rates and earnings over time, even in the skilled trades: for fluctuations in both light and heavy industries, see Gourvish, "The Standard of Living", p 20, and Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield, chapters 8 and 9.
75. For examples of such households, see the Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), in particular the case studies of homeworkers. See also the cases of families receiving relief in the Leeds Union, cited in the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), pp 130-6.
76. Bowley's figures do give some indication of the extent of such households. They suggest that in at least 12 per cent of working-class households in Leeds there was an additional male earner and in 8 per cent of households there was no male earner at all: Bowley, "Earners and Dependants", pp 106-7.
77. For example, see Roberts, "Working-Class Standards of Living", p 319; Gourvish, "The Standard of Living", p 29; P Thompson, The Edwardians: The Re Making of British Society (Paladin, 1977), pp 292-6.
78. D J Oddy, "Working-Class Diets in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain", Economic History Review, 2nd series XXIII, 2 (1970).
79. Ibid. pp 321-2.
80. Roberts, "Working-Class Standards of Living".
81. Ibid. pp 310 ff.
82. Ibid.
83. In Birmingham married women minded babies, took in lodgers or set up small shops to sell home-made food and workmen's dinners: Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, pp 173-6. In poorer districts the use of credit was widespread: C Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London. First Series, Poverty. (1) East, Central and South London (Macmillan, 1902), p 46; R Roberts, The Classic Slum (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), chapter 5; P Johnson, "Credit and

- Thrift and the British Working Class, 1870-1939", in J Winter, ed. The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling (Cambridge: C.U.P. 1983), pp 151-9. Social surveys, autobiographies and oral interviews all show the variety of methods used by families on low incomes to stretch their meagre resources. For example, see M Pember Reeves, Round About a Pound a Week (Virago, 1979, originally published, 1913); M L Davies, ed. Life as We Have Known It (Virago, 1977, originally published, 1931); J Robinson, The Life and Times of Francie Nichol of South Shields (Futura, 1977); T Thompson, Edwardian Childhoods (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), especially pp 15, 74-8.
84. E Benson, To Struggle is to Live. Vol 1 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: People's Publications, 1979).
85. Ibid. p 44.
86. Ibid. p 45.
87. Relief committees distributed bread and soup during 1895, the year of greatest unemployment, but the Leeds Independent Labour Party claimed that the food was badly distributed and that many were starving: Leeds Trades Council and Leeds Independent Labour Party, The Unemployed, p 4. The local press described the unemployed as lifeless and dispirited: Y.F.T. 11 August 1893. References were also frequently made to suicides among the unemployed: for example, see Y.F.T. 27 May 1892 and 2 January 1909.
88. Workers often stole fent ends to make warm underclothing and hearth rugs: Y.F.T. 17 October 1890. Workpeople could also buy cloth wholesale and have it made up into a suit for themselves or for friends: H Crilly, "Life and Labour in Leeds", Tailor and Cutter, 7 September 1899. Mr F Wright, the relieving officer of the Leeds Union, claimed that his district was the poorest in Leeds and that the workers' lives were "one long struggle against poverty". Many depended on casual labour and therefore were always in debt: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix IV. Minutes of Evidence for Liverpool and Manchester, West Yorkshire, Midland Towns (PP 1909, XLI), Q 39980. When girls were sick they had to rely on collections among their workmates: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 129.

89. For a description of life in the East End of Leeds, see the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), pp 132-6; Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1906, pp 128-9; "The Health of Leeds", Leeds Mercury, 26 September, 3 October, 9 October, 16 October 1891. The Mercury's articles mixed detailed accounts of health and housing statistics with sensationalist reports of drunkenness and drug taking. For a later description of housing in the East End of Leeds, see L.W.C. 23 February and 19 December 1913. For a description of the Leylands, see E Krausz, Leeds Jewry, (Cambridge: W Heffer, 1964), and E E Burgess, "The Soul of the Leeds Ghetto", Y.E.N. 19 January and 16 February 1925.
90. E J Connell, "Industrial Development in South Leeds, 1790-1914" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1975), especially chapters 6 and 23.
91. Y.F.T. 4 April 1890.
92. Ibid. 13 January 1893.
93. Crilly, "Life and Labour in Leeds", p 438.
94. Y.F.T. 9 October 1891. The Leeds Mercury claimed that during the 12 years preceding 1886, 16,070 new homes had been built and at least two-thirds of these were back-to-backs: L.M. 3 October 1891. Back-to-backs made up the highest proportion of all new houses built between 1886 and 1904, forming 65 per cent at the former date and 60 per cent in 1904. Between 1904 and 1909 they accounted for between 44 and 49 per cent of a much reduced building programme. By 1914 back-to-backs accounted for 9 per cent of all new buildings, but only 287 houses were built in that year: figures taken from M W Beresford, "The Back-to-Back House in Leeds, 1787-1937", in S J Chapman, ed. The History of Working-Class Housing (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971), Table 3.3, p 118.
95. For example, see the criticisms in the L.M. 3 October 1891. The Leeds Trades Council opposed the building of back-to-backs because they were unhealthy: Y.E.N. 2 November 1909. Dr L W Darra Mair's report on back-to-back housing concluded that death rates and ill health were usually higher in this type of accommodation. He was careful to compare only the best back-to-backs with through houses and attempted to study occupants with similar incomes and occupations in each type

- of housing. He found that the chief sufferers from back-to-backs were infants, young children and old people, because they were more susceptible to pulmonary diseases: Dr L W Darra Mair, Report to the Local Government Board on Relative Mortality in Through and Back-to-Back Houses in Certain Towns in the West Riding of Yorkshire (PP 1910, XXXVIII), pp 27-8.
96. For example, F M Lupton, a member of the Conservative Party and chairman of the Unhealthy Areas Committee, was a strong advocate of back-to-back housing throughout the period. He argued that it was the crowding together of houses, rather than their design, which led to ill health and poor conditions. He condemned alternative housing such as tenements for failing to provide privacy and places for children to play: F M Lupton, Housing Improvement (Leeds: Jowett & Sowry, 1906), p 3.
  97. Board of Trade, Enquiry into the Cost of Living (PP 1908, CVII), p 259. Rents for back-to-backs were given as 3/- to 3/6 for two rooms, 3/6 to 4/6 for three rooms and 4/6 to 6/- for four rooms. Through houses with five rooms were rented at 6/6 to 7/-. Darra Mair's report gave an average rent of 5/6 for through houses and 4/6 for back-to-backs in Yorkshire as a whole: Dr L W Darra Mair, Report to the L.G.B. on Relative Mortality in Through and Back-to-Back Houses (PP 1910, XXXVIII), p 27.
  98. Lupton, Housing Improvement, p 3.
  99. A Ravetz, Model Estate: Planned Housing at Quarry Hill, Leeds (Croom Helm, 1974), p 17.
  100. Lupton, Housing Improvement, p 2. They were built in blocks of eight.
  101. For the arguments of the supporters of back-to-backs, see the evidence of Dr Goldie to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes (PP 1884-5, XXX), Q 9788, and Lupton, Housing Improvement, p 3. The figures for overcrowding have been taken from the Census of England and Wales, 1891 (PP 1893-4, CV), Table 6, and the Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1913, LXXVII), Table 27a. Accommodation was described as overcrowded when private families lived more than two to a room.
  102. See D B Foster, Leeds Slumdom (Leeds: The Author, 1897), and L.M. 3 October 1891.



103. Ibid.
104. Krausz, Leeds Jewry, pp 17-21. For the conditions in and around the workshops, see "The Sweating System in Leeds", Lancet, 9 June 1888.
105. Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1906, p 128. See also T Dillon, "The Irish in Leeds, 1851-61", Publications of the Thoresby Society, LIV (1974).
106. Benson, To Struggle is to Live, pp 34-5. See also the description of housing in Holbeck in the L.W.C. 14 February 1913.
107. In 1892, for example, Leeds had the second lowest death rate of the nine largest towns in the United Kingdom. The death rates were as follows: Edinburgh, 19.4; Leeds, 19.8; Birmingham, 20.4; London, 20.6; Sheffield, 20.8; Glasgow, 22.8; Manchester, 23.8; Liverpool, 24.7; Dublin, 29.3: Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1892, p 10.
108. E P Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons (Edward Arnold, 1973), p 252.
109. In 1913 the infant mortality rate for Leeds was 135 and that for England and Wales was 108: Forty-Fourth Annual Report of the L.G.B. Supplement containing a Report on Maternal Mortality in Connection with Childbearing and its Relation to Infant Mortality (PP 1914-16, XXV), Appendix Table 2, p 121, and B R Mitchell and P Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge: C.U.P. 1971), p 32.
110. The districts covered by the medical officer of health's statistics were wider than the municipal wards. The South East district included the East, Central and South East Wards. In 1891 the death rate for South East Leeds was 33 per 1,000 population, compared with 26 for the whole of Leeds: L.M. 26 September 1891. In 1913 the death rate for South East Leeds was 19.11, which compared unfavourably with the rate of 10.47 in Headingley and the rate of 14.35 for the city as a whole: L.W.C. 19 December 1913.
111. Public Health and Welfare Association, Some Notes on Infant Mortality in Leeds and a Plea for Putting the Notification of Births Act into Operation (Leeds: Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, 1911), p 3.

112. The birth rate in Leeds between 1890 and 1894 was 33.2 per 1,000 population. This had fallen to 23.3 in 1914: Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1914, p 7. The birth rate of South East Leeds was higher than that of any other district. Between 1895 to 1905 the birth rate for South East Leeds averaged 35.1, which compared with an average rate of 29.0 for the city as a whole: Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1906, pp 128-9.
113. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, pp 232-3.
114. L.M. 23 July 1889.
115. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, pp 237-42. See also H Hendrick, "The Leeds Gas Strike, 1890", Thoresby Society Miscellany, XVI, 2 (1975), pp 84-6.
116. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, chapter 2.
117. Ibid. The unwillingness to act swiftly and decisively was also a feature of the council's response to the pressure to adopt the Notification of Births Act: see the discussion above, pp 345-6. See also the Labour Party's accusations against individuals such as Lupton for having vested interests in existing housing provision, and the way in which this led to a failure to re-house those made homeless during slum clearances: L.W.C. 13 March 1914.
118. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, p 248.
119. Ibid. pp 248-9.
120. See table 8.4, above, p 387.
121. Lupton, Housing Improvement, pp 10-15, and Ravetz, Model Estate, pp 17-23.
122. M F Ward, "Industrial Development and Location in Leeds North of the River Aire, 1775-1914" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1972), pp 314-5.

123. For example, see "Housing in Holbeck", L.W.C. 14 February 1913; "Horrors of East Leeds", ibid. 21 February 1913; "The Housing of Leeds", ibid. 13 March 1914.
124. Ravetz, Model Estate, pp 21-2, and L.W.C. 30 January 1914.
125. Krausz, Leeds Jewry, p 21, and Burgess, "Soul of the Leeds Ghetto", Y.E.N. 19 January 1925.
126. L.M. 9 October 1891, and Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 6.
127. This point was made during the tenants' campaign against proposed rent increases: L.W.C. 19 December 1913.
128. Ibid.

CHAPTER 9THE EXTENT AND TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT OF WOMENIN LEEDS, 1880-1914

There was a distinct correlation in Leeds between specific occupations and the type of female worker recruited. A key distinguishing feature in terms of the extent and type of women's wage earning was age. But marital status and religious, ethnic and family background could also differentiate between female workers and could cut across age divisions. The variety of occupations available and the different methods of production involved enabled women in Leeds to exercise some choice over which job to enter. This contrasted with areas in which only one major female trade predominated. Women were, however, faced with a labour market segregated along lines of sex which limited the choices that they could make.

A high proportion of girls and young women aged between 14 and 25 were employed in Leeds. The majority of women in this age group were single, although 30 per cent of those aged 20 to 25 were married in 1911.<sup>1</sup>

There was considerable similarity in the type of work undertaken by both married and single women in this group. Age, therefore, appears to have been of greater importance than marital status in determining the kind of work carried out.<sup>2</sup> A young girl's initial choice of work was determined by a combination of her family's needs and background, the demands of employers, the locality in which she lived and her own preferences, although these factors operated within a more general context of expectations concerning women's future roles as wives and

mothers.<sup>3</sup> Girls from poorer families were constrained in their choice of work by the need to earn high wages as soon as possible. They often entered tasks in which maximum efficiency could quickly be attained, such as paper bag making and light engineering.<sup>4</sup> Over 80 per cent of the female labour force in such trades were aged under 25 in 1911. Over 60 per cent were aged under 20, a higher proportion than in other occupations in the city.<sup>5</sup> Girls were soon able to increase their piece earnings in these trades, but the work was so simple and monotonous that they were rarely able to obtain an adult's wage. They had to change their occupation, therefore, if they wanted to raise their income.<sup>6</sup> At the opposite extreme it was usually girls from more comfortable working-class backgrounds who entered millinery and dress-making, where the payment of a premium or several years of low paid apprenticeship were still features of the trade.<sup>7</sup> It was possible for girls to receive skilled training in these occupations, but their position could be abused. For example, girls were often dismissed once they were old enough to command higher wages and did not necessarily receive an all-round training.<sup>8</sup>

The largest single employers of young girls were the textile and tailoring trades.<sup>9</sup> In both industries they were initially employed to fetch and carry for older workers. In the worsted trade girls started as "doffers", exchanging full for empty bobbins. In the woollen branch of the textile trade they were employed as winders or engaged in sweeping up fluff and dust that gathered around the looms.<sup>10</sup> They might then be put onto tasks associated with the labour of young people, such as worsted spinning, or they were sent to learn more complex work,

such as weaving, alongside an adult worker.<sup>11</sup> In the clothing trade girls started on simpler sewing tasks or worked as trimmers. They would then learn specific finishing or machining tasks under the guidance of more experienced women.<sup>12</sup> In the textile trade most young workers were paid time wages. These increased with age as they were promoted from simple to more difficult jobs.<sup>13</sup> In clothing, however, the majority of girls were quickly put onto piece work. Their earnings then increased according to their own speed, aptitude and the degree of difficulty of the work that they were given. Both industries offered a range of jobs to women and the opportunity to progress to more interesting and higher paid work as girls became older.<sup>14</sup>

Since textiles and ready-made clothing offered similar initial wage rates and prospects of promotion, the immediate need to contribute to family income cannot explain the choice of specific occupations. At a time when transport was expensive and when women, whether married or single, were expected to carry out domestic chores, industries tended to recruit workers from the immediate locality.<sup>15</sup> This affected the type of labour force employed in specific mills and factories. There was a complex relationship between industrial location and family background. Many firms were established in specific areas in order to tap an available labour supply, although this could in turn attract other families into the district.<sup>16</sup> The declining flax industry and firms specialising in low-grade branches of the wool and worsted trade, for example, were concentrated in this period in the East End of Leeds. Here they recruited women from the families of unskilled labourers, in particular the Irish.<sup>17</sup> In Hunslet and Holbeck textile

and clothing workers were recruited from the wives and daughters of iron workers, railway workers and engineers.<sup>18</sup> Young Jewesses were largely found in the tailoring workshops of the Leylands.<sup>19</sup> Family background and community networks played an important role in the recruitment of workers to specific firms, since many young girls were introduced to employment by relatives and friends who already worked in the industry.<sup>20</sup> But at times of labour shortage, for example in the years preceding the First World War, firms had to resort to advertising for workers on hoardings outside the factory or in the local press.<sup>21</sup>

The recruitment of the workforce through family and friends applied both to the textile and to the ready-made clothing industries. The large tailoring factories established in the 1880s and early 1890s, however, did not simply rely on local recruitment, although family connections were still important. The clothing factories were initially congregated in the central Park Lane area of the city and drew their labour force from all districts in Leeds.<sup>22</sup> It has been suggested that they chose a central location because of the huge demand for female labour and because the aim of many firms was to attract girls from more skilled working-class backgrounds.<sup>23</sup> After the mid 1890s new clothing factories were increasingly built in the suburbs and therefore had a more local recruitment.<sup>24</sup>

The girls who entered the ready-made tailoring factories in the 1880s were drawn from Leeds itself and from surrounding textile and mining districts. Clara Collet looked into the backgrounds of female workers in one clothing factory. She found that 69 per cent had come from Leeds,

21 per cent from other parts of Yorkshire and the remaining 10 per cent from more distant counties.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of this Buckman has suggested there was a large number of underemployed young women in Leeds who were drawn into paid employment by the expansion of the ready-made tailoring industry.<sup>26</sup> It appears to have been the case that there were working-class girls not engaged in waged work before the 1880s, but the extent of this should not be exaggerated. Many were already employed in small workshops or at home in branches of the clothing trade and, as Collet noted, their numbers were underestimated in census statistics.<sup>27</sup> Also, the number of girls employed in domestic service in Leeds steadily declined in the period, while the textile trade either reduced its demand for female workers or remained stable. This suggests that girls who might have previously entered these occupations increasingly turned to ready-made clothing.<sup>28</sup> Collet's sample is so small that it provides only a slim basis on which to make any generalisations concerning the extent to which girls were recruited from outside the city. Even she suggests, however, that a fifth of female workers came from other parts of Yorkshire. More descriptive accounts of the period give greater emphasis to the migration of girls into the town. A report from the Girls' Night Shelter noted "the large increase of female labour in the town and the pressing need for suitable accommodation for young workers, many of whom are strangers, attracted by hearing that work is plentiful".<sup>29</sup> John Lupton of the Charity Organisation Society claimed that "Leeds was, to many country girls, a sort of El Dorado. They perhaps left home owing to a quarrel and the St Paul's home took them in ... in the event of them staying in Leeds and getting work, this place was very useful to them as a



first step".<sup>30</sup>

It is more difficult to assess the attitudes of the girls and young women themselves towards different types of paid employment. It has already been noted that, for Patricia Branca, women's choice of employment was governed by their continuing commitment to family life and its values. Branca argues that women sought employment in domestic service and "white-blouse" occupations because work of this nature offered personal contact and features similar to family life. This contrasted with factory employment which was never their "preferred work".<sup>31</sup> At the same time, Branca argues that expectations of marriage made women uninterested in training or career advancement.<sup>32</sup> Contemporary social investigators also argued that women were uninterested in training or promotion, and suggested that the status of specific occupations played a crucial role in determining choice of work.<sup>33</sup> The physical conditions of the work were thought to play an important part in the status it acquired. Light clean work carried out in ordinary clothing was accorded a high status, whereas work that was heavy, dirty, rough or noisy was seen as of low status.<sup>34</sup> Skilled work, however, could have a high status even when other conditions of employment were less congenial. In their study of women's work in Birmingham Cadbury and his associates noted that warehouse work, which was light and clean, had a higher status than factory work, unless the latter was seen as skilled.<sup>35</sup>

Young women do appear to have been influenced by the status of the work, but there are a number of problems in leaving the analysis at this

point. It is difficult, for example, to give a general definition of high and low status work.<sup>36</sup> This varied considerably from one local area to another and was closely related to the wider economic and social context of a town. In Bristol and Liverpool factory employment was seen as low status work and therefore did not attract young single women or "respectable" married women. The clothing factories in Bristol were old, delapidated and associated with the employment of married women from poor families.<sup>37</sup> In Leeds, on the other hand, factory employment came to dominate the female labour market and some factory trades were seen as "preferred work", even by girls from more skilled working-class backgrounds.<sup>38</sup>

The newer factory industries in Leeds recruited predominantly young workers. It is not possible to assess from the census figures the proportion of the labour force aged under 25 who worked in the factories, but contemporary accounts stress that factory workers were largely young. In a sample of 1,500 tailoresses Collet found that one third were aged under 18.<sup>39</sup> Of the female workforce employed by Messrs J Barran & Sons, 75 per cent were aged under 22 in the 1890s.<sup>40</sup> Trades which had formerly been carried out in a domestic setting, such as the making of clothes, or which had involved very heavy work, such as washing, tended to attract more young workers once they were organised on a factory basis. In laundries, for example, the increasing use of mechanical power led to a greater recruitment of workers aged below 25. The proportion of young women in the Leeds labour force in laundries rose from 12.8 per cent to 47 per cent between 1901 and 1911.<sup>41</sup> The trend towards a more youthful workforce was also marked in other

factory industries. By 1911, therefore, approximately 60 per cent of female workers in Leeds aged under 25 were employed in manufacturing industries in which the factory system predominated or was the only form of production.<sup>42</sup>

This contrasts with occupations such as indoor domestic service, where only 26.6 per cent of the female labour force were aged under 20 in 1911. By this date domestic service was able to attract only 11 per cent of all women workers aged under 25 in the city.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, newer "white-blouse" occupations, such as clerical work or professional employment, still employed only a small proportion of the female labour force in Leeds at the outbreak of war.<sup>44</sup>

Large employers of labour in the newer factory trades, in particular in ready-made tailoring and printing, made a deliberate attempt to attract girls and young women from respectable, skilled working-class backgrounds. To that end they tried to raise the status of their industries by offering dining rooms, rest rooms and light clean conditions of work.<sup>45</sup> There is some evidence from the printing trade that the training period was kept deliberately long in order to attract only the better class of female worker.<sup>46</sup> Employers do appear to have succeeded in their attempt to attract girls from all types of working-class backgrounds. Barran's ledgers of employment reveal that the daughters of clerks, managers, engineers, foremen and older craft workers were extensively employed in the factory. However, the firm was not necessarily representative of all the larger establishments, since Barran's had a reputation for employ a superior and highly

respectable class of workgirl.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, wider references in the local press do confirm that "tradesmen's daughters who used to look askance at factory occupations" were to be found in clothing and printing factories.<sup>48</sup>

The possibility of wearing their own clothing and working in light clean conditions attracted girls to the newer factories in preference to the older textile mills. One union official complained that "some tailoresses are a bit proud in their good looking clothes ... but they must join the union ... weavers might wear Linsey dresses and shawls but they were their equals".<sup>49</sup> There were status differences, however, within the textile trade itself. These were related both to the conditions of the work and also to the level of skill required. Mending and winding had a high status because they were carried out in clean quiet rooms and also paid high wages.<sup>50</sup> Mending was particularly sought after by married women for the additional reason that it could be carried out at home.<sup>51</sup> Spinning and rag sorting, on the other hand, were low status jobs. Spinning was poorly paid and took place in damp humid conditions, while rag sorting was heavy, low paid, dirty work, and therefore looked down on by all but the poorest young women.<sup>52</sup> Weaving had a more anomalous position. Weaving rooms were noisy and filled with fluff and dust, but a proportion of weavers were highly regarded if they had a reputation for their skill and could command high wages.<sup>53</sup>

Many contemporaries, and historians such as Branca, imply that because girls were concerned with the status of the work they were uninterested

in the wages that went with it and lacked any commitment to paid employment.<sup>54</sup> It cannot be automatically assumed, however, that because girls were attracted to high status jobs they were uninterested in wages, nor that high status was related only to the general work environment. Contemporaries were divided in their views of the relationship between status and wages. Cadbury, for example, argued that if work was seen as "genteel" employers benefited, since girls competed for the work and wages were lowered.<sup>55</sup> Tawney, on the other hand, suggested that girls from more comfortable homes who sought high status jobs were unwilling to sell themselves cheap, and therefore wage levels were kept up.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, work with a high status in Leeds did not necessarily pay low wages and more congenial working conditions often went hand in hand with higher pay. Employers from large ready-made tailoring factories, for example, argued that they could only attract the kind of girls that they wanted by offering good working conditions and reasonable wages.<sup>57</sup> One wholesale clothier paid a few shillings extra a week in the early 1880s to attract women from the declining flax industry, and tailoresses consistently received slightly higher wages than women in the textile trade.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, the dirtiest heaviest work, such as rag sorting, also paid the lowest wages.<sup>59</sup> Even in dressmaking and millinery it is difficult to know whether it was the gentility of the work alone which attracted girls and their parents, or whether they were willing and able to defer immediate rewards in the hope of greater benefits later when a skill had been acquired.<sup>60</sup>

It is impossible to generalise about the importance of wage earning to

girls and young women because this was closely related to their family circumstances. Daughters of clerks and managers were frequently characterised as pocket-money earners. Their attitudes are caricatured by Tom Maguire in his poem, "The Duchess of Number Three":

"Ahem! You may look but don't touch me pray!"  
 Her walk, her style, her bearing say -  
       "No common trash about me,  
   you see.  
 For I don't work for my living like you;  
 My paw's a thingummy in the 'Prue',  
 I could stay at home if I chose to do",  
       Says the Duchess of Number Three.

"If I work for less it's my own concern,  
 I dress myself with the money I earn -  
       It wouldn't find bread and tea  
   for me,  
 But when lady visitors on us drop,  
 They come to me and beside me stop,  
 And so I give a high tone to the shop"  
       Says the Duchess of Number Three.<sup>61</sup>

Other girls, however, clearly had to either partially or wholly support dependants, while those who flocked to Leeds for work in the 1880s had to support themselves in lodgings entirely from their own resources.<sup>62</sup>

Female workers who remained in a family in which the earnings of other members were relatively high were still expected to pay for their own support, including board and lodging, clothes, amusements and fares.<sup>63</sup>

They were frequently helped out by relatives in times of strikes or short time. The Board of Trade enquiry into the expenditure of women workers, however, considered it to be very unusual when one girl was given a present of her board and lodgings by her parents during her unpaid holiday periods.<sup>64</sup>

The importance that girls and young women attached to their weekly earnings is indicated by the frequent strike actions which took place against reductions in piece rates during the 1890s, and in the willingness of female workers to strike for higher pay at times of general labour unrest.<sup>65</sup> In letters to the press women expressed their discontent with low prices, low wages and the regular deductions from weekly earnings. One tailoress complained that, if she earned 20/-, 1/8 was deducted for power, 1/3 for sewings, 2d for the cook and sometimes there were fines for lateness. She suggested that "some employers ... think girls get too much ... but you would be amazed to see the quantity done for 6d".<sup>66</sup> Moreover, any action taken against deductions involved the issue of wage levels. In 1912, for example, tailoresses at Messrs Rhodes & Co struck when they were asked to use dull rather than glazed cotton. This was more expensive and would have reduced their earnings.<sup>67</sup>

It is difficult to assess whether young girls had a great deal of choice about which occupation to enter, or whether this was decided by parents. Sisters did not always enter the same type of work.<sup>68</sup> This could suggest that girls exercised some preference over the occupations that they took up, or else it could have been affected by their position in relation to other siblings. When older brothers and sisters were already employed, younger girls were often able to enter dressmaking or other occupations which paid low wages to learners, but offered the prospect of skilled work later on.<sup>69</sup> Older girls, aged between 18 and 25, who were thought by employers to be at the peak of their efficiency, had greater freedom to exercise some choice over employment.<sup>70</sup> Young

women had only limited opportunities to advance to more interesting or skilled work. In order to increase their earnings or to cope with the monotony of factory life, therefore, they frequently moved between mills or changed occupations altogether. Moving from firm to firm was also adopted as a strategy to escape from a particularly difficult foreman or from the unpleasant features of a specific factory.<sup>71</sup> The weakness of trade unionism in the major female trades reinforced this tendency among women to choose an individual rather than a collective solution to difficulties at the workplace.<sup>72</sup>

It is clear from letters written to the press and from their autobiographies that young women themselves had individual reasons for their choice of work. However, a number of common themes recur in their writings. They thought that the regular and shorter hours of factory work were preferable to the long irregular working day in workshops, department stores and domestic service.<sup>73</sup> A number of women emphasised the importance of having a trade to fall back on after marriage.<sup>74</sup> The most constant theme expressed in the period was the greater freedom and independence of the factory girl, in particular in comparison to the domestic servant. This independence was thought to come from the absence of personal servitude at work, and the fact that wages were paid in money rather than in kind. It was remarked on both by middle-class and by working-class contemporaries with different degrees of approval and disapproval. One factory girl saw independence as a positive attraction. She wrote that "a great many girls prefer to go into the clothing factory or the mill as they are not tied so much as servant girls ... girls that work in factories earn their own



money and know how to spend it to the best advantage".<sup>75</sup> Servants who attempted to defend their own choice of occupation accused factory workers of spending too much money on dress, and of frequenting theatres and other places of amusement. A "Happy, Rosy Servant" suggested that the "freedom which a working girl talks about is simply the time spent in walking up and down Briggate as so many do".<sup>76</sup> Others claimed that factory girls made unsatisfactory wives because they had no domestic skills.<sup>77</sup> This criticism was echoed by the Yorkshire Factory Times. It warned men to beware of marrying a showy girl or one who could earn good wages because, although some factory girls made good wives, servants made the best.<sup>78</sup>

Most middle-class commentators thought that the monotony of factory work, coupled with high wages, which were earned outside the discipline of family life, led girls to have a greater independence and to seek cheap entertainments after work. For many this was a dangerous and disruptive feature of factory employment. It encouraged girls to be uninterested in a steady domestic life and could pose a threat to their moral welfare.<sup>79</sup> However, men and women who had a close contact with factory workers, such as factory inspectors, union organisers and socialists, had a more positive view of the factory girl. Adelaide Anderson, the factory inspector, claimed that factory girls appealed to her because of their "courage and their endurance, their ready trustfulness, and their loyalty".<sup>80</sup> Frances Hicks, a former dressmaker, wrote that "there is very much that is robust, independent and womanly in the honest factory girl which needs encouragement to develop". She claimed that while factory girls were timid when alone they could show "boldness

in company" and had a "strict adherence to their own code of honour".<sup>81</sup> This more positive view of the factory worker arose out of a context in which the sweated workshop and homeworker had become the focus of contemporary concern. Sweated workers were compared unfavourably with factory workers because their conditions of work were unregulated by legislation and they were thought to be inefficient.<sup>82</sup>

Despite contemporary fears, the low wages, the lack of promotion prospects and the monotony of a great deal of factory work did little to dissuade young women from looking forward to marriage and to the end of paid employment. This was a constant theme in the speeches of union leaders in the wool and worsted and ready-made tailoring trades throughout the period.<sup>83</sup> In both these industries a considerable number of married women did remain at work, but the overall proportion of married women recorded as working in regular full-time employment outside the home was not high in the city.<sup>84</sup> The ability to earn regular wages in mills and factories, however, did mean that the majority of young women in Leeds did not marry until well into their twenties, and some married women later resumed paid employment in their old trade as a result of their own needs or the demands of employers.<sup>85</sup>

In Leeds, therefore, young women could and did exercise some choice over which type of occupation to enter and they flocked to the factories in large numbers. Even those from more comfortable homes appear to have been keen to enter factory employment, in particular in the expanding trades of ready-made tailoring and printing. The influx of girls from surrounding districts also suggests that Leeds factories had a positive

attraction for young female workers. It is difficult to accept the view, therefore, that such women were only attracted by work which retained features of family life, since their motives for entering specific occupations were complex. The gentility of the work, the possibility of progressing to more interesting tasks and the level of wages paid were all mingled together to determine job choice and were not mutually exclusive. It is unlikely that girls from an area in which skilled and semi-skilled work for men, and industrial employment for women, predominated would have been keen to enter work which implied personal service, even if it did accord with a family context, in particular when the newer factory occupations carried no loss of status. This indicates the importance of recognising that the status of different occupations varied at a local level, and therefore it cannot be assumed that factory work or indoor domestic service invariably carried either a low or a high status.

The attractiveness of work to particular groups of women and their recruitment to specific occupations varied over time in Leeds. This was related to fluctuations in the demand for their labour and to the development of new work opportunities. In the years immediately preceding the First World War the expansion of trade in the ready-made tailoring and wool and worsted industries led to frequent complaints in both trades about a shortage of female labour. It was suggested that young girls preferred to seek work in dressmaking, millinery, printing and shop work.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, the lady factory inspectors reported an increase in the employment of young girls in ready-made clothing factories, laundries, printing and other factories

in Yorkshire as processes were lightened and simplified by the application of machinery. They also suggested that dressmaking and millinery workshops and steam laundries had to recruit a higher percentage of young workers because older girls preferred to take advantage of the higher wages being offered in the mills and tailoring factories.<sup>87</sup>

After the age of 25 the proportion of women engaged in full-time regular employment outside the home declined sharply in the census tables. This coincided with a higher proportion of married and widowed women in the female population.<sup>88</sup> Since it was assumed that married women would have major responsibility for child care and domestic duties, their wage earning took place under different constraints than that of single women. It has already been noted that historians such as Stearns and Tilly and Scott suggest that married women's wage earning had either declined or was of only minor importance in many districts in the period 1890 to 1914.<sup>89</sup> For Stearns, the cultural acceptance of domesticity by the working class is crucial in explaining this:

There are ample signs that the working class had absorbed much of the middle-class pedestal image of the woman, despite the glaring inappropriateness to a life of toil ... the working-class wife was not supposed to work, at least outside the home. To do so would offend her husband's manhood, for it would demonstrate his inability to provide for her.<sup>90</sup>

Tilly and Scott's argument has a more material base. They suggest that higher living standards and the growing importance of the working-class family as a unit of consumption underpinned women's increasing domesticity.<sup>91</sup> Branca provides some exception to the general argument,

since she sees the wage-earning role of married women as insignificant throughout the nineteenth century. Branca suggests that married women identified themselves primarily with their family role, and therefore she argues that paid employment was a "minority" theme in the history of married working-class women.<sup>92</sup>

Most of the authors cited above, however, use census statistics to underpin their basic point that married women's wage earning declined. But it has already been argued in the first chapter that census figures underestimated the extent of women's involvement in paid employment.<sup>93</sup> Little attention is paid in the more general studies to local variations in married women's employment. A distinction is usually made between textile districts and other areas, and between married women and widows. However, the discussion is not taken further in order to consider distinctions between non-textile areas and between married women themselves.<sup>94</sup> Leeds, for example, fits uneasily into the generalisations made. It was not a classic textile town, but it did provide a range of industrial occupations for women. This makes it a particularly important area for examining the extent and type of married women's employment.

The extent and type of work undertaken by married women in Leeds was affected both by the demand for their labour and also by the supply of women available. This could be affected by family living standards, demographic patterns and prevailing views about the most appropriate sex division of labour within the family and within production. In her thesis on married women's work, written in the 1950s, Leonore Davidoff

stresses that demand was the most critical factor, since the opportunity for employment was an independent variable to which wife and family adjusted.<sup>95</sup> More recently, greater emphasis has been given to the importance of the role played by family values and norms of behaviour, sometimes based on pre-industrial traditions, in influencing the type of work undertaken by married women and in their decision as to whether to work at all.<sup>96</sup> Both lines of argument share the weakness of providing a determinist view of a rather more complex process. For example, the existence of a supply of women, ready and able to work, could encourage employers to establish their firms in a particular local area, which in turn increased the demand for such workers.<sup>97</sup> The following section explores some of the complexities of the relationship between the demand for, and supply of, married women for employment in Leeds, although they will be treated separately for the purposes of analysis.

The existence of two staple female trades in Leeds, textiles and ready-made tailoring, ensured a high demand for female workers whether married or not. Demand for their labour fluctuated, however, throughout the period. The most rapid expansion of the female labour force took place in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Married women were increasingly employed in the factories and workshops, as well as providing the bulk of the labour force in the expanding homework section of the ready-made tailoring trade. A far smaller number of women entered the labour force in the 1890s, as the clothing and textile trades faced economic problems. A revival in the fortunes of both textiles and clothing between 1901 and 1911, however, led to a greater demand for the labour of married women and widows, who increased both

in numbers and as a proportion of all female workers.<sup>98</sup>

In the later period there was a close relationship between the employment of married women in Leeds and that of single women and girls.

Demographic changes in the city meant that the proportion of the population in the younger age groups decreased between 1901 and 1911.<sup>99</sup>

The ensuing trade revival revealed the importance of married women as a reserve army of labour. Single working-class girls below the age of 25 were already fully employed and formed a smaller proportion of the population in the city, while Leeds no longer exercised the same appeal for girls from the surrounding districts.<sup>100</sup> Any increase in the

female labour force, therefore, had to come from older single women, widows or married women who were likely to have had some experience of industrial employment when they were younger.<sup>101</sup> Women in the age group 18 to 25, who were preferred by employers and had less restrictions on their choice of occupation, tended to seek work in ready-made clothing and printing factories in preference to the older textile mills. In the former, the work was light and clean, and therefore women could wear ordinary clothing rather than clogs and shawls. When trade expanded in the years before 1914, therefore, textile employers had to increase their recruitment of married women.<sup>102</sup>

Married women and widows in Leeds were to be found in factories, in workshops and in irregular domestic and homework tasks. Industrial employment was particularly important for married women. In 1911 one fifth of occupied married women were employed in the textile mills and one third in all branches of the clothing trade (one quarter were in

tailoring alone). A further 15 per cent were engaged in dealing and 10 per cent worked as charwomen.<sup>103</sup> The distribution of widows in occupations was very different. Approximately one third were engaged in some form of domestic work and a further 21 per cent in dealing. Just under a third were in a branch of the clothing trade, but less than 9 per cent were employed in textiles.<sup>104</sup>

It is difficult to determine the extent to which married women outside textiles were employed in factories, in workshops or in the home. The tailoring factories varied in their recruitment of married women. Barran's employed very few married women. It was claimed that this was because the firm's female workers were recruited from comfortable homes, usually married skilled men, and therefore did not need to remain in the factory after marriage.<sup>105</sup> Rowland Barran suggested, however, that other factories did recruit extensively from married women, and this is substantiated by reports in the press and by the statements of union organisers.<sup>106</sup> In her study of Jewish workshops in the 1890s Clara Collet found that 21.4 per cent of the Christian female workers were married.<sup>107</sup> This was slightly above the proportion of married and widowed women in the female tailoring labour force as a whole if the 1901 census figures are taken.<sup>108</sup> Employers did not tend to put up formal barriers against the employment of married women and widows in mills, factories and workshops.<sup>109</sup> However, individuals did discourage their employment on the grounds that they thought that married women could act as a disruptive influence on the workforce and were more likely to take time off.<sup>110</sup>



The existence of opportunities for female employment did not automatically mean that a high proportion of married women would seek regular paid work outside the home. For example, in the textile districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire the rate of married women's employment varied far more widely than that of single women and widows.<sup>111</sup> The decision of married women about how often to take on waged work and their choice of occupation was inextricably linked to their domestic position and responsibilities. It was affected by the work opportunities available for other family members, the expectations held by working-class families about the work roles of individuals and the general level of local living standards, including how these were established. In Leeds, as in other towns and cities, a proportion of married women were desperate for work because their husbands' contribution to family income was so low. This could be an endemic feature of family life, if men were always irregularly employed, or it could be a sporadic feature related to the temporary illness or unemployment of the main breadwinner.<sup>112</sup> Contemporary social surveys frequently noted the close relationship between low paid male employment and the type and extent of married women's labour, in particular in areas of casual employment. It was suggested that in London, wherever there was casual work for male labour, women were also employed, and wherever the men's work was of a low grade, so was that of the women.<sup>113</sup> In Liverpool it was claimed that "many of the women are the wives of men irregularly employed or at sea a great part of the year ... the kind of work offered, and the circumstances under which it is sought, all tend to keep in existence a large class of irregular female labour".<sup>114</sup> Thus, where male work was casual, similar work developed for women so that

employers could tap the available supply of married women who were desperate for work at any price. Since they sought work when their husbands had little employment rather than when there was a demand for their own labour, competition for scarce jobs was increased. This pushed wages lower and in turn reinforced the desperate need of married women to take on paid employment.<sup>115</sup> Casual work was not an endemic feature of the male labour market in Leeds. However, unskilled work did predominate for men in some areas of the city and the wives of such workers were forced to seek paid employment. But, at least they were able to enter regular factory work as well as casual and domestic employment. In South East Leeds, one of the poorest districts, 17 per cent of married women in the age group 15 to 55 were recorded as occupied in the 1901 census tables.<sup>116</sup> Of these, 25 per cent worked in textile mills and 18.7 per cent were employed as tailoresses.<sup>117</sup> Others worked in miscellaneous tasks including hawking, bottle washing, office cleaning and laundry work.<sup>118</sup> The fact that married women's irregular employment was underestimated in the census figures helps to explain why a higher proportion of married women were recorded as occupied in the West and North districts than in the poorer area of South East Leeds.<sup>119</sup>

The homework trades were usually associated with the employment of women from low income families. Contemporary surveys of homework in different local areas indicate, however, that although married women with dependent children formed an important group in every area, there were considerable differences in the other types of women involved in homework according to the district being considered.<sup>120</sup> Homework could

provide extra income for the wives of better paid workers who did not necessarily want to work outside the home. A Bristol woman expressed what many must have felt when she said that, even though her husband's work was regular, "people with children could always do with more money".<sup>121</sup> In both Liverpool and Bristol young women were frequently found as homeworkers because they were not keen to enter factories which were old, paid low wages and entailed a loss of status.<sup>122</sup> No comprehensive survey was undertaken in the period into homework in Leeds. However, from the numerous examples quoted in the press it appears that young girls tended not to take up homework unless they were ill or had some physical disability. They preferred instead to enter better paid factory occupations which, in Leeds, did not entail a loss of status.<sup>123</sup> The most frequent examples of homeworkers cited in the press were of married women with young children, whose husbands were unemployed or on low wages, and widows who supported themselves or had dependent children.<sup>124</sup> Many of these women had worked in the tailoring trade before marriage and took work from their former employers.<sup>125</sup>

If women were forced to work because of low family income they were still able to exercise some choice over which occupation to enter. This was influenced not only by family circumstances but also by age and previous work experience. Women with several children were attracted to casual domestic employment and homework. But this does not mean that they were primarily concerned to place as little strain as possible on family relationships. It could, for example, have reflected the practical difficulties and cost involved in having several children cared for by others.<sup>126</sup> Domestic work was also a logical choice for

women who had been employed in domestic service before marriage. Moreover, age could deter women from mill life. It was difficult for older women to keep up with the pace of factory work. The lady factory inspectors noted the stress and strain involved in the "employment of women from girlhood, all through married life, and through childbearing".<sup>127</sup> They suggested that when women found mill work too demanding they became charwomen or house scrubbers. Widows, who increased in the older age groups, were not extensively employed in factory work, although they were not necessarily hampered by dependent children. They were more likely to combine domestic work with taking in lodgers.<sup>128</sup>

Married women did not simply take up casual employment as a response to their own family circumstances. They also responded to any increase in the demand for their services from other women in the community who were engaged in full-time factory employment. When factory work increased, neighbours stepped in to mind children, to complete a load of washing and to take on smaller tasks, such as shopping or lighting fires, whether their own circumstances had altered or not.<sup>129</sup>

Women from low income families who did turn to regular factory employment were found not only in the roughest dirtiest work, but were also employed in better paid tasks as weavers, winders and tailoring machinists.<sup>130</sup> A number of Yorkshire women interviewed by Barbara Hutchins, as part of a survey by the Women's Industrial Council into the employment of married women, had well paid occupations in the mills and came from low income families.<sup>131</sup> Mrs "A5", for example,

was 54 and had worked almost continuously as a weaver since her marriage, because her husband suffered from chronic bronchitis. Mrs "A6" had worked since the age of 13, with only short breaks on marriage and for the births of her two children, and had continued to work on her "fast loom" after her husband died from consumption.<sup>132</sup>

The historian needs to guard against providing a static picture of married women's work. The same woman might move between different tasks according to family circumstances, her own age and health, as well as in response to changing local opportunities. One woman interviewed by Barbara Hutchins started as a half-time worker in woolcombing. She worked steadily in that occupation except at her confinements. When at home she took in washing because her husband never worked regularly and left her for months at a time.<sup>133</sup> This example suggests that there was no strict demarcation line between mill and non-mill work. The same women could move between the two at different times. In an oral interview, Ethel Kay, a Lancashire woman, recalled that her mother, widowed when her father died in a pit accident, was at first reluctant to enter mill work because she was 40 and suffered from asthma. Instead, she took in washing and minded babies. She eventually entered the mill when she could not make ends meet. At times of greatest difficulty she took in washing in the evenings as well as working full time in the mill. She did not leave the mill until her two daughters were working full time, but even then she still took in washing to retain some economic independence.<sup>134</sup> A Yorkshire woman, aged 56, worked as a sweeper, doffer and spinner as a young girl, a weaver from the age of 16 to 35 and "subsequently as charwoman, in which occupation

she has a regular connection".<sup>135</sup> Some women worked only when their husbands were ill or on short time, whereas others worked all year round, but took on extra employment to meet specific family emergencies.<sup>136</sup>

Although these women worked because family income was low, the opportunity for factory and mill work did mean that their situation can be contrasted with areas such as Liverpool and London. In Leeds and in other Yorkshire textile towns, the combined wages of a female mill worker and a low paid male worker could raise family income above that in towns where both sexes were casually employed. On the other hand, the factories and mills in the East End of Leeds had a reputation for paying low wages because they could draw on the cheap labour of the female relatives of less skilled male workers in the district.<sup>137</sup>

Not all women from low income families sought paid employment. Surveys of the period suggest that Jewish women tended not to work for wages, in particular outside the home, even if their husbands were on poor relief.<sup>138</sup> This was explained at the time by the strong emphasis in the Jewish religion on the importance of women's role within the family.<sup>139</sup> In a study of Jewish women in Manchester, however, Rickie Burman suggests that many immigrants came from communities in which the ideal was for men to engage in religious studies and therefore for women to act as breadwinners.<sup>140</sup> She argues that it was only in England that Jewish women became identified with domesticity. This arose from the immigrants' desire to be accepted by the host community which led them to emulate middle-class ideals of family life.<sup>141</sup> There were also practical reasons why married Jewish women

were reluctant to engage in paid employment. As first generation immigrants they would have found it difficult to adapt to work in mills and factories which were dominated by young English women. Moreover, they received considerable financial assistance in times of difficulty from family and friends within the close-knit Jewish community.<sup>142</sup>

The emphasis so far has been on those women who worked because of low family income, and contemporary surveys continually emphasised the desperate need which drove married women and widows to seek waged work.<sup>143</sup> Barbara Hutchins claimed that of the 95 women covered by her survey, 63.2 per cent worked through the "insufficiency of the husband's wage", and a further 6.3 per cent because they were widowed.<sup>144</sup> Expectations of what constituted the minimum necessary for family comfort, however, varied between individuals and between local areas. One Yorkshire weaver with four children worked regularly before marriage and "not regularly but a good deal afterwards". Her husband's earnings, 23/- to 24/-, were not considered to be enough for their family needs. She did not work "for pride or for dress or for saving, but to keep the children in some comfort. Before she will stop at home she must have £2 a week from her man".<sup>145</sup> Even when women were initially drawn to work because of a family crisis, they might remain in paid employment afterwards. John Burnett noted that "women having become accustomed to do work in that way do not willingly give it up but would be inclined to stick to it as a means of increasing the family income".<sup>146</sup>

Examples can also be found of the wives of more skilled and better paid

workers in Leeds who were employed in the mills, factories and workshops.<sup>147</sup> Young women with small families tended to be more regularly employed than those with several children, and yet the latter would have been in most need.<sup>148</sup> For these women, the motivation to work was of a more positive kind than a simple reaction to desperate family circumstances, since they hoped to raise family living standards. This more positive motivation can be explained by a number of features which were common to Leeds and to the textile towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. However, the rate of married women's work was far lower in Leeds and in Yorkshire textile towns than it was in Lancashire cotton weaving districts, and this disparity is examined in the final part of the chapter.

The higher and more regular wages paid in mills and factories in the textile districts, compared with those paid to women in areas where small workshops and homework predominated, provided a positive inducement for married women to work. This was a particularly important feature of cotton weaving in Lancashire where women's wages were well above the average. In both Lancashire and Yorkshire textiles a high proportion of weavers were married women, since skill and experience were rewarded and therefore earnings increased with age.<sup>149</sup> In Yorkshire, however, average wages in the wool and worsted trade and in ready-made tailoring fell below those of the Lancashire cotton industry, and therefore married women had less incentive to take on the double burden of wage earning and domestic duties.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, in both areas, the opportunity for relatively well paid work in factories providing above average conditions did mean that the wives of better



paid workers were encouraged to seek outside employment. This contrasted with areas such as Bristol, Liverpool and London.<sup>151</sup> In the East End of London, for example, the wives of artisans rarely worked outside the home for, "the relative absence of properly remunerated female employment stamped women's work with the taint of poverty and loss of status".<sup>152</sup> Thus, women only worked if they had to.

A demand for female labour did encourage women to work to raise family living standards. However, their perception of what was necessary for family comfort, and the importance of their own wage earning in achieving higher living standards, differed in Leeds and in the textile towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire. In the cotton weaving districts of Lancashire the high wages of female workers were crucial in establishing local living standards. Not only were women's wages higher than the average for female workers, but also male wages in textiles were low.<sup>153</sup> In Leeds, however, it was the well paid work for men in engineering and other skilled trades, along with the widespread employment of young people in mills and factories, which laid the basis for higher living standards in the city. This meant that the contribution of married women was relatively less important. At the same time, the lower wages of women in wool and worsted textiles and ready-made clothing, when compared with those of the Lancashire cotton weaver, made paid employment less attractive for married women in Leeds and the West Riding textile towns. The proportion of married women employed in Bradford was slightly higher than in the other towns of the West Riding. This can be explained by the high demand for female labour in the worsted industry, which predominated in the town,

and the difficulties faced by men in finding work that was well paid.<sup>154</sup>

It is not obvious from the available evidence whether the wives of better paid workers in Leeds were discouraged from working when real wages rose in the early 1890s. Statistics for the age structure of the working population suggest that women in the older age groups were less evident as regular wage earners by the turn of the century, but this was related to a decline in employment opportunities as factory production spread.<sup>155</sup> There is little to indicate that married women's employment declined in the younger age groups when they were more likely to have sought factory employment.<sup>156</sup> It is also difficult to assess how far the widespread employment of young people affected the extent of married women's work. It is likely that older women gave up full-time work once children were employed.<sup>157</sup> In areas such as Blackburn, however, the rate of employment of both married women and children was high. The local variations in the extent to which children engaged in full-time wage earning can be seen in the following table:

Table 9.1 Percentage of Children Aged 13 and 14 Occupied in Selected Towns in 1911<sup>158</sup>

	<u>13 Years</u>		<u>14 Years</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Bradford	58.4	54.4	82.8	79.0
Halifax	73.2	69.1	83.0	83.0
Huddersfield	68.4	60.6	85.7	80.4
Leeds	59.9	45.7	82.8	67.3
Blackburn	74.6	72.3	90.2	84.1
Burnley	76.9	69.4	89.3	87.2
Bolton	72.8	67.3	87.1	83.4

This implies that if the rewards offered were great enough married women worked even if their children were employed, in particular if their wage earning was important for establishing the local living standards to which they were accustomed.

There is some evidence that local traditions of married women's employment, and the prevailing attitudes of working-class men and women towards such employment, may have had some influence on whether married women decided to seek paid work outside the home. Yorkshire trade unionists, for example, were far more hostile to the employment of married women than their counterparts in Lancashire.<sup>159</sup> Ben Turner

"strongly condemned the men who sent their wives to the mill ... they made their wives into beasts of burden", and this was a common theme in all speeches by textile union organisers in the period.<sup>160</sup>

Nevertheless, these statements must be viewed in their context. In many Yorkshire trades male workers feared the increasing introduction of women on low rates of pay. They therefore sought to discourage the employment of married women as one solution to their problems.<sup>161</sup>

Their strategy did not necessarily always have the effect they desired. One government enquiry suggested that male trade unionists in Hunslet and Holbeck did not allow their wives to work, but the continuing references in union leaders' speeches to the wives of miners, joiners and textile workers who were employed in the mills implies that many working-class families did not share their views.<sup>162</sup> This is hardly surprising given the low level of union organisation in many trades in Yorkshire.<sup>163</sup>

Working-class attitudes may be difficult to disentangle, but Clara Collet suggested that local customs could influence the extent to which married women were employed. She pointed to the fact that in Nelson and Colne 33.8 per cent of worsted workers were married in the 1890s, compared with 21.1 per cent in Yorkshire. Collet claimed that the long tradition of married women's employment in the cotton trade had affected the proportion of married women employed in the worsted industry in that county.<sup>164</sup> These conclusions were based on a very small number of women in Nelson and Colne and there is no consideration of other factors which may have influenced the result. More descriptive sources, however, tend to back up Collet's contention that the long tradition of married women's employment in the cotton weaving towns had made it an acceptable feature of family life. Moreover, married women's work was facilitated by the development of a network of services provided by other women in the community.<sup>165</sup>

The points discussed above suggest that many of the generalisations made about married women's employment should be treated with some care, in particular the contention, based on census figures, that married women's involvement in wage earning declined over the period 1880 to 1914. A heavy reliance on census data can be misleading, not only because the extent of married women's employment is underestimated, but also because the figures provide only a static picture of married women's employment at one point in time. The census does not indicate the extent to which a larger group of married women had to take up wage earning at some point in their lives, and fails to show the way in which the same woman might move in and out of waged work in

different periods. In Leeds the extent of married women's regular employment outside the home appears to have fluctuated in the period rather than showing a steady decline. However, despite the existence of two staple trades for women, the rate of married women's work for wages fell below that of the cotton textile towns and was only just above the national average. This can only be understood if married women's paid employment is placed within a local context in which the work available for all family members, prevailing living standards and customary behaviour were all closely interrelated.

When married women did seek paid employment their choice of occupation cannot simply be seen in the light of whether or not it "conflicted with family centred goals".<sup>166</sup> This merely replaces economic determinism with the determinism of family circumstances in which women have only a passive role to play. Married women may have seen themselves as part of a family unit rather than as individuals, but they could still make decisions about what was best for themselves and for their families. Married women were not an undifferentiated group but varied in age, family background and previous work experience, which all affected their choice of employment. Many chose factory work, which did not fit in easily with domestic responsibilities, because the higher wages enabled them to raise family living standards. Others took in home-work because they had been trained as tailoresses and were perhaps too old or had too many children to make factory work a practical alternative. Some women made the very positive decision to limit the number of their children, and therefore to alter family circumstances,

so that they could continue with factory employment.<sup>167</sup>

Historians who write that the working class adopted a pedestal image of women, or who see the working-class family as a unit of consumption, and use this to explain the levels of married women's work, fail to convey any impression of the texture and day-to-day realities of working-class family life. Married women in Leeds did not work extensively outside the home. This can only be explained, however, by the complex relationship between material and ideological factors in the city and cannot be reduced to a single explanation. The "ideology of domesticity" was strong within the trade union movement, but the views of the leadership did not always reflect those of its members, while even those who supported the idea that a "woman's place was in the home" backed up their arguments by referring to the practical difficulties women faced if they took on a double burden.<sup>168</sup> It is little wonder that married women hesitated before combining long hours of paid employment with heavy domestic tasks, in particular when the availability of skilled work for men and the widespread employment of children were most important in raising local living standards.

On the other hand, even the families of skilled workers faced a reduced family income in times of sickness and unemployment, and therefore women were rarely able to withdraw permanently from wage earning after marriage. At a time when there were few social security payments outside the Poor Law to cover sickness, unemployment, maternity expenses and widowhood, it is unlikely that married women saw a

rigid distinction between waged work and family life. Moreover, their wages continued to be crucial at times of difficulty. Their work may have been regular or irregular, well paid or badly paid, but it cannot be said that it was a "minority theme" in married women's history.

## CHAPTER 9, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.)

1. Appendix 1, Tables 1.1 and 1.16.
2. In older age groups ill health or an increasing number of children made factory employment more difficult. See the discussion below, pp 429-31.
3. For a discussion of the wider expectations concerning women's role within the family, see C Dyhouse, Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), chapter 3. Dyhouse also considers the way in which family life provided girls with their first lessons in the appropriate sex division of labour: ibid. chapter 1. For the importance of early socialisation in affecting the attitudes of girls to waged work, see J Bornat, "An Examination of the General Union of Textile Workers, 1883-1922" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1980), chapters 3 and 4.
4. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Appendix XVII. Report by Miss C Williams and Mr T Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief on Wages and the Conditions of Employment in Certain Unions in England (PP 1909, XLIII), p 129.
5. Appendix 1, Table 1.13.
6. It was noted that girls stayed in paper bag making for one or two years and then left to find higher paid work: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 129. It was also claimed that girls in the Bradford worsted trade left spinning and went to another part of the mill when they were 16 or 17: Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), QQ 10346-7.
7. For example, see F Hicks, "Dressmakers and Tailoresses", in F W Galton, ed. Workers on Their Industries (Swan Sonnenschein, 1894), pp 14-15, and the report by Clara Collet on dressmakers, milliners and mantlemakers in the Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), pp 89-90.



8. Isabella Ford claimed that it was a common practice in Leeds dressmaking to dismiss apprentices once they were entitled to receive wages: Yorkshire Factory Times, 21 July 1893. For the same practice in millinery, see Y.F.T. 4 October 1889. Fitters and cutters were rarely promoted from the workroom. They usually paid a special premium to learn the work: Hicks, "Dressmakers and Tailoresses", p 17, and Collet's report in the Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 89. It was noted by Vagabond, "The Pert Young Dressmaker and the Showy Madame", Y.F.T. 25 January 1912, that girls tended to concentrate on one process for which they had an aptitude, for example doing small trimmings or arranging soft silks. Fitters were chosen for their good looks and figures.
  
9. Approximately 22.9 per cent of girls aged 13 to 15 who were occupied in Leeds in 1911 worked in the tailoring trade. 17.0 per cent were employed in the wool and worsted industry: calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1913, LXXIX), Leeds Occupations, Table 13 (hereafter Census of England and Wales, 1911, Leeds Occupations).
  
10. For children's work in the worsted trade, see the evidence of John Watson to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), QQ 10339-43. For the employment of young people in weaving, see the evidence of W H Drew to ibid. QQ 5487-96.
  
11. 60 per cent of the female labour force in wool and worsted spinning were aged under 20 in Leeds in 1911 compared with 27.7 per cent of those employed in weaving: Appendix 1, Table 1.13. For the way in which girls were taught weaving, see J H Clapham, The Woollen and Worsted Industries (Methuen, 1907), p 219, and The Times, Special Textile Number, 27 June 1913, p 21.
  
12. Rowland Barran, for example, noted that a learner was instructed by another woman who was paid a proportion of the girl's first week or two's wages: evidence to the Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts (PP 1908, LIX), Q 7140. See also I O Ford, "Women Workers in the Wholesale Clothing Trade", Englishwoman, 11, 6 (1909), p 637.
  
13. Clapham quoted the example of girls being promoted from minding a preparing box in a combing mill at 10/- to minding a comb at 13/-: Clapham, Woollen and Worsted Industries, p 219.

14. For a full discussion of the range of wages and promotion prospects in clothing and textiles, see above, pp 243-9.
  
15. See M F Ward, "Industrial Development and Location in Leeds North of the River Aire, 1775-1914" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1972), p 284, and R W Unwin, "Leeds becomes a Transport Centre", in D Fraser, ed. A History of Modern Leeds (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp 138-9.
  
16. Connell suggests that the mixture of trades in South Leeds encouraged whole families to settle there. This in turn affected the decision of other firms about whether to establish factories in the area: E J Connell, "Industrial Development in South Leeds, 1890-1914" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1975). Ward argues that, whether industry followed workers or the other way around, varied over time and was related to the available supply of labour: Ward, thesis, pp 323-4.
  
17. C Collet, "Women's Work in Leeds", Economic Journal, 1, 3 (1891), p 466, noted that rag sorters were "nearly all Irish and many of them are married women with unsatisfactory husbands". See also Y.F.T. 4 December 1891. The predominance of Irish and other unskilled labourers in the East End of Leeds is detailed in the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Report of Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 132. For the low pay of East End workers, see Y.F.T. 19 January 1894 and 25 July 1913.
  
18. Connell, thesis, p 338.
  
19. Board of Trade, Reports on the Volume and Effects of Recent Immigration from Eastern Europe into the United Kingdom. Pt III. Foreign Immigration in Relation to Women's Labour (PP 1894, LXVIII), pp 117-8. Krausz notes that by the end of the period many Jewish workers left the workshops to enter the factories: E Krausz, Leeds Jewry (Cambridge: W Heffer, 1964), p 14.
  
20. It was noted that, in the Leeds Union, employers usually recruited new workers through existing employees who brought sisters and other relatives: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 132. John Barran's reference books, containing details of new employees, show that many of the young boys taken on had sisters, aunts or other female relatives already employed in

the factory: Leeds City Archives, Messrs J Barran & Sons Ltd. Papers, Reference Book 2, Notes on New Employees, 1889-95. In the wages books of Messrs Kellet Brown & Co the majority of female employees had the same surnames as male workers in the firm or else appear to have been related to other female workers: Brotherton Library, Leeds University, Messrs Kellet Brown & Co. Papers, Wages Books, 1880-1914.

21. For example, see Men's Wear, 16 September 1911.
22. Tom Maquire, for example, claimed that girls employed by Messrs Arthur & Co came from all parts of the city: Leeds Daily News, 23 October 1889. Female workers employed by Messrs J Barran & Sons were also drawn from a variety of districts in the city including Armley, New Wortley, Woodhouse and Hunslet: L.C.A. Messrs J Barran & Sons Ltd Papers, List of Employees, 1883-93.
23. Ward, thesis, p 275.
24. Ibid. pp 135, 279, 313. By the turn of the century the bulk of the population lived in the suburbs: ibid. p 315.
25. Collet, "Women's Work", pp 471-2.
26. J Buckman, "The Economic and Social History of Alien Immigration to Leeds, 1880-1914" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Strathclyde, 1968), p 47.
27. Collet, "Women's Work", p 467.
28. For the number and percentage of female workers in Leeds employed in domestic service and textiles, see Tables 1.8 and 1.10 above, pp 59-62. Contemporaries noted how the ready-made clothing factories recruited female workers from the declining flax trade: for example, see Collet, "Women's Work", p 464, and the evidence of Rowland Barran to the Departmental Committee on Truck (PP 1908, LIX), Q 7033.
29. L.C.A. Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education Papers, Girls' Night Shelter, Annual Report for 1888, p 4. Mr T Baines noted that young girls were bound to make their way to Leeds to gain employment in clothing.

30. Ibid. Annual Report for 1890, p 5.
  
31. P Branca, Women in Europe since 1750 (Croom Helm, 1978), pp 34-5, 50-1.
  
32. Ibid. pp 44-5, 50.
  
33. For example, see J R MacDonald, ed. Women in the Printing Trades (P S King, 1904), pp 64-7; A Harrison, Women's Industries in Liverpool (Liverpool: Liverpool University, 1904), pp 14, 35-9; C V Butler, Social Conditions in Oxford (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1912), pp 65, 70; E Cadbury, M C Matheson and G Shann, Women's Work and Wages: A Phase of Life in an Industrial City (T Fisher Unwin, 1906), chapter 2.
  
34. Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, p 75; Harrison, Women's Industries in Liverpool, pp 14-15; Mrs F W Hubback, "Women's Wages", New Statesman, Special Supplement on Women in Industry, 21 February 1914, p v.
  
35. Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, p 75.
  
36. Books by contemporary social commentators, the speeches of trade union leaders and articles in the local press were full of references to the way in which women workers were influenced by the status of particular tasks. For example, it was noted that young girls were more anxious to become machinists in tailoring, which had a high status, than to learn felling and buttonholing: Collet, "Women's Work", p 468; rag picking and rag sorting could only attract girls "of a rough and ready sort" from the lowest income families because they were hard dirty jobs, which involved heavy lifting and carried the danger of disease: Y.F.T. 4 December 1891, and Collet, "Women's Work", p 468; it was reported that piecers and feeders in the spinning and scribbling rooms were low paid and despised by their own sex. Young girls from Yorkshire textile towns preferred to enter dressmaking because it was seen as more respectable: Y.F.T. 8 August and 20 June 1890. In the printing industry, however, it was noted that it was particularly difficult to define high and low status jobs. Skilled and light work tended to be seen as genteel - hence bookfolding was accorded a higher status than paper bag making, despite its longer hours and low pay. On the other hand, fashions could change and a reputation for gentility could be more important than the content of the work: MacDonald, ed. Women in the Printing Trades, pp 67-8.

37. Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 34, and Harrison, Women's Industries in Liverpool, pp 14, 18-22.
38. See above, pp 201-05.
39. Collet, "Women's Work", p 470.
40. Royal Commission on Labour. Answers to Schedules of Questions in Group C (PP 1892, XXXVI, Pt IV), p 518.
41. Calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1901 (PP 1902, CXXI), Leeds Occupations, Table 35. (hereafter Census of England and Wales, 1901, Leeds Occupations); and Census of England and Wales, 1911, Leeds Occupations.
42. Calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1911, Leeds Occupations.
43. Ibid.
44. In 1911 8.5 per cent of all occupied females in Leeds were employed in professional and commercial occupations or in local government. 2.7 per cent were employed as teachers and 2.7 per cent as commercial or business clerks. The number employed as clerks may have been under-estimated, since some women working in factory offices may not have been included: ibid.
45. See above, pp 201 . It was suggested that the factories with the best equipment were able to obtain the best workers: Y.F.T. 18 December 1891.
46. MacDonald, ed. Women in the Printing Trades, p 56.
47. Female workers included in Barran's list of employees were traced in Kelly's Directory of Leeds (1889) and their fathers' occupations ascertained: L.C.A. Messrs J Barran & Sons Ltd Papers, List of Employees, 1883-93. For the firm's reputation for employing a high class of workgirl, see the evidence of Rowland Barran and H Withey to the Departmental Committee on Truck (PP 1908, LIX), QQ 7139, 5656-8.

48. Yorkshire Post, 23 February 1887.
49. Y.F.T. 19 January 1894. A speech by Ben Turner to the Tailoresses' Union.
50. The Times, Special Textile Number, 27 June 1913, p 21.
51. See the evidence of W H Drew to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), Q 5450, and Bornat, thesis, p 110.
52. The Times, Special Textile Number, 27 June 1913, p 21; Clapham, Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp 189-90; Y.F.T. 8 August 1890.
53. The Times, Special Textile Number, 27 June 1913, p 21, noted that weavers ranked next socially to the burlers. Clapham, Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp 196-7, claimed that weaving required a variety of skills and therefore individual earnings were also varied.
54. For example, see Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, pp 48-9; MacDonal, ed. Women in the Printing Trades, p 67; Hubback, "Women's Wages", p v; Branca, Women in Europe, p 45.
55. Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, pp 48-9.
56. R H Tawney, The Establishment of Minimum Rates in the Tailoring Industry under the Trade Boards Act of 1909. Studies in the Minimum Wage. No.2 (G Bell, 1915), pp 126-30.
57. See above, pp 201-05.
58. Collet, "Women's Work", p 467, and I O Ford, Women's Wages (Humanitarian League, pamphlet no 8, 1893), pp 5-8.
59. For the low pay and unpleasant conditions in rag sorting and flax spinning, see Collet, "Women's Work", p 464, and the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effects of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 129.

60. For example, see F Hicks, "Dressmakers and Tailoresses", pp 14-15. Hicks noted that the daughters of skilled workers refused to enter domestic service or factory work, and therefore preferred dressmaking, because it provided some freedom as well as respectability. On the other hand, they also hoped to be able to set up a small business of their own in a working-class suburb.
  
61. "The Duchess of Number Three", in T Maguire, Machine Room Chants (Labour Leader, 1895), p 20.
  
62. See above, p 377-79.
  
63. Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, pp 232-4.
  
64. Board of Trade, Accounts of Expenditure of Wage-Earning Women and Girls (PP 1911, LXXXIX), p 4. The 30 women included in the survey nearly all lived at home and were self-supporting. For the help of relatives and friends during strikes and short-time work, see L.D.N. 24 October 1889, and Hicks, "Dressmakers and Tailoresses", p 18.
  
65. For details of such strikes, see below, pp 554-55.
  
66. Letter from "A Workgirl", L.D.N. 22 October 1889. See also the series of letters about wages in the tailoring trade in the Leeds Evening Express, 16, 18, 19, 20 July 1889.
  
67. Men's Wear, 9 November 1912. The strike of tailoresses at Messrs Arthur & Co in 1889 was over the high charge made for power which reduced weekly wages: L.D.N. 17 October 1889.
  
68. For example, the sisters of young boys taken on by Barran's were not always employed in similar work: L.C.A. Messrs J Barran & Sons Ltd Papers, Reference Book 2, Notes on New Employees, 1889-95.
  
69. Examples of this can be found in autobiographies and oral interviews: see J Liddington and J Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement (Virago, 1978), pp 57-8, and Hannam, "Radcliffe Interviews". Ada Nield Chew's younger brothers were able to take advantage of better work opportunities than their older brothers and sister: D N Chew, Ada Nield Chew: The Life and Writings of a Working Woman (Virago, 1982), p 12.

70. Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 34.
71. For examples of the way in which girls moved from job to job, see Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, p 246; H Mitchell, The Hard Way Up: The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel (Virago, 1977), pp 57-8, chapters 4 and 5; Mrs Layton, "Memories of Seventy Years", in M L Davies, ed. Life as We Have Known It (Virago, 1977, originally published, 1931), pp 20-34; Hannam, "Radcliffe Interviews"; Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I). On the other hand, many of the above contain examples of women who remained with the same firm for a long period. Several of the female employees of John Barran worked in the firm for a number of years: L.C.A. Messrs J Barran & Sons Ltd Papers, List of Employees, 1884-93, and Reference Book 2, Notes on New Employees, 1889-95.
72. For the weakness of female trade unionism, see below, pp 512, 523- 4.
73. For example, see Mitchell, The Hard Way Up, p 76; letters from factory girls and servants quoted in Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, pp 113-17; letters from factory girls and servants in the L.D.N. 4, 6, 8, 12 November 1889. Miss Goodall, a member of the Women's Liberal Federation and a friend of Isabella Ford, who helped the tailoresses during the strike at Arthur's in 1889, claimed that she could find situations for domestic servants, but the girls preferred to be tailoresses. Many had been servants before and enjoyed the freedom of factory life: L.D.N. 14 November 1889.
74. For example, see L.D.N. 6 November 1889, and Liddington and Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us, p 57.
75. L.D.N. 6 November 1889. Similar sentiments are expressed in the letters from workgirls quoted in Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, pp 113-14.
76. L.D.N. 8 November 1889. See also the letters from servants in the L.D.N. 2 and 12 November 1889, and those quoted in Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, pp 114-15. One letter in the latter claimed that domestic servants were liable to "get into better company than factory girls", while another thought that there were "less temptations" in service.



77. Letter from "A Servant Girl" in the L.D.N. 8 November 1889.
78. Y.F.T. 6 December 1890.
79. For example, see Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, p 240. Tom Smith, Mayor of Leicester, thought that the ability to earn high wages meant that for girls there was "an end of any desire for domestic training or respect for home life": Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix VIII. Minutes of Evidence on Unemployment (PP 1910, XLVIII), Q 86726.
80. A M Anderson, Women in the Factory: An Administrative Adventure, 1893-1921 (John Murray, 1922), p 22.
81. F Hicks, "Factory Girls", in A Reid, ed. The New Party (Hodder Brothers, 1894), p 325.
82. Select Committee on the Sweating System. Fifth Report (PP 1890, XVII).
83. For example, see the speeches by union leaders in the Y.F.T. 19 September 1890 and 13 February 1891. See also Ben Turner's reply to a questionnaire sent to the General Union of Textile Workers by Sidney Webb, 20 January 1914: London School of Economics, Webb Collection E, Section A, Vol XLVII, item 68.
84. According to the 1911 census tables, 13.0 per cent of married women in Leeds were occupied. 17.6 per cent of tailoresses and 20.6 per cent of female textile workers were married: calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1911, Leeds Occupations.
85. For the percentage of women married in selected age groups in 1901 and 1911, see Appendix 1, Table 1.16. Only a small number of married women worked in the Leeds printing trade, but some older women were called back if employers had a rush job: MacDonal'd, ed. Women in the Printing Trades, p 111. During the First World War it was noted that there had been a large number of young married women in the Leeds tailoring trade, known as "busy season hands", who were always invited back to help in busy periods. This practice was more fully developed during the war: Trades Union Congress Archives, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, item 23, Married Women's Labour, Yorkshire Evening Post, 18 March 1915.

86. For the complaints of a labour shortage, see Men's Wear, 9 September 1911, 24 February 1912, 23 March 1912, and Y.F.T. 14 November 1912. For the attractions of millinery, dress-making and newer areas of employment, see MacDonald, ed. Women in the Printing Trades, p 111; the Report of the Lady Inspectors in the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1907 (PP 1908, XII), p 147; Vagabond, "The Pert Young Dressmaker". The latter article claimed that some of the daughters of skilled artisans refused to enter "house slavery" or to mix with "rough factory girls".
87. Report of the Lady Inspectors in the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1907 (PP 1908, XII), p 147. In 1901 4.4 per cent of the female labour force in dressmaking and millinery in Leeds were aged between 10 and 14 and 48.2 per cent between 15 and 24. The corresponding figures in 1911 were 7.0 per cent and 53.6 per cent: calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1901 and 1911, Leeds Occupations. It was suggested, however, that the factories established to manufacture ladies' garments in the pre-war years found it difficult to recruit young workers. The industry was not subject to Trade Board regulations and therefore did not have to pay wages to learners or to keep to a scale of wage rates for young workers: Leeds Weekly Citizen, 10 July 1914.
88. Appendix 1, Tables 1.1 and 1.16.
89. P Stearns, "Working-Class Women in Britain, 1890-1914", in M Vicinus, ed. Suffer and Be Still (Methuen, 1980), pp 110, 113-15, and L A Tilly and J W Scott, Women, Work and Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978), p 176.
90. Stearns, "Working-Class Women", p 113.
91. Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, pp 176-7.
92. P Branca, "A New Perspective on Women's Work: A Comparative Typology", Journal of Social History, IX, 2 (1975), p 147.
93. See above, pp 68- 9.
94. Branca distinguishes married women from widows and compares textile districts with other areas: Branca, Women in Europe, chapter 2. Stearns discusses non-textile factory workers,

but does not differentiate between them. He singles out cotton textile workers as an exceptional group: Stearns, "Working-Class Women", pp 109-12, 114. Tilly and Scott, however, do attempt to compare the pattern of women's work in different towns, although they do not devote very much space to this for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, pp 162-7.

95. L Davidoff, "The Employment of Married Women in England, 1850-1950" (unpublished MA thesis, London School of Economics, 1956), Introduction.
  
96. For example, see V Yans-M cLaughlin, "Patterns of Work and Family Organisation: Buffalo's Italians", in T K Rabb & R I Rotberg, eds. The Family in History: Interdisciplinary Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp 113, 115.
  
97. Ward, thesis, chapter 9.
  
98. The proportion of married and widowed women in the female labour force in the Leeds textile industry rose from 21.4 per cent in 1901 to 25.2 per cent in 1911. In tailoring the corresponding rise was from 16.3 per cent to 21.6 per cent. The absolute number of married and widowed women also increased in both industries between 1901 and 1911. In textiles they rose from 2,043 to 2,638 and in tailoring from 2,281 to 3,441: Census of England and Wales, 1901 and 1911, Leeds Occupations.
  
99. Appendix 1, Table 1.18.
  
100. In the period 1901 to 1911 there was an out migration of over 30,000 people from Leeds and there was no corresponding influx of young women into the city to supplement the native labour force: C J Morgan, "Demographic Change, 1771-1911", in Fraser, ed. A History of Modern Leeds, p 48.
  
101. This is based on the assumption that women would have had plenty of opportunity to work in industrial employment in their youth. For example, see Y.F.T. 14 November 1912.

102. A number of employers, however, claimed that they had no difficulty in attracting young workers. A member of the firm of Messrs J Wilson & Sons, worsted coating manufacturers of Leeds, said that the firm had no problem in attracting young women. This was partly because it was sited in a populated district and partly because the girls' parents were already employed in the mill. He claimed that the girls were more concerned with the wages they could earn, which enabled them to dress well out of work, rather than with the clothes they wore when at work: Y.F.T. 28 November 1912.
103. Calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1911, Leeds Occupations.
104. Ibid.
105. Evidence of Rowland Barran to the Departmental Committee on Truck (PP 1908, LIX), Q 7140. A similar point was made about the printing industry in Leeds: MacDonald, ed. Women in the Printing Trades, p 111.
106. Evidence of Rowland Barran to the Departmental Committee on Truck (PP 1908, LIX), Q 7232. For other references to the employment of married women and widows in clothing factories, see the evidence of H Withey to ibid. Q5605; Y.F.T. 26 August 1892; evidence of Miss M Baines of the Leeds Board of Guardians to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix IV. Minutes of Evidence for Liverpool and Manchester, West Yorkshire, Midland Towns (PP 1909, XLI), QQ 39566-8.
107. Board of Trade, Reports on the Volume and Effects of Recent Immigration. Women's Labour (PP 1894, LXVIII), p 104.
108. In 1901 16.3 per cent of tailoresses were married or widowed: calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1901, Leeds Occupations.
109. Miss Abraham's report on the wool and worsted industry in Yorkshire, for example, noted that, although most employers thought that married women's work was undesirable, they were indifferent about how to stop it: Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 102.

110. It was noted that many married women in Yorkshire often wanted employment, but that some employers thought that they would not keep good time: Y.F.T. 14 November 1912. J H Beever, a silk dresser and representative of the Halifax Trades Council, claimed that widows complained the most, in particular about having rent deducted directly from their wages: see his evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), Q 9858. Married women in the printing trade were thought to have a disruptive effect on other workers: MacDonalld, ed. Women in the Printing Trades, pp 106-8.
111. See Table 1.13 above, p 68.
112. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), pp 132-3. Married women workers in the East End of Leeds textile and rag sorting mills were noted as being drawn from families where men were irregularly employed or had low wages: Y.F.T. 8 August 1890, 28 November 1890, 19 January 1892, and Collet, "Women's Work", p 466. For the general point that irregular work could be a constant feature of married women's lives or a response to specific emergencies, see E G Howarth and M Wilson, West Ham: A Study in Social and Economic Problems (J M Dent, 1907), p 268.
113. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 7. See also Howarth and Wilson, West Ham, p 255.
114. Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 67.
115. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 8. Evidence for London.
116. Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1906, p 140.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid. p 47
119. Ibid. p 141.

120. For reports on homework in different towns, see the Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I); Select Committee on Homework (PP 1908, VIII); Women's Industrial Council, Homework in Liverpool (Liverpool: Northern Publishing Co 1909); M H Irwin, The Problem of Homework (Glasgow: K & R Davison, 5th ed. 1919); T.U.C. Archives, Gertrude Tuckwell coll. item 202, Homework; V De Vessilitsky, The Homeworker and her Outlook (G Bell, 1916). De Vessilitsky's study pointed to the way in which homework differed within London according to district and occupation.
121. Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 43. Another example was given of a woman whose husband brought home good money, but she had eight children, four of whom were under 13, and therefore she said that "nothing comes amiss".
122. Ibid. pp 30-3, 73-4.
123. For example, see the evidence of Joseph Young to the National Insurance (Outworkers) Committee. Minutes of Evidence. Vol 2 (PP 1912-13, XLII), Q 1280. He noted that homeworkers in Leeds were sometimes widows or else unhealthy girls who were often from the poorest class. Isabella Ford also referred to the case of a bedridden mother and sickly daughter who were employed as homeworkers in Leeds: Ford, "Women Workers in the Wholesale Clothing Trade", p 640.
124. For example, one homeworker was reported to be a widow with four children, and another had an unemployed husband and several children who did not earn wages: L.D.N. 17 October and 26 October 1889.
125. There are many examples of this in the local press. One woman, for example, claimed to have worked for Arthur's for many years, both inside and outside the factory: L.D.N. 25 October 1889. See also Y.F.T. 13 December . and 27 December 1889.
126. It has already been noted that children were minded for 1/6 to 2/6 a week.
127. Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Report (PP 1904, XXXIII), p 47. For a similar reference to the strain of mill life, see B L Hutchins, "Statistics of Women's Life and Employment", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXXII, 2 (1909), p 225. W E Yates, a Leeds worsted coating manufacturer

and merchant, claimed that about one half of the 200 women employed in his mill were married. However, only 6 women were aged over 40 and one over 50: evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), QQ 7746-50.

128. For the percentage of widows in selected age groups in Leeds in 1901 and 1911, see Appendix 1, Table 1.16. Women seeking relief in Leeds who were aged under 60 were largely widows, and they tended to take on casual domestic work or lodgers: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 133. For a discussion of the importance of lodgers for widows, see L Davidoff, "The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century England", in S Burman, ed. Fit Work for Women (Croom Helm, 1979), p 83, and M Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp 46-7.
129. Williams and Jones noted that, when some women were in good work, either at home or in a factory, others were encouraged to do baby-sitting or washing for them rather than taking out work from the factories: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 60. The demand for such services must have grown in Leeds in the years preceding the First World War when married women's employment increased in textiles and ready-made tailoring.
130. Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1906, p 140. Miss Squire found that women in Leeds who returned to work very soon after a confinement, and who were in desperate economic circumstances, worked in rag sorting, weaving and tailoring: Report of the Lady Inspectors in the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1907 (PP 1908, XII), p 186.
131. B L Hutchins, "Yorkshire", in C Black, ed. Married Women's Work (G Bell, 1915), especially pp 143-50. Hutchins interviewed 95 women in Yorkshire.
132. Ibid. pp 144-5.
133. Mrs "D 15" had had four babies who were born dead and two who had died between six and eight weeks old. Four children were still living at the time of the enquiry: ibid. p 155.

134. Hannam, "Radcliffe Interviews". Case L. Interview with Ethel Kay, aged 80, in 1974.
135. Mrs "C 2's" mother: Hutchins, "Yorkshire", p 151. Her husband deserted her when she was 26 and she had had nine children, five of whom survived to adulthood. Her husband "never gave her a farthing" and she "was glad to be quit of him".
136. Mrs "A I", a weaver, worked only when her husband was slack: ibid. p 143. Others worked all the time, either because of their husbands' drinking or because the latter had irregular work: ibid. pp 144-50. Sarah Boston's father was a painter. Although her mother took in washing for local professional people all year round, she did extra work in the winter: Hannam, "Radcliffe Interviews". Case B. Interview with Sarah Boston, aged 68, in 1974. Hannah Mitchell recalled how she had to take in extra sewing to cover the expenses of her first child's birth, because her husband was a shop assistant and was therefore unable to increase his wages by overtime: Mitchell, The Hard Way Up, p 100.
137. For the low wages of East End workers, see, for example, Y.F.T. 2 September 1892 and 25 July 1912.
138. Board of Trade, Reports on the Volume and Effects of Recent Immigration. Women's Labour (PP 1894, LXVIII), p 104.
139. For example, see E E Burgess, "Soul of the Leeds Ghetto", Yorkshire Evening News, 27 January and 29 January 1925.
140. R Burman, "The Jewish Woman as Breadwinner: The Changing Value of Women's Work in a Manchester Immigrant Community", Oral History, X, 2 (1982), pp 28-30.
141. Ibid. pp 35-7.
142. Williams and Jones claimed that deserted Jewesses were helped by neighbours: Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 135. See also Burgess, "Soul of the Leeds Ghetto", Y.E.N. 23 January 1925, and Krausz, Leeds Jewry, p 10.



143. For example, see Hutchins, "Statistics of Women's Life and Employment", p 219; Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Appendix V. Memorandum of the Lady Factory Inspectors on the Employment of Mothers in Factories and Workshops (PP 1904, XXXII), pp 125-6; Black, ed. Married Women's Work; Royal Commission on Labour. Fifth and Final Report. Appendix III, the Employment of Women (PP 1894, XXXV), pp 507-9.
144. Hutchins, "Yorkshire", p 135.
145. Ibid. p 148. The same observations were made for Blackburn by the lady factory inspectors: Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Appendix V. Memorandum of the Lady Factory Inspectors (PP 1904, XXXII), p 126.
146. Evidence of John Burnett of the Board of Trade to the Select Committee on Sweating. Fourth Report (PP 1889, XIV, Pt I), Q 32133. Hutchins met with a varied response from women in her Yorkshire survey. Mrs "A 19", a weaver, said that she liked to go out to work and that her mother looked after the children. Mrs "D 16", a blanket winder, stayed at home until her youngest child was nine, but preferred winding to housework: Hutchins, "Yorkshire", pp 147, 155. The majority of women interviewed, however, expressed a preference for remaining at home if there had been enough income from other family members.
147. There were many complaints in the Yorkshire Factory Times that the wives of miners in Hunslet and Wortley, and those of tuners and joiners in Leeds, worked in the mills and clothing factories. See, for example, Y.F.T. 15 May 1891 and 16 June 1893.
148. For references to the employment of younger women with small families, see the Leeds Medical Officer of Health, Annual Report for 1906, p 47, and the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Appendix V. Memorandum of the Lady Factory Inspectors (PP 1904, XXXII), p 143.
149. For the high proportion of married and widowed women in wool and worsted weaving in Leeds, see Appendix 1, Table 1.14. For the high proportion of married women in cotton weaving towns in Lancashire and the range of possible earnings, see the Board of Trade, Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls. Pt 2 (PP 1894, LXXXI), pp 56, 59, 67. Opportunities afforded to women to increase their earnings in wool and worsted weaving are discussed in Clapham, Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp 196-7.

150. Board of Trade, Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls. Pt 2 (PP 1894, LXXXI), pp 54, 67. For a comparison of average wages in the wool and worsted and cotton industries, see L W Papworth and D M Zimmern, Clothing and Textile Trades: Summary Tables (Women's Industrial Council, 1912), Table VII.
151. In Bristol and Liverpool it was largely the wives of low paid workers who worked in factories. They were employed in rough unskilled work which paid low wages: Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), pp 34, 67-8. Harrison noted that in Liverpool it was unusual for respectable married women to work in factories: Harrison, Women's Industries in Liverpool, p 14.
152. G S Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p 83.
153. Board of Trade, Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls. Pt 2 (PP 1894, LXXXI), p 59. See also the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. Appendix V. Memorandum of the Lady Factory Inspectors (PP 1904, XXXII), pp 125-6.
154. The Times, Special Textile Number, 27 June 1913, p 21, and Clapham, Woollen and Worsted Industries, pp 178-9.
155. See Table 1.3 above, p 52.
156. Ibid. There was a decline in the proportion of women employed in all age groups between 1891 and 1901. This can be explained by the economic difficulties of the two staple female trades in Leeds, wool and worsted textiles and ready-made tailoring.
157. W E Yates, for example, claimed that women generally stopped working in the mills when their children started to earn wages: see his evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), Q 7866.
158. Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1913, LXXIX), Table 23. For the extent of married women's employment in different towns, see Table 1.13 above, p 68.

159. See, for example, the Royal Commission on Labour. Fifth and Final Report. Appendix III, the Employment of Women (PP 1894, XXXV), p 479.
160. Y.F.T. 4 December 1891.
161. See the report by Miss Abraham on the wool and worsted industry in the Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al ' on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 102.
162. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Appendix XVII. Report by Williams and Jones on the Effect of Outdoor Relief (PP 1909, XLIII), p 137. For the speeches of union leaders, see below, pp 605 and 608.
163. K Laybourn, "The Attitude of Yorkshire Trade Unions to the Economic and Social Problems of the Great Depression, 1873-96" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1972), chapter 3. Trades with a weak union organisation in Leeds and in Yorkshire as a whole, for example the wool and worsted industry, the boot and shoe trade and ready-made tailoring, experienced a rise in union membership after 1910: see below, pp 507-14.
164. Board of Trade, Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls. Pt 2 (PP 1894, LXXI), p 49.
165. Most of the mothers of the women interviewed in Radcliffe either minded babies or took in washing and ironing for mill workers. Ellen Kay's mother, a weaver, hired a neighbour to do her shopping and to light the fire so that the meal would be hot when she came home: Hannam, "Radcliffe Interviews". Case L. See also Liddington and Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us, pp 58-60, and Board of Trade, Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls. Pt I (PP 1894, LXXXI), p 29.
166. Branca, Women in Europe, p 33.
167. E M Elderton, Report on the English Birth Rate. Pt I. England North of the Humber (University of London. Eugenics Laboratory Memoirs XIX and XX, 1914), pp 113, 210-11, and A MacLaren, "Women's Work and the Regulation of Family Size", History Workshop Journal, 4 (1977).
168. This point is more fully discussed below, chapter 13.

SECTION 3: THE LEEDS LABOUR MOVEMENT ANDWORKING-CLASS WOMEN, 1880-1914CHAPTER 10THE LABOUR MOVEMENT, FEMALE WORKERS AND THEORGANISATION OF WOMEN, 1880-1914Introduction

Throughout the period 1880 to 1914 strike action and union activity among the less skilled, social investigations into the sweated conditions of female employment and the revival of socialism encouraged the labour movement to take a greater interest in the industrial position of working-class women. A consideration of the wider issues raised by the "woman question" was given a further impetus by the activities of the contemporary women's movement and the close relationship that existed in the period between socialists, trade unionists and supporters of women's rights.<sup>1</sup>

The labour movement and the women's movement are often discussed in secondary literature as if they were distinct groups with a different membership and different overall aims.<sup>2</sup> By concentrating on the demand for women's suffrage, historians have characterised the women's movement of the late nineteenth century as having a narrow focus and one which was frequently at odds with the outlook of organised labour.<sup>3</sup> This has been contrasted with the early nineteenth-century feminist movement which had a close relationship with Owenite socialism. Early

feminists sought both to challenge the existence of all hierarchies and to "turn the world upside down".<sup>4</sup> The women's movement of the late nineteenth century, on the other hand, was committed to promoting a respectable image and was largely based on the needs and aspirations of middle-class women. However, recent studies suggest that feminists in the late nineteenth century were also interested in issues that went beyond the removal of barriers to equal competition between the sexes and the achievement of the vote.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, many of their aims were shared by labour activists. Although both movements were organised separately at a national level, individuals were frequently members both of women's groups and of labour organisations, in particular in a local context.<sup>6</sup>

It was not always easy to maintain an active membership of both groups. Individual women often had to make choices about where their commitments and priorities were to lie. Many middle-class women were initially drawn towards work for female suffrage and the opening up of educational and employment opportunities for women. This awakened an interest in social questions and the plight of working-class women which then encouraged them to work within the labour movement.<sup>7</sup> Other women moved from involvement in trade union activity and labour politics towards a full-time commitment to the struggle for the vote. This was prompted by the attitudes that they encountered towards women from within the labour movement.<sup>8</sup> Hannah Mitchell, for example, a working-class member of the Independent Labour Party, found that idealistic, young male socialists still expected her to provide their tea at meetings. She concluded that many young men "believed in 'freedom's cause' but thought

that liberty is a kind of thing 'that don't agree with wives'".<sup>9</sup> It was this experience that drew her towards full-time work in the suffrage movement. Whatever choices individuals made, however, their earlier feminist or socialist activities remained with them and continued to inform their attitudes.<sup>10</sup>

Hannah Mitchell's account of her work within the labour movement goes straight to the heart of the difficulties posed for trade unionists and socialists once women's specific needs as a sex had been raised. Any attempts to challenge the unequal position of women at home or in paid employment raised the possibility of divisions within the working class. This created tensions for those women, from whatever background, who did choose to work within the socialist and labour movement. The main emphasis of these women was the need to improve the industrial position of female workers. They believed that the only way to raise wages or to change work conditions was to organise women into trade unions and to promote industrial legislation.<sup>11</sup> Despite the difficulties they encountered, industrial feminists argued that the best way to achieve any improvements was by cooperating with male trade unionists and by joining in the movement for independent labour politics. In this way they rooted the struggle for change in the lives of working women firmly within the more general struggles of their class.<sup>12</sup>

The emphases and tactics of industrial feminists often varied, but they had a common commitment to improving the work and social conditions of working-class women and were all informed by feminist beliefs. In varying degrees they championed the right of women to work and to have

equal access to production. They also supported the campaign for the extension of the franchise to women, although there were divisions over the tactics and methods that should be adopted.<sup>13</sup> There was greater disagreement, however, over whether to support measures to promote the economic independence of women within the family, and whether questions concerning sexuality and the relationship between the sexes within marriage should be seen as important priorities for socialists.<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the nature of their feminist beliefs, female trade union organisers and socialists came into frequent conflict with male members of the labour movement because of their focus on the specific interests of women workers. Skilled trade unionists were suspicious of any suggestion that women should have equal access to production, or that they should receive state maintenance, which could lead to economic independence within the home.<sup>15</sup> Their hostility rested partly on the material realities of working-class life in the period, since women were low paid and represented the threat of cheap labour.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century it was more difficult for women to combine paid work with domestic duties. This gave added weight to trade union demands for a male family wage which, it was argued, would enable women to escape the hardships of assuming a "double burden".<sup>17</sup> However, the arguments of male trade unionists were not based simply on material interests. They were also deeply rooted in an ideological support for a specific form of family life, in which the responsibility of women for domestic duties and the man's role as breadwinner were seen as a natural division of labour between the sexes, rather than as one that had been socially constructed.<sup>18</sup> Any suggestion that

women should be economically independent, therefore, not only threatened to weaken the male worker's position at the workplace, but also threatened to disrupt family life, to question the working man's masculinity by undermining his breadwinning role and to reduce his power and privileges within the home.<sup>19</sup>

These views were not exclusive to trade unionists. They also permeated the socialist movement which was equally reluctant to challenge women's unequal position within production and within the family. Although individual socialist groups differed in their attitudes towards the importance of the family and the "woman question" in the struggle for socialism, only a minority of individual socialists were willing to give priority to women's issues in their day-to-day politics and in their wider theoretical perspective.<sup>20</sup> Recent studies have explained the socialist movement's neglect of sex divisions by pointing to a narrowing of the focus of socialism in the 1880s and to the importance that a stable family life assumed in socialist ideology. Barbara Taylor suggests that under the influence of Marxism the socialist movement came to concentrate on the economic class struggle at the point of production.<sup>21</sup> Socialist emphasis, therefore, was on the need to break down barriers within the working class, to foster class consciousness and to stress the importance of developing an independent political party.<sup>22</sup> In this context, a recognition of women's oppression was seen as a threat to class unity. Moreover, questions relating to power relationships between the sexes and their sexuality were seen as peripheral to the main focus of socialist struggle and capable of resolution after socialism had been achieved.<sup>23</sup>



There were men and women, in particular in the Socialist League and the ILP, who were keen to explore the transformation of all areas of life under socialism as the Owenites had done before them.<sup>24</sup> They sought to make connections between politics, work, culture, sexuality and family relationships. Moreover, they attempted to equate personal experience with political activity as they tried to live out a "new way of life" in the shell of the old society.<sup>25</sup> The ILP encouraged the involvement of women in socialist politics on terms of equal partnership with men. Local branches attempted to reach all members of the working-class community by combining leisure pursuits and cultural events with socialist propaganda.<sup>26</sup> Hannah Mitchell's autobiography reminds us, however, that the rhetoric of companionship did not imply a challenge to the sex division of labour and could founder when it came to decisions about who was to attend meetings and who was to make the tea.<sup>27</sup>

Yeo suggests that by the mid 1890s the ILP's focus also narrowed to a concentration on the business side of the movement and to the achievement of specific reforms. He argues that such reforms came to be seen as ends in themselves, rather than as a means to improve the quality of life.<sup>28</sup> He explains this development by the failure to gain electoral successes and by the setbacks to trade unionism in the period. He argues that this encouraged an emphasis on building up electoral machinery and propaganda for material reforms in order to win the working-class vote.<sup>29</sup> However, the ILP's failure to give priority to women's needs and to challenge their unequal position was not simply the result of practical problems. It was also deeply rooted in the

ILP's attitude towards family life. Although a minority of men and women tried to explore the possibilities of communal child care and a change in sex relations, the majority of socialists were in favour of bolstering up the private working-class family. This was thought to provide the main emotional bulwark against the harshness of industrial capitalism.<sup>30</sup> An essential aspect of family life for the ILP was the presence of the woman within the home and her full-time commitment to housework and child care. This was not merely viewed as a practical necessity, but was also seen as something desirable because it was natural. This emphasis on "nature" precluded any serious attempt to challenge the sex division of labour. Rowan points out, for example, that Hardie talked of the "restoration of true motherhood" and nature in the same breath. He claimed that he "did not believe in any substitute for the child's mother, nor did he believe in the gymnasium as a substitute for the forest as the training ground of the normal youngster".<sup>31</sup> This emphasis on motherhood was strengthened in the early twentieth century as the ILP and the Labour Party came to share in the more general concern over the high rate of infant mortality and the poor state of child health.<sup>32</sup> The Labour Party did stress the need to raise the material conditions of working-class life if child health and welfare were to be improved, but still saw the presence of the mother within the home as crucial to ensure the child's physical well-being and moral welfare.<sup>33</sup>

The sex division of labour within the family was not thought, however, to imply inequality, since each sex could contribute equally to the labour movement from their separate spheres.<sup>34</sup> The concept of separate but

equal spheres was common to the socialist, trade union and women's movement and provided a link between them. Members of the women's movement, for example, argued that women should have the vote because they would introduce compassion and caring to politics. They urged that women should be introduced to work in areas which involved the welfare of women and children, such as the factory inspectorate, since women would be more able than men to sympathise and to relate to members of their own sex.<sup>35</sup>

The socialist vision of a family life with women at the centre rested on the assumption that there was a harmony of interests between men and women in the working class who were engaged in a common struggle against class exploitation.<sup>36</sup> It refused to recognise that women's economic dependence within the family ensured their subordination to the male breadwinner which could cause tensions, rather than unity, within the family. A belief in the importance of women's place within the home, and the commitment to the achievement of a male family wage, combined to prevent both the political and the industrial wings of the labour movement from challenging the sex division of labour. It discouraged them from taking up the issue of women's economic independence before 1914, whether by seeking equal rights in production or by supporting a system of family allowances.<sup>37</sup> Their policies did little, therefore, to improve the position of female-headed households or that of families where the male breadwinner had little possibility of earning a family wage. Moreover, the Labour Party failed to pursue measures which would have given women the choice of combining paid work with family life.<sup>38</sup>

Women working within the two major female organisations in the labour

movement during this period, the Women's Trade Union League and the Women's Labour League, did raise the question of women's economic independence. However, they were forced to make compromises in their feminism because of their commitment to cooperation with male trade unionists and to the promotion of working-class unity.<sup>39</sup> The WTUL, for example, accepted protective legislation, even when it harmed the interests of women workers, in order to maintain good relations with skilled male trade unionists.<sup>40</sup> Also, whenever conflicts arose over women's autonomy or points of policy between the WLL and the Labour Party, the mainstream policies of the latter tended to prevail.<sup>41</sup> One of the fiercest battles within the WLL was fought over the issue of women's economic independence and whether there should be a state endowment of motherhood.<sup>42</sup> Many women in the movement opposed this, not only on the grounds that it would conflict with the aims of male trade unionists, but also because they too supported the notion of a male breadwinner. They therefore feared any measures that might reduce a man's sense of responsibility towards his family.<sup>43</sup> The supporters of women's economic independence were defeated and the WLL concentrated instead on encouraging women's involvement in labour politics so that they could promote measures which would improve the conditions of domestic life.<sup>44</sup> This can be contrasted with the Women's Cooperative Guild which, feeling less constrained by loyalty to the broader cooperative movement, argued that women should transcend their domestic responsibilities to take an interest in the world beyond the family.<sup>45</sup>

Rowan argues, therefore, that the tendency of the Labour Party and of the labour movement as a whole was to "defend the status quo in which

men were structurally in a position of power over women" both in the home and at the workplace.<sup>46</sup> It is significant that when the Labour Party did take up a women's issue after 1912, the demand for the vote, it chose a campaign which aimed to give women formal political equality. This could lay the basis for women's involvement in building up Labour Party organisation, but did not pose a fundamental challenge to the privileged position of men within the workplace and within the home.<sup>47</sup>

It is difficult to assess how far the failure to prioritise the needs of working-class women, or to challenge male privileges at the workplace and within the home, seriously reduced the appeal of trade unionism and labour politics for women, since this theme has been neglected in most standard texts of labour history.<sup>48</sup> Recent studies suggest, however, that the effects were complex. In mining areas, for example, where there were few opportunities for female employment and where close links existed between the family, the workplace and the wider community, women readily supported male workers in their industrial struggles and identified a common interest between the sexes.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, women married to more skilled workers often supported the demand for a male family wage which would enable them to shed their "double burden".<sup>50</sup> In many working-class communities the worlds of men and women, both inside and outside the workplace, were quite separate and both sexes were reluctant to challenge gender boundaries.<sup>51</sup> The importance of mutual self help between women in working-class neighbourhoods could often provide an alternative to the state welfare services demanded by women in the Labour Party.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, many women, in particular those

from skilled workers' families, welcomed the idea of a private family life and were critical of socialist demands for more communal facilities. As Rowan notes, women associated the need to use communal facilities, such as washhouses, with hardship and poverty. They therefore sought a private family life which was free from the need to share with neighbours and free from the interference of any outside inspection.<sup>53</sup>

These examples indicate the importance of examining the tensions between sex and class in the labour movement at a local level. They reveal the need to take account of the specific sex division of labour, the type of work available, levels of union organisation and traditions of political activity in different local areas. In Leeds, for example, although the views of socialists and trade unionists reflected the concerns and terms of debate expressed at a national level, their emphases often differed from those of their national counterparts. These differences arose both from the development of an individual's own ideas and also from the specific economic and social structure of Leeds itself.<sup>54</sup> The question of women's employment, for example, was a particularly important one for the labour movement in the city. Women workers played a crucial role in two of the major industries in Leeds and were not confined to service work as they were in many other cities.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, any attempt to address the specific problems of women workers had to take place within a union movement dominated by long-established skilled workers' organisations. These were reluctant to embrace independent labour politics, let alone to take up questions of sex oppression.<sup>56</sup> It is also at a local level that the interrelationship

between different groups, and the complex loyalties that this produced, can thoroughly be explored. Ellen Malos's study of Bristol, for example, shows that there were divisions of interest within classes and political parties along lines of sex, and indeed between members of the same sex, while women's organisations could support each other across class and party lines.<sup>57</sup>

Historians interested in the development of the labour movement in Leeds have either omitted the female worker altogether or have referred to her only in passing.<sup>58</sup> E P Thompson's important study of independent labour politics in Leeds explains the movement's "arrested development" in terms of the diversity of trades, which reduced a sense of shared grievances and created divisions based on skill, and by the more subjective failure of local leadership.<sup>59</sup> He gives little attention, however, to the importance of sex divisions in weakening working-class unity. Woodhouse's more recent study of Leeds does provide an exception to the general neglect of the woman worker in studies of the city's working class. He extends Thompson's argument concerning the importance of skill divisions in the working class to include differences based on living standards and sex. Woodhouse argues that the labour movement in Leeds failed to come to terms with the "role of women in the domestic and industrial economy".<sup>60</sup> He suggests that this had important consequences for the "level of union organisation and class consciousness" in the city.<sup>61</sup> He does not follow up this statement, however, by a systematic analysis of the labour movement's response to women workers. Moreover, its neglect

of the female worker is never fully explained.

In the following chapters the tension between the identification of women's specific needs and the emphasis on class solidarity in the Leeds labour movement, the extent to which this hampered any change in women's social and industrial position and the question of whether it adversely affected women's involvement in trade unionism and labour politics is examined for the period 1880 to 1914. The first chapter provides an account of the development of women's trade union organisation at a national level and the strategies that female union organisers chose to pursue. The second examines the development of women's trade unionism in Leeds and the extent of their involvement in local politics. The chapter is organised into three chronological periods: the labour unrest of 1889 to 1890; the long period of difficulty in the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century; and the second period of unrest between 1910 and 1914. The emphasis throughout is on the organising activities of men and women at a local level and the extent to which this showed any results by the end of the period. A chronological approach has been adopted for this chapter in order to give a sense of change over time. It also allows some account to be taken of the relationship between the organisation of women and the context in which this took place, notably the struggle for independent labour politics and the increasing demands for women's suffrage. The final chapters attempt to explain the continuing weakness of women's trade union organisation in the city. They examine the structural problems posed by the industries in which they were



involved, the characteristics of women as workers and the response of the local labour movement to the plight of the female industrial worker. Wherever possible, the views of the women themselves are discussed. Finally, an assessment is made of the importance of women's weak trade union organisation for the strength of trade unionism and independent labour politics in the city.

Women's trade union organisation in the United Kingdom, 1880-1914

Women concerned to raise the industrial status of female workers in the period 1880 to 1914 emphasised the importance of trade union organisation. They recognised, however, that women's weak position in the labour market and their family commitments posed considerable difficulties in the way of successful organisation.<sup>62</sup> After the labour unrest among less skilled workers in the late 1880s and the widening of union membership, female trade union leaders became more confident that organising problems could be overcome.<sup>63</sup> Many of the unions which were established in the late 1880s and early 1890s were open to both sexes, while the introduction of mechanisation into more skilled trades was forcing a number of craft unions to reassess their membership policies.<sup>64</sup> In this context, Lady Dilke and other leaders of the WTUL were encouraged to believe that the best way forward for female organisation lay in cooperation with male trade unionists, in changing male attitudes and in the integration of women workers into the mainstream labour movement by promoting mixed-sex trade unions.<sup>65</sup> Lady Dilke also emphasised the important role that leisured women could play in this development. She argued that they had the time to give

to organising work and could provide help in the business side of trade unionism which working women often found difficult.<sup>66</sup>

The WTUL linked its organising activities to campaigns to extend factory legislation. As early as the mid 1880s the League had changed its policy from one of suspicion or hostility towards protective legislation for women to one of support. This was partly to cement the League's alliance with male trade unionists, but it also came from the hope that legislation would raise women's industrial position which would, in turn, encourage trade unionism.<sup>67</sup> Mary Macarthur was a particularly strong advocate of this policy. She argued that women's low pay made them reluctant to join trade unions which then ensured that their pay would remain low. She thought that the only way to break this vicious circle was by outside interference in the shape of minimum wage legislation.<sup>68</sup> This support for legislation must also be seen in the context of the emphasis of the contemporary socialist movement, to which many industrial feminists belonged, on the regenerative potential of state action in improving social conditions.<sup>69</sup>

During the 1890s the WTUL encouraged all unions with female members to affiliate. In turn, it offered to provide practical advice on the difficulties of recruiting women and to send individual members to help in organising drives. These could involve up to two weeks intensive work in a local area.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, the League launched campaigns to extend existing legislation and to introduce new measures by organising propaganda meetings, leading deputations to government departments and collecting evidence to put before official enquiries.<sup>71</sup>

At first, its activities were largely confined to London, but by the mid 1890s it was more heavily involved in provincial attempts to organise women workers.<sup>72</sup>

During the period from 1888 to 1914 the number of female trade unionists in the United Kingdom did increase substantially. They were drawn from a wider range of occupations than before and they were increasingly organised in unions which catered for both sexes. Taken together these changes are usually seen as representing a breakthrough in female trade unionism and a vindication of the WTUL's policies.<sup>73</sup>

Trade union membership increased rapidly among both men and women in the two periods of labour unrest, 1888 to 1890 and 1910 to 1914.<sup>74</sup> In the 1880s less skilled workers in trades barely touched by union organisation, as well as those from more organised industries, took advantage of an upturn in the business cycle to demand an improvement in pay and basic conditions of work which also stimulated an interest in trade unionism.<sup>75</sup> The rapid gains in union membership were not sustained, however, and the numbers organised either declined or rose only slowly until the second outbreak of unrest after 1910, when a substantial increase in female trade union membership took place.<sup>76</sup> By the outbreak of war, therefore, the number of women in trade unions stood at approximately 357,956 compared with 36,900 in 1886.<sup>77</sup>

A major development for women workers in the period lay in the type of union into which they were organised. Most trade unions of the 1880s, with the exception of some of the textile unions, catered for members

of only one sex. The handful of women organised in trades outside textiles, therefore, were found in small all-female societies which were based on specific groups of workers in a local area, many of whom could claim a degree of skill and training.<sup>78</sup> These societies were usually established under the auspices of the Women's Provident and Protective League. They offered friendly benefits and discouraged strike action.<sup>79</sup> After 1889, however, women were much more likely to be organised in unions catering for both sexes. Many of the newly formed general and industrial unions were open to women from the start. Moreover, in the 1890s some long-established craft unions also began to change their membership policies and recruited women and less skilled male workers.<sup>80</sup> The existence of mixed-sex trade unions did not by itself, however, necessarily imply an increase in female membership or a progressive step towards a solution of the problem of weak trade union organisation among women. A more open membership policy among craft unions was often a thinly disguised attempt to protect the privileged position of male workers and only a half-hearted effort was made to recruit women.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, the women themselves were often deeply suspicious of the unions' motives.<sup>82</sup>

The success of general unions in recruiting female workers was also limited. Faced with an employers' counter-attack and a trade depression in the 1890s, they concentrated on retaining groups of workers with a strong industrial position. The Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union, for example, had only 800 female members in 1906 out of a total membership of 32,000, despite an early enthusiasm

for the comprehensive organisation of all less skilled workers.<sup>83</sup> It was in this context that Mary Macarthur established the all-female general union, the National Federation of Women Workers, as late as 1906. She argued that there was still a need for a union which would aim a vigorous organising campaign specifically at female workers and which would take their particular needs into account. Her ideal, however, remained the promotion of mixed-sex trade unions.<sup>84</sup>

It would be misleading to place too much emphasis on the obvious successes of trade unions in recruiting female members in the period, for by 1913 organised women represented approximately only seven per cent of all female workers. A large number of women were still employed in small workshops, in the home or in indoor domestic service, areas which were almost impossible to organise because of the isolation of the worker.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, important industrial occupations such as ready-made clothing, which were increasingly based on factory methods of production, still had a very low level of trade union organisation among women by the outbreak of war.<sup>86</sup> It is also difficult to assess to what extent the gains made in membership in the period after 1910 would have been as short lived as those of the late 1880s if the war had not intervened. After a series of strikes in London in 1911, for example, recruitment to the NFWW was very rapid, but numbers slumped in many branches as soon as the initial excitement was over.<sup>87</sup>

Female trade unionists were drawn from a wider range of occupations in

1914 than they had been in the 1880s. In 1886 women workers in the cotton trade accounted for 81.6 per cent of all female trade unionists, but this share had fallen to 58.6 per cent in 1913.<sup>88</sup> Women workers in the textile trade as a whole, however, continued to account for a disproportionately large share of all female trade unionists. Gains in linen, jute and the wool and worsted industries meant that 72 per cent of organised women in 1913 were still drawn from some branch of textiles.<sup>89</sup> The remainder were largely recruited from tailoresses, shop assistants, clerks and general unskilled factory workers, who were frequently enrolled in the NFWW.<sup>90</sup>

Overall, therefore, there were considerable advances in the organisation of female workers in the period 1888 to 1914. Moreover, the League's policy of cooperation with male trade unionists and its advocacy of mixed-sex organisations did offer the possibility of stronger trade unionism for women and their integration into the wider labour movement. At the same time, gains in membership were tempered by the continuing weakness of trade unionism in some major female occupations. Also, by putting cooperation with skilled male workers first, the League frequently had to compromise its more feminist aims.<sup>91</sup> The advantages women had gained in single-sex unions, such as experience in leadership, were not usually reproduced in mixed-sex organisations which rarely focussed on women's specific needs. The belief that male attitudes provided a stumbling block and could be changed by persuasion tended to draw attention away from the extent to which active antagonism to female workers was structurally embedded in the sex division of labour at the workplace and within the home. The League, therefore, underestimated the

difficulties involved in changing such attitudes.

The most recent histories of women's trade unionism focus on the activities of the main national organisations, the WTUL and the NFWW.<sup>92</sup> They provide a useful outline of "key events" and indicate the importance of the WTUL in providing a focus for women's trade union organisation and in drawing attention to the specific needs of female workers. However, the narrative approach adopted means that important questions are either not raised at all or only briefly mentioned.<sup>93</sup> There is little discussion, for example, of the possible contradictions between the League's assertion of women's right to work and the strategy of collaboration with male trade unionists who had a very different view of women's role in production. Similarly neglected is the question of whether middle-class female leaders experienced tensions in their relationship with skilled male trade union leaders or with rank and file women.<sup>94</sup>

An emphasis on the London based organisations and the leading female personalities, along with a heavy reliance on their minute books and journals, means that the developments in women's trade unionism are seen through the eyes of the central bodies and their leadership.<sup>95</sup> This reduces any sustained criticism of the effectiveness of the policies and strategies of the national organisations. Moreover, it encourages historians to adopt the emphases of the contemporary women's organisations and therefore to concentrate on the barriers placed in the way of effective female organisation by the hostility of skilled trade unionists towards women workers.<sup>96</sup> Such an approach fails to

take sufficient account of the sustained organising work undertaken by men and women at a local level. It also sidesteps the need to look beyond hostile male attitudes and the problems posed by women's "dual role" for an explanation of the weakness of female trade unionism.

Sally Alexander suggests that "women's vulnerability within the trade union movement" can only be understood if the relationship between the labour process, the family and consciousness is explored systematically.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, this can be carried out most fruitfully by way of detailed local studies.



## CHAPTER 10, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated.)

1. For the increasing concern shown by trade unionists over the organisation of women and their sweated conditions of work, see N C Seldon, Women in British Trade Unions, 1874-1976 (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1978), Chapter 2, and S Boston, Women Workers and the Trade Unions (Davis Poynter, 1980), Chapter 2. The socialist movement's interest in the "woman question" came partly from the writings of Marx and Engels and partly from the concern of individuals that socialism should mean the "transformation" of all areas of life: see, for example, R Coward, Patriarchal Precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), Chapters 5 and 6, and S Rowbotham and J Weeks, Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis (Pluto Press, 1977), especially pp 16-18. The revival of the organised women's movement after 1900 and its demand for the vote also encouraged the labour movement to consider women's rights. Rowbotham suggests that the women's movement "represented a challenge to all aspects of patriarchal hegemony": Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 19-20. For a discussion of the arguments within the Labour Party over women's suffrage, see C Rover, Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain (RKP 1967), pp 146-70.
2. For a discussion of this point, see Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 118-19. The most recent book on the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies discusses the relationship between that body and the Labour Party without giving detailed consideration to the common membership of the two organisations: L P Hume, The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, 1897-1914 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), Chapter 6.
3. For examples of books which concentrate on the suffrage campaign, see R Fulford, Votes for Women (Faber & Faber, 1958); A Rosen, Rise Up, Women! (RKP 1974); D Morgan, Suffragists and Liberals: The Politics of Women's Suffrage (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975). For the argument that the equal rights campaign was often at odds with the labour movement, see M Ramelson, The Petticoat Rebellion: A Century of Struggle for Women's Rights (Lawrence & Wishart, 1972), Chapters 2 and 14.
4. B Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem (Virago, 1983), p 275.
5. Barbara Caine, for example, argues that the women's movement was concerned with the private domestic lives of women, in particular marriage. She claims that authors have concentrated on the ways

in which women sought to gain access to the public sphere without "recognising the extent to which this access was expected to improve the situation in the domestic sphere": B Caine, "Feminism, Suffrage and the Nineteenth-Century English Women's Movement", Women's Studies International Forum, V, 6 (1982), p 537. See also S Jeffreys, "'Free from All Uninvited Touch of Man': Women's Campaigns Around Sexuality, 1880-1914", Women's Studies Internat. Forum, V, 6 (1982). Jeffreys points to the involvement of women in sexual purity campaigns and suggests that they attempted to challenge and set limits to male sexual behaviour.

6. For examples of common membership, see Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, p 18; E Malos, "Bristol Women in Action, 1839-1919", in I Bild, ed. Bristol's Other History (Bristol: Bristol Broadsides, 1983), pp 114-26; J Liddington, "Looking for Mrs Cooper", North West Labour History Society Bulletin, 7 (1980-81).
  
7. For the early interest of some middle-class female trade union leaders in women's suffrage, see Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions, Chapter 2. Hilda Martindale, a lady factory inspector, noted how her mother's interest in women's suffrage and women's rights in the 1870s and 1880s provided a context for her own choice of career: H Martindale, From one Generation to Another, 1839-1944. A Book of Memoirs (G Allen & Unwin, 1944), pp 31-2. For further examples, see Malos, "Bristol Women in Action", pp 114-15.
  
8. The most well-known women to leave labour politics for the suffrage movement were Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. They had both been active in the Manchester Independent Labour Party: see E Pankhurst, My Own Story (Eveleigh Nash, 1914), Chapters 1, 2, 3. Selina Cooper, a mill worker and suffragist, was active in the trade union and socialist movement in Lancashire, but gave most of her energies to the suffrage movement between 1900 and 1914: Liddington, "Looking for Mrs Cooper", pp 26-8. Annie Kenney, a Lancashire mill worker, moved from trade union activity to a full-time commitment to women's suffrage: for an account of her work, see S Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement (Virago, 1977, originally published, 1931), pp 185-6. For further examples of working-class women who became heavily involved in the women's suffrage campaign, see J Liddington, "Women Cotton Workers and the Suffrage Campaign: The Radical Suffragists in Lancashire, 1893-1914", in S Burman, ed. Fit Work for Women (Croom Helm, 1979), and D Nield Chew, Ada Nield Chew: The Life and Writings of a Working Woman (Virago, 1982), pp 42-54.
  
9. H Mitchell, The Hard Way Up: The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel (Virago, 1977), p 96.

10. Ibid. Chapter 11; Liddington, "Looking for Mrs Cooper", pp 28-33; Nield Chew, Ada Nield Chew, pp 42-3. For the way in which the relationship between sex and class preoccupied many women in the suffrage movement, see T Davis et al, "'The Public Face of Feminism': Early Twentieth-Century Writings on Women's Suffrage", in R Johnson et al, eds. Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics (Hutchinson, 1982), pp 320-2.
  
11. For example, see Lady Dilke, "Trades Unionism for Women", New Review, January (1890), p 51, and Lady Dilke, The Industrial Position of Women (Women's Trade Union League, 1894), p 14. Female trade union leaders did, however, have different emphases. Emilie Holyoake, secretary of the WTUL between 1893 and 1894, stressed that trade union organisation was the only way to ensure that protective legislation would be adhered to: E A Holyoake, "The Need of Organisation among Women", in F W Galton, ed. Workers on Their Industries (Swan Sonnenschein, 1894). On the other hand, Mary Macarthur, secretary of the WTUL from 1903, saw industrial legislation as the key to improving trade union organisation among women: M Macarthur, "Trade Unions", in G M Tuckwell et al, Women in Industry from Seven Points of View (Duckworth, 1908), pp 73-5.
  
12. Lady Dilke, president of the WTUL from 1886 to 1903, and Mary Macarthur both supported these policies. For example, see Lady Dilke, "Trades Unionism for Women", pp 43-4, and her speech to Bradford textile workers reported in the Yorkshire Factory Times, 17 October 1890; M Macarthur, "Can Men be Free", Woman Worker, 12 July 1908, p 2; M A Hamilton, Mary Macarthur: A Biographical Sketch (Leonard Parsons, 1925), Chapter 3.
  
13. For example, Mary Macarthur and Margaret Bondfield argued for the need to gain adult suffrage which would enable all men and women to vote after a short residence qualification. They opposed the emphasis on votes for women on the same terms as men because this would not have enfranchised most working women. Margaret Bondfield, assistant secretary of the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants until 1908, and a member of the Social Democratic Federation, was president of the Adult Suffrage Society. Mary Macarthur helped to establish the People's Suffrage Federation as a forum whereby men and women could work together for adult suffrage: Woman Worker, 27 October 1909, p 392. Other women working in the labour movement, including Isabella Ford and Ada Nield Chew, along with some male members of the ILP such as Ben Turner, supported the demand for votes for women on the same terms as men. They argued that it was an important principle and a necessary first step towards universal adult suffrage: for the views of Isabella Ford and Ben Turner, see the Labour Party, Annual Conference Reports for 1904 and 1908, and for those of Ada Nield Chew, see Nield Chew, Ada Nield Chew, pp 42-54. The different arguments in the debate are rehearsed in P Snowden, "Votes on Any Terms", and M Bondfield, "Votes for All", Woman Worker, 19 June 1908, pp 70-1.

14. Many of the women who sought to raise the industrial position of working women, including Mary Macarthur and Margaret Bondfield, were members of the Fabian Women's Group. The latter aimed to achieve economic independence for women and argued that state allowances for mothers was one way to achieve this: S Alexander, "Introduction", in M Pember Reeves, Round About a Pound a Week (Virago, 1979, originally published, 1913), pp xv-xvii. A large number of Women's Labour League members, however, including Margaret MacDonald, were opposed to mothers' allowances on the grounds that they would affect male wages adversely and would undermine their parental responsibilities: C Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party, 1906-20", Feminist Review, 12 (1982), p 80. There was a considerable controversy among feminists in the pre-war years over the rights of married women to seek paid employment and the desirability of this. Mary Macarthur supported family allowances in the hope that this would enable mothers to remain within the home. Both she and Margaret MacDonald tended to glorify motherhood and the special qualities needed for the task, and they did not approve of mothers working unless they were forced to: see Woman Worker, 27 October 1909, and J R MacDonald, Margaret Ethel MacDonald (George Allen & Unwin, 6th ed. 1919), p 392. Other women, including Ada Nield Chew, Mrs Pankhurst and various women's suffrage workers, thought that women should have the right to work whether they were mothers or not. They argued that motherhood alone did not necessarily fulfill women and that nurseries could be a positive benefit for children: see Nield Chew, Ada Nield Chew, pp 230-4, and the series of newspaper articles in the Trades Union Congress Archives, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, item 23, Married Women's Labour. Only a minority of female socialists were interested in sexuality: Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 118-21, and Davis et al, "'The Public Face of Feminism'", pp 312-15.
15. B Drake, Women in Trade Unions (Labour Research Department, 1920), pp 31-8 and Pt 3, Chapter 5; Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party", p 80; H Land, "The Family Wage", Feminist Review, 6 (1980), pp 63-7. For the views of labour men after the First World War when the campaign for family allowances was more fully developed, see J Lewis, The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-39 (Croom Helm, 1980), Chapter 6.
16. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, Pt 3, Chapter 5.
17. B Tillett, "Trade Unions for Women", Women's Trade Union Review, October (1896), noted the burdens of combining housework and paid employment. For a discussion of the decline in the opportunities for married women to work and the effects of rising male wages and living standards on their motives for working, see L A Tilly and J W Scott, Women, Work and Family (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978), pp 194-205, and Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem, pp 105-11.

18. R Gray, The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Britain, c 1850-1914 (Macmillan, 1981), p 39. Margaret MacDonald, for example, claimed that a woman's work in life was different from that of a man. A woman was sacred and different in essence from a man: MacDonald, Margaret Ethel MacDonald, p 157.
  
19. Land, "The Family Wage", pp 58-9. Editorials in the Yorkshire Factory Times against married women's employment also noted the disruption caused to family life and the blow to the man's bread-winning role: for example, see Y.F.T. 16 December 1892, 16 February 1894, 16 March 1894, 15 January 1904. For a range of views from trade unionists, feminists and middle-class social commentators on the effects of married women's work in the period just preceding the First World War, see the TUC Archives, Gertrude Tuckwell Coll. Item 23, Married Women's Labour.
  
20. The views of this minority are discussed in Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, especially pp 63-75.
  
21. Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem, pp 286-7. See also Coward, Patriarchal Precedents, pp 135-6, 154-8. Coward notes the way in which Marxist theory in the period emphasised the economic class struggle.
  
22. "A History of Leeds Labour Party", Leeds Weekly Citizen, 1 February 1918, and T Woodhouse, "The Working Class", in D Fraser, ed. A History of Modern Leeds (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp 365-6, 382.
  
23. For the views of the Social Democratic Federation, See K Hunt, "Women and the Social Democratic Federation: Some Notes on Lancashire", in N.W. Lab. Hist. Soc. Bull. 7 (1980-1), especially pp 57-8. Yeo also argues that the ILP narrowed its focus in the mid 1890s to bread and butter issues and the establishment of electoral machinery. He claims, therefore, that it was less concerned with wider social questions and the making of socialists: S Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-96", History Workshop Journal, 4 (1977), pp 41-6.
  
24. Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 63-75, and Yeo, "The Religion of Socialism", pp 30-7.
  
25. Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 72, 104, and Malos, "Bristol Women in Action", p 118.

26. Yeo, "The Religion of Socialism", pp 25-6, 37. Contemporaries frequently referred to the comradeship between men and women in the ILP, in particular in Yorkshire: for example, see the speech by Katharine Bruce Glasier reported in the Labour Leader, 9 April 1914, and B Turner, Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers (Heckmondwike: Labour Pioneer and Factory Times, 1920), p 5.
  
27. Mitchell, The Hard Way Up, p 96.
  
28. Yeo, "The Religion of Socialism", pp 41-3.
  
29. Ibid.
  
30. The SDF claimed that the rearing of the next generation was a communal duty and therefore advocated boarding schools which would foster ideals of "collective citizenship". This differed from the view of the mainstream ILP which is summed up by Katharine Bruce Glasier's praise of the emotional warmth of the nuclear family: C Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!' The State, the Labour Movement and Working-Class Mothers, 1900-18", in R Brunt and C Rowan, eds. Feminism, Culture and Politics (Lawrence & Wishart, 1982), pp 63-5.
  
31. Ibid., p 65. Hardie's speech was reported in the Women's Labour League, Annual Report for 1912.
  
32. A Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", Hist. Workshop J. 5 (1978), pp 17-18.
  
33. The Labour Party supported Margaret McMillan's platform for children. This included medical inspection and treatment in schools and clinics, public baths and school dining halls: Woman Worker, 5 June 1908. For the importance of the mother's role within the home, see E Snowden, The Feminist Movement (Collins, 1913), p 204, and Mary Macarthur's suffrage report in the Woman Worker, 12 January 1910, p 210.
  
34. Mrs J R MacDonald, "Women's Labour League", Woman Worker, November (1907), p 47, and the speech by Mrs Thompson, a Labour member of the Leeds Board of Guardians: L.W.C. 21 October 1911. She argued the need for Labour to have a woman's point of view.
  
35. For the emphasis of the women's movement on separate spheres, see Caine, "Feminism, Suffrage and the Nineteenth-Century English Women's Movement", pp 545-6, and Hume, The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, pp 194-5. Hume suggests that the NUWSS argument that women needed the vote to protect their interests as wives, mothers and workers had appeal for the labour movement because it did not threaten the male breadwinning role. For arguments

- concerning the need for women inspectors, see I O Ford, Women as Factory Inspectors and Certifying Surgeons (Women's Co-operative Guild, 1898), and A M Anderson, Women in the Factory: An Administrative Adventure, 1893-1921 (John Murray, 1922), pp 6-13.
36. Coward, Patriarchal Precedents, p 155.
  37. Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party", pp 82-3, and Land, "The Family Wage", pp 64-7.
  38. For a critique of the family wage and the failure of the Labour Party to pursue measures which would have given women some choice, see M Barrett and M McIntosh, "The Family Wage", in E Whitelegg et al , The Changing Experience of Women (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), pp 76-83, and S Alexander, "Introduction", in M Herzog, From Hand to Mouth: Women and Piecework (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p 33.
  39. S Alexander, "The National Federation of Women Workers and the Women's Trade Union League" (unpublished paper presented to a conference on Women and Trade Unions, Ruskin, 1983). The fore-runner of the WTUL was the Women's Protective and Provident League. Its name was changed to the Women's Trade Union and Provident League in 1889 and to the Women's Trade Union League in 1891.
  40. Ibid.
  41. Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!'", p 74. Margaret MacDonald thought that the WLL should not pass any resolution on women's suffrage so that they could remain united and continue to influence the Labour Party: MacDonald, Margaret Ethel MacDonald, p 208. Not all the branches of the League felt the same way. For the views of the Leeds group, see below, pp 638-40.
  42. Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party", pp 79-80.
  43. Ibid. p 80.
  44. Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!'", p 74.
  45. Ibid.
  46. Ibid. p 66.

47. Hinton, for example, notes that the support given by suffragists to labour candidates in pre-war bye-elections "anticipated the crucial role that women were to play in building up Labour's constituency organisation after the war": J Hinton, Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement, 1867-1974 (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), p 79.
  
48. The appeal of the Labour Party to female voters is either not mentioned at all or is dealt with only briefly in the standard texts: see, for example, H Clegg, A Fox and A F Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Vol I, 1889-1910 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Hinton, Labour and Socialism; E H Hunt, British Labour History, 1815-1914 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), pp 329-34.
  
49. A John, "Scratching the Surface. Women, Work and Coalmining History in England and Wales", Oral History, X, 2 (1982), pp 13-16, and E Jameson, "Imperfect Unions: Class and Gender in Cripple Creek, 1894-1904", in M Cantor and B Laurie, eds. Class, Sex and the Woman Worker (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977).
  
50. For example, see C Black, Married Women's Work (G Bell, 1915), p 195; Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 34; A Harrison, Women's Industries in Liverpool (Liverpool: Liverpool University, 1904), p 14. Taylor argues that women in Nottingham tended to accept their role in the home, in particular given their experience of the labour market: S Taylor, "The Effects of Marriage on the Job Possibilities for Women and the Ideology of the Home: Nottingham, 1890-1930", Oral Hist. V, 2 (1977), p 55.
  
51. E Ross, "Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London before World War One", Hist. Workshop J. 15 (1983), pp 7-8, and Editorial, "Culture and Gender: The Separate Worlds of Men and Women", ibid. p 3.
  
52. Ross, "Survival Networks", p 19.
  
53. Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!'", p 81.
  
54. For a consideration of the views of local socialists and trade unionists in Leeds, see Chapter 14.
  
55. For example, in Liverpool women were concentrated in the service trades and did not have a significant manufacturing base: see L Grant, "Women's Work and Trade Unionism in Liverpool, 1890-1914", N.W. Lab. Hist. Soc. Bull. 7 (1980-1), p 66.



56. T Woodhouse, "The Working Class", pp 382-3.
57. Malos, "Bristol Women in Action", especially pp 120-6.
58. See the discussion above, pp 21-24.
59. E P Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", in A Briggs and J Saville, eds. Essays in Labour History. Vol I (Macmillan, 1960), pp 302-3.
60. Woodhouse, "The Working Class", p 377.
61. Ibid.
62. Lady Dilke, The Industrial Position of Women, p 13.
63. For example, see the Women's Trade Union and Provident League, Annual Report for 1889, pp 4-8, and Annual Report for 1890, pp 3-4; in a speech to Bradford workers Lady Dilke claimed that "new unionism has helped the standing of trade unionism ... it has shown that the weak can organise, if just for a short time": Y.F.T. 17 October 1890. Clementina Black claimed that the worst paid and least skilled workmen in London had obtained what they wanted from the most wealthy and powerful company "entirely by orderly combination", and that the tailoresses could get justice by the same means: Y.F.T. 18 October 1889. Black acted as secretary of the WTUPL between 1887 and 1889. In October 1889 she resigned to join the Women's Trade Union Association.
64. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, Pt 1, Chapter 3.
65. Lady Dilke, Trade Unions for Women (WTUL 1893), p 9.
66. Lady Dilke, "Trade Unionism for Women", p 52.
67. Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions, pp 35-6.
68. Macarthur, "Trade Unions", p 74.
69. Alexander, "The National Federation of Women Workers and the Women's Trade Union League". For the membership of industrial feminists in the socialist movement, see Alexander, "Introduction", in Pember Reeves, Round About a Pound a Week, p xv.

70. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, pp 30-1.
71. Boston, Women Workers and the Trade Unions, Chapter 2. The Women's Trade Union Review provides the most comprehensive guide to the range of the League's activities in the 1890s.
72. In the 1890s the League attempted to devote long periods of time to one area or to revisit areas on a scheduled basis: Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions, pp 37-45.
73. For example, see Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions, Chapter 2, and S Lewenhak, Women and Trade Unions (Ernest Benn, 1977), Chapter 6.
74. In the early 1880s the Trades Union Congress represented approximately 600,000 workers. In 1893 the number stood at 1,559,000 and in 1900 it was 2,022,000. Membership declined to below two million in the period 1903-5 and only started to increase again after 1906. In 1909 union members affiliated to the TUC numbered 2,477,000 and in 1914 membership had increased to 4,145,000: H Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), pp 85, 261.
75. For a discussion of the unrest, see Clegg, Fox and Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions, Chapter 2, and Hunt, British Labour History, pp 318-29.
76. Barbara Drake estimated that there were 36,900 female trade unionists in 1886 and 117,888 in 1896. This number increased only slightly to 166,803 in 1906, but by 1914 the figure stood at 357,956: Drake, Women in Trade Unions, Table 1.
77. Ibid.
78. Dressmakers, bookbinders, upholstresses and tailoresses were among those most frequently organised in all-female societies: C Black, "Women's Trade Union and Provident League", Women's Gazette, 3 November 1888, and Women's Union Journal, October (1884).
79. Black, "Women's Trade Union and Provident League", and Drake, Women in Trade Unions, pp 11-12.

80. The Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union and the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants were open to women from the start. In the 1890s the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, the National Union of Printers, the Pottery Workers' Union and the London Society of Compositors, among others, opened to female members: Drake, Women in Trade Unions, p 30.
81. For examples, see Ibid, pp 142-6, and Lewenhak, Women and Trade Unions, pp 93-4.
82. Lady Dilke, "The Seamy Side of Trade Unionism for Women", New Review, June (1890), p 420. Drake also noted that tailloresses were very suspicious of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, "not only as jealous trade competitors, but as exploiters to some extent of female labour": Drake, Women in Trade Unions, p 32.
83. E J Hobsbawm, "General Labour Unions in Britain, 1889-1914", in Labouring Men (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), p 191. In 1906 there were only 2,674 female members in general unions: Drake, Women in Trade Unions, Table 1.
84. Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions, Chapter 3.
85. B L Hutchins, Women in Modern Industry (G Bell, 1915), pp 84-8.
86. In 1913 approximately 3 per cent of all women workers in the broad census category of dress, and 6 per cent of women workers in the wool and worsted industry, were organised into trade unions: calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1913, LXXVIII), England and Wales Occupations, Table 2, and Board of Trade, Labour Statistics (PP 1914-16, LXI), Return of Female Membership of Trade Unions, 1899-1913, pp 202-3.
87. The Bermondsey branch, for example, shrank from 2,000 to 40 members in two years: T Olcott, "Dead Centre: The Women's Trade Union Movement in London, 1874-1914", London Journal, II, 1 (1976), footnote 65.
88. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, Table 1, and Board of Trade, Labour Statistics (PP 1914-16, LXI), Return of Female Membership of Trade Unions, 1899-1913, pp 202-3.
89. Calculated from the Board of Trade, Labour Statistics (PP 1914-16, LXI), Return of Female Membership of Trade Unions, 1899-1913, pp 202-3.

90. By 1914 the NFWW had over 10,000 members: Drake, Women in Trade Unions, p 50.
91. Alexander notes that the NFWW negotiated women out of skilled and semi-skilled jobs between 1918 and 1919, and that this was largely because they dealt with the skilled unions rather than with the general ones: S Alexander, "Women and Trade Unions: A Review Essay", Capital and Class, 11 (1980), p 142.
92. For example, see Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions; Boston, Women Workers and the Trade Unions; Lewenhak, Women and Trade Unions.
93. Alexander, "Women and Trade Unions", pp 139, 142.
94. J Druker, "Women in Trade Unions: Review Essay", Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, 37 (1977), p 90.
95. Soldon, in particular, emphasises the role of the female leaders of the WTUL and the NFWW. His chapters are headed by their names: for example, "Mary and Margaret, 1903-1914": Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions, Chapter 3.
96. In particular, see Lewenhak, Women and Trade Unions, pp 92-4.
97. Alexander, "Women and Trade Unions", pp 141-3.

CHAPTER 11WOMEN'S TRADE UNION ORGANISATION IN LEEDS, 1880-1914

In the late 1880s trade union activity among women in Leeds dramatically, if briefly, increased. This must be seen in the context of a more general unrest in the city, a revival of socialist activity and the development of demands for an independent working-class political party. The combination of labour unrest and socialist propaganda, and the involvement of men and women in both movements, gave the period a sense of enthusiasm and excitement. This can be contrasted with the setbacks to women's organisation and the slow development of independent labour politics in the late 1890s and early 1900s.

Until the late 1880s trade unionism in Leeds was largely confined to skilled workers who dominated the Trades Council and whose leaders had close links with the Liberal Party.<sup>1</sup> However, during the early 1880s attempts were made to organise women and less skilled male workers in the two staple female trades of Leeds and the West Riding of Yorkshire, wool and worsted textiles and ready-made tailoring. Many of the men and women involved in this organising work were to remain important figures in the struggle to improve women's industrial position in Leeds during the following two decades.

At the beginning of the 1880s wool and worsted weavers could join a number of small organisations which were based on individual towns.<sup>2</sup> The lengthy Huddersfield strike of 1883, however, led to an amalgamation of these smaller groups and to the formation of the West Riding Power

Loom Weavers' Association.<sup>3</sup> The Association attempted to organise weavers throughout the West Riding in one union. It was open to both male and female weavers in the wool and worsted industry, but membership was very low by the late 1880s.<sup>4</sup> The early leaders, in particular Ben Turner and Alan Gee, remained in leadership positions up to 1914 and retained an interest in the organisation of female workers throughout the period.<sup>5</sup>

In Leeds itself a number of small all-female societies were formed after the mid 1880s, largely to cater for tailoresses. They were established under the auspices of the Women's Protective and Provident League and they followed the pattern of organisation of women's societies in other towns in the period.<sup>6</sup> The Leeds Tailoresses' Society, for example, charged a subscription of 2d a week, emphasised the payment of friendly benefits and expressed its intention of avoiding strike action.<sup>7</sup> These aims were heartily approved of by the two officers of the Trades Council, John Judge of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union and John Bune of the Brushmakers' Society, who attended the initial meetings and gave their support. By 1886, however, membership was so low that the Society collapsed.<sup>8</sup>

This early attempt to organise women in Leeds is notable because it represented the first occasion on which Isabella Ford became involved in the organisation of working women. It was also the start of her friendship with John Bune who continued to give help to tailoresses throughout the 1890s.<sup>9</sup> Isabella Ford came from a wealthy Quaker family. She was to become the most active female worker on behalf of

women's trade unionism, independent working-class politics and women's rights in Leeds during the next two decades.<sup>10</sup> Her involvement with female trade unionism was prompted by Emma Paterson, the leader of the WPPL, who encouraged her to give help to the Tailoresses' Society.<sup>11</sup> At first, Isabella Ford played only a minor role by providing entertainment. But she expressed the belief that members would come more often if business were combined with music.<sup>12</sup> This link between trade unionism and wider cultural pursuits was to remain a touchstone of her ideas in later years.

Isabella Ford's early organising activities among working women brought her to the attention of members of the Socialist League who were involved in organising Jewish tailoring workers. Alf Mattison claimed that he first met Isabella and her sister Bessie in 1887 when, along with Tom Maguire, Bill Allworthy and Frank Corkwell, he was deputed by the local Socialist League "to bespeak their interest in our local movement. We met with a cordial reception at Adel and their help was never sought in vain for the movement".<sup>13</sup> Isabella Ford's relationship with members of the Socialist League was to prove particularly important during the unrest of 1889 and helped to provide vigorous leadership in the tailoresses' strike of that year.

By 1888 Isabella Ford felt confident enough to establish, on her own initiative, a Workwomen's Society which was open to any female worker in Leeds. The Society again stressed friendly benefits and the avoidance of strikes. By 1889, however, it had only 60 members.<sup>14</sup> Among male workers in the tailoring trade only bespoke tailors were well organised

in this early period. The Leeds branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors had approximately 300 members in 1889 out of a total of 450 bespoke tailors in the city.<sup>15</sup> Union organisation among men in the ready-made sector of the trade was almost non-existent. There was no union for male factory workers and they remained largely unorganised up to 1889. On the other hand, male Jewish workers in the workshops did attempt to organise throughout the 1880s. By 1888 the Jewish Tailors' Trade Society had 1,000 members and led a strike to obtain shorter working hours. However, when the strike was defeated union membership fell rapidly and the Society collapsed.<sup>16</sup>

It was in the period of labour unrest after 1888 that an impetus was given to the organisation of female workers and less skilled male workers in Leeds. Women played an important part in the more general unrest in the city and for a brief period trade union organisation flourished. The first expression of female discontent in the city came in 1888. 200 weavers employed by Messrs J Wilson & Sons, woollen manufacturers, came out on strike against the firm's proposal to change the prices paid for completed "cuts".<sup>17</sup> After reading adverse reports about the strike in the press, Isabella Ford went among the strikers to find out for herself and stayed to help in the dispute.<sup>18</sup> This was her first major contact with textile workers and was the beginning of a long-standing friendship with Ben Turner.<sup>19</sup> The strikers achieved some success in their demands and 200 women joined the WRPLWA.<sup>20</sup> Their action also stimulated unrest in other textile mills. Early in 1889 Isabella Ford was once more involved in a textile dispute, this time in neighbouring



Alverthorpe, which again resulted in membership gains for the union.<sup>21</sup>

The largest and most prolonged dispute involving female workers took place in the tailoring trade. It involved tailoresses employed by Messrs Arthur & Co, wholesale clothing manufacturers, and took place in October 1889.<sup>22</sup> At least 700 machinists came out on strike to obtain a reduction in the charge made for power. Although the firm claimed a victory after four weeks, many girls remained on strike until December.<sup>23</sup> The strike must be seen in the context of a growing expression of discontent in the ready-made tailoring trade and the more general atmosphere of unrest in the city. The bricklayers' labourers were the first to organise, their union numbering 800 by August, and they were followed by the tramwaymen and gas workers.<sup>24</sup> In view of the general excitement Isabella Ford was encouraged to try to establish an organisation for tailoresses that would be based on union principles. A mass meeting to form the union was called in October. There was an impressive list of speakers, including Clementina Black of the Women's Trade Union and Provident League, Ben Turner and Tom Paylor of the Socialist League.<sup>25</sup> Only a few days later the newly formed union was faced with the prolonged strike at Arthur's.

As early as July 1889 female workers in the clothing trade had written to the press to complain about the way in which wages were reduced by deductions made for power, thread and the use of facilities and by disciplinary fines.<sup>26</sup> The letters prompted newspapers such as the Leeds Daily News to undertake investigations into the working conditions of tailoresses. This gave continued publicity to the grievances expressed

and provided the context in which the strike took place.<sup>27</sup> It was the allegations made against foremen in the press which formed the immediate background to the strike. The manager of Arthur's, Mr Cobb, called the workforce together to ask if the women had any complaints to make against the foremen. The tailoresses denied this, but expressed discontent about the charge made for power. When the firm refused to reduce the charge the machinists decided to strike.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the strike the tailoresses received help from individuals drawn from a variety of backgrounds. The most active were Isabella Ford, Ben Turner, John Bune and members of the Socialist League, notably Tom Maguire, Tom Paylor and James Sweeney. Isabella Ford and the socialists gave the most energetic leadership. They kept up the early enthusiasm with their rousing speeches at public meetings and gave practical help and advice to the inexperienced strikers. The assistance given by Socialist League members was part of a more general attempt to involve themselves in strike actions in the period in the hope that industrial unrest would increase labour solidarity and detach the loyalty of working people from the Liberal Party.<sup>29</sup> The main emphasis of their propaganda was on the importance of breaking down barriers based on skill, sex and ethnicity. Therefore, they urged the need for unity among all clothing workers, although this appeal was not always successful.<sup>30</sup>

The socialists failed to persuade girls in other firms to join the strike. These workers did not necessarily share the same grievances as those employed at Arthur's and many were reluctant to take action

just before the slack season. However, letters to the press did express sympathy with the strikers. One employee of Messrs Rhodes & Co, wholesale clothing manufacturers, wrote:

To anyone reading ... the interview between your representative and Mr Cook it would appear that the girls are in a perfect state of contentment ... This impression is not quite accurate. The girls there do not intend acting with the haste that has characterised the actions of those at Arthur's, but will do all that is possible to ensure success before striking a blow ... the girls at Arthur's have our sympathy ... we feel they are, to a great extent, fighting our battle, and we were sorry that no one was at our shop last Saturday to receive the contributions that we had agreed to give. I trust they will not forget us next Saturday ...<sup>31</sup>

Female finishers at Arthur's were also reluctant to join the strike since they did not suffer from the power charge, while the majority of male cutters refused any support.<sup>32</sup> The firm sent much of its unfinished work to be completed by outside workers, although Maguire and Paylor were able to use their close contacts with Jewish workers to dissuade some of them from doing the strikers' work.<sup>33</sup>

After receiving a deputation from the tailoresses the Trades Council also pledged its support. It sent representatives to the strike meetings and sought financial assistance from its members.<sup>34</sup> John Bune was particularly active in the strike. He reflected the attitudes of many skilled workers in his sympathy for poorly paid female workers who were not directly challenging the interests of organised men.<sup>35</sup> The relationship between the Liberal-dominated Trades Council and members

of the Socialist League was an acrimonious one in this period. The conflict between them has been frequently discussed, but little attention has been paid to the role played by the tailoresses' strike in exacerbating their differences.<sup>36</sup>

The actions of Trades Council members and socialists during the strike, the emphases in their speeches and the tactics that they urged the tailoresses to use revealed the very deep divisions between these different groups in the local labour movement. For example, when the firm's manager stated that girls who did not return to finish their work would be acting illegally, Sweeney counselled them not to return. Bune argued, however, that they should return to work, for "he, as an old trade unionist, would have been to blame had he not put that side of the case before them".<sup>37</sup> Sweeney's criticisms of Bune's actions prompted the Leeds Trades Council to try to expel the former on the grounds that he had "publicly held up to ridicule the members of that Council and their action in connection with the tailoresses' strike".<sup>38</sup>

Once the strike appeared to be lost the socialists withdrew from active support and were accused of leaving the girls in the lurch. The Leeds Times complained that "now that a successful issue of the contest appears impossible, Maguire, Sweeney and the other leaders coolly hand them over to the Trades Council".<sup>39</sup> Isabella Ford tactfully refused to comment on the withdrawal in any detail, but noted in a press interview that "the socialists found it better that one party should have the matter in hand".<sup>40</sup> This is likely to have been the case, since the growing hostility between the socialists and the Trades Council must have threatened to disrupt the strike. The

tailoresses, therefore, were caught in a conflict which had deeper roots than their own dispute, although the outcome of the strike does not appear to have been affected. The withdrawal of the socialists may, however, have hampered future attempts to consolidate union organisation among tailoresses.<sup>41</sup> The involvement of both socialists and skilled Trades Council members in the strike certainly highlighted and worsened the differences between them. It must have contributed to the establishment of the Yorkshire Labour Council, a rival body to the Leeds Trades Council, in 1890.<sup>42</sup>

There is some evidence that the tailoresses themselves may have felt a greater affinity with the socialists than with members of the Trades Council. The socialists were youthful, energetic and were particularly sympathetic to the problems faced by female workers.<sup>43</sup> In their speeches they captured the girls' grievances in graphic phrases - Maguire, for example, referred to fining as nothing short of "refined swindling".<sup>44</sup> They were also in touch with details of the girls' working lives and discontents. Clothing workers expressed anger at statements from employers that tailoresses earned high wages. They constantly referred to the easy life style of those in authority compared with the hardships of their own lives. One machinist from Arthur's wrote a letter to complain about the high wage figures quoted by the manager: "it would be wise for the firm to pay higher prices and not to keep so many of these gentlemen walking around with rings on their fingers doing nothing, just watching others work".<sup>45</sup> The socialists picked up, and played on, such grievances in their own speeches. Sweeney, for example, exclaimed: "What right had they to

pay for power to make anyone a fortune . . . they had the power to paralyse the whole trade of the town and he held they had a right to do so".<sup>46</sup> Maguire also referred to the large palatial buildings that had been erected and the huge fortunes made. He was sure that they would think as he did - "there was more room for a better wage".<sup>47</sup> .

On the other hand, the experience and backgrounds of most Trades Council members alienated them from working women. When the Trades Council proposed that three of its members, Heaton, Marston and Firman, should form a deputation to the management the tailoresses objected strongly.<sup>48</sup> They argued that the three men had all been passers or managers in the clothing trade and "they have never been connected with the strike, yet other men have been connected from the beginning".<sup>49</sup> Another participant, Fogg, a member of the AST, was hardly in tune with the spirit of the strike when he said that he should be seen as a member of the public since he had never been mixed up in a dispute like this before.<sup>50</sup>

The strikers failed to achieve their aims despite financial assistance from other unions, in particular from the gas workers who helped the girls make their collections, and from members of the public.<sup>51</sup> The timing of the strike was ill chosen since it came just before the start of the slack season. The existence of a variety of methods of production in the trade meant that the manager could use outside workers to defeat the strike. The public and some of the local press, notably the Leeds Daily News, did express sympathy with the tailoresses. However, this did not result in any sustained pressure on the management,

which contrasted with the gas workers' dispute in 1890.<sup>52</sup> In the latter, not only were the gas works municipally owned, and therefore the responsibility of elected councillors, but also the cutting off of gas supplies threatened to stop production in other industries.<sup>53</sup>

Some positive developments did emerge from the strike, in particular the establishment of trade unions for workers in the ready-made sector of the tailoring trade. The Tailoresses' Union, formed in October 1889, rapidly recruited 2,000 members, and the male cutters and pressers in the factories were also roused to form their own organisation, the Wholesale Clothiers' Operatives' Union.<sup>54</sup> Jewish workers organised once more in the Jewish Tailors' Union which became the Jewish Tailors', Pressers' and Machinists' Union in 1893.<sup>55</sup> By the early 1890s, therefore, unions had been established to cater for most groups in the tailoring trade. However, in contrast to many other newly formed unions in the period, they did not seek to unite all workers in the trade. Rather, they reinforced and reflected existing divisions in the workforce which were based on sex, skill, ethnicity and method of production.<sup>56</sup> These divisions made it more difficult for union organisers to promote common action among clothing workers and to channel the enthusiasm unleashed by the strike of 1889 into a permanent commitment to trade unionism. Membership gains among female workers, which had been generated by the general unrest, were quickly eroded. The WRPLWA reported that the members who joined after the strike at Wilson's had already lapsed from the union by the early months of 1889, while the number of organised tailoresses also fell dramatically once the strike was over.<sup>57</sup>

During the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century, local labour leaders in textiles and ready-made tailoring faced a long struggle to improve union organisation in trades facing considerable economic difficulties. At the same time, along with trade unionists from other newly formed organisations of the less skilled, they worked to promote the cause of independent labour politics in Leeds which they saw as closely linked to their industrial struggles.<sup>58</sup> A number of Labour clubs and electoral unions were formed in the early 1890s. These drew support from members of the Socialist League as well as from individuals such as Isabella Ford.<sup>59</sup> In 1893 they came together to form the Leeds branch of the ILP. But members faced a long hard struggle to gain the support of the Trades Council and the most important skilled unions for the cause of independent labour politics. William Marston and other leaders of the Trades Council were keen to promote labour candidates through the Liberal Party during the 1890s.<sup>60</sup> However, in 1895 the Leeds ILP and the Trades Council cooperated in the agitation to help the unemployed.<sup>61</sup> A turning point came when local members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers shifted their support to independent labour after their trade dispute of 1898, and in 1900 the Leeds Trades Council affiliated to the Labour Representation Committee.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, Woodhouse argues that a number of Trades Council members, including the secretary Owen Connellan, did not see the LRC as "necessarily opposed to the Liberal Party", but as "a body which would work in cooperation with it". It was only in 1903, after hard work by the ILP, that the Leeds LRC saw itself as independent from the Liberal Party and "had won the right to speak politically for the labour movement".<sup>63</sup>

Attempts to extend union organisation among less skilled and female



workers proved even more difficult to achieve than independent labour politics. The problems faced by union organisers in the major female trades in Leeds were not only specific to their industries but must also be seen in the context of the difficulties faced by trade unionists nationally. Setbacks in trade, frequent bouts of unemployment, and the counter-attacks of employers made trade union inroads into less skilled occupations extremely slow.<sup>64</sup>

Organising work in the textile trade was carried out by workers drawn from the industry itself. They attempted to recruit both male and female workers in the wool and worsted industry across the whole of the West Riding.<sup>65</sup> The union initially concentrated on the weaving section of the trade. The leadership was cautious about extending membership to other groups, but a more open policy was eventually adopted. This was reflected in the union's change of name to the General Union of Weavers and Textile Workers in 1900, and to the General Union of Textile Workers in 1912.<sup>66</sup> For the rest of this section it will be referred to as the General Union of Textile Workers. Alan Gee, Ben Turner and William Drew were key figures in the organisation of the GUTW.<sup>67</sup> They were already familiar to weavers in the West Riding by the late 1880s and their long association with the union, up to and beyond 1914, provided an important continuity in leadership.<sup>68</sup> During the period they were tireless in their organising work; this included making speeches, giving practical help in disputes and holding organising drives in local areas.<sup>69</sup>

The high proportion of female workers in the wool and worsted industry

made union leaders conscious of the need to attract female members.<sup>70</sup> In 1889 the union affiliated to the WTUPL and Alan Gee acted as one of the League's advisers. Local female activists and national leaders of the League were invited to speak at mill gates and in public meetings on the grounds that they might have a greater appeal for female workers,<sup>71</sup> Membership did often increase after an organising drive, but soon dropped off once the excitement was over. Furthermore, the visits by League organisers were too infrequent to make a lasting impression.<sup>72</sup> The efforts of local organisers were severely hampered by the economic difficulties of the wool and worsted industry in the period, which led to a surplus of labour in the West Riding, and by the low level of wages.<sup>73</sup> Individual towns and districts specialised in different types of products, the sex composition of the labour force varied and so did the difficulties encountered. Moreover, in areas in which substantial numbers of men were employed in weaving there was considerable hostility to female workers.<sup>74</sup>

In ready-made tailoring the pattern of organising work was different, although the proportion of male and female workers recruited into the unions was equally as small as in textiles. In the 1890s the only unions open to female workers in Leeds were the Tailoresses' Union, which catered for factory workers, and the Jewish Tailoresses' Union, which was based on the workshops.<sup>75</sup> A minority of active workers in the Tailoresses' Union were drawn from the ranks of the tailoresses, but they relied heavily on the assistance of men and women from outside their trade, in particular Isabella Ford. The tailoresses also received help from male trade unionists who were active socialists, such

as Ben Turner, Tom Paylor and Walt Wood, secretary of the Gas Workers' Union. They spoke at meetings and assisted in disputes. Help was also forthcoming from the Liberal trade unionist John Bune who acted at different times as vice-president and secretary of the union.<sup>76</sup>

Isabella Ford served as president of the Tailoresses' Union, organised and spoke at meetings and provided an important link with national bodies such as the WTUL. She also gave money to help pay for a full-time secretary and to establish a trade union club for women.<sup>77</sup> The day-to-day running of the union, however, was carried out by tailoresses, although it is difficult to find detailed information on the individuals involved. Lily Thakeray, a delegate to the Trades Council, had been involved in the dispute at Arthur's. Mrs Parrett, who gave "homely" speeches at meetings, acted as secretary for a short period.<sup>78</sup> In the early years the union suffered from frequent changes in officials. Stability was finally given to the executive by the appointment of Agnes Close, a tailoress, as full-time secretary on £40 a year, a position she was to hold from 1896 until the union dissolved in 1899.<sup>79</sup> Agnes Close and her mother rented rooms in the newly formed Women's Trade Union Club. Agnes was still described as a women's organiser as late as 1901, although she then left the city to work in Canada.<sup>80</sup> She was described by Isabella Ford as "well up in organising work, hunting up girls in their homes, holding shop meetings, meetings in the street during the dinner hour, and generally haranguing them at odd hours wherever she meets them".<sup>81</sup> She claimed that "the girls were very pleased at her appointment" and that she was glad to have found someone from within the trade to take up the position.<sup>82</sup>

The union not only held organising meetings but also assisted in disputes, even if the strikers were not union members. In a letter to Isabella Ford Agnes Close gives a glimpse of how she assisted 70 machinists. They came to her for help after they had taken strike action against a change in work conditions which would have reduced their wages. The letter also gives an insight into the way in which the tailoresses viewed Isabella Ford:

I got ten of the girls to go and see the manager and he would come to no terms with them. So I got a room at Lockhart's for 1/6, and I took the girls there ... Ben Turner was in Leeds and I got him to speak to the girls, and then Walt Wood and I spoke to them. We told them what suffering it means to be on strike and not to be in a union ... They are a plucky lot of girls. They say they will have what they want before they go into work ... All the girls asked for you, and I told them that you were away from home. I do wish you were in Leeds. I shall stick to them and help them all I can.<sup>83</sup>

As an all-female group, the Tailoresses' Union did try to relate its activities to the specific needs of women workers. Organising drives were held at factory gates or in the lunch break, since it was recognised that women found it difficult to attend evening meetings.<sup>84</sup> Speakers were drawn from both the local labour movement and from the WTUL, and on a more practical level the union offered sickness and unemployment benefit.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, the social side of the movement was not neglected. Musical evenings and dances were held frequently. The trade union club was to be a "bureau for labour information, and, better still, tea, bread and butter will be obtainable at certain hours".<sup>86</sup> The club had attractive surroundings: "the whole place is painted white, and has yellow walls ... and some wallpaper covered

with yellow daffodils or sweet peas ... Beauty of all sorts is excluded from so many of our girls' lives that it shall not be excluded from their club".<sup>87</sup>

Despite these efforts, the union was unable to repeat the initial success of 1889 and membership remained very small.<sup>88</sup> Any increases were usually as a result of strike action or the policies of individual firms. Some gains were made, for example, when the manager of the Cooperative Wholesale Society's clothing factory in Leeds agreed to cooperate with the union and to encourage the workforce to join.<sup>89</sup> However, this cooperation was shortlived once a dispute had broken out concerning the low prices paid to a number of machinists for completing white knickers.<sup>90</sup> A long argument took place in the local press between Isabella Ford and Ben Turner, representing the Tailoresses' Union, and the manager of the CWS factory.<sup>91</sup> The trade union representatives claimed that the prices paid for the white knickers were too low, which reduced weekly wages, and they questioned the nature of the relationship between the CWS and the trade union movement.<sup>92</sup> The dispute was eventually settled amicably, but tailoresses from the CWS factory did drop out of the union. Although they were affected by the dispute, they had previously expressed discontent with the executive of the union over the loan that had been granted to John Bune's Brushmakers' Society. This had also affected their willingness to remain as union members.<sup>93</sup> Arguments over money and who should act as representatives on public bodies were frequent in the Tailoresses' Union.<sup>94</sup> Such internal conflicts were common in all organisations which had a very small membership and which found

it difficult to make progress.

Difficulties in recruiting members were not confined to the women's union. By 1893 the membership of the WCOU had fallen from 400 to 143 through "a lack of faith and trust in each other".<sup>95</sup> In 1894 the Leeds union joined with a similar group in Bristol to form the Amalgamated Union of Clothing Operatives, but frequent strikes drained the funds of the new organisation and total membership stood at only 1,291 in 1900.<sup>96</sup> The strongest clothing unions in the city were those catering for Jewish workshop workers. The membership was small, but it did represent a higher proportion of those employed in the workshop sector than the AUCO and the Tailoresses' Union were able to organise in the factories.<sup>97</sup> The membership of the Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union fluctuated between 600 and 1,200 during the period from the 1890s to 1910, while the Jewesses' Union had 200 members in the late 1890s.<sup>98</sup>

The clothing unions faced similar problems in the 1890s and early 1900s to those facing their counterparts in the textile trade. The ready-made clothing industry suffered from bouts of trade depression which increased short-time working, while cut-throat competition between employers pushed wages downward.<sup>99</sup> Organising efforts were further hampered by the varied methods of production in the industry and by the divisions within the workforce based on skill, ethnicity and sex. These were then reinforced by their organisation into separate unions.

The WCOU refused from the beginning to organise all workers in the trade.<sup>100</sup> The secretary, T Buck, wrote in 1893 that his members were

not prepared to unite with the Tailoresses' Union since "I do not think either of us would better our condition. At the same time we are prepared to render our sisters any assistance that lies in our power".<sup>101</sup>

The union leadership did take an increasing interest in the fortunes of the Tailoresses' Union during the 1890s and encouraged their members to assist in strikes involving female workers.<sup>102</sup> In 1895 a federation was formed between the two unions to enable them to act more closely together. This laid the basis for their amalgamation at the end of 1899 when the Tailoresses' Union was on the point of collapse.<sup>103</sup> The Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union also eventually opened to female workers, but not until 1908.<sup>104</sup>

These developments were seen as a sign of progress by the WTUL.

Referring to a similar change in the policy of the AST, the League's journal noted that "if the men have recognised the need for women's organisation and have worked up the necessity for aiding in it we have the strongest possible factor in successful organisation".<sup>105</sup> In the case of the AUCO and the Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union, however, a change in policy did not necessarily mean a rise in female union members or a more positive attitude to their organisation. Joseph Young, general secretary of the AUCO, and H Withey, secretary of the Leeds branch, were sympathetic to the organisation of women.<sup>106</sup>

But they did not necessarily represent the views of rank and file members who expressed open hostility to female workers. In 1904 the Leeds branch considered a resolution to be sent to their annual conference which advocated that women should be excluded from membership.<sup>107</sup> This provoked a strong letter from Isabella Ford which was

published in the union's Monthly Gazette. She pointed out that there were four times more women than men in the clothing factories and that they helped to govern work which governed wages. She reminded them that it was the tailoresses' strike at Arthur's which had led to the formation of the WCOU and argued that the best safeguard for men was to have women in the union.<sup>108</sup> Mary Macarthur also attended the meeting of the Leeds branch and spoke on the necessity of organising women. This helped to dissuade the members from pursuing the resolution any further.<sup>109</sup> It is hardly surprising, therefore, that by 1909 the AUCO had only 636 female members compared with 1,789 men.<sup>110</sup>

On the eve of the second outbreak of labour unrest in the city women working in the wool and worsted and ready-made tailoring trades had the opportunity of entering mixed-sex trade unions, but only a handful of women were organised. In other industries in which smaller numbers of women worked, such as boot and shoe manufacture and printing, women entered the appropriate unions after strike actions. However, again the numbers organised were small and it was difficult to maintain a permanent commitment to trade unionism.<sup>111</sup> It must be noted, however, that male workers in ready-made tailoring and in most branches of the wool and worsted trade, as well as less skilled male workers in other industries, were also poorly organised in this period. Unions catering for these workers were only to make substantial gains during the period of labour unrest in the city in the years immediately preceding the First World War.<sup>112</sup>

After 1910 there was a revival in union membership in both the wool and



worsted and in the ready-made tailoring trades and the gains made were built upon and extended during the war itself.<sup>113</sup> The increase in membership should not be exaggerated, but it was a substantial one compared with previous years and had more solid foundations. A wide variety of occupational groups were involved in the labour unrest in Leeds, including women from a number of trades, and their strike actions were stimulated by favourable economic conditions and by the actions of other workers.<sup>114</sup> In the East End of Leeds, for example, the miners' dispute of 1911 encouraged other workers to take action. Six female polishers from Messrs Scuphams, Mill Street, struck to obtain the reinstatement of a dismissed fellow-worker. She had refused to re-polish door knobs which had already taken a day to complete.<sup>115</sup> They sought the advice of Ben Stocks, the miners' leader, who accompanied the women on their deputation to the manager. The girl was eventually reinstated and the strikers joined a union.<sup>116</sup> East End textile workers also went on strike for extra pay and female workers from the mills of Messrs Lister, Wilson and Lupton joined the GUTW.<sup>117</sup>

Considerable unrest also broke out in individual clothing firms, which again encouraged union membership. In 1911 250 men, lads and girls employed by Messrs Geo. Firth & Co, mantle manufacturers, struck in support of seven male underpressers who had refused to accept a reduction in prices and had been dismissed.<sup>118</sup> 114 girls and 27 male workers joined the union and received strike pay.<sup>119</sup> In 1912 over 500 women and girls employed by Messrs Rhodes & Co came out on strike against the employer's attempt to change the type of cotton used. This would have increased the amount deducted from wages.<sup>120</sup> In this

dispute there was no support from male cutters and some of the work was completed by outside employees. Nevertheless, the strike did result in a victory for the women who joined the union.<sup>121</sup>

In both strikes the women and girls faced the opposition of the police. In the mantle workers' dispute the secretary of the Leeds branch of the AUCO spoke vigorously against the conduct of the police "who seemed to have gained the impression that they were the servants of the firm".<sup>122</sup> Arthur Conley, the union's general organiser, added that the girls had been "terrorised by the guardians of the law, until the people in the district had to protest".<sup>123</sup> The police made five arrests and this must have served to increase the strikers' resolve to identify with the union.

The gains made in union membership after the enthusiasm of strike action proved to be more long-lasting than in the late 1880s. The specific conditions of wartime were partly responsible for this. However, the structure of existing unions and the changed economic and social context in which the strikes took place also contributed. Although the GUTW and the AUCO were weak in terms of membership by 1910, they did have full-time organisers who had gained long years of experience in union work and who were familiar to workers in the district.<sup>124</sup>

This can be contrasted with the late 1880s when unions were being formed for the first time, and in the case of the tailoring trade divided rather than united the workforce. The labour movement was also politically stronger in the later period. The Trades Council now gave full support to the local Labour Party and many trade union leaders

stood for municipal elections.<sup>125</sup> By 1913 the Labour Party had 16 seats on the Leeds City Council and was fighting to improve conditions of work for municipal employees through political channels as well as through industrial action.<sup>126</sup> The increasing militancy of the suffragette movement, both locally and nationally, along with the steady growth in support for the more constitutional National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, brought the question of women's rights to the fore both in the labour movement and in the pages of the local press.<sup>127</sup> This helped to generate excitement and interest in the organisation of female workers and increased their own willingness to express their grievances both as women and as workers.<sup>128</sup>

Perhaps the most important stimulus to trade union membership, however, came from industrial legislation which affected the work conditions of both men and women. Mary Macarthur had argued consistently that women's weak industrial position led to low union membership which in turn reinforced the difficulties women faced at the workplace. She urged that the only way to break this vicious circle was by the outside intervention of government legislation.<sup>129</sup> She argued that minimum wage legislation in particular, by raising female wages, would increase their interest in trade unions and would make it more possible for them to afford contributions.<sup>130</sup> The 1909 Trade Boards Act and the 1911 National Insurance Act did have an effect on levels of union membership, although this could take the form of losses as well as gains in different industries. Moreover, the effects were not always due to the same reasons as Mary Macarthur had put forward.<sup>131</sup> The

National Insurance Act was of particular importance for the GUTW. It stimulated the union's leaders to renew their organising drives in order to persuade textile workers to make the union their approved society under the Act. Ben Turner and Isabella Ford held meetings almost daily outside Leeds mills and in public halls to explain the provisions of the Act and how it affected women workers.<sup>132</sup> They argued that only the union would ensure that workers received their full rights to benefits since the GUTW was keen to protect their interests against those of the employers.<sup>133</sup> The meetings were well attended and the large number of married women in the industry were particularly concerned about the sickness and maternity benefits offered by the legislation.<sup>134</sup> The union's activities on insurance, combined with the excitement of the labour unrest, did lead to substantial gains in membership. In 1906 the Heavy Woollen District, of which Leeds was a part, had only a few hundred members, but by 1913 membership had risen to 5,000.<sup>135</sup> It is difficult to assess how many of these were female workers from Leeds, but reference is made to a few hundred female members from the East End. Their numbers justified the formation of a separate branch in the city before the war and this was largely run and organised by women.<sup>136</sup>

The increase in membership encouraged the union to seek an agreement with employers to establish standard rates of pay and conditions across the Heavy Woollen District. They hoped that this would lead the workforce to act together in the future rather than pursuing local grievances in individual firms.<sup>137</sup> Under the agreement of 1913 standard wages were agreed by both sides. But those laid down for

women fell far below union demands and served to underline the continuing weak industrial position of female workers.<sup>138</sup>

In the tailoring trade the Insurance Act had less positive benefits in terms of membership gains. The general secretary argued that in the short term the number of members had decreased because women and girls could not afford to pay both the insurance contributions and their subscriptions.<sup>139</sup> Employers were also more reluctant to concede wage rises when faced with the extra costs imposed on them by government legislation and when the price of raw materials was rising.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, the Trade Boards Act, which included the ready-made tailoring trade in its brief to establish minimum wages, did give a stimulus to trade union activity and membership. Mary Macarthur assumed that minimum wage legislation would raise earnings and therefore encourage trade union membership. In Leeds, however, it was the initial excitement engendered by the new legislation and the subsequent failure of the Act to increase wages in the city that led to a greater interest in the union.

When the legislation was announced the AUCO held a series of meetings in Leeds and elsewhere to explain how the Act would work. The union argued that workers' interests could only be carried forward by their representatives on the Board if they were strongly organised.<sup>141</sup> The meetings were well attended and outside speakers such as Mary Macarthur were used to provide an added attraction.<sup>142</sup> In the first flush of excitement union membership increased rapidly. Interest in the union was further stimulated when the Trade Board announced the minimum

rates to be paid.<sup>143</sup> Some workers responded by going on strike when they realised that the prices paid in their own firms did not reach the minimum. In one firm tailoresses, with the help of the AUCO, successfully picketed the gates until they achieved an advance in wage rates.<sup>144</sup> A more usual response in Leeds, however, was one of anger that minimum rates had been set so low. It was argued, for example, that the average weekly wages of female workers would still fall below 12/- because they were only employed for 40 full weeks throughout the year.<sup>145</sup>

The discontent expressed over the minima set encouraged the union to press for a higher minimum wage for all tailoring workers in the Leeds area. This was an attempt, as in textiles, to get away from the normal practice whereby workers in individual factories took action to gain local wage advances.<sup>146</sup> An industry-wide agreement seemed more likely of achievement now that the employers, in response to the establishment of the Trade Board, had also formed an association which covered the leading firms in the district.<sup>147</sup> In 1913 higher minimum rates than those laid down by the Trade Board were established for men and women in the Leeds ready-made tailoring trade. But the minimum for women, at 4d an hour, was still low, and it was reported that there was considerable discontent among female workers in the city when they were informed of the agreement.<sup>148</sup>

The minimum wage legislation and the increased expression of grievances in the trade encouraged the AUCO to reorganise itself and to adopt a more vigorous approach to the recruitment of new members, in particular

women. The union revived its former practice of holding monthly meetings, which had been abandoned when membership had fallen away, and local organisation was improved.<sup>149</sup> Ten areas were formed in Leeds so that local secretaries could collect contributions and make contact with members. A central committee was to carry out business and attend to shop disputes, leaving the office to deal with insurance claims and the payment of sick and unemployment benefits.<sup>150</sup> It was hoped that this would enable the union to give more time to organising women and a female committee was formed to deal with their specific needs.<sup>151</sup> A number of organising drives were held when leading female organisers, such as Annie Hicks and Mrs Pete Curran, were invited to spend a week in the city.<sup>152</sup> However, most of the organising work was carried out by workers from within the trade and therefore the services of outsiders, in particular those of middle-class women such as Isabella Ford, were rarely sought.

The AUCO also tried to improve its strength by actively seeking amalgamation with other clothing unions, whether based in Leeds or in other areas of the country. This policy was stimulated by the growing strength of employers' associations and the reorganisations in the tailoring trade itself. These made it difficult to draw any hard and fast line between union members in different sectors of the industry.<sup>153</sup> Negotiations took a long time because sectional and skill differences were not easily overcome. However, with the help of the General Federation of Trade Unions, the United Garment Workers' Union was eventually formed in 1915 and was open to all workers in the

ready-made tailoring trade regardless of race, sex or skill.<sup>154</sup>

Despite the organisational changes and the renewed vigour of the AUCO, membership was still weak in Leeds at the outbreak of war, in particular among women.<sup>155</sup> Joseph Young felt that the union's weakness had meant that it had not been able to take full advantage of the opportunities for organisation afforded by the Trade Boards Act, but the union's focus on the needs of male workers in the trade appears to have been equally crucial.<sup>156</sup>

In both the textile and the ready-made tailoring industries the revival of trade, the general excitement of labour unrest and government legislation did lead to gains in union membership among both men and women which were built on during the war years. Nevertheless, the gains should not be exaggerated. By 1914 only a small proportion of all women workers in the wool and worsted industry and in ready-made tailoring were organised in the city.<sup>157</sup> This can be partly explained by the difficulties posed by the structure and work conditions found in the two industries which affected all workers to a greater or lesser degree. At the same time, women's position within these industries was particularly weak, and extra difficulties were posed for union organisers by the relationship between women's paid employment and their actual or potential family commitments.

It is commonplace to emphasise the problems that women's dual role posed for union organisers, but it is also important to examine what the trade union movement had to offer female workers. In the wool and



worsted and ready-made tailoring industries there was considerable antagonism between the sexes which was reflected in union policies. It is argued in the following chapters that this seriously hampered effective union organisation among women. It is also suggested that the hostility between men and women workers was not a simple or straightforward one, since it rested on different foundations and was expressed in different ways in the two industries. It is argued that the basic division of manufacturing industry along lines of sex, and the important role played by the trade union movement in reinforcing this division, is fundamental to any explanation of the low level of union organisation among women in the period as well as their weak industrial position.

## CHAPTER 11, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated)

1. T Woodhouse, "The Working Class", in D Fraser, ed. A History of Modern Leeds (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp 355-7.
2. B Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union: A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of the Heavy Woollen District Branch of the General Union of Textile Workers (Dewsbury: Yorkshire Factory Times, 1917), chapters 4 and 5.
3. Ibid. chapter 5.
4. Ibid. chapter 10.
5. Ben Turner (1863-1942) became involved with the organisation of textile workers during the Huddersfield strike of 1883. He was made secretary of the Heavy Woollen District section of the union in 1892 and became president of the General Union of Weavers and Textile Workers in 1902. Turner was also active in the movement for independent labour politics. He developed a close relationship with Leeds socialists when he lived in the city between 1889 and 1891. He then moved to Batley. He was a founder member of the I.L.P., sat on the executive of the Labour Party and became an M.P. in 1922. He was knighted in 1931 for his work as Parliamentary Secretary for Mines, 1929-30. Turner was an important contributor to the Yorkshire Factory Times, writing on trade union questions and independent labour politics. He also wrote poems and stories in dialect.

Alan Gee (1853-1939) was general secretary of the G.U.T.W. from 1888 to 1922. He lived in Huddersfield and founded the Trades Council there in 1885. He was a town councillor from 1892 and sat on the executive of the Labour Party between 1900 and 1905. He was described as having a talent for mediation and negotiation.

For biographical sketches of the above, see Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union, chapters 2 and 3; for Turner, see Y.F.T. 15 April 1904, and for Gee, see Y.F.T. 14 April 1910.

6. In 1884 Jewish tailoresses tried to form a society with the help of Mrs Ellis of Batley. In 1885 the Female Machinists' Society was established and was open to all tailoresses. Mrs Paterson presided at the founding meeting: Women's Union Journal, September (1884) and January (1885). For the aims of all-

- female societies in other parts of the country, see B Drake, Women in Trade Unions (Labour Research Department, 1920), chapter 2.
7. Women's Union Journal, January (1885) and April (1885). By April the Female Machinists' Society had changed its name to the Leeds Tailoresses' Society.
  8. Ibid. April (1885), July (1885), May (1886).
  9. John Bune was secretary of the Leeds Trades Council in the late 1880s and a member of the Leeds Board of Conciliation in the early 1890s. He remained a staunch supporter of the Liberal Party throughout his life.
  10. For a biographical sketch of Isabella Ford, see Leeds Weekly Citizen, 12 June 1914.
  11. See the biographical sketch of Isabella Ford by Ben Turner in the Y.F.T. 1 November 1889.
  12. Women's Union Journal, July (1885).
  13. Brotherton Library, Leeds University, Alf Mattison Papers, Diaries, 28 June 1918.
  14. Women's Union Journal, September (1888), and Leeds Daily News, 21 October 1889. Tailoresses in the Society were largely drawn from two firms, Buckley's and Gaunt & Hudson's.
  15. Evidence of Robert Burnett, president of the Leeds branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors, to the Select Committee on the Sweating System. Fourth Report (PP 1889, XIV, Pt I), QQ 30532-3.
  16. Evidence of James Sweeney to ibid. QQ 30189-93, 30205-06.
  17. Leeds Mercury, 18 September 1888.
  18. L.W.C. 12 June 1914, and L.D.N. 19 September 1888.

19. Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union, p 82.
20. Women's Trade Union and Provident League, Annual Report for 1888, p 11.
21. Ibid.
22. For a full account of the strike, see J Hendrick, "The Tailoresses in the Ready-Made Clothing Industry in Leeds, 1889-99: A Study in Labour Failure" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Warwick, 1970), especially chapter 4.
23. Press reports varied about the number of machinists on strike. The figures given ranged from 600 to 900. The higher number appears to have included finishers. The figure of 900 was quoted in the Y.F.T. 25 October 1889; the W.T.U.P.L. Annual Report for 1890, p 12, and the Tailor and Cutter, 31 October 1889. Isabella Ford claimed that the strikers numbered 600-700: Leeds Mercury, 26 November 1889.
24. E P Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", in A Briggs and J Saville, eds. Essays in Labour History. Vol 1 (Macmillan, 1960), pp 295-7.
25. Y.F.T. 18 October 1889. Tom Paylor was an insurance agent.
26. Leeds Evening Express, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23 July 1889.
27. For example, see "A Few Facts from the Clothing Factories", L.D.N. 17 October 1889, and the investigation into the wages of clothing workers in ibid. 23 October 1889.
28. Ibid. 21 October 1889.
29. Woodhouse, "The Working Class", p 374. For an account of the activities of the Leeds Socialist League, see Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", and E P Thompson, William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary (Merlin Press, 2nd ed. 1977), pp 528-9, 560-3.

30. For example, see the speeches of Paylor and Maguire to the girls on strike: L.D.N. 23 and 24 October 1889.
31. The letter was signed "Toiler": ibid. 29 October 1889. Speakers at all the meetings emphasised that the timing was unfortunate: for example, see Y.F.T. 25 October 1889.
32. Y.F.T. 25 October and 8 November 1889.
33. It was reported that Jewish workers were completing the strikers' work in the L.D.N. 28 October 1889. Isabella Ford and members of the Socialist League attended a meeting in the Leylands where Jewish workers resolved not to complete any garments from Arthur's: ibid. 30 October 1889. Female homeworkers, however, were used to finish clothing: Y.F.T. 27 December 1889.
34. Leeds City Archives, Leeds Trades Council, Minute Book, 6 November 1889.
35. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, chapter 3.
36. Most attention tends to be focussed on the Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union and the gas strike of 1890: see H Hendrick, "The Leeds Gas Strike, 1890", Thoresby Society Miscellany, XVI, 2 (1975), p 94, and Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", pp 296-301. Thompson notes, however, that the Trades Council was criticised by J Sweeney for its role in the tailoresses' strike: ibid. p 296.
37. Y.F.T. 10 January 1890. Bune told the girls to return to work to show that they were "desirous of having the dispute conducted in a proper manner": Yorkshire Post, 4 November 1889.
38. Y.F.T. 6 December 1889.
39. Leeds Times, 23 November 1889.
40. Leeds Evening Express, 30 November 1889.

41. The socialists never made an all out attempt to organise women workers after this dispute, although individuals such as Tom Paylor, James Sweeney and Walt Wood continued to give support at meetings. The socialists also withdrew from active work in the men's union, the Wholesale Clothiers' Operatives' Union, in the face of the exclusive attitudes of the cutters. The union then affiliated to the Leeds Trades Council. Socialists had greater influence among Jewish workers. The Jewish Tailors' Union had close links with the gas workers and did not affiliate to the Trades Council until 1895.
42. Y.F.T. 24 January 1890. The Gas Workers' and General Labourers' Union claimed that the Yorkshire Labour Council was not set up to be in opposition to the Trades Council. However, most of the new unions were involved in the former and not in the latter in 1890: Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", p 297.
43. For the views of Tom Maguire on women workers, see below, pp 616-18.
44. L.D.N. 18 October 1889.
45. Letter from a "Machine Girl": ibid. 22 October 1889.
46. Y.F.T. 25 October 1889.
47. Ibid.
48. L.D.N. 12 November 1889.
49. Ibid. The paper then published a letter from Firman in which he complained about his treatment. He claimed that he had been involved in the dispute from the start. He had been a passer and manager in a machine room and therefore knew more about it than a boot maker and joiner (a reference to Sweeney). He claimed that he had suggested that Heaton should go on the deputation because he had been a manager and could deal with the question in a more practical way than men not in the trade: ibid. 13 November 1889.
50. Ibid. 24 October 1889.

51. Gas workers volunteered to guard the collection sheets spread out on Saturdays: Y.F.T. 8 November 1889. Workpeople contributed £437; public collections totalled over £105; private contributions equalled £140. Over £802 was received by the committee altogether: Board of Trade, Annual Report on Strikes and Lockouts for 1889 (PP 1890, LXVIII), p 126.
  
52. Editorials in the Leeds Daily News were consistently supportive of the tailoresses. The paper received a number of letters from members of the public expressing sympathy with the girls' conditions of work and their grievances: for example, see 5 and 11 November 1889.
  
53. Hendrick, "The Leeds Gas Strike", pp 86-94.
  
54. Women's Union Journal, November (1889), and L.D.N. 28 October 1889.
  
55. J Buckman, Immigrants and the Class Struggle: The Jewish Immigrant in Leeds, 1880-1914 (Manchester: M.U.P. 1983), pp 98-106.
  
56. The development of sectional unions in the clothing industry was common to all centres of the trade: for examples of the different unions, see the Royal Commission on Labour. Fifth and Final Report. Appendix III, the Employment of Women (PP 1894, XXXV), pp 541-6, and Board of Trade, Report on Trade Unions for 1900 (PP 1901, LXXIV), Membership of Trade Unions, 1896-1900, pp 62-5.
  
57. Y.F.T. 19 July 1889, and the W.T.U.P.L., Annual Report for 1890, p 12.
  
58. "A History of the Leeds Labour Party. IV and V", L.W.C. 1 and 8 February 1918, and B Turner, "Don't Be Downhearted: Reminiscences of the Past. Faith and Hope in the Future", L.W.C. 23 April 1926.
  
59. Ibid.
  
60. Woodhouse, "The Working Class", p 381.

61. For the involvement of the I.L.P., see Brotherton Library, Leeds University, Alf Mattison Papers, Diaries, February 1895. See also Leeds Trades Council and Leeds Independent Labour Party, The Unemployed: A Discussion of the Causes of and Remedies for Scarcity of Employment, with Special Reference to Leeds (Leeds: Crowther, 1895).
62. Woodhouse, "The Working Class", pp 373-4.
63. Ibid. pp 381-2.
64. H Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), chapter 6, and E J Hobsbawm, "General Labour Unions in Britain, 1889-1914", in Labouring Men (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), pp 187-91.
65. B Turner, Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers (Heckmondwike: Labour Pioneer and Factory Times, 1920), chapter 9.
66. J Bornat, "An Examination of the General Union of Textile Workers, 1883-1922" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1980), pp 48-9, 53.
67. William Drew represented the union in Bradford, a city which proved particularly difficult to organise.
68. Only Gee and Turner were paid officials in the early years.
69. Their activities were detailed each week in the Yorkshire Factory Times. Turner and Drew were paid correspondents. Gee was the paper's bookkeeper: Bornat, thesis, p 52.
70. Approximately 58 per cent of wool and worsted workers were female in 1911, but the proportion was far higher in the weaving branch of the trade: D Haynes, "A Comparative Study of the Occupations of Men and Women, 1851-1911: With Special Reference to their Mutual Displacement", Women's Industrial News, October (1915), p 294.



71. For example, in 1897 Miss Barry of the W.T.U.L. went to Yorkshire for 16 days to help organise textile workers. The first two meetings were held in Leeds and the rest in other towns in the West Riding: Women's Trade Union Review, April (1897). Isabella Ford spoke frequently at textile union meetings in the area; for example, see Y.F.T. 8 August 1890, 5 August 1892 and 21 April 1893, when she addressed meetings at Leeds, Thornton and Dewsbury.
72. Organising drives were held approximately twice a year in the West Riding in the late 1890s.
73. H Clegg, A Fox and A F Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Vol 1. 1889-1910 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p 34.
74. For a discussion of regional variations in union membership, see below, pp 558-9.
75. The Leeds Jewish Tailoresses' Union appears to have been initiated by the Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union in 1896: Der Arbeiter Freund, 31 January 1896 (I am grateful to Dr J Buckman for this reference). In 1897 it was noted as having 200 members: Women's T.U. Rev. April (1897). The union subsequently collapsed, but in 1906 Isabella Ford was involved in trying to organise another union for Jewesses: see a leaflet advertising this meeting, written in English and Hebrew, dated 2 September 1906 (I am grateful to E P Thompson for this reference). In 1907 Jewish tailoresses from Leeds appealed to the W.T.U.L. for assistance during a dispute. Mrs Chew was asked to go and help: Trades Union Congress, W.T.U.L. Papers, Minutes of the Committee meeting held 15 March 1907.
76. Bune acted as vice president in 1894 and secretary in 1899, when Agnes Close was organising secretary: Y.F.T. 26 January 1894, and Women's T.U. Rev. January (1899).
77. Isabella Ford was a member of the national committee of the W.T.U.L. She gave £40 a year to pay for the salary of the secretary of the Tailoresses' Union and, with her sister Bessie, financed the women's Trade Union Club: Women's T.U. Rev. January (1897), and P Snowden, An Autobiography. Vol 1 (Nicholson & Watson, 1934), p 77.

78. Lily Thakeray was on the union's executive until 1891 when she was elected as a delegate to the Trades Council. Mrs Parrett was made secretary in December 1891. Her "homely" speech was made to workers in the C.W.S. clothing factory: Y.F.T. 21 August 1892.
79. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1897).
80. Ibid. and January (1901). In 1901 Agnes Close was described as a resident organiser at the Women's Trade Union Club. She came back to Leeds from Canada for a visit in 1906: Y.F.T. 10 April 1906.
81. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1897), p 18.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid. p 17.
84. For example, see Y.F.T. 13 March 1891.
85. For example, see Y.F.T. 13 February 1891, when the speakers were James Sweeney, Ben Turner and Miss Abraham from London; 24 February 1893, when Miss Marland of the W.T.U.L. and local labour leaders spoke; 12 January 1894, when Miss Marland and officials of the Amalgamated Union of Clothing Operatives addressed the meeting. Members of the Tailoresses' Union received 4/- to 6/- per week out of work pay, 5/- a week sick benefit for 4 weeks, and then 2/6 for 4 weeks, and 7/- to 10/- dispute pay. A levy of 3d per member was made for funeral benefits: Royal Commission on Labour. Fifth and Final Report. Appendix III, the Employment of Women (PP 1894, XXXV), p 544. Ben Turner thought that sick benefits were a mistake: Y.F.T. 2 December 1892.
86. For details of the dances and socials, see Y.F.T. 18 March, 14 October and 25 November 1892. For the Trade Union Club, see Women's T.U. Rev. January (1897), p 18.
87. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1897), p 18.
88. Appendix 5, Table 5.3.

89. Y.F.T. 19 and 26 August 1892.
90. Ibid. 15 November 1895.
91. See the letters from Isabella Ford, Turner and Uttley, the C.W.S. clothing factory manager, in ibid. 13 and 20 December 1895.
92. See Isabella Ford's letter: ibid. 13 December 1895. She claimed that the true aims of the co operative movement should be the welfare of the workers and the full liberty of the workforce to combine for their own protection and benefit.
93. Co operative employees called a special meeting of the union because of the loan made to the Brushmakers Society. The committee's action, however, was upheld: ibid. 24 August 1895.
94. For example, there were arguments over why Miss Thakeray and Miss Storey were no longer on the executive of the union: ibid. 4 December 1891. It was noted that the suggestion of union officials that Miss Kennedy should attend the Trades Union Congress instead of Miss Close went against the decision of the union committee: ibid. 31 August 1894.
95. Ibid. 3 February 1893.
96. Board of Trade, Report on Trade Unions in 1900 (PP 1901, LXXIV), p 65. The union also had 109 female members. There were 15 branches by the end of 1900: ibid. p 64.
97. In 1903 it was estimated that there were 1,600 to 1,700 male Jewish tailoring workers and that 1,300 of these were in the union: see the evidence of S Freedman, secretary of the union, to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration. Vol 2 (PP 1903, IX), Q 20372.
98. Appendix 5, Table 5.2.
99. For a discussion of these difficulties, see above, pp 209-12.

100. One speaker at the meeting to form the W.C.O.U. suggested that there should be separate unions for pressers, cutters and tailoresses, but that they should have a joint executive. This was defeated: Y.F.T. 1 November 1889.
101. Labour Chronicle, June (1893).
102. When the girls at Messrs Stewart and Macdonald went on strike in 1894, the executive committee of the men's union called out the male pressers to help the girls in their struggle: Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheet of the A.U.C.O. January 1st to June 30th 1894, p 2. A.U.C.O. officials also frequently attended meetings of the Tailoresses' Union: see, for example, Y.F.T. 12 January 1894 and 6 October 1895.
103. A federation was proposed in 1894. It was agreed that in a dispute no member of the federation would do a striker's work. The federation was also to hold regular meetings to oversee conditions in the trade. However, the constituent unions were to be under no financial obligations and would not intervene in each other's disputes unless requested: Y.F.T. 23 November 1894. The federation was completed in August of the following year: ibid. 23 August 1895.
104. Appendix 5, Table 5.2
105. Women's T.U. Rev. April (1898), p 2.
106. When the A.U.C.O. wished to expel women from the branch in Leeds, Young opposed the resolution: Y.F.T. 22 January 1904. Withey helped out in the tailoresses' strike of 1889 and played an active part in the amalgamation of the union with the A.U.C.O.: see the biographical sketch of Withey in ibid. 5 August 1904.
107. Ibid. 22 January 1904.
108. Isabella Ford's letter was reprinted in ibid.
109. Mary Macarthur was visiting Leeds at the time to prepare for the women's conference of the Trades Union Congress which was to be held in the city that year: Women's T.U. Rev. April (1904), and Y.F.T. 12 February 1904.

110. Appendix 5, Table 5.1.
111. For example, after a dispute in the printing trade in 1906 450 girls joined the union: Y.F.T. 6 July 1906. In the boot and shoe industry 60 girls joined the union after a strike: Women's T.U. Rev. October (1904).
112. Appendix 5, Tables 5.1 and 5.5.
113. Ibid. For war-time gains in union membership, see Bornat, thesis, chapter 10, and M Stewart and L Hunter, The Needle is Threaded (Heinemann & Neame, 1964), p 172.
114. For the more general unrest in these years, see J Hinton, Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement, 1967-1974 (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), chapter 5, and E H Hunt, British Labour History, 1915-1914 (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), pp 318-29.

Local unrest among male workers included engineers, miners, boot and shoe workers, tailors, tramwaymen and french polishers. In the case of female workers disputes involved tailoresses, textile workers, laundresses and shop assistants: Board of Trade, Annual Report on Strikes and Lockouts for 1910 (PP 1911, XLI), for 1911 (PP 1912-3, XLVII), for 1912 (PP 1914, XLVIII), for 1913 (PP 1914-16, XXXVI). The laundresses on strike were employed by the Leeds Infirmary and the shop assistants worked for the industrial co operative society: Y.F.T. 18 January and 1 February 1912. For an account of the important strike among municipal workers, see J E Williams, "The Leeds Corporation Strike in 1913", in A Briggs and J Saville, eds. Essays in Labour History. Vol 2 (Macmillan, 1971).

115. L.W.C. 21 October 1911.
116. Ibid.
117. Y.F.T. 28 March 1912.
118. L.W.C. 21 October 1911.
119. Ibid.

120. Ibid. 8 November 1912.
121. Ibid. 15 November 1912.
122. Ibid. 28 October 1911.
123. Ibid.
124. The long years of union service of Ben Turner and Alan Gee have already been noted. In the clothing trade Joseph Young was appointed general secretary of the A.U.C.O. and remained in this post until the end of the period. Arthur Conley, a Leeds Catholic of Irish extraction, was an influential shop steward after the Boer War and then secretary of the Leeds branch. In 1909 he was made a full-time organiser of the A.U.C.O. and became general secretary of the United Garment Workers' Union in 1920: S W Lerner, Breakaway Unions and the Small Trade Union (George Allen & Unwin, 1961), p 100.
125. Between 1902 and 1930, 22 of the labour councillors and aldermen were trade union officers and/or party agents, 11 were self-employed, 11 were railwaymen, 10 were skilled workers, 6 were manual workers, 4 were professional employees, 3 worked for the Post Office, 2 were housewives and there was 1 clerk: M Meadowcroft, "Transition in Leeds City Government, 1903-26" (unpublished M Phil thesis, University of Bradford, 1978), p 62.
126. Ibid. p 32, Table 2. The fortunes of the Labour Party fluctuated during the period. The number of councillors rose steadily between 1903, when there was only 1 councillor who took 8.8 per cent of the votes, to 1907 when there were 9 councillors and 1 alderman taking 24.2 per cent of the vote. The number of councillors then fell to between 3 and 5 in the period 1908 to 1911, but the share of the vote remained stable. From 1910 the number of councillors steadily increased to 9 in 1911, 10 in 1912 and 14 in 1913. The share of the vote did not increase until 1913 when labour councillors took 29.2 per cent of the votes. There was 1 alderman each year until 1913 when the number increased to 2. For the attempts of the Labour Party to improve the work conditions of municipal employees, see L.W.C. 28 October 1911.
127. In 1912 the Leeds Trades Council debated the issue of women's suffrage after hearing a speech from Isabella Ford. The following resolution was agreed by the meeting: "This meeting considers that it would be a grave injustice to women not to grant them the franchise at the same time as an extension of the franchise is granted to men, and therefore urges the House of Commons to include women in the proposed bill": L.C.A. Leeds Trades

- Council, Minute Book, 30 October 1912. The various women's suffrage groups were very active in Leeds and their activities were widely reported in the press. When the City Council refused to allow the Women's Freedom League to use the Victoria Hall for a suffrage meeting, this was opposed by councillor Verity on behalf of the Labour Party: L.W.C. 6 June 1913. The Leeds Women's Labour League was active in promoting the suffrage cause and this was a major theme of the various platforms at the May Day demonstration in 1913: ibid. 9 May 1913.
128. Active members of the A.U.C.O. were also involved in the Women's Labour League and the cause of women's suffrage. Miss Holmes, a Trades Council delegate, was a member of the W.L.L. Miss Quinn, a member of the branch committee and a delegate to the Trades Council, declared that she was glad that she threw a book at Mr Redmond when he came to Leeds because he was a supporter of the Cat and Mouse Bill: L.W.C. 1 August 1913. She became a full-time union organiser in 1915 and stood unsuccessfully for the West Ward in the municipal elections of 1920: for a brief biographical sketch, see Garment Worker, November (1926), p 2. The Leeds W.L.L. also made an attempt to become involved in the organisation of tailoresses: L.W.C. 15 June 1912.
129. M Macarthur, "Women and Trade Unions", in G M Tuckwell et al, Woman in Industry from Seven Points of View (Duckworth, 1908), p 74.
130. Ibid. See also M Macarthur, "The National Insurance Act", Women's T.U. Rev. April (1912), where she argued that the Act would provide a chance to get more women into unions.
131. A Susan Lawrence, "National Insurance and Women's Trade Unionism", Women's T.U. Rev. July (1912), pointed out that there were both dangers and opportunities for women's organisation in the Act. Female workers on low pay would find it difficult to pay both insurance and union contributions. If they insured with a non-trade union organisation then they could be lost to trade unionism for life. On the other hand, if they made the union their approved society this could improve organisation.
132. These meetings are reported in the Yorkshire Factory Times for 1912. They were held almost every week in Leeds during the first half of the year.

133. Turner warned that if textile workers made mill clubs their approved societies they would feel less free to be sick. Employers would know the details of their personal lives such as age: Y.F.T. 20 June 1912.
134. Ibid. 18 January, 2 May, 23 May 1912.
135. Ibid. 20 February 1913. Membership also increased in other areas. Huddersfield had had 1,500 members for many years and now increased to 3,000. Bradford went up from 200 to 2,000. In one year alone the Heavy Woollen District increased by 2,300 members. Overall, membership of the G.U.T.W. increased from 9,000 in January to 15,000 in August in 1913: ibid. 21 August 1913.
136. Approximately 160 textile workers from Lister's joined the union in 1911 and this led to the formation of a Leeds branch: Y.F.T. 2 May 1912. They were later joined by female workers from Lupton's and Wilson's: ibid. 28 March 1912. In 1913 Turner recruited 100 female workers from one worsted mill in Leeds: ibid. 9 October 1913. In 1917 it was noted that 8 of the 11 committee members of the Leeds branch were female: Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union, pp 83-4.
137. Y.F.T. 19 June and 3 July 1913.
138. Ibid. 4 September 1913, and Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union, pp 105-06. Turner claimed that the settlement was not a very good one for female workers because they were poorly organised.
139. L.W.C. 11 July 1913.
140. For example, see Men's Wear, 14 September 1912 and 8 February 1913.
141. For example, see Yorkshire Post, 28 January 1910.
142. For example, see Y.F.T. 3 February and 24 March 1910, and Yorkshire Post, 28 January 1910.



143. In March 1910 Joseph Young claimed that 1,000 female workers had joined the Leeds branch within a month: L.M. 19 March 1910. By the end of 1910 the A.U.C.O. had 4,200 members in the country as a whole and this had increased to 6,700 by the end of 1911: ibid. 15 August 1912.
144. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1913).
145. L.W.C. 23 December 1911.
146. The union demanded a 48 hour week with overtime paid at time and a quarter, a minimum of 9d per hour for stock cutters, passers and fitters, 9½d for machine cutters, 10½d for special cutters and a piece rate that would yield 10d for male pressers and 5d for female workers. It demanded the end of all fines and deductions, with the price of sewings to be fixed by a board comprised of representatives from the employers and the workers: ibid. 31 January 1913.
147. Y.F.T. 9 December 1909.
148. Male workers received between 8½d and 9½d an hour: L.W.C. 11 April 1913. The national minima were 6d an hour for men and 3½d for women. Hours were set at 49½ per week: Y.F.T. 9 May 1912. For the discontent among female workers, see L.W.C. 18 April 1913.
149. Monthly meetings were abandoned in 1907: Yorkshire Evening News, 26 September 1907.
150. L.W.C. 11 July 1913.
151. Y.F.T. 9 May 1912.
152. Y.F.T. 1 April 1909 and 26 May 1910.
153. A series of meetings were held to promote the idea of amalgamation: for example, see Y.F.T. 16 May 1912, and L.W.C. 27 June and 4 July 1913.

154. The A.U.C.O. was the largest union seeking amalgamation. Other substantial unions included the Leeds Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union, the West End branch of the A.S.T., the London Society of Tailors and Tailoresses and the London Jewish Tailors' Society: Y.F.T. 11 December 1913, and Stewart and Hunter, The Needle is Threaded, p 172. For the sectional differences, see Tailor and Cutter, 8 February 1912.
  
155. Early in 1913 the Leeds branch of the A.U.C.O. had 3,600 members, over half of whom were men: Men's Wear, 29 March 1913. This had increased to 5,000 by the end of 1913: Y.F.T. 6 November 1913.
  
156. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1913). The focus on the interests of male workers is more fully discussed below, pp 590-1, 595-601.
  
157. Only a few hundred female textile workers were organised out of approximately 10,000 women in the trade in Leeds. Roughly 25 per cent of tailoresses in the factories were members of the A.U.C.O. 300 women were in the Shop Assistants' Union, 100 were in the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives and a handful of women were organised in printing, cardboard box making and miscellaneous trades: L.W.C. 20 and 27 July 1912.

CHAPTER 12SOME EXPLANATIONS OF THE WEAKNESS OF FEMALE TRADE UNIONISM IN LEEDS

Many of the problems faced by union organisers in their attempts to recruit female members were caused by women's weak industrial position. Low pay, low skill, the casual nature of women's work and their concentration in isolated forms of production such as homework, small workshops and indoor domestic service posed major structural barriers to the effective organisation of women. Many of these problems also applied in the case of less skilled male workers. However, contemporary union organisers argued that women workers posed additional problems because of the relationship between their wage earning and family life.<sup>1</sup> Women's role within the family was thought to affect both their industrial position and their attitudes towards paid employment and trade unionism.

Lady Dilke suggested that the weak industrial position of women had its roots in their role as supplementary wage earners in the family. This meant that they formed a pool of low skilled cheap labour and had little interest in taking up the few opportunities for promotion and training which were offered.<sup>2</sup> A high proportion of women left regular paid employment after marriage and therefore the female labour force was a predominantly youthful one.<sup>3</sup> Young workers were seen as difficult to organise because they cared only for dress and entertainment, while the expectation of marriage and an early end to paid employment was thought to lessen their interest in waged work and in the benefits of trade unionism.<sup>4</sup> It was also suggested that women's upbringing

hampered trade union organisation, because girls were encouraged to be submissive to authority and were therefore reluctant to stand up to employers or to join organisations which implied militancy.<sup>5</sup>

Most female trade union organisers agreed that the weaknesses of trade unionism among women could be explained by a combination of their structural position within industry and their role within the family, but their emphases and solutions for overcoming such weaknesses differed. Barbara Drake, for example, argued that the major obstacles to women's organisation were low pay and low skill rather than the special circumstances of their family lives. She concluded that these difficulties would "disappear spontaneously with changes in economic and social conditions".<sup>6</sup> Others viewed the problems as more complex and thought it necessary to change consciousness as well as to remove structural barriers. Mary Macarthur saw low pay as crucial for any explanation of women's failure to join unions, but she also related the difficulties of organisation to the low living standards of female workers. In her view "the very lowest class of women's labour can never be efficiently organised until the workers are raised to that standard at which intelligent contemplation of their position becomes possible".<sup>7</sup> Macarthur argued that the best way forward lay in sustained education in the principles of trade unionism during the periods of enthusiasm engendered by strike action, and in legislation to improve women's pay.<sup>8</sup> The emphasis of female union leaders on the need for legislation increased during the first few years of the twentieth century. They were concerned that sweated workers would never be able to improve their work conditions by organisation alone. At

the same time, they were encouraged by, and contributed to, the wider campaign to achieve minimum wage legislation for low paid groups which gathered momentum in these years.<sup>9</sup>

Isabella Ford also argued strongly that women's attitudes had to be changed, because their resistance to trade unionism was deeply rooted in contemporary definitions of femininity. Feminine behaviour was frequently equated with submission and this made women reluctant to join unions, bodies which were regarded as rebellious against authority. She suggested that families, schools, religious organisations and philanthropic groups all played a part in bringing girls up to accept such notions of femininity; therefore it was the task of trade unionists "to fight every form of conventional thought ... particularly amongst the women themselves".<sup>10</sup> Although Isabella Ford recognised that women's upbringing and role in the family could lead them to adopt different attitudes to those of male workers, which could hamper trade unionism, she also suggested that this could be a source of strength. She thought that once women had become organised they grasped trade unionism more firmly than men "because more religiously ... No battle can be fought successfully that has not a religious spirit or meaning within it and this meaning, which exists in Trade Unionism, appeals more strongly to women than the merely economic side of the cause".<sup>11</sup> She argued constantly that trade unionism meant more than material benefits, since it fostered a collective spirit rather than one of individual competition, and therefore implied a moral revolution.<sup>12</sup>

The most recent histories of female trade unionism also point to the

structural weaknesses of women's industrial position, the difficulties posed by their dual role at work and in the family and the hostility of male workers to explain the low level of female organisation.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, within this general framework there are different emphases and approaches. Lewenhak, for example, stresses the obduracy of male trade unionists in refusing to meet women's needs and demands as an important barrier to union organisation among women. She explains this hostility by men's fear that women could be used as a source of cheap labour and by their belief that "a woman's place was in the home".<sup>14</sup>

However, her analysis of sex antagonism and women's dual role is not explored in detail in the context of specific industries and local areas. This means that she fails to move beyond the formulation of general statements.<sup>15</sup> By emphasising the hostility of male trade unionists, Lewenhak does not fully explore the question of women's own resistance to joining unions and their specific consciousness as workers.<sup>16</sup>

Heidi Hartmann also sees the hostility of male trade unionists as crucial for an understanding both of women's weak industrial position and their reluctance to organise.<sup>17</sup> She suggests that by demanding a family wage for men and by seeking to restrict women to less skilled work trade unions were responsible for women's marginal role in production and for their low pay.<sup>18</sup> She argues that these policies were not simply a response to the threat of cheap female labour but represented an attempt by patriarchal institutions to bolster up male privileges in the workplace and in the home.<sup>19</sup> In Hartmann's analysis trade unions operated as organs of male power. Their outlook was, therefore,

particularly difficult to change because it was deeply rooted in the patriarchal structures and attitudes of the wider society.<sup>20</sup>

Hartmann's focus on the importance of sex antagonism in the trade union movement can be criticised for "failing to locate trade union sexism more firmly within the struggle between capital and labour".<sup>21</sup> The exclusionary tactics of skilled unions, for example, were directed as much against immigrant and less skilled male workers as they were against women. It has been argued that their policies reflected a basic accommodation to the capitalist system, and the reformism that resulted, rather than simply deriving from the patriarchal nature of trade union structure and attitudes.<sup>22</sup> It can also be suggested that, although trade union policies helped to perpetuate women's weak industrial position, these were largely developed as a response to the use of women as cheap labour which long preceded the formation of strong trade unions.<sup>23</sup>

Among the most recent attempts to examine the organisation of women, Sally Alexander's work stands out as pointing the way towards a new approach; one which would explore the complex relationship between sex antagonism in industry and in trade unions, changes in the labour process and women's position within the domestic sphere.<sup>24</sup> Alexander suggests that major periods of union activity among women need to be explained as well as union weaknesses, and that in both cases a simple reference to sex conflict or to women's "dual role" does not go far enough. Instead, she argues that attention should be paid to the "connections between changes in the labour process, dislocation of the

customary and local sexual divisions within different trades, as well as a heightened trade union consciousness among strategic groups of workers", if changes in the organisation of women are to be more fully understood.<sup>25</sup>

Alexander points to the need to explore the specific way in which a trade union consciousness is likely to arise among women. She criticises the conventional approach of labour historians who assume a "correspondence between the wage relationship itself, class consciousness, and workers' defensive organisations".<sup>26</sup> She cites the following passage from G D H Cole as representative of this approach:

Trade unions arise as natural responses of the workers to the conditions of capitalist employment. They arise as bodies for the collective defences of the immediate interests of particular groups of workers and for the improvement of workers' conditions of life.<sup>27</sup>

Alexander, on the other hand, argues that such an approach cannot be applied satisfactorily to female workers. They did not always concentrate on their own immediate interests, but often subordinated these to the needs of their families, while their thoughts centred on their domestic responsibilities.<sup>28</sup> She suggests, therefore, that unions needed to recognise and to cater for women's specific consciousness and needs if they were to have any success.<sup>29</sup>

As already noted, the expansion of trade unionism in the late 1880s and the changed membership policies of many organisations led female trade union leaders to take a more optimistic view about the possibility of



organising women workers. They were encouraged to believe that male attitudes towards female workers could be changed. This led the Women's Trade Union League in particular to pursue a policy of cooperation with craft unions and the promotion of mixed-sex trade unionism. It was hoped that a lessening of male hostility to female workers, combined with government legislation, which would remove structural barriers to their organisation, would lead to a breakthrough in women's trade unionism in the period.<sup>30</sup> Despite the development of mixed-sex trade unions in the major female trades in Leeds and the introduction of legislation such as the Trade Boards Act, the level of female organisation was still low in the city by 1914. The following chapters attempt to explain the continuing weakness of female trade unionism in Leeds. They take up and explore Sally Alexander's contention that women's organisation can only be understood in the context of women's specific consciousness, both as women and as workers, the extent to which trade unions attempted to cater for this and changes in the labour process which affected the position and attitudes of both male and female workers at a local level.

#### The characteristics of women workers in Leeds

It has been noted above that both male and female union organisers argued that the characteristics of women workers, including youth, expectation of marriage, lack of interest in paid employment, submissiveness and gentility, all contributed to weak organisation. It is tempting for historians to accept these views too readily, despite the fact that many male union organisers had strong opinions

about the desirability of women's waged work and were by no means detached observers, because the views of women themselves were rarely recorded. It is possible, however, to catch glimpses of the outlook of working women, in particular when they wrote letters to the press or were interviewed at times of labour unrest.<sup>31</sup> These reveal a wider range of attitudes than is usually suggested in the prevailing literature.

Women workers in Leeds were not an undifferentiated group with a common attitude towards wage earning and trade unionism. Their views were affected by age, marital status, family background and also by the type of work that they did and their experience of work conditions.<sup>32</sup> The relationship between age, marital status, family background and the level of trade union activity was a particularly complex one. Young girls employed in monotonous work were likely to have had a greater interest in dress and entertainment than in the day-to-day activities of trade unionism. This was a frequent source of complaint among trade union organisers.<sup>33</sup> Isabella Ford, who had a detailed knowledge of the lives of female workers, captured these attitudes in her novel, Mr Elliott, when a young mill worker complains:

Oh, Aunt Sarah, we've had no fun for iver so long, and I've stalled o' these meetin's and all their talk about t'union. I want to see t'sea, and hear yon band playin' on t'pier, and go in them big swings that makes you feel as sick as aught; and there'll be some dancin' too.<sup>34</sup>

During the tailoresses' dispute at Arthur's the strike committee

frequently complained that the girls were too young and flippant to realise the "seriousness of the struggle" or to show loyalty to the union; for example, it was suggested that they often claimed strike pay after they had returned to work.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, many young women did remain resolute during the lengthy strike, refusing to return to the firm once they had been defeated.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the fact that a large number of girls were not the main breadwinners, but had the support of their relatives, enabled them to make a strong stand.<sup>37</sup> Where unions were well established, as in Lancashire cotton textiles, young workers were drafted into the union as soon as they entered the mill and remained as members for the rest of their working lives.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the female labour force in Leeds cannot be characterised by extreme youth. Although the majority of factory workers in ready-made tailoring were aged under 25, at least one third of the female workforce in textiles and in all branches of clothing manufacture were aged over 25 in 1911. On average, young women could expect at least eight years of waged work before they married.<sup>39</sup>

The relationship between family background and attitudes towards union organisation was also complex. The daughters of white-collar workers, foremen and managers were thought to be particularly hostile to trade unionism. It was assumed that their status as "pocket-money earners" made them less interested in their conditions of work.<sup>40</sup> It has already been argued, however, that such women were in a minority. Even girls from more comfortable working-class homes were expected to contribute to family income and had a pride in their own worth. This could encourage them to adopt a more positive attitude towards trade

unionism than that shown by girls from poorer homes.<sup>41</sup>

Contemporaries also made contradictory statements concerning the effects of marital status on trade union membership and activity. Married women who were desperate for work were thought to be reluctant to jeopardise their employment by belonging to a union, whereas wives of better paid workers were accused of working simply to pay for extra clothing and seaside holidays, and therefore of displaying little interest in trade unionism.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Isabella Ford argued that married women who worked to raise family living standards tended to make the most solid trade unionists.<sup>43</sup> Her views were supported by evidence from the printing trade, where it was suggested that married women were often the most independent workers and were usually chosen to go on deputations to employers.<sup>44</sup>

Status divisions between female workers had some effect on union activity by hampering the development of a collective identity. Tailoresses, for example, were often characterised as being too proud to join unions because they wore ordinary clothes and worked in light clean conditions; in the textile trade menders and weavers looked down on piecers and feeders in the spinning rooms who were paid lower wages and worked in more unpleasant physical conditions.<sup>45</sup> However, status differences were not confined to women. Male workers also displayed a concern with the status of their work, in particular in the tailoring trade. Moreover, status divisions based on the quality of dress or the nature of the task performed could be overcome when all workers were faced with the deterioration of work conditions or

suffered from an officious foreman.<sup>46</sup>

Contemporaries characterised female workers as submissive and easily intimidated by employers. They cited this as a reason for their reluctance to join trade unions. In Leeds women working in the tailoring factories and textile mills did meet considerable hostility to trade unionism from employers, although there were firms which either tolerated or even actively encouraged union organisation.<sup>47</sup>

Textile employers tended to discuss their workpeople in paternalistic terms. They frequently referred to their willingness to listen to grievances and expressed a preference for dealing directly with their own workers when disputes arose rather than with "outside agitators".<sup>48</sup>

The owners of large tailoring factories emphasised that the provision of welfare facilities and high wages had removed the necessity for trade union membership. They tended to claim that they had little experience of union activity in their firms.<sup>49</sup> The hostility expressed

towards trade unionism was directed at both male and female workers, but employers were particularly outraged when women sought to join unions or to express grievances. This can partly be explained by the anger of employers that their female workers should be so ungrateful as to complain in the face of so much benevolence, but it was also because women's protests were not taken seriously. Sir Edwin Gaunt, for example, one of the leading clothing manufacturers in Leeds, would not meet a deputation of workers from his firm because he refused to speak with "a crowd of gaping lasses".<sup>50</sup> Such an attitude was

encountered frequently by union leaders.<sup>51</sup> When the large wholesale clothiers in Leeds formed an association in the years preceding the

First World War, they tried to insert a clause on union membership in their wage agreement with the Amalgamated Union of Clothing Operatives. The clause stated that employees who were not union members should be free to obtain work, while employers should not object to employing union members.<sup>52</sup> The AUCO opposed this clause bitterly but were in no position to enforce a closed shop.<sup>53</sup>

Both sexes were victimised for union activity. Many individuals were blacklisted by a particular mill or factory.<sup>54</sup> Some officials of the AUCO found it so difficult to obtain work that they had to leave the city for long periods to find employment elsewhere.<sup>55</sup> Victimisation pay was a regular item of union expenditure during the period on behalf of male members.<sup>56</sup> However, the the high demand for female labour in the late 1880s, and the lack of organisation among employers, meant that women dismissed after strike action were usually able to find work in other firms.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, the economic difficulties of the wool and worsted and the tailoring industries in the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century increased the pressures on women workers to avoid union membership.

It was the day-to-day pressure from managers and foremen against union activity which had the most immediate importance for the workforce. Male workers in many trades were subject to such pressures. However, women were particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, while payment by the piece gave foremen considerable power over female wages and conditions of work. The members of the Workwomen's Society, for example, refused to insert a strike clause in the rules because they "feared that they would be subject to the special oversight of the foreman".<sup>58</sup> A letter

signed by "Poor Pay" also pointed to the pressures exerted by foremen:

The proposed Tailloresses' Union should have been established years ago, but the girls are, as a rule, too afraid to come forward. On Saturday morning, just as the first hand was going for her pay, the master called out, "The first one who leaves the room will be dismissed". We had to wait until all had been paid, then he spoke against the Tailloresses' Union. He said finishers got 15/6 all year which is a barefaced lie which I should have contradicted but I was afraid of dismissal ... we want to go shoulder to shoulder and get better pay ... why should us women, because we have to work for our money, work for such a small wage. I for one mean to speak out.<sup>59</sup>

Managers frequently refused to allow meetings to take place on the premises and could make it difficult for women to attend evening meetings by resorting to overtime.<sup>60</sup> When Miss Marland visited Leeds as part of an organising drive for the WTUL she asked the manager of one firm if she could speak to the girls in the dining room for a few minutes during the meal hour. "'Who are you?' he asked. 'Organiser for the Women's Trade Union League,' I replied. 'No thank you, we don't wish to see you,' he said, as he turned on his heel and left me."<sup>61</sup>

There are many examples of women's fear of the foreman and of the practical difficulties put in the way of their organisation by management, but the submissiveness of the female worker should not be over-emphasised. Women were not averse to taking strike action despite the equation of femininity with submissive attitudes. During the 1890s and early 1900s militancy among female workers in the ready-made tailoring and wool and worsted industries in Leeds increased as employers sought to cut wages.<sup>62</sup> All but a handful of disputes involved the level of wages paid, which suggests that women workers saw this as a crucial issue. The strikes

were usually confined to a single firm and were rarely prolonged.<sup>63</sup>

For example, in one Leeds mill weavers struck when their employers decided to deduct a shilling per end of finished cloth. They finally returned to work after a compromise in which the deduction was reduced to 6d.<sup>64</sup>

In most mills, however, wage reductions were made indirectly by a change in work practices. In 1890, for example, weavers in one Leeds mill were told to do their own twisting-in for no extra pay, although this work was carried out by a separate group of workers in neighbouring Morley and Batley.<sup>65</sup> On this occasion strike action proved to be unsuccessful.

Women were not always involved only in defensive strikes. They also sought to improve their pay and conditions of work at times of more general labour unrest. It was the tailoresses at Arthur's who carried out the lengthiest dispute in the clothing trade in 1889 when they demanded a reduction in the charge made for power. Their action was important in fostering a sense of solidarity among the women. One tailoress, signing herself "Anxious and Troubled", wrote that when she first went on strike she feared the consequences for those women with relatives to support and was less enthusiastic than many of the others. She had been encouraged, however, by the growing offers of support and by the boldness with which a number of tailoresses got up to speak at meetings. At this point "all the spirit of Englishwomen rose within us to do our best for those without help".<sup>66</sup> Letters to the press showed that the strike had unleashed a depth of resentment felt, and kept hidden, by many women and girls in ready-made tailoring. It was as if some had gained a new confidence and were refusing to be downtrodden any longer. One of the



strikers, who signed herself "Hopeful", wrote to refute the manager's statement that collections were being made in order to keep the strike leaders: "He's only trying to smooth us down. Don't let him girls. Let's walk hand in hand ... and hope we'll fare better in the future in the union",<sup>67</sup> In the second period of unrest after 1910 women again went on strike for higher wages in all the major female trades in Leeds.<sup>68</sup>

In both periods of labour unrest women showed a willingness to take their turn at picket duty and were not averse to *harassing blacklegs*. In the dispute at Arthur's there were several reports of female pickets jostling and jeering at girls who had returned to work.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, in a dispute in 1912 some girls on picket duty could be seen chasing and beating blacklegs. One man with a bundle under his arm was chased by about one hundred girls who "thrashed him with their umbrellas".<sup>70</sup>

The sheer weight of evidence of many male trade unionists concerning the lack of solidarity displayed by female workers has tended to obscure the more positive role that women could play in disputes, in particular in supporting male workers. In 1910, for example, 300 female weavers came out in sympathy with male warp dressers and twistlers employed by Messrs J Wilson & Co. The men had taken action against the introduction of female labour into their department.<sup>71</sup> An article by "Yarn Spinner" in the local press claimed that the men would not have won without the assistance of the women, who received no strike pay. It was pointed out that it was more usual for women to help the men than the other way around.<sup>72</sup> This was even more the case in the ready-made tailoring industry.<sup>73</sup>

Women workers were not necessarily unwilling, therefore, to take militant action when their conditions of work were threatened. They could express a sense of solidarity with other workers at times of strike activity and were often recruited into trade unions during the excitement engendered by disputes. However, women usually lapsed from membership once the early enthusiasm had disappeared. Moreover, it was difficult to channel their capacity for militancy into a more permanent commitment to trade unionism.<sup>74</sup> Women's feminine upbringing and their "dual role" at work and in the family did play a part in this, but it cannot be seen as an insuperable barrier to effective organisation. Where other conditions were favourable, as in the cotton and jute industries, the organisation of female workers was extensive and successful.<sup>75</sup> A more serious problem was the weak industrial position of women workers. This made it difficult to overcome women's reluctance to see paid employment as a temporary phase in their lives, and placed practical difficulties in the way of their organisation.

#### The weak industrial position of women workers in Leeds

Women's low pay, their concentration in work considered to be low skilled and the methods of production in which they were employed all increased the difficulties in the way of their successful organisation. A high proportion of women workers in the United Kingdom in the period 1880 to 1914 were employed either in a domestic setting or in small workshops. The isolation of these workers made them almost impossible to organise.<sup>76</sup> In Leeds, however, the majority of female workers were employed outside the home in factories, mills or large workshops, which should have

increased the possibility of union organisation. But as late as 1914 female trade unionism remained weak in the city. The continuing weakness of female trade unionism in Leeds in the 1890s and early 1900s must be related to the economic difficulties facing the wool and worsted and ready-made tailoring trades and to the way in which both industries were organised. These difficulties must also be placed in a national context in which economic depression, severe unemployment and an employers' counter-attack meant that trade union gains among less skilled and lower paid workers of either sex were slow to develop and difficult to achieve.<sup>77</sup>

The wool and worsted industry suffered from increased foreign competition in the 1890s which forced mills to either close or work short time. Employers sought to solve their problems by speeding up machinery, reducing wages, altering the sex division of labour and readjusting production to cater for more protected markets.<sup>78</sup> The constant pressure on work conditions led to frequent strikes in the period.<sup>79</sup> However, low wages, a surplus labour force and the lack of alternative employment for both sexes in many West Riding towns reduced the industrial strength of the workforce. It also hampered commitment to a union which appeared unable to effect major changes.<sup>80</sup> Although there was a uniform system of production in the textile trade, the conditions and organisation of work varied considerably between the wool and worsted branches of the industry. This, combined with local differences in the quality of the goods produced and in the composition of the labour force, hampered attempts to organise all wool and worsted workers in the West Riding. It also led to variations in the level of union membership between different local areas.<sup>81</sup>

The union was strongest in Huddersfield; men and women were employed together in weaving high quality cloth and female wages were higher than in the other West Riding towns.<sup>82</sup> The weakest areas in terms of union membership were Bradford and Leeds. There were very few female union members in either city, despite a number of organising drives, until after 1910.<sup>83</sup> Bradford specialised in the worsted branch of the textile trade in which young female workers predominated, and the level of wages was low.<sup>84</sup> A variety of wool and worsted cloth was produced in Leeds, but by the 1880s weaving was largely a female occupation. Again, complaints were frequent about the low level of weavers' wages in the city, in particular in the East End mills.<sup>85</sup>

In the ready-made tailoring trade in Leeds the rapid expansion of the late 1880s was followed by a period of intense competition between employers. They faced a reduced demand for their goods during a period of strike activity in other industries and frequent trade depressions. In the same way as in the textile trade employers attempted to reduce costs by lowering wages, by changing work practices and by substituting young workers for adult males.<sup>86</sup> In both industries the low level of wages paid to female workers, and to many men in textiles, made them reluctant to make even a small weekly contribution to a union. Moreover, those who did become organised often allowed their membership to lapse in periods of depression.<sup>87</sup> The weakness of existing unions, therefore, set up a vicious circle. Women were unlikely to part with a proportion of their small wages to a union that appeared to be too weak to do anything for them, while their reluctance to join ensured that the union would remain weak.<sup>88</sup>

In the ready-made tailoring industry trade union development was further hampered by the way in which production was organised. The different methods of production used and the extreme subdivision of labour both created and reinforced divisions within the workforce based on sex, skill, ethnicity and family background. Historians have usually cited the variety of production methods in the industry, in particular the widespread use of homework and small workshop production, as the key to an explanation of the low level of union organisation in the trade.<sup>89</sup> In Leeds, however, the predominance of factories and large workshops did create the possibility of a more organised work force. Nevertheless, the continued existence of other methods of production in the city and the varied conditions of work, even within the factory sector, worked against effective union organisation.

Factories varied in size, in the way in which work was subdivided and in the conditions of employment offered, and therefore strikes tended to be confined to a single firm and involved specific local grievances. When disputes did occur employers were able to use workshop workers and homeworkers to complete any unfinished garments, which weakened the power of the inside labour force.<sup>90</sup> It can also be suggested that the size and strength afforded by factory methods of production made employers reluctant to concede to union demands. This can be contrasted with the position of small workshop masters. They were fiercely competitive, enjoyed only precarious profits and their capital reserves were low; therefore, they were less able to withstand a long strike. In these circumstances trade union organisation could be seen as a way to establish standard conditions and to reduce excessive competition.<sup>91</sup> In Jewish

workshops in Leeds, for example, small masters were often pressurised to settle disputes quickly by the large wholesale clothiers. The latter resented any disruption to their own production and threatened to create coatmaking departments within their own factories.<sup>92</sup>

The way in which tasks were divided along lines of sex and skill in the factories, management practices which underlined these divisions and the different family backgrounds from which women were drawn all divided the workforce and made common action difficult. However, differences and allegiances within the workforce were complex. Workers did divide along lines of sex. Nonetheless, there were also differences within each sex, while solidarity could develop irrespective of sex differences.<sup>93</sup> The varied family backgrounds of tailoresses have already been discussed. The divisions that this caused between them in their attitudes towards work and trade unionism were then compounded by the practice of favouritism. This drove a wedge between the girls who competed with each other for the foreman's attention. Favourites also tended to support management decisions and attempted to reduce discontent at the workplace.<sup>94</sup> At the same time, the different conditions of work of machinists and finishers meant that they rarely had common grievances and were reluctant to support each others' actions.<sup>95</sup>

A particularly large gulf existed between male cutters and female workers. This was related both to sex differences and to levels of skill. Some of the best paid cutters had been trained in first-class bespoke establishments before they entered the factories. Their attitudes to their work and to less skilled employees were based on a

craft outlook. This made them unwilling to join in a union which included either female workers, male pressers or warehousemen. When the Wholesale Clothiers' Operatives' Union was formed, many cutters argued against the inclusion of pressers because they could not help them to obtain their most important objective, the restriction of apprentices.<sup>96</sup> Union leaders found it difficult to persuade male cutters to recognise the importance of trade unionism, let alone to join with other workers in the trade, and found that even when organised they did not adopt a "trade union attitude".<sup>97</sup> By the late 1890s union leaders were urging that the "members must be educated in the spirit of trade unionism, therefore causing a kindlier feeling to each other, more tolerance of failings, and more willingness to assist".<sup>98</sup> The exclusive attitudes of the cutters led Isabella Ford to suggest that the Tailoresses' Union should open to less skilled male workers in the trade, since the AUCO was "too genteel" to admit them.<sup>99</sup>

Reluctance to join with women in the trade must be seen largely in the light of exclusive craft attitudes rather than because women represented the immediate threat of cheap labour. Throughout most of the period employers did not make a sustained attempt to introduce women into the cutting room. The main threat to the position of male cutters came from the increasing use of boys and lads.<sup>100</sup> The skill differences between men and women were reinforced by the way in which work was organised and by management practices, which elevated the status of the cutter. In the largest factories the cutters were physically separated from women in their own department and enjoyed more favourable conditions of employment. Men were not subject to fines for disciplinary offences,

they did not suffer deductions from wages for the use of materials or power and they did not have to pay for dining and other facilities, even if they used them.<sup>101</sup> Cutters were allowed to go home when there was no work to be done, whereas women were locked in the factories, without pay for waiting time, in case late orders came in.<sup>102</sup> Cutters were also placed in positions of power over women. Foremen of all departments were usually recruited from their ranks and many employers made a special point of cultivating a close relationship with their male workers in the cutting room. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that cutters rarely supported the strike actions of their fellow workers, whether male or female, whereas machinists and male pressers frequently gave each other support.<sup>103</sup>

Workshop workers were divided from factory workers both by the different method of production in which they were employed and by their ethnic origins. Male workshop workers were engaged in different tasks from their counterparts in the factories - for example, tailoring by hand and machining - and worked on material which had already been cut out in the wholesale factories. Therefore the grievances and interests of the two groups rarely coincided. At the same time, Jewish workers suffered from a degree of anti-immigrant feeling in the Leeds labour movement in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Tom Maguire accused cutters of being reluctant to include pressers in their union because many of the latter were Jews.<sup>104</sup> In 1893 the Leeds Trades Council passed a resolution blaming increased immigration for an overstocked labour market and the lowering of wages. It agreed to work with other trades councils to bring this to the attention of the government.<sup>105</sup> Isabella Ford and



members of the Socialist League spoke out against the resolution and continued to assist both male and female workers in the Jewish workshops in their attempts to organise.<sup>106</sup> Tom Maguire recognised that the foreign immigrant, often destitute and ignorant of the English language, was an easy prey for the sweater. Nonetheless, he argued that the restriction of immigration would not improve social conditions. He suggested that it merely served to direct attention away from the real cause of their difficulties, namely foreign competition from abroad which was "aided by British Capital".<sup>107</sup>

Opposition to Jewish workers was increasingly muted after the Jewish Slipper Makers' Union and the Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union affiliated to the Trades Council in 1894 and 1895 respectively, although individual members of the Trades Council continued to take a strong stand.<sup>108</sup> By 1896 the Trades Council was rejecting offers of speakers on the topic of anti-alien immigration, and their resolutions were aimed against sweated conditions in general rather than against immigrants as such.<sup>109</sup> Despite a resurgence of anti-alien feeling in 1903, the Jewish unions remained part of the Trades Council and their continuity and strength clearly impressed English trade unionists in Leeds.<sup>110</sup> The leaders of the Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union were active in promoting the cause of independent labour politics which helped their integration into the broader labour movement.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, changes in the organisation of ready-made tailoring in the factories, in particular the development of wholesale bespoke, increasingly brought Jewish workers into the factory sector and paved the way for the amalgamation of the different tailoring unions in Leeds and elsewhere

in 1915.<sup>112</sup>

The Jewish union had considerable success in recruiting a high proportion of male workshop workers. It also showed a remarkable continuity compared with other Jewish unions in lasting from 1893 until the amalgamation of 1915.<sup>113</sup> Historians have attributed this to the larger size of Jewish workshops in the city compared with other areas and to the more settled character of the Jewish population in Leeds.<sup>114</sup> However, Buckman has argued more recently that the strength of Jewish trade unionism in Leeds should not be exaggerated. He notes that membership fluctuated considerably over the whole period and that the problems faced by Jewish tailors increased rather than diminished after 1900.<sup>115</sup> He suggests that other historians have exaggerated the importance of large workshops in Leeds. Instead, Buckman points to the increasing number of bedroom masters and the growing practice of subcontracting as the wholesale clothiers tried to get work completed at the cheapest possible rate.<sup>116</sup> This meant that the union was involved in a constant battle against the undercutting of small masters and against the introduction of piece rates in the trade. Moreover, its success in protecting members' conditions of employment and in reducing the number of hours worked was often limited.<sup>117</sup> In the trade depression of the early 1900s many Jewish workers emigrated to America and Canada which again weakened the strength of the union.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, despite its difficulties, the Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union was able to organise a strong core of men employed in Jewish workshops over a lengthy period and to maintain a degree of control over the hiring and firing of workers.<sup>119</sup> Its success in this has considerable relevance for

any study of female trade unionism, since immigrants were often described as incapable of sustained organisation in the same terms as those used about women workers.<sup>120</sup>

Female worker in the workshops remained largely unorganised throughout the period. They were divided from male workers by the type of work that they did and, in the 1890s, by ethnic differences, since a high proportion of the female labour force at that time was made up of Christian women.<sup>121</sup> Studies of Jewish trade unionism pay scant attention to the position of female workers.<sup>122</sup> However, a number of attempts were made in Leeds to form unions for Jewesses, and at its peak membership reached 200.<sup>123</sup> It is unclear whether these unions accepted Christian women as members. The latter were often employed on different processes than Jewish female workers which may have exacerbated any ethnic divisions. In the late 1890s Isabella Ford tried to bring the different groups of women workers in tailoring together by suggesting an amalgamation between the Tailoresses' Union and the Jewish Tailoresses' Union.<sup>124</sup> This was put forward at a time when the Tailoresses' Union was on the verge of collapse and therefore nothing came of the plan.

Overall, effective organisation in the workshops was hampered by the small size of many of the concerns, by women's low pay and by the close supervision of small masters and their relatives who worked in the shops. During the lockout of Jewish tailoring workers in 1911 a number of letters were written to the press expressing grievances about the pressures exerted by such relatives. One Jewish workman complained that a girl had been assaulted by the daughter of her employer because she had

discussed the causes of the dispute with another girl.<sup>125</sup>

M Hyman

claimed:

The employer has perhaps two or three sons in the shop walking up and down and never taking their eyes off you for two minutes at a time. It makes the operatives' life in the workshop worse than slavery.<sup>126</sup>

Many of the Jewesses employed in the workshops would have been related to the small masters. This would have divided them from the other female workers and weakened the possibility of trade union organisation.

It has already been noted that a revival in the ready-made tailoring and wool and worsted industries in the years preceding the First World War, which created full employment, coupled with the excitement generated by the more general labour unrest and by the introduction of industrial legislation, led to an increase in union membership among men and women in both trades. At the same time, the formation of an employer's association in the tailoring trade and the increasing difficulty of drawing a demarcation line between workers in the different sectors of the industry encouraged existing unions to sink their differences and to amalgamate. However, despite these developments, unions in Leeds had only a limited success in recruiting female members before 1914. This can only be fully understood in the context of the attitudes and policies of the trade unions and of the wider labour movement in the city towards the position of women workers.

## CHAPTER 12, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated)

1. For example, see Lady Dilke, The Industrial Position of Women pp 11, 13 (Women's Trade Union League, 1894); E A Holyoake, "The Need of Organisation among Women", in F W Galton, ed. Workers on their Industries (Swan Sonnenschein, 1894), p 203; T Mann, "Women's Organisations", Women's Trade Union Review, January (1897), p 12.
2. Dilke, The Industrial Position of Women, pp 11, 13.
3. B L Hutchins, "Statistics of Women's Life and Employment", Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXII, 2 (1909), p 216.
4. B L Hutchins, Women in Modern Industry (G Bell, 1915), p 115. For the way in which girls saw work as temporary and the effects of this on their attitudes towards trade unions, see the comments by Margaret Bondfield and Alan Gee in the Women's T.U. Rev. January (1900), pp 5-6. For the general difficulties of organising young workers, see B Drake, Women in Trade Unions (Labour Research Department, 1920), p 201.
5. Hutchins, for example, claimed that "the habit of association has developed more slowly among women than among men, because to some extent it does undeniably come in conflict with the traditional moralities of women": Hutchins, Women in Modern Industry, pp 106-7. For an attack on philanthropists who encouraged submissive attitudes in women, see I O Ford, "Unsatisfactory Citizens", Women's Industrial News, March (1898). Women's lack of independence and narrow outlook, and the way in which this hampered union organisation, is noted in E Cadbury, M C Matheson and G Shann, Women's Work and Wages: A Phase of Life in an Industrial City (T Fisher Unwin, 1906), p 251.
6. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, p 202.
7. M Macarthur, "Trade Unions", in G M Tuckwell et al, Woman in Industry from Seven Points of View (Duckworth, 1908), p 74.
8. Ibid. pp 74-5, 79.

9. The Woman Worker, journal of the National Federation of Women Workers, edited by Mary Macarthur, was very supportive of the campaign for minimum wage legislation: for example, see 12 June 1908, p 26. The commitment of female trade union leaders, and other women interested in the industrial position of working-class women, to the extension of government legislation, in particular in relation to low paid work, is expressed in the contributions to Tuckwell et al, Woman in Industry: see, in particular, C Smith, "The Minimum Wage", and G M Tuckwell, "The Regulation of Women's Work".
10. See Isabella Ford's contribution to the opinions of trade unionists on the difficulties of organising women in the Women's T.U. Rev. January (1900), p 12.
11. Ibid.
12. For example, see I O Ford, "Industrial Conditions Affecting Women of the Working Classes", Yorkshire Factory Times, 17 March 1893, and her speech to the West Ward Labour Club in ibid. 1 March 1895.
13. For example, see S Boston, Women Workers and the Trade Unions (Davis Poynter, 1980), chapter 2; N C Soldon, Women in British Trade Unions, 1874-1976 (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1978), chapter 2; S Lewenhak, Women and Trade Unions (Ernest Benn, 1978), chapter 6.
14. Lewenhak, Women and Trade Unions, pp 89-91.
15. Lewenhak does include local examples, but these are not discussed systematically. She also fails to expand on crucial questions concerning the relationship between men and women in the labour market and in trade unions. She notes, for example, that Lady Dilke thought that a woman's place was "at the hearth", ibid. p 91. However, the implications of this are not discussed. Similarly, she sees the role of the N.F.W.W. during the First World War as "heroic", but does not explore the anomalies of its relationship with the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. For the latter point, see J Druker, "Women and Trade Unions: Review Essay", Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, 37 (1978), p 90.
16. Druker, "Women and Trade Unions", p 91. Druker suggests that Lewenhak plays down women's lack of interest in trade unionism, or else sees it as resulting from male indifference, rather than from the decision of the women themselves to give priority to the domestic sphere.

17. H Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex", Signs, 1, 3, Pt 2 (1976), p 139.
18. Ibid. pp 156-7. See also H Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism", in L Sargent, ed. Women and Revolution: The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: A Debate on Class and Patriarchy (Pluto Press, 1981), pp 20-3.
19. Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation", pp 152, 155.
20. Ibid. pp 159, 168-9.
21. C.S.E. Sex and Class Group, "Sex and Class", Capital and Class, 16 (1982), pp 87-8.
22. Ibid.
23. S Alexander, "Introduction", in M Herzog, From Hand to Mouth: Women and Piecework (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p 25. Tilly and Cohen suggest that Hartmann does not document carefully such questions as the extent to which unions and male workers were able to influence job segregation by sex and the mechanisms by which they made their opinions felt: L A Tilly and M Cohen, "Does the Family have a History", Social Science History, VI, 2 (1982), p 164.
24. For example, see S Alexander, "Women and Trade Unions: A Review Essay", Capital and Class, 11 (1980), and S Alexander, "The National Federation of Women Workers and the Women's Trade Union League" (unpublished paper presented to a conference on Women and Trade Unions, Ruskin, 1983).
25. Alexander, "Women and Trade Unions", p 142.
26. Ibid. p 141.
27. Ibid. The quotation is taken from G D H Cole, British Trade Unionism Today (Gollancz, 1939), p 11.

28. Alexander, "Women and Trade Unions", p 142. Mary Macarthur also argued that "the thoughts of most women workers are concentrated on the needs of the day. They are often incapable of grasping anything which does not minister to their immediate wants, but however little abstract theory may appeal to them, a practical object-lesson seldom fails": Macarthur, "Trade Unions", pp 78-9.
29. Alexander, "Women and Trade Unions", p 143.
30. For example, see Lady Dilke, Trades Unions for Women (W.T.U.L. 1893), pp 3-4; Routledge, "The Need of Organisation among Women", pp 202-3; Macarthur, "Trade Unions", pp 74-5.
31. The letters appeared most frequently in 1889, and between 1910 and 1914, periods of labour unrest. It is impossible, however, to assess how far the views expressed were representative.
32. For some historians, the position of women within the family and their early socialisation are seen as the most crucial factors in affecting their attitudes towards paid employment: for example, see P Branca, Women in Europe since 1750 (Croom Helm, 1978), chapter 2, and V Yans-McLaughlin, "Patterns of Work and Family Organisation: Buffalo's Italians", in T K Rabb and R T Rotberg, eds. The Family in History: Interdisciplinary Essays (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). Others contend that women's experience of work and the type of work that they do has a crucial effect on their attitudes to work and family life: for example, see A Pollert, Girls, Wives, Factory Lives (Macmillan, 1981), pp 3-5; F McNally, Women for Hire: A Study of the Female Office Worker (Macmillan, 1979), p 6; A John, By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women at Victorian Coal Mines (Croom Helm, 1980), pp 12-15.
33. For example, see the editorial in the Y.F.T. 24 October 1890; the comments of a workman in ibid. 4 October 1889; Ford, "Unsatisfactory Citizens", p 31; Turner's speech to a meeting of tailoresses: Y.F.T. 19 January 1894.
34. I O Ford, Mr Elliott (Leeds: E J Arnold, 1901), p 67.
35. Y.F.T. 22 November and 6 December 1889.



36. Isabella Ford claimed that 350 of the strikers remained firm for five weeks: Leeds Daily News, 26 November 1889. For details of girls obtaining work elsewhere once the strike was over, see ibid. 15 November 1889, and Y.F.T. 27 December 1889.
  
37. L.D.N. 24 October and 18 November 1889.
  
38. J Hannam, "Radcliffe Interviews" (unpublished oral interviews undertaken in 1973 and 1974), and J Liddington and J Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement (Virago, 1978), pp 96-7.
  
39. Calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1913, LXXIX), Leeds Occupations, Table 13.
  
40. See, for example, "The Duchess of Number Three", in T Maguire, Machine Room Chants (Labour Leader, 1895), and the complaints by the Leeds Women's Labour League that girls from white-collar families were just pocket-money earners, reported in the Leeds Weekly Citizen, 15 June 1912.
  
41. See above, pp 415-17.
  
42. See the letter from "W.N." on "Married Women Workers" in the L.W.C. 27 July 1912, and "Married Women Workers in the Mills" by a textile worker in the Y.F.T. 15 January 1904.
  
43. I O Ford, "In Praise of Married Women", Labour Leader, August (1904), and I O Ford, "Women Workers in the Wholesale Clothing Trade", Englishwoman, II, 6 (1909), p 644.
  
44. J R MacDonald, ed. Women in the Printing Trades (P S King, 1904), p 106.
  
45. See Y.F.T. 19 January 1894 and 26 August 1890.
  
46. For the interest of male workers in the tailoring industry in the status of their work, see Ben Turner's speech at a meeting of the Wholesale Clothiers' Operatives' Union: Y.F.T. 3 February 1893. For the way in which status divisions could be overcome, see J Bornat, "An Examination of the General Union of Textile Workers, 1883-1922" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1980), pp 111-12.

47. For example, see the biographical sketch of Alfred Shaw, president of the Huddersfield district of the General Union of Weavers and Textile Workers: Y.F.T. 12 February 1904, and the evidence of Rowland Barran to the Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts (PP 1908, LIX), Q 7187.
48. See the evidence of wool and worsted employers to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), especially QQ 6404, 6480, 6666-8, 6673-5.
49. See the replies of Messrs J Barran, Gaunt & Hudson and William Blackburn to the Royal Commission on Labour. Answers to Schedules of Questions in Group C (PP 1892, XXXVI, Pt IV), pp 517-605, 687-8. They all denied any knowledge of blacklists and boycotting. Blackburn, however, refused to employ trade unionists. He claimed that he avoided strikes by having consideration for the workpeople and looking after their interests: ibid. pp 517, 688. John Barran claimed that his workers were well behaved. He thought that if a firm had the best equipment then the worst evils could be avoided: Y.F.T. 18 December 1891. See also the letter from a wholesale clothier who preferred to settle grievances with his own workers: L.D.N. 9 November 1889.
50. L.D.N. 21 October 1889.
51. See I O Ford, Industrial Women and How to Help Them (Humanitarian League, c.1900), p 10.
52. L.W.C. 18 April 1913.
53. Ibid. The Amalgamated Union of Clothing Operatives claimed to have organised 75 per cent of male cutters in the factories by 1913. However, at the most, only 25 per cent of tailoresses in the factories were in the union.
54. Isabella Ford noted that 10 weavers were boycotted from their mill for joining a union: Y.F.T. 28 November 1890. In the early years of the W.C.O.U. employers tried to break the organisation by dismissing members: ibid. 11 July 1890. During the tailoresses' dispute of 1889 it was suggested that members of the strike committee would not be able to return to the firm: ibid. 6 December 1889.

55. T Buck resigned as secretary of the Leeds branch of the A.U.C.O. because he was blacklisted by employers: Y.F.T. 24 August 1894. Sam Elsbury of the Jewish Tailors' Union was blacklisted as an agitator at the age of 18 and had to leave Leeds to find work: S W Lerner, Breakaway Unions and the Small Trade Union (George Allen & Unwin, 1961), p 100.
56. The A.U.C.O. regularly paid out victimisation pay to its members: see, for example, ibid. 1 April 1904. However, in 1906 the secretary of the Leeds branch reported that no victimisation pay had been needed for two years and hoped that this showed a change in employers' attitudes: ibid. 14 September 1906. This evidence conflicts with Buckman's view that there was no boycott or blacklist in Leeds tailoring. He claims that this reduced hostility and worked against any fight to the finish attitude: J Buckman, "The Economic and Social History of Alien Immigration to Leeds, 1880-1914" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Strathclyde, 1968), pp 184-5.
57. Tailoresses who refused to return to Arthur's after the 1889 dispute all found work elsewhere. Some went to existing firms and others to Stewart & MacDonald's new factory in 1890: Leeds Mercury, 9 and 26 November 1889, and Y.F.T. 27 December 1889. Pressers employed at Arthur's who went on strike in 1894 also managed to find work elsewhere: Y.F.T. 30 March and 14 May 1894.
58. L.D.N. 21 October 1889.
59. Ibid.
60. It was reported that many posters were placed around the town to advertise a meeting of the Tailoresses' Union, but that overtime was resorted to to prevent attendance: Y.F.T. 24 January 1890.
61. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1895). Similarly, Isabella Ford and Walt Wood were turned out of Schofield's by the manager. He said that the girls' wages were high enough: Y.F.T. 13 September 1895.
62. See, for example, the disputes recorded in the Board of Trade, Annual Report on Strikes and Lockouts for 1893 (PP 1894, LXXXI, Pt I), for 1894 (PP 1895, XCIL); for 1895 (PP 1896, LXXX, Pt I). See also the reports of strike action in the Yorkshire Factory Times, 1892-7.

63. For example, in one firm in Leeds tailoresses struck against a proposed wage reduction. The strike lasted two days. Finishers resumed work at the original price, but machinists accepted part of the reduction because less was to be charged for cotton. In another firm Leeds tailoresses struck against a proposed reduction of 6d per dozen on all garments. The strike lasted three days and they accepted a reduction of 3d on garments for which over 6d was paid: Board of Trade, Annual Report on Strikes and Lockouts for 1893 (PP 1894, LXXXI, Pt II), pp 75-6.
64. Women's T.U. Rev. July (1900).
65. Y.F.T. 12 September 1890.
66. L.D.N. 26 October 1889.
67. Ibid. 24 October 1889. See also "Toiler". She wrote that if the tailoresses united, they could get on with the important question of a wage rise: ibid. 29 October 1889.
68. See above, pp 515-17.
69. Y.F.T. 8 November 1889. The paper noted that the girls indulged in "horseplay" and extra police were drafted into the area, but no one broke the law. The Leeds Daily News claimed that the girls said to have been injured by the strikers were not seriously hurt, but that there had just been some "skylarking": L.D.N. 25 October 1889.
70. Men's Wear, 9 November 1912.
71. Y.F.T. 14 April 1910.
72. Ibid.
73. The cutters refused to come out on strike in sympathy with the tailoresses involved in the dispute at Arthur's in 1889. In 1912 the cutters employed by Messrs Rhodes & Co also refused to help the 400 women on strike. The A.U.C.O. said that they should join the dispute because they were in the union: L.W.C. 8 November 1912.

74. In almost every dispute in the 1890s and early 1900s women on strike were recruited into their respective unions, but they quickly lapsed from membership once the excitement of the dispute was over.
75. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, pp 118-26, 130-1, and H Clegg, A Fox and A F Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Vol 1. 1889-1910 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p 188.
76. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, pp 198-9.
77. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions, pp 66-96, 466-71.
78. See above, pp 173-4, 209-12 and footnote 62.
79. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions, p 34, emphasise the importance of surplus labour in the trade. They suggest that this meant that men could not build up the strength necessary to bring the women in. Contemporaries tended to stress the low wages in the trade and the difficulty of organising women: see the evidence of W H Drew and J Downing to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), QQ 5442, 5449, 4999. However, Bornat suggests that union leaders simply saw the presence of large numbers of women as enough explanation for union weaknesses. This did not account for groups of women who clearly did organise, as in the cotton trade, and ignored the role of the union itself in maintaining sex divisions: Bornat, thesis, p 48.
80. Defeats in major strikes, for example at Huddersfield in 1883 and Manningham in 1891, also undermined the strength of the union: Bornat, thesis, p 50.
81. See chapter 11, footnote 135, for union membership in different local areas.
82. Alan Gee claimed that 2,000 of the 5,000 members of the West Riding Power Loom Weavers' Association came from Huddersfield and the Colne Valley in the 1890s: see his evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), Q 4786. Turner also noted the importance of Huddersfield for the union: B Turner, Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers (Heckmondwike:

- Labour Pioneer and Factory Times, 1920), chapter 10. Bornat suggests that the existence of a strong employers' association, which welcomed the union in the hope that rank and file conflict would be reduced, helped union growth in the area: Bornat, thesis, p 51.
83. In 1889 the union set up a branch in Leeds which had 1,000 members. When the enthusiasm of labour unrest had died, and Turner had left the city, the branch collapsed and future progress was slow: Turner, Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers, pp 121-2. In Bradford a branch of the union was established after the Manningham Mills strike of 1891, but membership hardly went above 200 until 1913: Y.F.T. 20 February 1913. For a discussion of the organising campaigns in Bradford and the poor results, see the Women's T.U. Rev. October (1899) and January (1901). Bornat also suggests that the union tended to overlook the special problems of Bradford in formulating its policies: Bornat, thesis, p 60.
84. The Times, Special Textile Number, 27 June 1913, p 21, and the evidence of Drew to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), Q 5499.
85. For the low wages in Leeds East End textile mills, see Y.F.T. 25 July 1912. The paper reported that wages were 20 per cent less in the East End compared with Kirkstall or Armley.
86. See above, pp 169, 209-12.
87. See Withey's report in the Y.F.T. 17 June 1904.
88. For example, in 1891 five girls left the Tailloresses' Union because there had never been a strike. They did not see, therefore, how the union could benefit them: Y.F.T. 13 March 1891. An editorial in the paper urged that trade unionists should refute the idea that unions did nothing for women: ibid. 24 January 1890.
89. M Stewart and L Hunter, The Needle is Threaded (Heinemann & Neame, 1964), p 132, and Buckman, thesis, pp 181-6. Buckman also emphasises the way in which labour moved from place to place and therefore employers could easily get new hands.

90. It was reported that finishers were used to complete the work of the tailoresses on strike at Arthur's in 1889: L.D.N. 26 October and 28 October 1889. Homeworkers were also given strikers' work in the 1912 dispute at Rhodes: L.W.C. 8 November 1912.
91. For this point, see M Dubofsky, When Workers Organise: New York City in the Progressive Era (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), p 6.
92. Wholesalers threatened to do all their work within the factories during the Jewish workshop dispute of 1911: see Yorkshire Evening News, 9 and 13 March 1911. A letter from "Interested" claimed that employers tried to persuade workshop workers to enter the factories with promises of good conditions. Nonetheless, once any dispute arose, factory owners were as obstinate as the workshop masters and any future advertisements for labour read "only Gentiles need apply": Y.E.N. 6 March 1911.
93. It has already been noted that cutters rarely helped either women or male pressers who were on strike. For example, they gave no help to 15 male pressers on strike at Arthur's in 1894: Y.F.T. 16 March 1894. On the other hand, women did support the actions of male pressers, and vice versa: for example, see the Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheet of the A.U.C.O. January 1st to June 30th 1894, and L.W.C. 21 October 1911. In the latter dispute women came out in support of male underpressers and, for once, the cutters also joined in.
94. For example, see the letter from "Tailoress" in the L.D.N. 25 October 1889, and Ford, "Industrial Conditions Affecting Women".
95. In the 1889 strike at Arthur's finishers only joined the strike when there was no work left to do. Strikes in the 1890s tended to involve either finishers or machinists. For example, in 1894 60 machinists struck against a reduction in piece work prices, but 220 workers were affected by the dispute. In another case 40 apprenticed finishers struck against a temporary reduction in prices on a foreign order: Board of Trade, Annual Report on Strikes and Lockouts for 1894 (PP 1895, XCIL), pp 194-5. On other occasions strikes could be even more sectional. In 1891, for example, 40 trouser machinists at Albrecht's struck because of a proposed reduction in prices. They represented only a small proportion of the firm's machinists: Y.F.T. 10 April 1910.

96. Y.F.T. 1 November 1889. Letters from cutters also expressed the need to restrict apprentices: see L.D.N. 26 and 28 October 1889.
97. Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheet of the A.U.C.O. January 1st to June 30th 1894, p 2. The report complained that union officials had to battle against the men as well as against the masters. It noted that one dispute would have been won if the employees had carried out the "spirit of trade unionism".
98. Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheet of the A.U.C.O. 1st July to 31st December 1897, p 2.
99. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1897), p 18.
100. See, for example, the complaints raised in letters to the press and in union meetings about the increasing use of boys: L.D.N. 28 October 1889, and Y.F.T. 1 November 1889. In 1896 the A.U.C.O. sent a deputation to one firm to try to obtain a reduction in the number of youths employed: Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheet of the A.U.C.O. 1st July to 31st December 1896, p 2.
101. Ford, "Women Workers in the Wholesale Clothing Trade", p 641, and the evidence of Withey to the Departmental Committee on Truck (PP 1908, LIX), Q 5482.
102. Ford, "Industrial Conditions Affecting Women"; I O Ford, Women's Wages (Humanitarian League, pamphlet no 8, 1893), p 13; Y.F.T. 24 March 1910.
103. See above, footnote 93.
104. L.D.N. 29 October 1889.
105. Y.F.T. 17 February 1893.
106. Ibid.
107. Labour Chronicle, 6 May 1893.



108. K Laybourn, "The Attitude of Yorkshire Trade Unions to the Economic and Social Problems of the Great Depression, 1873-96" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1972), pp 362-4. For the continuing anti-immigrant feeling of individual members of the Trades Council, see the evidence of O Connellan and W Marston to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration. Vol 2 (PP 1903, IX), QQ 14998-15009, 14320, 14336, 14359-62.
109. Laybourn, thesis, p 363.
110. J Buckman, Immigrants and the Class Struggle: The Jewish Immigrant in Leeds, 1880-1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp 112-13.
111. Ibid. chapter 6.
112. J Thomas, "A History of the Leeds Clothing Industry", Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research, Occasional Papers no 1 (1955), pp 35-6.
113. Buckman, Immigrants and the Class Struggle, p 106.
114. For example, see L P Gartner, The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1880-1914 (Simon Publications, 2nd ed. 1973), p 119, and S W Lerner, "The Impact of the Jewish Immigrant, 1880-1914, on the London Clothing Industry", Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, 12 (1966), p 13.
115. Buckman, Immigrants and the Class Struggle, pp 106-7.
116. Ibid. pp 16-30.
117. The union only managed to lower hours, from 61 to 59 per week, in 1911: Y.E.N. 23 March 1911.
118. Ibid. 9 February 1911.
119. One of the main factors in the 1911 dispute in the Jewish workshops was the masters' opposition to the union exercising any control over who should be employed and whether a man could be dismissed: ibid. 1 March 1911.

120. For a discussion of the criticisms made of the Jewish worker's capacity for organisation, see Buckman, Immigrants and the Class Struggle, pp 111-12.
121. Board of Trade, Reports on the Volume and Effects of Recent Immigration from Eastern Europe into the United Kingdom. Foreign Immigration in Relation to Women's Labour (PP 1894, LXVIII), p 117. Particulars of race were obtained for workers in 64 of the 98 Jewish workshops registered in Leeds. Out of 898 women and girls employed, 380 were English.
122. For example, see Buckman, Immigrants and the Class Struggle; Gartner, The Jewish Immigrant in England; Thomas, "Leeds Clothing Industry", chapter 2.
123. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1897).
124. Ibid.
125. Y.E.N. 4 March 1911.
126. Ibid. 1 March 1911.

CHAPTER 13THE LEEDS TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND WOMEN WORKERS

Union leaders in the textile and ready-made tailoring trades in Leeds emphasised the importance of organising women workers throughout the period 1880 to 1914. However, they differed among themselves in their degree of commitment to this policy and did not necessarily represent the views of rank and file members. In both industries male trade unionists exhibited hostility towards women workers, although the roots of this hostility, the way in which it was expressed and the relationship between the sexes at the workplace differed in the two trades. This sex antagonism meant that the message of trade union leaders to female workers was often a contradictory one and union organisation was hampered. This was partly because the unions were reluctant to develop policies that were geared to the specific needs of women. It was also partly because they failed to address themselves in a positive way to the different outlook held by women towards paid work which resulted from the relationship between their waged work and family commitments. This failure to cater for women's specific needs had important consequences for the strength of union organisation among women. Sally Alexander notes, for example, that the importance of women's domestic responsibilities meant that any strategy which concentrated wholly on the industrial organisation of women and which ignored "domestic work, child care ... and the complexities of social-sexual relations" was unlikely to succeed.<sup>1</sup>

After the late 1880s the General Union of Textile Workers made greater efforts to organise all weavers in the West Riding wool and worsted

industry.<sup>2</sup> The union directed much of its propaganda towards women workers who formed such a large proportion of the labour force in many areas.<sup>3</sup> It has already been noted that the union used female speakers, both from the local district and from the Women's Trade Union League, to address textile meetings, and carried out organising drives in selected areas in an effort to attract female members. However, these organising efforts took place at a time when male workers in the industry faced considerable threats to their employment and conditions of work. There was a contraction in the trade and employers attempted to substitute women for men in weaving and more subsidiary processes, as well as putting pressure on the level of wages. Faced with these difficulties, union leaders directed their attention to the position of the female worker. They saw the unorganised woman worker as a threat to conditions of work in the industry and emphasised the problems posed by the availability of cheap female labour.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, women were so entrenched in many processes that it was impractical to attempt to restrict their employment or to take too negative a view of their position. Instead, union leaders and the paper which represented their interests, the Yorkshire Factory Times, focussed on the employment of married women.<sup>5</sup> They led a propaganda battle against the right of married women to seek employment in the wool and worsted industry which was sustained from the 1890s until the period immediately preceding the First World War.<sup>6</sup> Although they criticised employers for taking on married women, much of the propaganda of union leaders was directed against the women themselves and their husbands. The wives of skilled workers in particular were characterised as irresponsible for seeking mill work.<sup>7</sup>

It was most commonly suggested that married women's employment endangered the level of male wages and their employment prospects.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, some single women also complained that their own wages were reduced by the competition of married women who were only supplementary earners.<sup>9</sup> None of these allegations was backed up by systematic enquiries and evidence.<sup>10</sup> The extent of married women's employment was not high enough in most West Riding towns to have had a dramatic effect on the level of wages, and there is little evidence that married women were more willing than other female workers to accept low pay.<sup>11</sup> Married women appear, therefore, to have been used as a scapegoat for the difficulties encountered by male, and some single female, workers who faced an employers' offensive against their conditions of work. At a deeper level, the attack on married women's employment reflected fears about the stability of family life. It rested on a commitment to the view that family well-being depended on a women's presence within the home which was her natural sphere.<sup>12</sup> In a characteristic editorial against married women's work and the adverse effects that this had on family life, the Yorkshire Factory Times argued:

Poorly brought up children cannot make strong women and men. Irregular meals and overwork are bound to have their effect. Uncomfortable homes at night do not make sober fathers and kindly husbands.<sup>13</sup>

It went on to suggest that, if men had higher wages, women would be able to stay at home "to be what nature intended them to be, namely housewives".<sup>14</sup> Union leaders claimed to be speaking in the interests

of both men and women when they suggested that, if married women were removed from the mills, men's wages would rise and women would not longer be made into "beasts of burden".<sup>15</sup> Instead, they could concentrate on domestic duties which would contribute to the well-being of all family members.

The adherence to this particular view of family life meant that the speeches of union leaders contained a contradictory message. For example, William Drew saw the family as posing a barrier to women's organisation. He chided young female workers for "looking forward to a time when factory work would be out of the question", which detracted from their interest in paid employment.<sup>16</sup> In the next breath, however, he urged married women to give up paid employment in the mills. Tom Brown, union secretary for Bradford, made regular tirades against married women workers. He characterised them as docile and lacking in any spirit of independence, and yet at the end of his speeches he expressed the hope that they would get together and organise.<sup>17</sup>

A minority of union leaders, including Ben Turner, Alan Gee and Isabella Ford, took a more positive view of women's potential for trade union organisation. Turner was keen to note those occasions on which women had shown solidarity with other workers and was ready to point out that men could be just as submissive and apathetic as the women.<sup>18</sup>

Alan Gee and Isabella Ford agreed that women were affected by their domestic role and upbringing, but thought that this could prove a source of strength as well as weakness. They argued that once women did see the importance of trade unionism they tended to become very loyal and

active members, in particular if unions appeared to be interested in wider questions than the level of wages.<sup>19</sup>

A belief in the importance of women's role within the home, however, also affected the outlook of those union leaders who were most sympathetic to the position of women workers. Ben Turner, for example, championed the right of single women to earn a living wage.<sup>20</sup> At a time when the demand for a limited franchise for women was not popular in the labour movement, Turner supported it on the grounds that it would help to further the movement towards the equality of the sexes and hasten the time when all would have the vote".<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, this support for political equality did not extend to an active support for women's equal access to paid employment. Turner was keen to see the end of married women's employment, not only to protect the interests of male workers, but also because he hoped that it would promote a stable family life. He had a particularly idealised view of the role of the wife and mother within the home and tended to see wives as playing an important supportive role for male activists.<sup>22</sup> He called the women who waited, silently at home, preparing meals for men who were always late, the "true heroines" of the labour movement.<sup>23</sup>

Turner sympathised with married women who had to work because family income was so low. But he was very critical of the wives of skilled workers who sought paid employment and of the men who encouraged them to do so.<sup>24</sup> It was only Isabella Ford who consistently tried to deflect union policy away from using married women as a scapegoat for the problems faced by textile workers. She was concerned at the divisiveness of the union's approach, which pitted men and women against each other,

and urged both sexes to realise that this weakened their position.<sup>25</sup> She did agree that married women had "enough to do at home", but was sympathetic to the difficulties they faced in trying to make ends meet on a small family income.<sup>26</sup>

It is difficult to assess how far the union's attitude towards married women's employment had an adverse effect on the recruitment of female workers. Structural problems such as low wages, short-time work and an intense work discipline placed barriers in the way of the effective organisation of both sexes in the 1890s and the early 1900s, regardless of union attitudes to women workers. It is also often ignored in accounts of trade union developments that many of the married women themselves must have shared the view that they would have had an easier life if they could have stayed at home.<sup>27</sup> At a meeting in Bingley, for example, Drew stated that if women continued to push men out of work, they "would have to keep the men at home to do the housework while they went to the mill to support them".<sup>28</sup> This was greeted by a mixed audience with "considerable laughter and good humour".<sup>29</sup> Many of the Yorkshire women interviewed by Hutchins for the Women's Industrial Council claimed that they would have preferred to remain at home if their husbands' wages had been higher and more regularly earned.<sup>30</sup>

The relationship between the sexes within the wool and worsted industry was not always one of straightforward antagonism. Women did express hostility to the power wielded by male tuners and foremen, in particular if sexual harassment or favouritism was involved.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, they could also show solidarity with male workers and did not necessarily



seek to promote the interests of their own sex.<sup>32</sup> Women often refused to take on tasks that had formerly been completed by men and could hold strong views concerning the appropriate sex division of labour in the trade.<sup>33</sup> Women's solidarity with men on these issues came out of the specific social and economic structure of the industry and of the wider community. A large proportion of weavers were married and several members of the same family still tended to work together in the textile trade. This made women reluctant to see male wages and employment threatened. Family interests were particularly strong in the smaller textile towns where there were few opportunities for alternative work for either sex.<sup>34</sup> Men and women worked closely together in the mills and there were many low paid and low skilled male workers who enjoyed few privileges because of their sex.<sup>35</sup> This can be contrasted with the tailoring industry where the small group of men in the cutting rooms were more rigidly demarcated from women by their conditions of work, their treatment by the management and their craft attitudes.

Nonetheless, the hostility of many members of the GUTW to married women's employment, and the union's support for the view that a woman's place was in the home, did work against the development of policies designed to meet the specific needs of women. This meant that its actions reinforced, rather than challenged, women's marginal role in production. Bornat's study of the GUTW emphasises that the way in which the union was structured helps to explain the difficulties it faced in recruiting women and worked against the active involvement of female workers in the organisation.<sup>36</sup> She notes that the union was run by men who were generally in positions of authority over women at the workplace, and

argues that the paternalistic terms in which these men addressed women was off-putting. As an example of this she cites the way in which union leaders appealed to male workers to organise their female relatives, rather than addressing the women directly.<sup>37</sup> Bornat also claims that the practice of collecting dues from workers' homes further distanced young women from the union because the money was usually handed over by their mothers.<sup>38</sup>

It could be argued, however, that of greater importance was the failure of the GUTW to develop, and then to pursue vigorously, policies designed to meet women's needs. The demand for a minimum wage for all workers, for example, was not supported wholeheartedly by union officials.<sup>39</sup>

Also, the union failed to develop special sickness and maternity benefits for women despite the successes claimed by other organisations which had adopted such policies.<sup>40</sup> After the introduction of the National Insurance Act, Turner suggested that women should be accepted free of charge for insurance purposes in the hope that they would subsequently join the union; but this was rejected by the membership.<sup>41</sup> The failure to recognise women's special needs in its policies must have reduced the union's appeal to female workers. This was of considerable importance once economic and political changes after 1910 made membership gains more feasible, in particular in areas such as Leeds, where the weaving branch of the trade was largely in the hands of women.

Male members of most other trade unions in Leeds were characterised at the time as indifferent to the organisation of women. The Yorkshire Factory Times frequently accused the Trades Council of ignoring female

workers: "the organisation committee of the Trades Council has its hands full, but ... it never thinks of the tailoresses, poor things ... everybody seems to desire to leave the organisation of women alone, because it is the hardest task of all".<sup>42</sup> In despair

Isabella Ford wrote an open letter to all male trade unionists in Leeds which criticised them for failing to urge their daughters to join a union. She emphasised that male factory workers had to be more persistent in their efforts or these would have no lasting effects.<sup>43</sup>

The plea to male workers to encourage their female relatives to organise was common during the period. It has already been noted that Bornat sees this as illustrating the paternalistic nature of trade unions. This might have been the case in unions such as the GUTW, but for Isabella Ford and Tom Maguire it represented a recognition that families could exert a strong influence over young people. They saw such pleas as a worthwhile tactic if stronger trade unions might result, but not as an alternative to making direct appeals to the women themselves.<sup>44</sup>

Indifference or outright hostility certainly characterised the attitude of male members of the AUCO towards the organisation of women. Sex antagonism in tailoring had a different origin, however, than in the wool and worsted industry and was expressed in different ways. It has already been noted that divisions based on sex and skill in the ready-made tailoring industry were complicated by differences based on ethnicity and methods of production. In the 1890s these differences led to the development of a number of sectional unions which catered for each group of workers in the trade.<sup>45</sup> In this context the opening of the Amalgamated Union of Clothing Operatives to women at the turn of the century appeared to be a step forward in breaking down the barriers

between workers. Nonetheless, the development of mixed-sex trade unions had costs as well as benefits for women. In a letter written some time after the event Isabella Ford recalled that some members of the Tailoresses' Union had been reluctant to amalgamate "fearing that those of their interests which were not identical with the men's interests, might be neglected. I shared their fears".<sup>46</sup> It is significant that, although Agnes Close continued to act as a union organiser until 1901, she did not work from within the AUCO. Instead, she used the women's Trade Union Club as a base and helped out all groups of female workers when they were involved in disputes.<sup>47</sup> The fears of members of the Tailoresses' Union seemed justified when, despite the opposition of the union leadership, members of the Leeds branch of the AUCO expressed the view in 1904 that women should be excluded once more from union membership.<sup>48</sup>

The hostility of rank and file members can be explained by the exclusive craft attitudes of the cutters and by their growing insecurity. The use of mechanical power reduced the skill content of many aspects of the cutting process and in the 1890s lads and boys were increasingly introduced into the cutting room. The possibility that employers would also introduce women into their work then served to increase the hostility and aloofness that already existed towards less skilled female workers.<sup>49</sup>

The Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union took even longer than the AUCO to admit female members. Women workers had been supportive of the demands of male workshop workers during the Jewish tailors'

strike of 1888, but the men always felt vulnerable to the encroachment of cheap female labour, in particular in machining and basting.<sup>50</sup> Their fears of female competition prompted union leaders to establish a separate organisation for Jewesses in the late 1890s. Any chance that the men had of being successful in their attempts to interest women in trade unionism must have been reduced, however, by the hectoring tone in which they addressed female workers. For example, Louis Ellstein, a member of the organising committee, wrote:

Till now, you have been the right hand of the masters. Whenever the men have gone on strike, you have completed the partly finished work, and, because of this, many strikes have been lost. Do you now understand against whom you are strike-breaking? ... These men are your fathers, brothers, friends and future husbands ... You working women of Leeds now have the opportunity to enter the union which the Leeds Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union has founded for you ... the men in all the workshops will do their best to support you in all your legitimate claims ... unity is the Golden Bridge which leads us to freedom and happiness ...<sup>51</sup>

It is hardly surprising that, when the union did open to both sexes, very few women were recruited. Moreover, the emphasis of the union's policy continued to reflect the interests of men in the trade.<sup>52</sup>

Faced with male hostility, or with unions which were clearly supporting male interests, women in various trades avoided trade union organisation altogether and turned to more informal methods of protecting their interests. Women could show a strong sense of loyalty to each other and a willingness to take collective action to deal with the difficulties that they faced at home and in the workplace. They collected money for sick workmates, provided wedding breakfasts for friends, and, in the

tailoring trade, they raffled damaged goods among themselves to save one worker from having to bear the full costs of the garment.<sup>53</sup> After minimum wages were fixed in ready-made tailoring, some firms insisted that female workers should be quick enough to earn the minimum or else they would be dismissed, even if prices were so low that only the speediest workers could hope to do so.<sup>54</sup> To circumvent this policy women and girls employed by Messrs Rhodes & Co, who were able to earn more than the minimum, added part of their work to that of the slower workers so that all appeared to earn the minimum rate.<sup>55</sup> Female workers also took spontaneous actions against foremen and other women who transgressed their moral code and against supervisors who were thought to be unjust. In one large firm four foremen and four girls were found in incriminating circumstances and dismissed on the spot. The discharged workers were then followed through the streets by a "hooting yelling mob" of other girls at the works and residents in the neighbourhood.<sup>56</sup> On another occasion a forewoman was set upon by a number of young women because her adverse report had led to the dismissal of one of their workmates.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the absence of a formal organisation encouraged individual women to step forward and lead deputations to employers when grievances were expressed.<sup>58</sup>

Informal actions were important in fostering a sense of collective identity and in providing female workers with some kind of control over work conditions; in the printing trade, for example, it was reported that some women maintained their level of wages by treating any worker who was prepared to take a lower rate "to a hiding".<sup>59</sup> In most instances, however, their actions provided a defensive solution to problems, or the

collective exercise of self help, rather than leading to a sustained challenge to the conditions of employment which made such actions necessary. Raffling, for example, was condemned by union leaders, both because it dealt with the consequences of fines for damages rather than seeking to end such fines altogether, and also because they thought it encouraged gambling.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the camaraderie of the workplace could lead girls to join with their employers in deceiving outsiders, in particular factory inspectors. Isabella Ford noted that when word went round that the inspector was coming the women hid everything. She told of one occasion when a girl hid a loose screw with her dress and the others thought that this was "a good joke".<sup>61</sup> She claimed that female workers might have seen their employer as a tyrant, but the inspector was also seen as an interloper rather than as someone who could protect their interests.<sup>62</sup>

It has already been suggested that, in the years immediately preceding the war, an improvement in trade and widespread labour unrest encouraged union leaders in Leeds to make a more sustained effort to organise female workers. The AUCO expressed its intention of putting greater emphasis on recruiting female members and promoted a number of organising drives among tailoresses. Similarly, the GUTW used the occasion of national insurance legislation to undertake a recruiting drive in the city. However, overall union policies did not always match these intentions. They were rarely geared to the specific needs of female workers and in many instances the interests of male workers were overtly pushed to the front.

The main aim of union leaders in the wool and worsted industry, the boot

and shoe trade and ready-made tailoring in the late 1900s was to achieve standard rates of pay for men and women across their respective industries. The rates that were finally agreed, however, tended to reinforce the wage differential between men and women and, in some cases, actually widened it. They also did nothing to challenge women's unequal position at the workplace. The wage agreement drawn up for the wool and worsted industry in 1913 included few gains for women. Union leaders acknowledged this and explained it as a result of women's weak organisation.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the GUTW itself had not given priority to the needs of women workers or to their wage claims.<sup>64</sup> In the boot and shoe industry a national minimum wage for women workers was finally agreed in 1914, but there were no piecework statements for women as there were for male workers. Moreover, the union took the opportunity to confine women more strictly than before to their own departments.<sup>65</sup> A further clause in the agreement sought to exclude women from clicking, lasting, pressing and finishing which were in male hands at the time.<sup>66</sup>

The AUCO was in a somewhat different position, since the union had to react to the establishment of a Trade Board to lay down minimum wages for the industry. The main concern of the union's representatives on the Board, who were largely drawn from male cutters, was to ensure that "the work at present done by men should be retained by men".<sup>67</sup> The general secretary believed that "they had the sympathy of the women members of the union in demanding that the small amount of work done by men should not be subject to competition from cheap female labour".<sup>68</sup> He failed to mention, however, that this work included the most interesting



and well paid occupations in the tailoring trade.

The conflict between the interests of male and female workers came to a head when the AUCO sought to raise minimum rates in Leeds above those laid down by the Trade Board. This was achieved in the agreement made with the Wholesale Clothiers' Association in 1913 which raised the minimum rate for women from  $3\frac{1}{4}d$  to  $4d$  per hour.<sup>69</sup> Stewart and Hunter, in their standard history of tailoring trade unionism, view this agreement as a considerable victory for the AUCO.<sup>70</sup> But the minimum agreed for women fell below the rate originally demanded by the union and it was generally accepted that it would not yield a "living wage" for a single woman.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the women's rate was achieved only on the understanding that "the employers' piece rates comply if it can be shown that such rates yield to 70 per cent of any section, or grade of worker, the equivalent of the time rate".<sup>72</sup> Arthur Conley had previously opposed the proposal made to the Trade Board that a percentage clause should be part of the agreed minimum rates. He claimed that he could not understand how some of the workers' representatives could have voted for it and argued that employers wanted percentages because it made the minimum a dead letter.<sup>73</sup> Two officials of the Employers' Association had approached the AUCO with the offer that they would agree to a minimum of  $3\frac{1}{2}d$  for women, instead of  $3\frac{1}{4}d$ , if the union would support the percentage clause. The executive committee refused to agree. Conley argued afterwards that workers' representatives on the Trade Board would otherwise have "failed in their duty to the sweated women workers in the clothing industry".<sup>74</sup> In 1913, however, the whole settlement, including the minimum rates gained for men, would have been jeopardised

by a rejection of the percentage clause, and the union drew back from taking further action on the issue.

The percentage clause and the agreement on minimum wages highlighted the considerable tensions which existed within the industry and in the union between the interests of women as a sex and the union policy of promoting class unity in the trade union movement and in the Labour Party. These local tensions reflected a more general debate in both the women's suffrage campaign and in the labour movement over the relationship between women's specific needs and their class position.<sup>75</sup> This debate was encouraged by the groundswell of support for women's suffrage after 1903 and the renewed vigour of organising campaigns among women workers, in particular those of the National Federation of Women Workers, which drew attention to women's needs and the demand for equal rights.<sup>76</sup>

In the Leeds tailoring industry women often expressed an awareness of their specific interests as a sex, in particular at times of unrest. The majority of tailoresses in the factories were young and single, they did not necessarily work alongside male relatives and there was a wide gulf between their position in the industry and that of male cutters. Many cutters enjoyed a skilled status, they were paid double the hourly rate of female workers and they enjoyed a particularly privileged position at the workplace. These privileges, in particular the men's exemption from paying fines and deductions, were the cause of considerable resentment among female workers. Isabella Ford, for example, noted that the practice of locking women in the factories when there was no work to be done was much disliked, for the cutters were able to go home.<sup>77</sup> It

was at times of unrest that women showed most consciousness of their disabilities as a sex. In the course of the dispute at Arthur's in 1889, one woman complained that "I suppose the manager thinks that because there are mostly girls in the trade they only need low wages, but why shouldn't they have the same as a man".<sup>78</sup> In a later dispute a tailoress urged that it was nonsense to suppose that a woman could live on half the wages of a man.<sup>79</sup>

It is difficult to assess whether such awareness and sense of resentment was widespread. Nonetheless, coupled with the reluctance of cutters to support women involved in disputes, it must have pulled against the consciousness of labour solidarity that women could display when they supported the actions of less skilled male workers. There is more sustained evidence that the AUCO's minimum wage agreement of 1913 caused general resentment among women. For example, the Leeds Weekly Citizen noted that the percentage clause reduced the advantages of the settlement for women. The paper suggested that many girls would be worse off and that discontent was widespread among the female workforce.<sup>80</sup> This discontent was expressed in letters to the press. One letter from "Justice" argued that the percentage clause went against union principles and that the men should have struck in opposition to it. Instead, she claimed men traded on the fact that women were ignorant about trade unionism. "Justice" argued further that women were at a double disadvantage of sex and class, with men ready "to exploit women of their own class".<sup>81</sup> A subsequent letter, from a tailoress signing herself "Honesty", echoed these complaints. She claimed that a minority of the workforce wanted to reject the percentage clause, but the answer from the

men was "let women organise and get off the men's backs".<sup>82</sup>

Both male and female organisers of the AUCO responded to such criticism and vigorously supported the actions of the union. One argument they used was that women were in the majority at the meeting which ratified the agreement and could have objected at that point.<sup>83</sup> Emily Tate supported the settlement on the grounds that the men were well organised compared with the women who only had their own weakness to blame. She argued that if men had struck on their behalf they would have been granting them a privilege.<sup>84</sup> "Honesty's" reply to these arguments was that trade unionists should stand up for each other and that this was called justice rather than a privilege. Moreover, she complained that Emily Tate had been appointed as an organiser rather than elected.<sup>85</sup> In a second letter "Justice" claimed that women had not been allowed to discuss their position at the ratifying meeting. Union officials had suggested that the minimum rates had been settled and therefore only the question of a closed shop still remained to be decided.<sup>86</sup>

Isabella Ford also joined into the controversy. She wrote a letter emphasising the need for women to be involved in their own fate and pointed out that this was rarely the case in mixed-sex trade unions in which men dominated. She took the opportunity to remind the union of how much it owed to women. She argued that it was the tailoresses' strike of 1889 that had first spurred the men to organise: "Mr Walt Wood, Mr Tom Paylor and a few more are still here, and will remember how much men owe to the women's battle".<sup>87</sup>

During the controversy union organisers emphasised the need to promote

class loyalty above the interests of a particular sex. Bernard Sullivan, a member of the negotiating committee, argued that "there is no sex war in the economic field, but there is a class war which demands the whole of the energy and activity of the workers, irrespective of sex or creed, in one camp, if they wish to attain a higher and fuller life."<sup>88</sup> There may well have been a class war, but it must have been difficult to convince women workers that their interests were being catered for as part of that war, in particular when the blatant support of male interests revealed the hypocrisy of appeals to unity among the workforce. Writing in 1926, Moses Sclare, an official of the United Garment Workers' Union and former leader of the Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union, confirmed that in the past the union had been mainly concerned about its male members. He wrote that "hitherto the men's wages and working conditions were the primary concern of the union and that of female workers only secondary. The time has now arrived for a change".<sup>89</sup> It is significant, however, that he suggested that women's wages should be placed at the forefront of union policies because the increasing competition of cheap female labour was putting the position of male workers in jeopardy.<sup>90</sup>

It was not only the A U C O's policies which confirmed women's unequal status in industrial employment, but also its structure and organisation. Women paid different subscription rates than male workers, received lower benefits and there was no attempt to introduce special sickness or maternity benefits for female members.<sup>91</sup> An increasing number of women acted as union organisers and shop stewards as female membership increased, but the union executive was dominated by male cutters who

were seldom concerned to pursue women's interests.<sup>92</sup> Female organisers were usually active in both the industrial and the political wings of the labour movement. They were involved in campaigns to promote women's rights, for example the movements for women's suffrage and improved health facilities.<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, they tended to put class unity above the interests of their sex and were reluctant to challenge the overall policies of the union.<sup>94</sup> This may have been due to the fact that they operated within a mixed-sex trade union, had been workers within the industry and were willing to make compromises to maintain the unity of the organisation. This contrasts with earlier female organisers such as Isabella Ford. She came from outside the industry, was a committed feminist and kept women's needs to be front. Isabella Ford was always prepared to conflict with the labour movement over both her socialism and her feminism. Nonetheless, she also recognised the importance of organising both sexes together despite the danger that the women's point of view would be lost.<sup>95</sup>

Anna Pollert's recent study of tobacco workers in Bristol suggests that women experience work in terms not only of their exploitation as a class, but also their oppression as a sex. She argues that the collision between the two can provide strengths in terms of organisation.<sup>96</sup> Pollert notes, for example, that women are likely to bring family concerns to bear on the sphere of trade unionism, thereby broadening union policies. At the same time, work gives women the opportunity to take collective action against both the abuses of female labour and sex oppression, which can cut across home and workplace.<sup>97</sup> In the Leeds ready-made tailoring trade, however, women were so unorganised that

they were unable to influence the policies of a male and craft dominated union. Moreover, the appointment of women as organisers did little to challenge this. When women did take collective action it tended to be short-lived and outside the formal structure of trade unionism, while the most frequent cause of complaint was the low level of wages rather than other aspects of employment.

The failure of the AUCO to break down the barriers between male and female workers was particularly important in an industry in which the gulf between the sexes was created, not only by the fear of cheap female labour, but also by the exclusive attitudes of craft workers. These were reinforced by the privileges given to cutters by employers and by their assumption of supervisory functions within the factory. It is significant, therefore, that despite minimum wage legislation and a revival in trade union enthusiasm, only a minority of tailoresses were organised before the outbreak of war.<sup>98</sup>

The female membership of trade unions in Leeds had increased by 1914, but their organisation was still weak, in particular when considering that most female employment was factory-based. The structural problems inherent in female industries and women's low pay go some way to explain this. Nevertheless, the way in which unions were organised and the policies pursued contributed to the weaknesses of female organisation. Union policies had some success in raising women's rates of pay and in getting rid of fines and deductions, but they did little to improve women's overall position in industry and generally put the interests of male workers first.

On the other hand, Alexander suggests that women's marginal position in industry was so closely related to their central role within the family that trade union action alone was unlikely to bring significant changes in their subordination within paid employment. She argues that such action needed to be accompanied by political activities which sought to change, or to relieve, women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere.<sup>99</sup>

It is crucial, therefore, to examine the attitudes and policies of socialist groups and the Labour Party in Leeds towards women's role in production and within the home. This is particularly important since it is impossible to draw a hard and fast line between the industrial and political wings of the movement in the period. Socialists were prominent in building up trade unionism among the less skilled in the 1880s and 1890s, while union leaders in textiles and clothing played an active part in Labour Party politics. At the same time, some female members of socialist groups, the Labour Party and the trade unions were increasingly drawn to the suffrage movement. This encouraged them to promote the interests of their sex within the labour movement.



## CHAPTER 13, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication London unless otherwise stated)

1. S Alexander, "Introduction", in M Herzog, From Hand to Mouth: Women and Piecework (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p 32.
2. The union was not called the General Union of Textile Workers until 1912, but this name will be used throughout the text to avoid confusion.
3. In 1891 women formed 48 per cent of the labour force in wool and worsted manufacture in Huddersfield, 62.8 per cent in Halifax, 58.3 per cent in Bradford and 60 per cent in Leeds: calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1891 (PP 1893-4, CVI), Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford, Leeds Occupations, Table 7.
4. For example, see the reports of the speeches of union leaders in the Yorkshire Factory Times, 26 July 1889, 16 October 1891, 5 May 1893, 17 November 1893.
5. Ben Turner and William Drew were both paid correspondents of the Yorkshire Factory Times. The newspaper concentrated on the efforts made to organise textile workers in the period.
6. For example, see the evidence of Downing and Drew to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), QQ 5018-23, 5530-9. For examples of articles against married women's work in the mills, see Mrs Byles, "Married Women's Labour", Y.F.T. 19 August 1892; M Leslie, "Should Married Women Work in Factories?", ibid. 25 November 1892; "Should Married Women Work in Factories?", ibid. 16 December 1892; A Textile Worker, "Married Women Workers in the Mills", ibid. 15 January 1904; Nemo, "The Crux of the Woman Question", ibid. 22 February 1912.
7. For example, see Y.F.T. 15 May 1891 and 15 January 1904. See also Drew's speech to textile workers at Bingley: ibid. 26 July 1889.
8. It was suggested that if married women were not at work then the wages of men and single women would rise: Y.F.T. 16 December 1892 and 20 January 1893. Married women workers were thought to endanger male jobs, in particular in Huddersfield: see Y.F.T. 6 March 1894.

9. See Miss Abraham's report on the wool and worsted industry in the Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I), p 102, and the Royal Commission on Labour. Fifth and Final Report, Appendix III, the Employment of Women (PP 1894, XXXV), p 483.
  
10. Most articles and speeches merely stated that there were too many married women in the mills and that this was bound to bring down wages. They did not attempt to determine the extent of married women's employment in different districts or to correlate this with the overall level of wages in any systematic way.
  
11. In 1911 14.1 per cent of female wool and worsted workers in Halifax were married, 14.5 per cent in Huddersfield, 20.9 per cent in Dewsbury, 20.8 per cent in Bradford and 17.6 per cent in Leeds: J Bornat, "An Examination of the General Union of Textile Workers, 1883-1922" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1980), Appendix, Table 12. Employers claimed that married women formed too small a percentage of the female labour force to have affected wage rates. See the evidence of E Penrose-Arnold Forster, representative of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), QQ 9682-7. He produced figures from 17 firms which showed the number of female workers and their marital status. There were 8,279 female workers aged over 16. 16.54 per cent of these were married. The percentage married in individual firms ranged from 7.2 per cent to 28.72 per cent: ibid. Appendix XVIII. Clara Collet could find no evidence of a relationship between married women's work and low wages in the textile districts. On the contrary, she found that the highest proportion of married women were employed when wages were high: Board of Trade, Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls (PP 1894, LXXXI, Pt II), pp 5, 54. See also I O Ford, "In Praise of Married Women", Labour Leader, 2 September 1904, p 262.
  
12. For example, see the evidence of Downing to the Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C. Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), QQ 4999, 5001-2, and comments in the Y.F.T. 30 August 1889. In the latter it was suggested that there ought to be a clearer distinction between the duties of a husband and wife. The view that married women's employment disrupted family life, and the belief that a woman should give a full-time commitment to domestic duties, was also shared by Lady Dilke. At a Liverpool meeting she expressed the hope that the day would come when every home would have a woman in it all day long, who would make it comfortable for her husband and children: Y.F.T. 1 May 1891.

13. Y.F.T. 18 March 1904.
14. Ibid.
15. For the suggestion that the interests of men and women were the same, see the speeches of union leaders at Milnsbridge: Y.F.T. 20 September 1889; Lady Dilke's speech at Bradford: ibid. 17 October 1890; the speeches by May Abraham in various textile towns: ibid. 4 December 1891; the speech by Miss Marland at Ravensthorpe: ibid. 30 March 1894; Ben Turner's speech at Morley: ibid. 1 April 1904. Turner used the phrase "beasts of burden" at Birstall: ibid. 4 December 1891.
16. See Drew's speech to textile workers at Bingley: Y.F.T. 26 July 1889.
17. Ibid. 23 November 1906.
18. For example, see Turner's speech to weavers at Stanningley: ibid. 4 July 1890.
19. Women's Trade Union Review, January (1900).
20. See Turner's speech to the 1913 Trades Union Congress Annual Conference, reported in the Y.F.T. 11 September 1913.
21. Labour Party, Report of the Annual Conference for 1908.
22. B Turner, Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers (Heckmondwike: Labour Pioneer & Factory Times, 1920), p 5, and B Turner, "A Labour View of the New Ministry", Yorkshire Evening Post, 31 January 1924. In the latter Turner claimed that: "Our women folk have had hard struggles to keep active and hopeful. The wives of Labour Men thirty and more years ago had bigger tasks than those of the men. Theirs was silent sacrifice and often pecuniary suffering".
23. Turner, Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers, p 5.
24. See Turner's speeches reported in the Y.F.T. 17 October 1890 and 1 April 1904.

25. See Isabella Ford's speech to textile workers at Thornton:  
Y.F.T. 5 August 1892.
26. Ibid.
27. For a comment on this, see J Druker, "Women and Trade Unions:  
Review Essay", Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin,  
37 (1978), p 91.
28. Y.F.T. 26 July 1889.
29. Ibid.
30. B L Hutchins, "Yorkshire", in C Black, ed. Married Women's Work  
(G Bell, 1915), pp 143-60.
31. For complaints about the power of overlookers and tuners,  
see Y.F.T. 2 and 30 August 1889, 30 May 1890. An interview  
with a young female weaver revealed that the weft man treated  
the women shabbily, often keeping them waiting for an hour for  
weft. The tuner also swore at the women: ibid. 11 October 1889.
32. For example, in 1893 weavers in a Leeds mill went on strike to  
obtain the reinstatement of a sacked tuner: Y.F.T. 25 August 1893.  
In 1910 female weavers employed by Wilson's, a Leeds worsted  
manufacturer, left work in support of male workers in the  
drawing and twisting-in department who objected to the use of  
women in their work: ibid. 14 April 1910.
33. For example, female warpers at Yeadon and Guisely went on strike  
in protest at being asked to beam their own warps, which was  
men's work: Y.F.T. 1 December 1893. See also ibid. 14 April 1910.
34. For the extent to which men and women from the same family  
worked together in the textile mills of Bradford, Halifax and  
Huddersfield, see the evidence of Drew and Turner to the  
Royal Commission on Labour. Minutes of Evidence of Group C.  
Textiles (PP 1892, XXXV), QQ 5540, 5619, 5712, and The Times,  
Special Textile Number, 27 June 1913, p 20. In her report on  
the wool and worsted industry Miss Abraham noted that, while  
some men were opposed to married women's work, others feared  
any prohibition of this because family income depended on their  
wives working: Royal Commission on Labour. Reports by Miss Orme  
et al on the Employment of Women (PP 1893-4, XXXVII, Pt I),  
p 102.

35. J H Clapham, The Woollen and Worsted Industries (Methuen, 1907), pp 192-203.
36. Bornat, thesis, pp 57-9.
37. Ibid. p 168.
38. Ibid. p 145.
39. Ben Turner, however, was a supporter of the demand for a minimum wage for all workers. See his speech to the 1913 Trades Union Congress reported in the Y.F.T. 11 September 1913.
40. One worker wrote a letter to the press suggesting that the union should offer a longer period of sick pay for women and give payments for "accouchment": Y.F.T. 12 December 1890. The National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants gave women back half their contributions when they married if they had claimed no benefits: Leeds Weekly Citizen, 20 July 1912. Margaret Bondfield claimed that the Shop Assistants' Union's policy of giving women equal rights in the organisation, where they were eligible to stand for any post, had increased the appeal of the union for women: Women's T.U. Rev. January (1900), p 5.
41. Y.F.T. 16 May 1912.
42. Ibid. 15 May 1891.
43. Women's T.U. Rev. July (1897), pp 19-20.
44. In her letter Isabella Ford noted that the girls' excuse for not joining a union was often that "their fathers did not urge or care for them to do so": ibid. For the views of Tom Maguire, see Labour Chronicle, 6 May 1893.
45. See above, pp 509, 513-14.
46. L.W.C. 16 January 1914.
47. Women's T.U. Rev. January (1901).

48. Y.F.T. 12 February 1904.
49. See J Young's speech to a meeting of clothing workers reported in the L.W.C. 21 October 1911.
50. For the support given by women in the strike of 1888, see Leeds Mercury, 8 May 1888. For male fears about the introduction of cheap female labour, see above, p 171- 3.
51. Arbeiter Freund, 31 January 1896 (I am grateful to Dr J Buckman for this reference and for the translation). The union formed for women appears to have been the International Tailoresses' Union (Leeds): see Appendix 5, Table 5.4, for membership figures.
52. In the 1911 dispute in Jewish workshops the union was concerned with the hours of work of male employees: Yorkshire Evening News, 27 February 1911.
53. Examples of these practices can be found in F Hicks, "Factory Girls", in A Reid, ed. The New Party (Hodder Brothers, 1894), p 324. For wedding breakfasts, see Y.F.T. 14 February 1890, and Y.E.N. 24 August 1907. The latter reported a wedding breakfast held for three girls at a worsted mill in Hunslet. All the female workers contributed 3d and the men slightly more. For raffles, see the Report of the Lady Inspectors in the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1896 (PP 1897, XVII), p 73, and L.W.C. 13 December 1912.
54. L.W.C. 8 November 1912.
55. Ibid.
56. Leeds Daily News, 18 October 1889.
57. Y.F.T. 15 November 1889.
58. Rowland Barran claimed that there were leaders in every room who took up any issues with the factory manager: see his evidence to the Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts (PP 1908, LIX), Q 7184. See also J R MacDonald, ed. Women in the Printing Trades (P S King, 1904), p 106.

59. MacDonald, ed. Women in the Printing Trades, p 41.
60. Isabella Ford, for example, claimed that raffling was degrading and could lead to the growth of a "gambling spirit". She recognised, however, that many women did not object because it was an easy way to recoup themselves: Women's T.U. Rev. April (1897), p 9. See also Withey's evidence to the Departmental Committee on Truck (PP 1908, LIX), QQ 5462-4, and L.W.C. 13 December 1912.
61. I O Ford, Industrial Women and How to Help Them (Humanitarian League, c.1900), pp 5-6.
62. Ibid. p 6.
63. B Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union: A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of the Heavy Woollen District Branch of the General Union of Textile Workers (Dewsbury: Yorkshire Factory Times, 1917), pp 106-7.
64. Most attention was paid to the wage claims of the willyers and fettlers who were well organised: ibid. chapter 21. In 1913 Leeds female textile workers instructed the union to send in a wage claim to the employers. The Yorkshire Factory Times, however, noted that they would have to be better organised to obtain decent wages: Y.F.T. 4 September 1913.
65. B Drake, Women in Trade Unions (Labour Research Department, 1920), p 52.
66. Ibid.
67. L.W.C. 21 October 1911.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid. 11 April 1913.
70. M Stewart and L Hunter, The Needle is Threaded (Heinemann & Neame, 1964), p 163.

71. The union had demanded a minimum rate of 5d an hour for women: L.W.C. 7 February 1913. The agreed rates for men also fell below those demanded by the union, although the discrepancy between the two was less. For example, the union demanded 9d for stock cutters, fitters, passers and tailors: ibid. They received 8½d: ibid. 11 April 1913.
72. Ibid. 11 April 1913.
73. Ibid. 4 May 1912.
74. Ibid.
75. Articles in the national and local labour press reflected a growing interest in the relationship between sex and class. For example, see M Macarthur, "Can Men Be Free?" Woman Worker, 12 June 1908; C Hamilton, "Sex or Class?" Woman Worker, 11 September 1908; I O Ford, "Woman as She Was and Is", Labour Leader, 13 May 1904; "Woman in Her True Position", Y.F.T. 8 April 1904. For the interest of women's suffrage workers in questions relating to sex and class, see T Davis et al, " 'The Public Face of Feminism': Early Twentieth-Century Writings on Women's Suffrage", in R Johnson et al, eds. Making Histories: Studies in History-Writing and Politics (Hutchinson, 1982), pp 320-2.
76. There was considerable debate in the labour press over whether support should be given to the demand for "Votes for Women on the same terms as men" or to the demand for "adult suffrage": for example, see the correspondence in the Labour Leader throughout 1904; P Snowden, "The Independent Labour Party and Women's Franchise", Labour Leader, 16 April 1904; J Keir Hardie, "Women and the Suffrage", ibid. 9 December 1904; "Women and the State", ibid. 21 April 1905; "Votes for Women", Woman Worker, 27 October 1909; "Votes for Women", L.W.C. 30 December 1911. At the end of 1913 the Leeds Weekly Citizen started a regular column, "The Woman's View", by Suffragist: ibid. 12 December 1913. Articles on women workers also became more frequent in the labour press and tended to link economic conditions with the need for political equality: see, for example, Gavroche, "The Woman Wage Earner", Labour Leader, 9 January 1904, and "Notes by Nemo", Y.F.T. 27 March 1913. In the latter the author pressed the need for women to have a minimum wage. He suggested that when women had the vote they would be able to push their claims more effectively.



77. I O Ford, "Industrial Conditions Affecting Women of the Working Classes", Y.F.T. 17 March 1893. For a more detailed discussion of the practice of favouritism and the privileged position of male cutters, see above, pp 215-16, 562- 3.
78. L.D.N. 31 October 1889.
79. L.W.C. 13 April 1912.
80. Ibid. 18 April 1913.
81. Ibid. 12 December 1913.
82. Ibid. 9 January 1914.
83. For example, see the letter by Bernard Sullivan: ibid. 4 December 1914.
84. Ibid. 26 December 1913. Emily Tate was a union organiser.
85. Ibid. 9 January 1914.
86. Ibid. 16 January 1914.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid. 9 January 1914.
89. M Sclare, "Female Versus Male Labour", Garment Worker, December (1926), p 5.
90. Ibid.
91. Women paid 3½d a week subscription rate compared with 7d to 9d for men. They were paid sick and victimisation pay at half the male rate and their funeral pay was less than half that received by men. Their dispute pay was a half or less than the male rate and women received no unemployment benefits. The Yorkshire Factory Times expressed strong disagreement with these policies: Y.F.T. 29 July 1904.

92. Miss Holmes was a delegate to the Leeds Trades Council; Emily Tate was an organiser; Miss Foster was a member of the negotiating committee during the dispute of 1913 to raise minimum rates; Miss B Quinn started organising women in 1912 as a member of the branch committee, was a delegate to the Trades Council and was appointed full-time organiser of the Leeds No 1 branch in 1915: Garment Worker, November (1926); Anne Loughlin was an active shop steward before the war. At the age of 21, in 1915, she was made a full-time union organiser and in 1948 became union general secretary: H Chevins, Anne Loughlin (Milton Keynes: National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, 1975).
93. Emily Tate was an active member of the socialist Sunday school movement in Leeds: L.W.C. 20 December 1912; Miss Holmes formed part of a deputation organised by the Leeds Women's Labour League to gain representation for working women on the board of the Leeds Infirmary: ibid. 28 March 1913; Miss Quinn was a supporter of women's suffrage before the war, was elected to the Leeds Board of Guardians in 1918 and stood as a candidate for the Labour Party in Leeds West Ward in 1920: ibid. 1 August 1913, and Garment Worker, November (1926). All of these women worked in the tailoring trade, although not a great deal is known about them. Miss B Quinn was born in Middlesborough into a family of ten children. She was educated in a Birmingham convent and came to Leeds at the age of 18 to work in a clothing factory: Garment Worker, November (1926). Anne Loughlin, the daughter of a boot and shoe worker, was born in Leeds in 1894. She was of Irish extraction. At the age of 12 she had to look after her brothers and sisters when her mother died and then became family breadwinner when her father died four years later: Chevins, Anne Loughlin, p 1.
94. In defending the 1913 settlement Emily Tate wrote: "Your correspondent is evidently suffering from a bad attack of 'anti-manitis'. I have been through the same stage myself; but it has not left me quite so bitter. All the bitterness and hatred in me is reserved for the men - aye, and women too - of the master class, who have oppressed my class for centuries upon centuries": L.W.C. 9 January 1914.
95. For example, see I O Ford, Women's Wages (Humanitarian League, pamphlet no 8, 1893), pp 9-10.
96. A Pollert, Girls, Wives, Factory Lives (Macmillan, 1981), pp 2-4.
97. Ibid. pp 237-42.

98. By 1914 there were approximately 5,000 members in the Leeds branch of the A.U.C.O. 2,500 to 3,000 of these were female members: L.W.C. 31 July 1914. In 1911 15,917 tailloresses were listed in the occupation tables of the census: Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1913, LXXIX), Leeds Occupations, Table 13. Emily Tate claimed that 25 per cent of Leeds tailloresses were organised in 1913: L.W.C. 26 December 1913.
99. Alexander, "Introduction", pp 32-3.

CHAPTER 14THE RESPONSE OF LEEDS SOCIALISTS AND THE LEEDS LABOUR  
REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE TO THE FEMALE INDUSTRIAL WORKER

The involvement of women, in particular middle-class women, in the socialist movement of the late nineteenth century has been commented on frequently by historians.<sup>1</sup> A few studies have also noted that this encouraged socialist groups to explore the relationship between women's rights and socialism.<sup>2</sup> Little time is spent, however, in discussing why middle-class women were drawn to socialism or in examining the extent to which socialists concerned themselves with the specific interests of working women. Moreover, most studies give only limited attention to socialist ideas about the role of the family and the sex division of labour.<sup>3</sup> And yet such questions can be crucial for an understanding of the development of independent labour politics, in particular in an area such as Leeds, where women formed an important group in the industrial labour force.

The Leeds socialist movement of the late 1880s and the early 1890s can be characterised by its enthusiasm and energy. The industrial unrest of 1889, the fierce struggles with the Trades Council over independent labour politics and the establishment of a branch of the Independent Labour Party created an atmosphere of excitement in the city.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis of many of the early propagandists lay on "making socialists" and creating "a new way of life".<sup>5</sup> They had a broad vision of socialism and formed part of a close circle of friends who gathered round the writer Edward Carpenter.<sup>6</sup> For them, socialism represented

more than a change in ownership and control at the point of production - it meant a transformation of all human relationships.<sup>7</sup> The early socialists were keen to draw connections between personal life and political activity. This encouraged an interest in issues which touched directly on the experience of women, including sexuality and the power relationships between the sexes within marriage.

Two members of this group, Isabella Ford and Tom Maguire, had a particular interest in the difficulties faced by working-class women and the relationship between sex oppression and class exploitation. They both played an important role in the Leeds labour movement. Tom Maguire died in the mid 1890s, but Isabella Ford was involved in labour politics until the early 1920s.<sup>9</sup> The first part of this chapter concentrates on their activities on behalf of, and ideas concerning, working women. A study of their work helps to shed light on the extent to which efforts were made to involve women in labour politics in Leeds, how far their needs were catered for and the reasons why at least one middle-class woman was attracted to socialism. The second part of the chapter examines the very different political context of the pre-war years. In this period the Labour Party was at the centre of independent labour politics and women's interests were more formally represented by the Women's Labour League.

The detailed knowledge of, and sympathy with, the day-to-day lives of working women shown by Tom Maguire and Isabella Ford was unusual. Their speeches constantly attempted to raise the awareness of the Leeds labour movement concerning the specific needs of the working-class



just as ready to criticise male workers for their own pretensions.<sup>13</sup> He refused to simply blame women and their domestic responsibilities for the reluctance that they showed about becoming involved in the labour movement. He noted that men had many advantages to gain from keeping women tied to the family. Maguire argued, for example, that the indifference and hostility of male tailoring workers to the organisation of women went deeper than a fear of their cheap competition. He reminded the men's union that it owed its existence to the actions of the tailoresses in 1889 and complained that men did not try to get their female relatives to join a union. Instead, Maguire noted that their usual reaction was to think:

"My Sarah Jane must stay at home and make my home more comfortable for me. What is a wife for!" - Why don't men try to rouse women to unions at their own fireside. It is not women who are selfish and narrow minded, we all know that.<sup>14</sup>

Maguire's writings were important for highlighting the difficulties faced by women workers and for discussing their needs from the point of view of the women themselves. After Maguire's early death, Alf Mattison claimed that his views "regarding the position and future of women were unusually advanced, as were also his sympathies with them".<sup>15</sup> At a practical level Maguire and other members of the Socialist League gave help to the tailoresses during their strike of 1889. Nevertheless, this involvement in the organisation of women was not sustained. In the 1890s Leeds socialists put most of their energies into organising groups such as the gasworkers who had greater industrial strength.<sup>16</sup>

Isabella Ford's work had a more long-term significance for women workers

in Leeds. From the late 1880s onwards her activities centred around the need to change the industrial, social and political position of women, in particular that of working-class women. To that end she worked for trade union organisation, socialism and independent labour politics, and women's suffrage.<sup>17</sup> Her ideas about the nature of socialism and women's emancipation, and the close relationship between the two, altered very little over the years. What did change was the attention and emphasis that she gave to each campaign at any one time.

In the 1890s Isabella Ford was largely involved in organising women workers throughout the West Riding and in promoting independent labour politics. She was president of the Leeds Tailoresses' Union, a member of the central committee of the Women's Trade Union League, and in 1904 was elected to the National Administrative Council of the ILP. After 1906 she devoted more of her time to the women's suffrage campaign and was a member of the executive of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.<sup>18</sup> Her ideas were widely disseminated through her speeches and writings. These covered topics ranging from detailed descriptions of the conditions of female employment to more theoretical statements on the relationship between women's emancipation and socialism.<sup>19</sup> Her activities, at both a local and a national level, brought her into contact with a wide group of labour leaders, including Ben Turner, Philip Snowden and Keir Hardie, and with women prominent in the suffrage movement, the WTUL and the professions.<sup>20</sup> Isabella's sister Bessie was also involved in the labour movement, and her practical help is acknowledged in the autobiographies and diaries of labour leaders.<sup>21</sup> She tended, however, to work from behind the scenes, whereas Isabella's



contribution was of a more public and propagandist nature.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the range of Isabella Ford's activities and the recognition given to her by contemporaries, she has been largely neglected by historians. Most studies of socialism or of women's suffrage deal with her contribution in only one or two sentences.<sup>23</sup> To some extent this reflects a more general neglect of women's role in the labour movement. Nonetheless, ILP members such as Katharine Conway, Enid Stacy and Carolyn Martyn have received greater attention and recognition.<sup>24</sup> The neglect of Isabella Ford may stem from the fact that she was based in the provinces and left few personal papers. Moreover, she did not marry a fellow labour activist, which usually ensures women some attention.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, it also reflects the arbitrary way in which local socialists are "discovered" only if an individual researcher decides to study the labour movement in a specific local context.<sup>26</sup> And yet the regional variations in socialist and trade union activity and support makes an examination of the contribution of men and women at a local level particularly valuable.<sup>27</sup>

As already noted, Isabella Ford was only one of a group of middle-class women who were attracted to socialism and the women's trade union movement in the late nineteenth century. She came from a wealthy Quaker family in Leeds whose religious and political sympathies help to explain her early interest in women's rights and humanitarian causes. Both her parents were radical liberals and a succession of political leaders, including John Bright and Mazzini, visited the Ford household when she was a child.<sup>28</sup> Her mother was involved in Josephine Butler's

campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts and supported women's suffrage.<sup>29</sup> This appears to have given Isabella Ford an early interest in women's rights; her first speech, delivered at the opening of the Stanningley and Farsley Liberal Club, was on the theme of women's suffrage.<sup>30</sup> Her liberal and religious background also laid the basis for a lifetime commitment to international peace and the rights of national minorities.<sup>31</sup> The involvement of members of her family with the Quakers directed their energies towards social and humanitarian questions. Isabella's parents, for example, gave financial backing to a local shoemaker to establish a night school for mill girls in the 1860s. This provided Isabella Ford and her sisters with an early contact with working women and they helped out in the school from a young age.<sup>32</sup>

Two of Isabella Ford's brothers were active in public life. J Rawlinson Ford, a solicitor, was the leader of the Liberal Party on the City Council.<sup>33</sup> T Benson Ford, the owner of a silk spinning mill, acted both as chairman of the Health Committee of the West Riding and as chairman of the West Riding Insurance Committee.<sup>34</sup> J Rawlinson Ford's wife was also involved in social and political reforms. She took a particular interest in the education, moral welfare and employment prospects of middle-class and working-class women as an active member of the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education.<sup>35</sup> Given her family background it is hardly surprising that Isabella Ford should have been interested in women's rights and political and social questions. What is more difficult to explain is why she, and her sister Bessie, decided to concentrate on the problems faced by working-class women, and why they saw the solution to these as lying in trade union organisation and

socialism.

In a recent article Yeo argues that men and women were "converted" to socialism in the last 1880s and early 1890s.<sup>36</sup> He suggests that such conversions were preceded by "poverty, religious eclecticism, unresolved guilt, domestic unhappiness, scattered activity, wealthy aimlessness or social unease"; he also notes that individual tensions were released by the quasi-religious conversion to socialism, with its message of hope and moral challenge.<sup>37</sup> Barker, on the other hand, suggests that labour leaders in Yorkshire were not converted. He argues instead that they came to support the doctrine of socialism because they felt revulsion at the social and economic conditions of working-class life. They desired to see a new moral basis for civilisation and were expressing an emotional reaction to injustice and degradation.<sup>38</sup>

Isabella Ford does not appear to have become a socialist because of a sudden conversion or because of an emotional reaction to injustice, although she did express a deep sense of moral outrage at the economic deprivations and spiritual barrenness of working-class life. Her decision to work for socialism developed out of her involvement in the organisation and industrial struggles of working-class women and her growing contacts with local socialists. At the same time, her humanitarian and Quaker upbringing ensured that she would be attracted by the socialist promise of a moral as well as an economic transformation of society.<sup>39</sup>

From the very beginning Isabella Ford's interest in socialism was closely

related to her interest in women's rights. In an article written in 1913 she recalled that she was first made aware of the importance of socialism for women when she read the Beehive, a newspaper taken by her mother.<sup>40</sup> This was the first paper she had seen which paid attention to women's industrial lives. Her interest in the labour movement was then strengthened when Emma Paterson, a family friend, urged her to help in the establishment of trade societies for tailoresses in the mid 1880s. This brought her to the attention of local socialists. Her subsequent involvement in the weavers' strike of 1888 gave her further contacts in the labour movement, notably with her lifelong friend Ben Turner.<sup>41</sup> Isabella Ford's emphasis at this stage was on the need for working women to join trade unions in order to improve their work conditions. Politically she was still associated with the Liberal Party, and in February 1889 helped to form a Women's Liberal Association in Leeds. In doing so she expressed the hope that women would take more interest in municipal politics and that educated women would assist those with fewer advantages.<sup>42</sup>

The weavers' strike had already begun to change Isabella Ford's political views, but it was her involvement in the tailoresses' dispute of 1889 that took this process even further. She later wrote that "I found it was quite impossible to obtain any help, politically, from either of the two parties".<sup>43</sup> She also noted that the Liberal Party was "the avowed advocate of Trade Unionism, but the liberal employers were quite as bitter as the conservatives against any of their female employees who dared to join a union".<sup>44</sup> She was particularly incensed by the tone in which employers referred to women who joined unions. She thought that

this showed that "sex hatred, or what is even worse, 'sex contempt', on the part of men towards women, was underlying our social structure".<sup>45</sup>

By 1890 Isabella Ford was arguing, in a speech to Stanningley weavers, that "there was no force so powerful as combination. The workers were possessed of sufficient power to move the world ... The results of labour were not equally divided. Everyone was not paid on the scale Mr Drew advocated - that of each being paid in proportion to the skill and intelligence displayed".<sup>46</sup> Her commitment to socialism was further strengthened by the Manningham mills dispute of 1891.<sup>47</sup> In a later interview she said:

I have never felt absolute hunger ... but these girls did. We found some of them desperate with hunger, and supplied a breakfast of tea and bread and butter every morning. One poor girl with a drunken father and an invalid sister collected 10s and ran away with it. To her it represented wealth, and I was only sorry there was not more in the box. She had awakened to the right to possess something.<sup>48</sup>

Isabella Ford continued to attend meetings of groups with varied political commitments, including the Women's Liberal Association and the YLCE, but after 1889 all her energies were devoted to promoting socialism, trade unionism and the emancipation of working-class women.<sup>49</sup>

Isabella Ford shared many ideas in common with other socialists, female trade union organisers and members of the women's movement. She believed that socialism meant more than the achievement of immediate reforms, arguing that it "insists on the moral regeneration of society of the most complete and searching kind".<sup>50</sup> For Isabella Ford, socialism

meant bringing beauty into people's lives as well as material benefits. She felt that socialists should endeavour to "procure that happiness of mind and those little enjoyments which alone rendered life worth living".<sup>51</sup> Along with many others in the ILP she argued that socialism involved a change in individual and national character and values.<sup>52</sup> This emphasis on individual change raised problems about the processes by which socialism would be achieved and the question of agency. While accepting that the interests of capital and labour were not as yet identical, Isabella Ford did not look to class conflict as a motive force for social change.<sup>53</sup> She argued instead that the educational effects of involvement in trade union and political activities would convince individuals of the justice and superior values of socialism, which again echoed the views of other ILP members.<sup>54</sup> Isabella Ford also shared the belief, which was widespread among contemporaries in the socialist and women's movement, that women had special qualities because of their caring role within the family.<sup>55</sup> This underpinned her arguments for increasing women's involvement in public life. She suggested that the participation of women in any movement tended to "strengthen and purify it" and argued that it was a "woman's duty to alleviate suffering and to prevent it".<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, Isabella Ford's focus on the specific needs of women workers gave her ideas a different emphasis from those of many ILP members, while her socialism set her apart from the mainstream women's movement. Her refusal to compromise her feminism and to put class loyalty first also differentiated her from many industrial feminists. This means that it is difficult to neatly pigeonhole Isabella Ford into any one stereotype of the typical middle-class socialist or feminist

of the period.

A central tenet of Isabella Ford's arguments was that women's full emancipation had to go hand in hand with socialism, and that socialism could not be achieved unless men and women took an equal part in the movement.<sup>57</sup> She thought that only socialism refused to distinguish between men and women as equal human beings with equal rights. Moreover, she claimed that the political embodiment of socialism, the ILP, was the only party which offered full equality to women.<sup>58</sup> She noted that women had been elected almost immediately on to the National Administrative Council of the ILP and were not expected to simply act as unpaid canvassers or as dignitaries on platforms.<sup>59</sup>

Isabella Ford argued that the women's movement and the labour movement were inextricably connected because they both demanded a "state founded on the highest justice and the consequent reform of the home", and because they both arose from economic dependence. She saw the family as playing a crucial part in building a state out of "this moral regeneration that socialism calls for".<sup>60</sup> Women had an important role in this because they were the "mothers of the nation".<sup>61</sup> She wrote that "After all, women are the foundation of the world, of the race - 'out of the most perfect woman is unfolded the most perfect man'".<sup>62</sup> On the surface these views appear to echo those of more mainstream ILP propagandists, providing a justification for the sex division of labour and women's identification with the domestic sphere. However, the key to the difference between Isabella Ford and many of her contemporaries lay in her insistence that the nature of family life had to change. In

her view the man's role in the family was of equal importance, for "the relationship between men and women forms the core, the centre around which society grows, for the family, the home, is the very heart of the nation".<sup>63</sup> She suggested that this vital relationship had been distorted under capitalism; men had become the oppressors because of women's economic and political dependence.<sup>64</sup>

Along with many others in the women's movement Isabella Ford placed great faith in the political enfranchisement of women as providing a solution for their oppression in the family and in the workplace. On the one hand, she argued that it would have the practical effect of increasing support for legislation geared to the needs of women.<sup>65</sup> She also argued, however, that political equality was a necessary pre-requisite for a change in society's view of women, and for a change in women's view of themselves.<sup>66</sup> This would then mean an alteration in the relationship between the sexes. Isabella Ford believed that it would lead to a more equal companionship within marriage which was necessary for cooperation between men and women in the labour movement.<sup>67</sup> There would never be a real Labour Party, in her eyes, unless women were free, for "there can never be anything worthy unless it is built on men and women together, neither side claiming superiority over the other".<sup>68</sup>

Isabella Ford stopped short of challenging the view that women should be primarily responsible for child care and the home. She argued that their role as homemakers made them ideally suited to work for socialist aims, in particular the achievement of love and beauty.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, she refused to sentimentalise their role within the family and thought



that women could only make a contribution to social change by using their intelligence. The achievement of political freedom would wipe out the view that "women are naturally more angelic than men, and somehow possess more first hand knowledge about heaven ...".<sup>70</sup> Isabella Ford also believed that women should not be confined by family life, which encouraged individualism and selfishness, but that they should take a full part in public affairs.<sup>71</sup> Aware of the difficulties working-class women faced in this, she advocated cooperative housekeeping, but recognised that many were not yet ready to accept such a plan.<sup>72</sup>

A number of younger suffrage workers in the pre-war years were ready to put forward the view that married women were not fully satisfied by child care and married life alone. They argued that this was perfectly natural and that nurseries should be provided to enable women, if they chose, to combine paid work with family life.<sup>73</sup> Isabella Ford did not adopt the same kind of argument. Instead, she emphasised that married women usually worked because of an inadequate family income and should be given every sympathy. She praised them for shouldering a "double burden" and was scathing about male workers who used the married woman worker as a scapegoat for all their industrial problems.<sup>74</sup>

Isabella Ford adopted a political solution for women's dependence and subordination within the home and did not take up the question of family allowances or nurseries as a way to achieve greater economic independence. In dealing with the industrial difficulties faced by working women, however, she not only advocated legislation to improve working conditions, but also emphasised the need for trade union organisation.<sup>75</sup>

She thought that trade unions would raise the industrial status of women workers and had an important role to play in the achievement of social change. This set her apart from many other ILP socialists who tended to minimise the importance of trade unionism in the development of socialism.<sup>76</sup> As already noted, she found the task of organising women to be a weary and thankless one. Nevertheless, she maintained a positive view of the female worker's potential as a trade unionist. She differed from many male trade unionists in her refusal to constantly blame women for their apathy. She attempted instead to understand the reasons for this, which included women's early socialisation as well as the structural problems posed by their occupations.<sup>77</sup> Her harshest criticisms were reserved for philanthropists who taught women that submissiveness was a characteristic of femininity and argued that the role of trade unions should be to change women's attitudes as well as to bring material improvements.<sup>78</sup> She thought that trade unions fostered a spirit of collectivism and should be used to attack every form of conventional thought.<sup>79</sup>

Isabella Ford's ideas and work revealed time and again the conflicts that existed between the interests of men and women at the workplace and in the home. These conflicts were reproduced within the socialist and trade union movements and could not simply be subsumed under a general appeal for working-class unity. The tensions between sex and class in the labour movement were also present in Isabella Ford's own life. She experienced difficulties, both as a feminist working within the labour movement, and also as a middle-class woman working on behalf of another social class. In one of her own articles he noted that trade union work often brought isolation, for it was difficult to maintain

friendly relations "with those on both sides of the gulf, capital and labour".<sup>80</sup> Some middle-class contemporaries called her "mannish" when she spoke in public, while others saw her organising work as a sign of "unfeminine behaviour".<sup>81</sup> Middle-class women active in the suffrage campaign were not necessarily in sympathy with her socialism and her approach to working-class women. They tended to see the latter as a social problem, or in need of rescue, rather than as an exploited group with specific needs.<sup>82</sup>

On the other hand, relationships with working men and women could be equally difficult. Isabella Ford was well liked by a variety of labour leaders who remained on friendly terms with her even when they disagreed with some of her views. This relationship was made easier by her commitment to working from within the labour movement, which was favourably contrasted with the activities of charitable do-gooders.<sup>83</sup> It was also helped by her lack of stridency and her sense of humour.<sup>84</sup> The Yorkshire Factory Times followed her activities with interest, but there was an element of reverence in the pieces written in appreciation of her work. A typical reference to her said:

Leeds is blessed in having as neighbours such good ladies as Bessie, Isabella and Emily Ford. I know them all, and am proud of their acquaintance. So are the mill girls ... I wish there were a multitude of Misses Fords in the world. There would be better times for the workers.<sup>85</sup>

This tone was commonly used when middle-class female socialists were referred to and it reveals a tendency in the labour movement to put such women on a pedestal.

Nonetheless, other working men were deeply suspicious of Isabella Ford's class origins, her socialism and her feminism. In 1904 she published a letter to correct the impression given in the Leeds Mercury that she was still a member of the Women's Liberal Association. She thought it necessary to write the letter because "I find evil reports are sometimes easily, and I regret to say gladly, believed of 'middle-class' women".<sup>86</sup> Ben Turner commented that some working-class men never "give credit to a middle-class woman for good work and good intentions ... the sacrifices that the Misses Ford have made are surely enough to prove their bonafides, for they were fighting for Labour a lot before some of their present day critics were ready for work".<sup>87</sup>

Isabella Ford's refusal to make compromises in her feminism and her socialism also brought her into conflict with male trade union leaders who otherwise gave her support. She clashed with the Leeds Trades Council, for example, over its opposition to Jewish immigration in the 1890s.<sup>88</sup> Unlike some women in the labour movement she was wary of protective legislation for women, in particular if it threatened to restrict them from work which did not seem to be inherently unsuitable. She opposed the attempt in the mid 1890s to prohibit women from chain and nail making, arguing that they had been engaged in the work for generations and the alternative would be starvation or prostitution.<sup>89</sup> She suggested that greater attention should be paid to organising women and to educating them to demand higher pay, rather than seeking to restrict their employment. Isabella Ford was particularly incensed by the way in which the legislation had been drawn up without consultation with the women concerned. She pointed out that this was seen as an act of kindness for

women, whereas it would have been viewed as an act of tyranny if applied to men.<sup>90</sup> Her stand on this issue was opposed by the local trade union movement and she received a rebuke from her usual source of support, the Yorkshire Factory Times.<sup>91</sup>

It is difficult to assess Isabella Ford's relationship with the working women that she attempted to organise. She was on friendly and affectionate terms with the officers of the Tailoresses' Union, notably Agnes Close, who was a frequent visitor to her home.<sup>92</sup> She tried to draw closer to union members by inviting them to tea, by taking them to London to visit the WTUL and by participating in their socials.<sup>93</sup> But most of the girls must have been overawed by her wealthy background and it is likely that they were never really independent in her presence. The working women who were involved in organising tailoresses left few records, and therefore it is difficult to assess whether they also experienced tensions in working for women's interests within the wider labour movement. Agnes Close, for example, did not work for the AUCO once it had amalgamated with the Tailoresses' Union. Instead, she continued to organise female workers from her base in the women's Trade Union Club. Eventually, she left for Canada and found work as a stewardess on a packet steamer; work which she apparently enjoyed.<sup>94</sup> She also retained an interest in women's work conditions and sent reports about these back to England.<sup>95</sup>

It is difficult to assess the impact of Isabella Ford's activities and ideas on the socialist and trade union movements in Leeds. Her organising work among tailoresses and textile workers helped to give women's specific

needs more prominence in trade union circles, and she was made an honorary life member of the Trades Council.<sup>96</sup> Tailoresses were always prominent in labour demonstrations in the city and their union sent delegates to the Trades Council.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the leaders of the General Union of Textile Workers and the AUCO welcomed Isabella Ford's help in their attempts to recruit more female members. In her speeches she always emphasised the needs and difficulties faced by working women. This was a useful corrective to the more critical tone of male trade unionists.

Nonetheless, the rigid sex division of labour in textiles and ready-made tailoring, the threat posed by cheap female labour and the craft outlook of male clothing workers meant that her views concerning the specific needs of women had little impact on overall union policies. Male trade unionists were anxious to see an improvement in women's wages and working conditions. However, they were unwilling to challenge women's subordinate status within industry, since this would have threatened the privileged position of men both at the workplace and in the home.<sup>98</sup> This is illustrated by the ambivalent stand of the Yorkshire Factory Times on female workers. The paper gave considerable space to reporting attempts to organise women and showed great concern about their low pay and working conditions. On the other hand, it led a campaign against the rights of married women to seek paid employment and in support of their domestic role within the family.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, the movement for independent labour politics in Leeds also failed to give priority to women's specific needs and did not challenge

their subordinate social position in any systematic way. Isabella Ford and other female socialists gave numerous speeches on the "woman question" to local labour clubs and labour churches.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, the day-to-day activities of the socialists revolved around capturing the trade union movement for independent labour politics. This meant becoming involved in labour struggles at the workplace and in putting forward immediate material reforms to alleviate the economic insecurities of working-class lives, rather than addressing the position of women.<sup>101</sup>

The formation of a local branch of the Labour Representation Committee in Leeds in the first decade of the new century, and the steady increase of Labour members on the City Council, meant an even greater tendency to concentrate on the achievement of immediate reforms.<sup>102</sup> It has been suggested that these reforms came to be seen as ends in themselves, rather than as a means to achieving a transformation of society. Moreover, it meant that there was little room for a consideration of issues relating to the sex division of labour.<sup>103</sup> Isabella Ford never wavered from her broad vision of socialism, but she no longer played such a central role in the trade union and labour movement. She continued to assist the General Union of Textile Workers in its organising drives, but the AUCO tended to use its own full-time organisers.<sup>104</sup> After 1906 most of Isabella Ford's energies were devoted to the campaign for women's suffrage. This formed the main theme of all her speeches to labour rallies and other groups.<sup>105</sup> Her concentration on women's suffrage was largely related to the increased vigour of the movement in the years preceding the war.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, it must also have reflected the fact that her own socialist vision was at odds with the emphases and concerns of the

pre-war Labour Party.<sup>107</sup>

It is significant that the demand for women's suffrage was the one issue relating to women that received growing attention from the Leeds labour movement before the war. The Leeds Weekly Citizen, the official organ of the Labour Party, gave considerable coverage to speeches and activities on behalf of women's suffrage, while women were invited to speak on the subject to local labour groups.<sup>108</sup> In 1912 the Leeds Trades Council passed a resolution in support of the inclusion of women into any future suffrage bill.<sup>109</sup> This was in line with the policy adopted by the Labour Party in the same year. The Leeds LRC, however, was accused by the local WLL of not pursuing the issue of women's suffrage with enough vigour.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, support for formal political equality did not necessarily lead to a deeper questioning of women's subordinate position in the workplace and in the home.

The emphasis in most labour speeches was on the way in which the vote would enable women to use the qualities that they had developed in the domestic sphere for the benefit of the whole community. There was little reference to the way in which it could be seen as a first step towards involving women in public life. James O'Grady, the Labour MP for Leeds, claimed that votes for women would mean, not only the extension of democracy, but also "purer politics, for the spirit of motherhood would dominate the vote". He argued that the suffrage would not undermine women's role in the family because they would consider a candidate "from the point of view of the family circle. If in her judgement those politics would damage family life, of which she was the



centre, that candidate would not get her vote".<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, a concentration on the achievement of formal political equality was in many respects encouraged by the emphases of the women's movement itself.<sup>112</sup>

The Leeds LRC failed to make any direct appeal to working-class women in the city, either in terms of its organisational structure or its policies. The formal structure of party meetings must have been off-putting to women and there was little of the crusading fervour which marked the early days of socialist activity.<sup>113</sup> A challenge to women's domestic role would not necessarily have appealed to the wives of skilled workers in the city. On the other hand, the Leeds LRC also failed to give priority to issues which would have concerned them, such as health care, pregnancy, divorce and the conditions of domestic life.<sup>114</sup> The importance of trade union support meant that the LRC focussed upon industrial issues or on general social problems, such as housing, which were not usually related explicitly to women's needs. The campaign issues of the 1911 municipal elections in Leeds, for example, were the conditions of employment of municipal workers and the extension of municipal services. Candidates also expressed a concern with the feeding and medical inspection of schoolchildren.<sup>115</sup> Towards the end of the period the Leeds Weekly Citizen spearheaded a campaign around the issue of inadequate housing and the need for a programme of municipal housebuilding.<sup>116</sup> However, the LRC was mainly interested in the lack of suitable accommodation for skilled workers and did not focus on the facilities needed to relieve women's domestic drudgery.<sup>117</sup>

The campaign against rent increases in 1913 did provide the Leeds LRC

with an opportunity to make contact with working-class women, since a number of women were members of the Tenants' Defence Committee.<sup>118</sup> The LRC used the occasion, however, to attack Liberal Party mismanagement rather than as a way to involve women from the community in labour politics.<sup>119</sup> One correspondent in the Leeds Weekly Citizen complained that the LRC did not make enough appeal to women at election times, especially on the details of their daily lives and how they could be remedied, for they were not always fired by the suffrage.<sup>120</sup> The success of the Women's Cooperative Guild in attracting the support of married working-class women suggests that women could be persuaded to take an interest in politics if an organisation became directly involved in their problems and focussed on the needs of the women themselves.<sup>121</sup>

In the pre-war years the WLL was the organised expression of women's interests within the Labour Party. It was set up to encourage women to take part in labour politics, to gain representation for women on public bodies and to focus attention on reforms affecting women and children.<sup>122</sup> The Leeds WLL averaged only 60 members in its early years. During the municipal elections of 1913, however, membership increased and there were eight branches in the city by the following year.<sup>123</sup> On one level the Leeds WLL thought that it had an important role to play in the "lighter side of the movement"; its members were responsible for providing refreshments and for running bazaars, socials and other fund raising activities.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, the emphasis of the local group lay on the achievement of political and social reforms which would affect women's lives.<sup>125</sup> Its activities reflected the aims of the WLL at a national level; it campaigned for the provision of municipal

lodging houses for women and for municipal clinics which would give free treatment as well as advice. It also worked hard in opposition to the involvement of children in street trading.<sup>126</sup> A vigorous and lengthy campaign was waged to obtain representation for working women on the Board of the Leeds Infirmary. Help was enlisted for this from the Trades Council, the AUCO and the Women's Cooperative Guild.<sup>127</sup> The Leeds WLL also tried to arouse women's interest in municipal politics by pointing to the ways in which the City Council's responsibility for medical, social and educational services could affect their daily lives.<sup>128</sup>

Despite sharing aims and objectives in common, members of the League, at both a national and a local level, did express fundamental differences over the policies that should be pursued. Conflicts most often arose when the interests of women appeared to threaten labour unity. One issue which provoked great controversy was the question of women's economic independence. Many London branches, which were close to the Fabian Women's Group, attempted to gain the support of the League's Annual Conference for a policy of family allowances.<sup>129</sup> It was argued that this would provide women with some economic independence. Most male trade union leaders, however, were opposed to such a policy and the WLL refused to give the measure official support. Some women feared that allowances would be divisive of labour unity, while others argued that they would undermine the man's responsibility for his family.<sup>130</sup> One Leeds group gave support to the principle of economic support for families, but failed to pursue the issue within the local LRC.<sup>131</sup>

The most divisive issue for the Leeds WLL was the struggle for women's

suffrage. The 1907 Annual Conference of the national WLL agreed that members should be free to make their own decision about whether to support a limited franchise or adult suffrage. However, the leaders of the League were always critical of the policies and tactics of the Women's Social and Political Union. In 1910 the League finally took a stand on the issue by passing a resolution which urged the Labour Party to oppose any future franchise measure which did not include women. This led to conflict with some male members of the Party, which was resolved in 1912 when the Labour Party officially adopted a similar policy. This paved the way for an alliance with the non-militant NUWSS.<sup>132</sup>

Members of the Leeds WLL were active in promoting the cause of women's suffrage. They sent resolutions on the issue to the LRC and came to the May Day demonstration of 1913 attired in red sashes which carried the slogan "Votes for Women".<sup>133</sup> Conflict arose within the group, however, over the relationship of some women to the WSPU. Most members of the East Hunslet WLL were also members of the WSPU, and the East and North East Leeds group invited women from the Union to speak at branch meetings.<sup>134</sup> This brought them into conflict with male and female members of the Leeds LRC who objected both to the violent tactics of the WSPU and also to its hostile attitude to Labour candidates.<sup>135</sup> When women who belonged to the WLL and to the WSPU heckled Philip Snowden during a public speech against militarism, they raised the problem of whether women's interests as a sex should be placed above class loyalty.<sup>136</sup> Jeannie Arnott, secretary of the Leeds Central WLL, argued that the Labour Party expected its members to support Labour candidates. Membership of the League, therefore, was incompatible with membership of the

WSPU. She put forward a motion of censure to the Leeds LRC against Mrs Dightam, secretary of the East and North East Leeds WLL, but was unable to obtain enough support.<sup>137</sup> Mrs Dightam defended her actions on the grounds that the Labour Party had fallen away from its ideals by refusing to grant sex equality. She accused Jeannie Arnott of being a dictator and of driving members from the League.<sup>138</sup> The debate continued over many weeks in the local press. Nonetheless, members of the WLL who were also in the WSPU were not expelled from the Labour Party and the conflict paled in significance with the outbreak of war.

In any conflicts between the WLL and the Labour Party over the specific interests of women as a sex the mainstream policies of the latter tended to prevail. The WLL drew back from pursuing potentially divisive issues and concentrated on persuading the Labour Party to give priority to social reforms designed to improve domestic conditions. The League had some success in this, in particular after the First World War.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, even in the domestic sphere it campaigned on only a narrow range of issues, such as the improvement of child health or the provision of municipal housing, and did not take up questions affecting women's personal lives.<sup>140</sup> The League also put little emphasis on the needs of the female wage earner. It failed to explore systematically the links between women's industrial position and labour politics.<sup>141</sup> This must have reduced the appeal of the League to working women in a city with such widespread industrial employment for female workers. The Leeds WLL tried to encourage women to enter politics by providing a sympathetic environment - for example, the Armley group ensured that each member took the chair in turn so that they could all learn how to conduct business.<sup>142</sup>

Nevertheless, few female industrial workers or married working-class women were attracted to the organisation. Most local members were drawn from "white-blouse" and professional occupations or were the wives of labour activists.<sup>143</sup>

The failure of the Leeds socialist movement and the LRC to give priority to the needs of women workers reflected a similar failure at a national level. Barbara Taylor suggests that this can be explained by the influence of Marxism in the 1880s which led to a focus on the economic class struggle at the point of production. Questions relating to the power relationships between the sexes were therefore marginalised.<sup>144</sup>

This argument can be applied with most force to the Social Democratic Federation.<sup>145</sup> Many ILP members, on the other hand, did have a broader vision of socialism and were initially interested in the link between all areas of social and personal life. Yeo suggests, however, that by the mid 1890s even the ILP had narrowed its focus. He explains this by the increasing emphasis placed on winning elections, which involved building an electoral machinery, raising money and the promotion of immediate reforms.<sup>146</sup>

In his study of labour politics in Leeds Woodhouse does not find a break in socialist aims and tactics in the mid 1890s. He argues instead that an emphasis on the achievement of material reforms was already there from the late 1880s.<sup>147</sup> Woodhouse suggests that this was a response to a fragmented working class, permeated with liberalism and subject to economic insecurities, and a Trades Council which retained a strong commitment to the Liberal Party. This encouraged Leeds socialists

to put issues concerning sex oppression and the quality of life to one side in order to concentrate on breaking the hold of the Liberal Party on the trade union movement and the Leeds working class. In doing so they failed to attract women's support and reduced the level of class consciousness in the city.<sup>148</sup>

Woodhouse's emphasis on the practical difficulties facing Leeds socialists does not, however, provide a complete explanation for the neglect of female workers. The theoretical framework adopted by the ILP also made it more likely that it would slip into a concentration on material reforms, which were then overlaid by a woolly rhetoric of ethical socialism. A concentration on material reforms did not have to preclude an interest in broader social issues. Maguire, for example, argued that the ILP should become familiar with workshop conditions and everyday life so that it could build on this in its propaganda work. He suggested that "momentarily people may be exalted by lofty ideals, but inevitably, and naturally, they gravitate to the material issues".<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, he did not advocate piecemeal reforms as ends in themselves, but only as part of a movement towards a qualitatively different way of life. For Maguire, as for William Morris, the moral dimension was to supplement analytic marxism rather than to become a substitute for it.<sup>150</sup> The ILP's criticism of capitalism as being immoral, and their view that "the motive force for change would not be class struggle, but the moral conviction and informed opinions of the people", had the opposite effect.<sup>151</sup> Hinton argues that the ILP's ethical socialism was so vague that the leadership were under few constraints in making compromises and there was little attempt to relate practical politics to socialist

goals.<sup>152</sup>

Woodhouse also gives little attention in his article to the way in which the ILP's view of the family placed barriers in the way of a challenge to women's subordinate status within industry and in the home. The majority of ILP members maintained a strong adherence to a sentimental view of family life, in which women had a central role to play, despite the alternatives presented by women such as Isabella Ford. Along with leading trade unionists in the West Riding they saw the ideal family as having a male breadwinner, with enough wages to support his dependants, and a woman giving full-time commitment to the home. Only this could ensure family stability.<sup>153</sup> They envisaged a harmony of interests between the sexes within the family and minimised the conflicts that could arise from women's economic dependence. The growing support of trade unionists for independent labour politics helped to underline the commitment of the Leeds LRC to the sex division of labour within the family. It also ensured that the LRC would concentrate on industrial issues and material social reforms, rather than on the domestic and personal difficulties faced by women in their daily lives.



## CHAPTER 14, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated)

1. For example, see H Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party (Oxford: Oxford Paperback, 1966), p 155; S Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-96", History Workshop Journal, 4 (1977), p 25; D Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p 331; J Hinton, Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement, 1867-1974 (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), p 78.
2. S Rowbotham, Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It (Pluto Press, 1973), pp 70-3; S Rowbotham and J Weeks, Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis (Pluto Press, 1977), pp 19-21; Hinton, Labour and Socialism, p 32.
3. The most recent study of the I.L.P. hardly mentions women. There is no discussion of the role of the family and the sex division of labour in the chapter concerned with the policies and underlying assumptions of the organisation: see Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, chapter 15. An exception to this general neglect of themes relating to women is Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life.
4. "A History of the Leeds Labour Party, 11", Leeds Weekly Citizen, 11 January 1918. The article noted that "they worked in the romantic, the adventurous, the self-sacrificing stage of the history of the Leeds Labour Party".
5. Ibid. See also B Turner, "Don't Be Downhearted. Reminiscences of the Past. Faith and Hope in the Future", L.W.C. 23 April 1926.
6. "A History of the Leeds Labour Party, 11", L.W.C. 11 January 1918, noted that for one socialist, Tom Maguire, socialism meant not only an economic programme, but also "clean, healthy society, a city of faithful friends, each to all". The Carpenter circle is fully discussed in Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life.
7. Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 63-75. See also E P Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", in A Briggs and J Saville, eds. Essays in Labour History. Vol 1 (Macmillan, 1960), pp 290-4.

8. Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 18, 66-7. They note, however, that Carpenter's homosexuality made it difficult for him to fully come to terms with women's sexuality, in particular that of working-class women. He saw them as "symbols of an ideal of motherhood, nurture, suffering, labour, strength and earthiness" which limited his challenge to domestic relationships: ibid. p 95.
  
9. Maguire died in 1895 at the age of 30. For a discussion of his life and work, see Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire". Isabella Ford was born in the 1850s and died in 1924. For a brief biographical sketch, see E E Crossley, "I O Ford", L.W.C. 28 June 1929.
  
10. See T Maguire, Machine Room Chants (Labour Leader, 1895); Maguire's notes on women's lives in the Labour Champion, 21 October 1893, and Labour Chronicle, 6 May 1893; T Maguire, "Collapse of a Workshop", Commonweal, August (1885), Supplement.
  
11. "The Old Order Changeth", in Maguire, Machine Room Chants, p 28.
  
12. Labour Champion, 21 October 1893. In another short passage on tailoresses he wrote that "the poor pale-faced dears are so very respectable that they prefer to starve into consumption rather than to belong to a low, common trade union": ibid.
  
13. See Maguire's notes on the Leeds I.L.P. in the Labour Leader, 12 May 1894, and his speeches to tailoring workers reported in the Yorkshire Factory Times, 25 October and 1 November 1889.
  
14. T Maguire, "Notes on Women's Life and Labour", Labour Chronicle, 6 May 1893.
  
15. A Mattison and E Carpenter, eds. Tom Maguire: A Remembrance (Manchester: Labour Press Society, 1895), p xiv.
  
16. For further information on the involvement of the socialists with the gasworkers, see H Hendrick, "The Leeds Gas Strike, 1890", Thoresby Society Miscellany, XVI, 2 (1975). James Sweeney, however, continued to give help to the tailoresses to such an extent that the Yorkshire Factory Times had to protest against the idea that he was a paid official of the Tailoresses' Union: Y.F.T. 13 March 1891.

17. Obituaries provide the most comprehensive overview of her activities. For example, see Yorkshire Post, 15 July 1924; Leeds Mercury, 18 July 1924; L.W.C. 19 July 1924.
  
18. L P Hume, The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, 1897-1914 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982), p 36. Isabella Ford was also vice-president of the Leeds branch of the N.U.W.S.S.: L.W.C. 30 May 1913.
  
19. For example, see Women's Wages (Humanitarian League, pamphlet no 8, 1893); Industrial Women and How to Help Them (Humanitarian League, c.1901); Women and Socialism (Independent Labour Party, 1906).
  
20. For her relationship with labour leaders, see P Snowden, An Autobiography. Vol 1 (Nicholson & Watson, 1934), pp 77-8; B Turner, About Myself (Humphrey Toulmin, 1930), p 107; newspaper cuttings of the Hardie memorial meeting in London in October 1915: Brotherton Library, Leeds University, Alf Mattison Papers, Newspaper Cuttings. A variety of well-known men and women were friends of Isabella Ford and stayed at her home. They included Margaret McMillan, Paul Bland, Adelaide Anderson, Katharine Conway, Sergius Stepniak and Edward Carpenter. Her cousin was the Fabian Edward Pease: Brotherton Library, Leeds University, Alf Mattison Papers, Diaries, 1893-1918.
  
21. Bessie Ford was interested in music and philosophy: B Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union: A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of the Heavy Woollen District Branch of the General Union of Textile Workers (Dewsbury: Yorkshire Factory Times, 1917), p 80. Bessie played a large part in establishing the well furnished I.L.P. club at Briggate and also provided the finance and editorial assistance for Mattison and Carpenter, eds. Remembrance to Tom Maguire. For an account of her role in this project, see Brotherton Library, Leeds University, Alf Mattison Papers, Diaries, 8 March and 7 August 1895. Mattison also noted that Mr Lunn of Whitby, who hired out pleasure boats, was an old friend of the Fords and had named three of his boats Bessie, Isabella and Adel in honour of the sisters. Katharine Bruce Glasier claimed that Yorkshire labour leaders had been very influenced by the companionship of both Isabella and Bessie Ford: Labour Leader, 9 April 1914. Ben Turner argued that Isabella and Bessie Ford were "Yorkshire's chief women. They were Trojans at the work": "Ben Turner Looks Back", Clarion, 28 March 1924, p 9. A third sister, Emily, was in sympathy with the labour movement, but did not play a very active role. She was a church artist: Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union, p 80.

22. Snowden, An Autobiography, pp 77-8, noted how Bessie was a member of the I.L.P. and a keen suffragist, but that Isabella "who was a good speaker, did a great deal of platform work for that and socialism".
23. Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party, makes no mention of Isabella Ford's role, and Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, p 331, merely notes that she was a member of the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P. Her activities in the women's suffrage movement receive a brief discussion in Hume, The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, pp 36, 75; L Middleton, ed. Women in the Labour Movement (Croom Helm, 1977), pp 57, 23; M Currell, Political Woman (Croom Helm, 1974), p 10. Studies of the Leeds labour movement acknowledge Isabella Ford's importance, but do not examine her contribution in any depth: for example, see Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", p 296, and T Woodhouse, "The Working Class", in D Fraser, ed. A History of Modern Leeds (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p 367. The most sustained attention to her ideas is given by Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 64, 96. For the acknowledgement of her importance by contemporaries, see Snowden, An Autobiography, pp 78-9, 298; Katharine Bruce Glasier's speech to the I.L.P. coming-of-age conference reported in the Labour Leader, 9 April 1914; Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union, p 80.
24. All three women are discussed in Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party, p 155; Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, pp 103, 108, 214, 289, 296, 330-1, 334, 338, 386; Rowbotham and Weeks, Socialism and the New Life, pp 19, 67-70. For a biography of Katharine Conway, see L Thompson, The Enthusiasts: A Biography of John and Katharine Bruce Glasier (Gollancz, 1971). For biographies of Enid Stacy, see J Liddington and J Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement (Virago, 1978), chapter 8, and A Tuckett, "Enid Stacy", North West Labour History Society Bulletin, 7 (1980-1).
25. Katharine Conway, for example, married John Bruce Glasier, a fellow member of the I.L.P.
26. For example, see E Malos, "Bristol Women in Action, 1839-1919", in I Bild, ed. Bristol's Other History (Bristol: Bristol Broadsides, 1983), and J Liddington, "Looking for Mrs Cooper", N.W. Lab. Hist. Soc. Bull. 7 (1980-1).

27. For a discussion of the importance of studying socialism at a local level, see W Lancaster, "Towards a Typology of Local Socialism in Late Nineteenth-Century England" (unpublished paper, University of Warwick, 1980).
28. Snowden, Autobiography, p 77.
29. E E Crossley, "I O Ford".
30. See the interview with Isabella Ford in the L.W.C. 12 June 1914.
31. For her interest in international peace, see J Arnott, "Isabella O Ford: An Appreciation", L.W.C. 19 July 1924, and L.W.C. 7 June 1918. Isabella Ford opposed restrictions on immigrants and argued that the Alien Immigration Bill of 1904 would close the doors to political refugees: Labour Leader, 13 May 1904. She seconded a resolution at the Labour Party Annual Conference of 1904 against the military expedition to Tibet: Labour Leader, 9 April 1904.
32. L.W.C. 12 June 1914. All three sisters continued to help out at the school until it was closed on the eve of the First World War: Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union, p 81.
33. J R Ford was leader of the Liberal Party on the City Council between 1912 and 1919: M Meadowcroft, "Transition in Leeds City Government, 1903-26" (unpublished M Phil thesis, University of Bradford, 1978), p 37.
34. Y.F.T. 8 May 1913. T Benson Ford trained to be an engineer. He later went into silk spinning because he did not want to become involved in the manufacture of armaments. He also refused to help Boy Scouts or Boys Brigades because of their military overtones.
35. Mrs J R Ford was particularly active in the Leeds Branch of the National Union of Women Workers. She was involved in a campaign to persuade employers to provide seats for shop assistants: Leeds City Archives, Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education Papers, National Union of Women Workers, Minute Books, 30 November 1892, 8 December 1893, 28 February 1894.

36. Yeo, "The Religion of Socialism", pp 9-13.
37. Ibid. p 10.
38. B Barker, "The Anatomy of Reformism: The Social and Political Ideas of the Labour Leadership in Yorkshire", International Review of Social History, XVIII, 1 (1973), p 4.
39. Arnott, "Isabella O Ford", called her a child of the humanitarian movement of the early nineteenth century.
40. I O Ford, "Why Women Should be Socialists", Labour Leader, 1 May 1913. For a discussion of the Beehive, see S Coltham, "The Beehive: Its Origin and Early Struggles", in Briggs and Saville, eds. Essays in Labour History, Vol 1.
41. B Turner, Short History of the General Union of Textile Workers (Heckmondwike: Labour Pioneer and Factory Times, 1920), p 121.
42. Women's Gazette, 2 February 1889.
43. Ford, "Why Women Should be Socialists", p 10.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Y.F.T. 4 July 1890.
47. Ibid. 20 February 1891. Isabella Ford joined the West Ward Labour Club in 1893: ibid. 6 January 1893.
48. L.W.C. 12 June 1914.
49. In 1894, for example, Isabella Ford moved a resolution at the Women's Liberal Association in London that the wages of men and women should be equal for work of the same class and commercial value: Y.F.T. 11 May 1894. She attended a few meetings of the National Union of Women Workers with Mrs J R Ford and gave some help to the Y.L.C.E. sub-committee on lodging

- houses for women: L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, National Union of Women Workers, Minute Books, 17 January 1895, 29 July 1897, and the Sub-Committee on Lodging Houses for Women, Minute Book, 15 November 1911. Isabella Ford was a close friend of Miss D Goodall, a member of the Women's Liberal Association, who helped Isabella during the tailoresses' strike of 1889 and worked in the Leylands Mission room: L.C.A. Y.L.C.E. Papers, Leeds Ladies' Association for the Care and Protection of Friendless Girls, Annual Report for 1890, p 9.
50. Ford, Women and Socialism, p 2.
51. Address to the Bradford Labour Church: Y.F.T. 28 July 1893.
52. Isabella Ford argued that the real meaning of socialism was to make character the ruling force of the nation. The nation could not have character unless there was economic and political freedom for all: Ford, "Why Women Should be Socialists", p 10.
53. For example, she wrote that "class war and sex war are poor things, even if clothed in a socialist garb, and they possess no real life": ibid. See also, I O Ford, "Unsatisfactory Citizens", Women's Industrial News, March (1898), p 32.
54. For example, see Ford, Women's Wages, pp 14-15, and Ford, Industrial Women and How to Help Them, pp 9-12.
55. For the views of the women's movement on separate spheres, see B Caine, "Feminism, Suffrage and the Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement", Women's Studies International Forum, V, 6 (1982), pp 245-6. Caine suggests that the women's movement thought that women had innate qualities which would be exercised by them even if they were not responsible for the home. Isabella Ford, however, tended to argue that it was the woman's role as homemaker and mother that developed her caring qualities: Ford, "Why Women Should Be Socialists", p 10. For the views of socialists on separate spheres, see below, pp 635- 6.
56. I O Ford, "Industrial Conditions Affecting Women of the Working Classes", Y.F.T. 17 March 1893, and her speech to Thornton textile workers, ibid. 5 August 1892.

57. Ford, Women and Socialism, pp 13-14.
58. Ford, "Why Women Should be Socialists", p 10.
59. Ibid.
60. Ford, Women and Socialism, p 3.
61. Y.F.T. 22 January 1904.
62. Ford, "Why Women Should Be Socialists", p 10.
63. Ford, Women and Socialism, p 3.
64. Ibid.
65. For example, see the letter written by Isabella Ford about the achievements of women voters in Australia and New Zealand: Labour Leader, 27 February 1904, and her speech at Cross Hills for the Labour Party, Y.F.T. 31 August 1906.
66. A constant theme of her speeches and articles was that the vote would raise women's status and therefore their industrial conditions. She argued that women were "put upon" because they did not have the vote: Ford, Industrial Women and How to Help Them, p 10, and her speech to the West Ward Labour Club: Y.F.T. 1 March 1895.
67. Ford, Women and Socialism, pp 3, 14, and Ford, "Industrial Conditions Affecting Women".
68. L.W.C. 12 June 1914.
69. Ford, "Why Women Should Be Socialists", p 10.
70. Ibid. She argued against those who spoke of the sacredness of the home without taking account of the lack of space and poor facilities in many working-class houses: see her speech to the



- West Ward Labour Club: Y.F.T. 1 March 1895, and I O Ford, "In Praise of Married Women", Labour Leader, 2 September 1904. In the latter she claimed that motherhood was not always voluntary and was not given the recognition it deserved.
71. Speech to the West Ward Labour Club: Y.F.T. 1 March 1895.
72. Ibid.
73. For example, see D Nield Chew, Ada Nield Chew: The Life and Writings of a Working Woman (Virago, 1982), pp 231-2, and the views of women on proposals to restrict married women's labour, and on the question of nurseries, in the Trades Union Congress Archives, Gertrude Tuckwell Collection, item 23, Married Women's Labour, especially Daily Chronicle, 16 March 1910.
74. Ford, "In Praise of Married Women", p 262. She wrote that "women are a little tired of hearing women always blamed, and always being told to organise, and I for one am heartily tired of hearing so much abuse of the married woman worker".
75. For Isabella Ford's views on the importance of trade union organisation, see her speech to the West Ward Labour Club, Y.F.T. 20 January 1893; her speech at Shotley Bridge, ibid. 10 February 1893; Ford, Industrial Women and How To Help Them, pp 10-11. In the latter she argued that trade unions were more likely to flourish among women if they had the vote.
76. Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, pp 356-7.
77. Women's Trade Union Review, January (1900), p 12.
78. For her criticisms of philanthropists, see Ford, "Unsatisfactory Citizens", pp 30-1.
79. Ford, "Industrial Conditions Affecting Women", and Isabella Ford's contribution to the views of trade unionists in the Women's T.U. Rev. January (1900), p 12.

80. Ford, "Unsatisfactory Citizens", p 32.
81. For example, see her speeches to textile workers at Thornton and Dewsbury, reported in the Y.F.T. 5 August 1892 and 21 April 1893.
82. Isabella Ford noted that the Women's Liberal Association passed numerous resolutions about Factory Acts, but she found considerable prejudice in local associations against improving women's lives by trade unionism: Ford, "Unsatisfactory Citizens", pp 29, 31.
83. Ben Tillett, for example, contrasted women such as Isabella Ford and other leaders of the Women's Trade Union League with capitalist women, who shared in the exploitation of working women, and with those who were keen on reform but did no plodding work: Y.F.T. 13 December 1895. In reviewing Isabella Ford's pamphlet, Women's Wages, a correspondent of the Yorkshire Factory Times noted that her labour on behalf of working-class women put her above the middle-class political rights' woman: ibid. 21 July 1893.
84. Arnott, "Isabella O Ford", claimed that, although Isabella Ford always advocated exactly what she wanted and had no patience with those who were insincere, she was no doctrinaire and could work with a wide range of individuals and groups. Her sense of humour was noted by J J Mallon, "Isabella Ford", Woman Worker, 7 August 1908. Mallon also claimed that she was broad, well-balanced and belonged to the centre. She had great faith in the crowd and urged with Diderot that "we must never let our pretended masters do good to us against our wills", p 251.
85. Y.F.T. 2 December 1892.
86. Ibid. 11 March 1904.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid. 17 February 1893.
89. I O Ford, "Factory Legislation for Women", ibid. 10 April 1891.
90. Ibid.

91. Ibid. Nevertheless, despite disagreeing with her views, the paper still claimed to admire her.
  
92. Agnes Close always signed her letters to Isabella Ford with affection: for example, see the Women's T.U. Rev. January (1897), p 17. She worked very closely with Isabella Ford in organising work among tailoresses and textile workers: Women's T.U. Rev. January (1901).
  
93. In 1895 Isabella Ford took six tailoresses to London to visit the W.T.U.L. and to find out what was happening in London trade unions: Women's T.U. Rev. October (1895). For examples of Isabella Ford dancing at socials and inviting tailoresses to tea, see Y.F.T. 18 March and 19 August 1892.
  
94. Y.F.T. 29 July 1904. She had previously worked in daily domestic service: Labour Leader, 20 May 1904.
  
95. Labour Leader, 20 May 1904.
  
96. L.C.A. Trades Council Minute Books, 3 September 1890.
  
97. For the involvement of tailoresses in labour demonstrations, see Y.F.T. 18 September 1891 and 10 May 1895. The tailoresses usually sent two delegates to the Trades Council: L.C.A. Leeds Trades Council Minute Books, 1890-99.
  
98. See above, pp 588- 9, 594- 7.
  
99. For example, see Y.F.T. 20 January 1893, 18 January 1895, 18 March 1904.
  
100. For example, I O Ford spoke on the "Social Status of Women" to the Holbeck Labour Club: Y.F.T. 2 February 1894; on "Women's Position in the World" to the Beeston Labour Club: ibid. 9 November 1894; on "Women and Trade Unionism" to the West Ward Labour Club: ibid. 1 March 1895; and she spoke on women's suffrage at the labour demonstration in 1895: ibid. 10 May 1895. Katharine Conway was a regular speaker in the West Riding. She was reported as giving two to three lectures a day in 1893: ibid. 31 March 1893. The subject of her speeches was often the general question of what the I.L.P. stood for, but she also gave talks on women and socialism. For example, see her speeches to Fabian women

and to the Women's Labour Union reported in ibid. 29 April and 28 October 1892. Other regular speakers in the West Riding included Enid Stacy and Margaret McMillan.

101. Woodhouse, "The Working Class", p 382.
102. The Leeds L.R.C. was concerned about this itself. It claimed that the Labour Party nationally had to steer a middle course between the two dangers of impossibilism and compromise. It should not be impossibilist, but, equally, it should be wary of losing its backbone in face of radical reforms: Leeds L.R.C., Year Book for 1911-12, p 47.
103. Ibid. p 383. Woodhouse suggests that D B Foster, one of the most important Labour Party leaders, saw socialism as only the amelioration of poverty by welfare measures and that he rejected class struggle. He placed public service and citizenship above class loyalty.
104. Isabella Ford frequently attended textile union meetings in the pre-war years. For example, see Y.F.T. 22 August 1912, 2 January 1913, 23 January 1913.
105. Isabella Ford spoke on women's suffrage, for example, to the Harmsworth Labour Party: Y.F.T. 31 August 1906; to a suffrage meeting at Dewsbury: ibid. 9 May 1912; to a socialist sunday school demonstration: L.W.C. 22 August 1913; in 1912 she moved a resolution at a meeting of the Trades Council to gain support for women's suffrage: L.C.A. Trades Council Minute Books, 30 October 1912. She was particularly active in the Leeds Women's Suffrage Society and was honoured by the Society for her work in 1913: Y.F.T. 29 May 1913.
106. In 1907 she gave up her membership of the National Administrative Council of the I.L.P. in order to work for women's suffrage: L.W.C. 12 June 1914. She wrote in 1913 that the Women's Suffrage Party had agreed for the moment to put their cause first before everything else: Ford, "Why Women Should be Socialists", p 10.
107. She continued to hold a very broad view of socialism and remained critical of an emphasis on material reforms alone: Ford, "Why Women Should be Socialists", p 10.

108. For example, see the editorial on "votes for women": L.W.C. 30 December 1911. The A.U.C.O. sent a letter to the Trades Council asking it to protest against the Cat and Mouse Act: ibid. 1 August 1913; members of the W.S.P.U. spoke to the North East I.L.P.: ibid. 24 January 1913; Miss Robertson of the N.U.W.S.S. spoke to the East Ward Labour Party: ibid. 10 April 1914. In 1909 the Yorkshire Factory Times carried an article on the front page on Mary Wollstonecraft because there was so much interest in the women's suffrage issue: Y.F.T. 8 July 1909.
109. L.C.A. Leeds Trades Council Minute Books, 30 October 1912.
110. L.W.C. 28 February 1913.
111. Ibid. 31 January 1913. See also his speech at Rotherham: ibid. 14 November 1913.
112. Caine, "Feminism, Suffrage and the Nineteenth-Century English Women's Movement", pp 548-50.
113. For the involvement of the Labour Representation Committee in electoral politics, see Leeds L.R.C. Report and Balance Sheet for 1906-7, and Leeds L.R.C. Annual Report for 1910.
114. The Leeds W.L.L. also failed to campaign on such issues. Instead, it concentrated on school meals, a municipal milk supply, school clinics and municipal lodging houses for women at its quarterly conferences: L.W.C. 17 February 1912.
115. For the candidates' manifestoes, see L.W.C. 28 October and 21 October 1911.
116. Ibid. 14 February 1913, 21 February 1913, 13 March 1914.
117. Ibid. 19 December 1913. The Labour Party demanded 5,000 houses and claimed that the real shortage was most marked in houses rented from 5/- to 10/-. This was particularly important for the artisan class.
118. Ibid. 6 February 1914.
119. Ibid. 30 January 1914.

120. Ibid. 16 August 1912. The Leeds L.R.C. also recognised that many married women had not found their way to support the Labour Party and hoped that polling district organisation would open the door: Leeds L.R.C. Year Book for 1911-12, p 51. A letter from one woman complained that there were never any photographs of women in the Leeds Weekly Citizen, and yet they were active in the labour movement: L.W.C. 4 January 1918.
121. J Gaffin and D Thoms, Caring and Sharing: The Centenary History of the Co-operative Women's Guild (Manchester: Co-operative Union Ltd 1983), chapter 4, and C Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!' The State, the Labour Movement and Working-Class Mothers, 1900-18", in R Brunt and C Rowan, eds. Feminism, Culture and Politics (Lawrence & Wishart, 1982), pp 67-73. See also Women's Co-operative Guild, Working Women and Divorce (David Nutt, 1911).
122. Mrs J R MacDonald, "Women's Labour League", Woman Worker, November (1907). The League was established in 1906. It published its own newspaper, the League Leaflet, from 1910. The name of the paper was changed to Labour Woman in 1913.
123. The Leeds W.L.L. was recorded as having 60 members in the Leeds L.R.C. Report and Balance Sheet for 1906-7, and the Leeds L.R.C. Annual Report for 1910. Its gains in 1914 are reported in M Wainwright, "Women's Labour League", in the Leeds L.R.C. Year Book for 1914.
124. Wainwright, "Women's Labour League".
125. Some local branches of the League were described as the "local paper-selling and tea-making arm of the L.R.C.": C Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party, 1906-20", Feminist Review, 12 (1982), p 76. The Leeds group, however, did try to educate, as well as to service, the local L.R.C. by initiating campaigns for women's representation on public bodies and by making constant references to the need for women's suffrage.
126. Wainwright, "Women's Labour League".
127. The campaign started in 1913 and the Leeds Trades Council passed a resolution that members should not send subscriptions to the Infirmary until the women had achieved their aims: L.W.C. 28 November 1913. The campaign was still going on when war was declared. Although the aims of the W.L.L. had not been achieved, the campaign did provoke a lively debate in the local

- press. The League extracted a promise that the waiting time for women patients at the hospital would be cut. For a full account of the campaign, see Labour Woman, August (1913), and E M Marvin, "Working Women on Hospital Boards", ibid. April (1914). Edith Marvin was a member of the North and North East Leeds W.L.L., the group which had led the campaign.
128. J Arnott, "Women Voters. What you might Accomplish", L.W.C. 17 October 1913.
129. Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party", pp 79-81.
130. Ibid. p 80.
131. W.L.L., Annual Report for 1910, p 17. The report from East and North East Leeds noted that two members had given papers on the subject of improving conditions for mothers. One advocated the state endowment of mothers, the other supported state maintenance of children.
132. Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party", pp 77-9. Rowan suggests that the Labour Party's change in attitude was not due to pressure from the W.L.L., but because of a shift in its own policy: ibid. p 79.
133. L.W.C. 28 February 1913, and Y.F.T. 9 May 1913.
134. W.L.L. Annual Report for 1910, p 17, noted that the East and North East Leeds W.L.L. had had speakers on women's suffrage during the year, one of whom was from the Women's Social and Political Union. The East Hunslet branch gave a tea to swell the funds of the W.S.P.U.: L.W.C. 11 July 1913.
135. For examples of the opposition of the Labour Party to the violence of the suffragettes, see the editorial in the L.W.C. 30 December 1911, and the speech by J O'Grady in ibid. 31 January 1913.
136. L.W.C. 21 November 1913.
137. Ibid. 26 December 1913 and 9 January 1914. She was also critical of Mrs Toombs, secretary of the East Hunslet W.L.L.

138. Ibid. 5 December 1913.
139. Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!'", pp 74-8, and Rowan, "Women in the Labour Party", pp 84-5.
140. Rowan, "'Mothers Vote Labour!'", pp 69-71.
141. Most reports of the activities of the Leeds W.L.L. emphasise work on behalf of social reform and women's representation on public bodies. The Holbeck branch, however, did try to organise tailloresses in the workshops and invited Mary Macarthur to speak: L.W.C. 15 June 1912.
142. League Leaflet, July (1912).
143. For example, Jeannie Arnott was the wife of John Arnott, an engineer and Labour councillor. After the First World War she was also elected to the City Council. Mrs Dightam was the wife of the vice-president of the East Leeds L.R.C. Mrs Hunter, Mrs Killingbeck and Mrs Geldart were also wives of L.R.C. activists. Mrs Marvin had been a school inspector, and another member was described as a school teacher.
144. B Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem (Virago, 1983), pp 285-7.
145. K Hunt, "Women and the Social Democratic Federation: Some Notes on Lancashire", N.W. Lab. Hist. Soc. Bull. 7 (1980-1).
146. Yeo, "The Religion of Socialism", pp 41-4.
147. Woodhouse, "The Working Class", pp 371-3.
148. Ibid. pp 382-3, 379.
149. Labour Leader, 1 September 1894, p 2.
150. Hinton, Labour and Socialism, p 62.



151. Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, p 362.
152. Hinton, Labour and Socialism, pp 62-3.
153. See the speeches of J O'Grady reported in the L.W.C. 31 January and 14 November 1913, and D B Foster, "Woman and War", L.W.C. 2 May 1913.

CHAPTER 15CONCLUSION

Between 1880 and 1914 women's work in Leeds was transformed by the introduction of factory methods of production across a range of industries. This widened the opportunities available for women to work outside a domestic setting and made it more possible for female workers to organise into trade unions and to take part in labour politics. Women played a key role in two of the staple trades in Leeds and were by no means a marginal group in the city's labour force. This meant that it was particularly important for the labour movement to attract the support of female workers.

Women's important role within industry raised in an acute form the conflicts which existed between the interests of male and female workers. Although women formed the bulk of the labour force in textiles and in ready-made clothing manufacture, they were still seen as a marginal group within production. This was related to their perceived status as secondary wage earners within the family and to their domestic commitments. Women were therefore paid a "woman's rate" for the job and were confined to occupations labelled as unskilled, where there were few opportunities for promotion or training. The sex segregation of occupations then reinforced this separate status of the female worker. It was expected that women would take on domestic responsibilities and would not be the family breadwinner. This meant that women were used as a source of cheap labour and were therefore seen as a threat by male workers. This provided a source of tension between the sexes. At the same time, the

relationship between work and family affected women's own consciousness of themselves as women and as workers and meant that they had specific needs which were often different from those of male workers.

The development of factory employment in Leeds had complex effects on the position of female workers. The fact that young women were less likely to be employed directly by male relatives or by individual middle-class households, coupled with the possibility of earning individual wages, did give them considerable independence. It may also explain why they delayed marriage until their mid or late twenties. However, the monotony and harsh discipline of factory life, the lack of opportunities for training and the low pay, which was barely sufficient for self-support, did little to challenge women's commitment to marriage and domesticity. The widespread opportunities for men to work in skilled and semi-skilled occupations in Leeds underlined this. Male wages and the earnings of young people provided the basis for family living standards in Leeds. This ensured that the proportion of married women employed in full-time work outside the home was barely above the national average, since the conditions prevailing in factory employment provided little positive incentive to take on a "double burden". It is likely that factory work for young women affected their relationships with their parents and with their future husbands. This has not been explored in the present study, but an assessment of the impact of women's work on family patterns and relationships in Leeds merits further research as a topic in its own right.

Women active in the labour movement who were anxious to raise the

industrial status of women faced a formidable task. The sex division of labour in the family and at the workplace posed a structural barrier to change that was particularly difficult to overcome. Contemporaries argued that women's marginal role in production and the conditions of work that arose from this could only be changed by a combination of trade union organisation, labour politics and legislation. Legislation, however, achieved little for women workers in Leeds before World War One. Minimum wage legislation, for example, provided a higher rate of pay for only the most sweated female workers. Moreover, the rates established underlined women's subordinate position, since they were based on different criteria for the two sexes. Indirectly, legislation stimulated trade union membership, but only a minority of female workers were organised in Leeds before 1914.

The advantages of union membership for women were not always obvious. Women made only slight gains from industry-wide wage agreements in the pre-war years and priority tended to be given to the claims of male workers. Union policies, in particular in the tailoring trade, highlighted, rather than overcame, the divisions that existed between the sexes. They sought to restrict women's labour in response to male fears of unfair competition, rather than aiming to raise the industrial status of the female worker to such an extent that employers would gain no advantage from sex division. This policy had important consequences for the labour force in later years when employers increasingly tried to de-skill jobs and to introduce more cheap female workers.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the local socialist movement and the Labour Representation

Committee failed to give priority to, or at times even to recognise, women's specific needs. On one level there was no sustained attempt to challenge women's subordinate position within industry by promoting policies designed to achieve equal pay, to open more occupations to women or to enable them to combine paid work and domestic duties. Such measures may not have appealed to women themselves, for they were often committed to defending the privacy of their family lives and their domestic role. This was particularly the case in a city such as Leeds, where a high proportion of households were headed by skilled men. On the other hand, the Labour Party also failed to give priority to improving the conditions of domestic life. It is likely that this would have appealed to women and would have enabled them to play a more active role in public affairs. It was left to the Women's Labour League to promote the view that the working-class home was a "legitimate sphere of political struggle", and the League had an uphill task to convince the Labour Party of the importance of its policies.<sup>2</sup>

The LRC's failure to take up women's issues in Leeds must have reduced the interest of women in labour politics. In some cases they were drawn into the labour movement through the commitment of their families.<sup>3</sup> The support of the female factory labour force was, however, largely untapped. The low level of union organisation among such workers further weakened support for labour politics, since union activity was often a route to active support for the Labour Party.<sup>4</sup> Again, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which the Labour Party was able to extend its support among women in the inter-war years when they were able to exercise the vote.

## CHAPTER 15, FOOTNOTES

(Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated)

1. See A Coyle, "Sex and Skill in the Organisation of the Clothing Industry", in J West, ed. Work, Women and the Labour Market (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp 22-5.
2. Rowan, " 'Mothers Vote Labour!' : The State, the Labour Movement and Working-Class Mothers, 1900-18", in R Brunt and C Rowan, eds. Feminism, Culture and Politics (Lawrence & Wishart, 1982), p 82.
3. For example, the wives of Turner, Withey and Wood were all involved in labour activities. Turner's wife and five daughters all supported the labour cause. They managed to stretch a slender budget to entertain visiting speakers and the girls would say "F.H.B." - "Family Hold Back": "Ben Turner Looks Back", Clarion, 28 March 1924, p 10. His wife and daughters were also involved in the women's suffrage campaign: B Turner, About Myself (Humphrey Toulmin, 1930), p 278. Walt Wood's wife helped to canvas during elections, helped in relief works and attended meetings: Yorkshire Factory Times, 5 February 1904. For the support of Withey's wife, see ibid. 5 August 1904.
4. During the labour unrest in the years preceding the war, East End textile workers who were involved in trying to gain a wage advance also helped the Labour Representation Committee to organise relief for the children of locked-out miners: Leeds Weekly Citizen, 21 October 1911. Two members of the committee of the Leeds branch of the General Union of Textile Workers were active in labour politics: B Turner, The Heavy Woollen District Textile Workers' Union: A Short Account of the Rise and Progress of the Heavy Woollen District Branch of the General Union of Textile Workers (Dewsbury: Yorkshire Factory Times, 1917), p 84.
5. T Woodhouse, "The Working Class", in D Fraser, ed. A History of Modern Leeds (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), p 384.

APPENDIX 1: Occupations, Marital Status and Age Structure of the Male & Female Population in Leeds, 1881-1911

Table 1.1 Percentage of Women in Selected Age Groups in Leeds Who Were Occupied in 1891 and 1911

<u>Age</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1911</u>
10-	20.9	22.3
15-	81.6	83.5
20-	62.8	69.7
25-	33.5	38.6
35-	24.4	25.8
45-	22.3	22.2
55-	21.1	18.6
65+	13.2	9.2

Source: 1891 figures have been taken from the Board of Trade, Report by Miss Collet on the Statistics of Employment of Women and Girls (PP 1894, LXXXI), Appendix 1, Table B.

Table 1.2 Percentage of Women in Selected Age Groups in Leeds and in England and Wales who were Occupied in 1911

<u>Age</u>	<u>England and Wales</u>	<u>Leeds</u>
10-	17.0	22.3
15-	68.8	83.5
20-	62.0	69.7
25-	33.8	38.6
35-	24.1	25.8
45-	23.1	22.2
55-	20.4	18.6
65+	11.5	9.2

Source: The figures for England and Wales have been taken from B L Hutchins: Women in Modern Industry (G Bell, 1915), p 82.

Table 1.3 Percentage of Men and Women in Selected Age Groups in Leeds who were Occupied in 1911

<u>Age</u>	<u>% of Men Occupied</u>	<u>% of Women Occupied</u>
10-12	1.0	0.1
13-	59.9	45.7
14-	82.8	67.3
15-	89.4	76.8
16-	93.6	81.5
17-	95.9	83.1
18-	96.1	83.5
19-	96.1	82.5
20-	97.6	69.7
25-	99.2	38.6
35-	99.2	25.8
45-	98.2	22.2
55-	91.7	18.6
65+	58.6	9.2

Table 1.4 Percentage of the Total Male and the Total Female Labour Force in Leeds in Selected Occupations in 1881 and 1911

<u>Occupation<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>1881</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>% of Total Labour Force</u>		<u>% of Total Labour Force</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Domestic Service	1.5	29.7	1.4	18.4
Dress	8.0	23.2	9.7	35.7
Textiles	11.1	30.1	6.0	16.1
Metals	18.0	0.9	21.7	2.4
Bricks	3.8	0.3	2.0	0.2
Building	8.4	0.1	6.4	0.01
Transport	9.0	0.3	11.2	1.1
Commerce	4.9	0.4	6.7	2.9
Professions	2.7	4.5	2.9	4.9
Food, Drink & Tobacco	6.8	4.2	7.5	8.2

<sup>a</sup> The above occupational groups are based on the broad orders of the census and therefore include dealers as well as makers.



Table 1.5 Number and Percentage of the Male Labour Force in Leeds  
Employed in Selected Branches of the Textile Trade,  
1881-1911

	<u>1881</u>		<u>1891</u>		<u>1901</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of</u> <u>Total</u> <u>Male</u> <u>Labour</u> <u>Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of</u> <u>Total</u> <u>Male</u> <u>Labour</u> <u>Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of</u> <u>Total</u> <u>Male</u> <u>Labour</u> <u>Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of</u> <u>Total</u> <u>Male</u> <u>Labour</u> <u>Force</u>
Wool & Worsted	6,208	(6.6)	6,301	(5.5)	4,563	(3.3)	4,303	(3.0)
Cotton	63	(0.06)	62	(0.05)	114	(0.1)	100	(0.1)
Linen & Flax	792	(0.8)	414	(0.4)	138	(0.1)	123	(0.1)
Bleaching, Dyeing & Finishing <sup>a</sup>	1,085	(1.1)	1,229	(1.1)	1,338	(1.0)	1,799	(1.2)
All Textiles <sup>a</sup>	8,718	(9.3)	8,443	(7.3)	6,481	(4.7)	6,678	(4.6)

<sup>a</sup> Figures for All Textiles exclude dealers.

Table 1.6 Male Workers as a Percentage of the Total Labour Force of  
Selected Branches of the Textile Trade in Leeds, 1881-1911

	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>
Wool & Worsted	44.1	40.8	38.9	34.0
Cotton	15.4	11.4	13.1	13.0
Linen & Flax	27.6	18.4	14.2	16.4
Bleaching, Dyeing and Finishing <sup>a</sup>	98.2	96.2	95.9	94.5
All Textiles <sup>a</sup>	42.0	41.7	40.5	38.9

<sup>a</sup> Figures for All Textiles exclude dealers.

Table 1.7 Number and Percentage of the Male Labour Force in Leeds in Selected Branches of the Clothing Trade, 1881-1911

	<u>1881</u>		<u>1891</u>		<u>1901</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Male Labour Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Male Labour Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Male Labour Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Male Labour Force</u>
Tailors	2,148	(2.3)	4,773	(4.1)	5,792	(4.2)	7,625	(5.2)
Boot & Shoe Makers	4,760	(5.1)	6,154	(5.3)	5,581	(4.1)	4,297	(3.0)
All Dress <sup>a</sup>	7,406	(7.9)	11,630	(10.1)	12,079	(8.8)	12,945	(8.9)

<sup>a</sup>Figures for All Dress exclude dealers.

Table 1.8 Male Workers as a Percentage of the Total Labour Force of Selected Branches of the Clothing Trade in Leeds, 1881-1911

	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>
Tailors	44.0	30.4	29.2	32.4
Boot & Shoe Makers	80.7	80.3	78.0	77.0
Dressmakers & Milliners <sup>a</sup>	0.8	1.5	0.5	3.1
All Dress <sup>a</sup>	43.8	38.5	35.6	34.2

<sup>a</sup>Figures for All Dress do not include dealers.

Table 1.9 Number and Percentage of the Female Labour Force in Leeds in Metal Manufacture and Selected Branches of the Paper Trade, 1881-1911

	<u>1881</u>		<u>1891</u>		<u>1901</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Female Labour Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Female Labour Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Female Labour Force</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Female Labour Force</u>
Metals	363	(0.9)	467	(0.8)	900	(1.5)	1,640	(2.3)
Paper Box, Bag and Paper Manufacture	130	(0.3)	396	(0.7)	745	(1.2)	895	(1.3)
Printers and Litho-graphers	52	(0.1)	246	(0.4)	751	(1.2)	1,553	(2.2)
Bookbinders	157	(0.4)	250	(0.4)	505	(0.8)	347	(0.5)
All Paper	398	(1.0)	991	(1.8)	2,192	(3.6)	3,014	(4.2)

Table 1.10 Female Workers as a Percentage of the Total Labour Force of Selected Paper Trades in Leeds, 1881-1911

	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>
Paper Manufacture	11.7	22.0	42.4	43.6
Paper Box and Bag Makers	90.9	93.6	89.8	84.6
Printers	4.1	10.4	21.2	32.5
Bookbinders	48.2	54.2	68.0	58.6
All Paper	18.5	26.7	39.3	43.5

Table 1.11 Number of Women and Men in Professional Occupations in Leeds, 1881-1911

	<u>1881</u>		<u>1891</u>		<u>1901</u>		<u>1911</u>	
	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Clerical <sup>a</sup>	411	37	422	92	449	106	462	120
<u>Legal</u>	<u>379</u>	-	<u>457</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>567</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>520</u>	<u>41</u>
Barristers	115	-	170	-	142	-	138	-
Clerks	254	-	287	4	425	1	382	41
<u>Medical</u>	<u>479</u>	<u>266</u>	<u>342</u>	<u>490</u>	<u>385</u>	<u>651</u>	<u>430</u>	<u>783</u>
Doctors <sup>a</sup>	132	-	190	-	245	2	265	7
Midwives & Nurses	-	266 <sup>b</sup>	-	477	2	637	2	746
Teaching	608	1,311 <sup>c</sup>	683	1,595 <sup>c,d</sup>	720	1,950	884	1,980
Literary and Scientific	60	2	117	5	160	7 <sup>e</sup>	309	90 <sup>e,f</sup>
Art, Music & Drama	541	214	843	391	1,088	426	1,534	520
Engineering & Surveying	189	-	139	-	165	-	92 <sup>g</sup>	-

- a. Between 1881 and 1901 retired doctors and clergymen were included under their original profession. In 1911 they were transferred to a separate category for the retired.
- b. It has been assumed that the 246 women listed in subordinate medical service in 1881 were nurses.
- c. In 1881 and 1891 caretakers and wardrobe keepers were listed under Teaching. In 1902 they were transferred to Other Domestic Service. The same occurred with church caretakers.
- d. In 1891 students over 15 were included under Teaching, but they have been omitted in the above table. In 1881 and 1891 law, art and some medical students were listed separately - the numbers were so small that they have been included in the above table.
- e. In 1901 and 1911 the census figures for the category Literary and Scientific included librarians. They were previously classified under booksellers.
- f. In 1911 the statistics for the Literary and Scientific group were not comparable with other years since they included political and election agents (previously classified under Commerce), and those engaged in political and social service.
- g. In 1911 the category Engineering and Surveying was not comparable with previous years since many workers had been transferred to mining and commerce.

Table 1.12 Female Workers as a Percentage of the Total Labour Force of Selected Professions in Leeds, 1881-1911

	<u>1881</u>	<u>1891</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>
Clerical	8.3	17.9	20.6	20.6
Legal	0.0	0.9	0.2	7.3
Teaching	68.7	70.0	73.0	69.1
<u>Medical</u>	<u>35.7</u>	<u>58.9</u>	<u>62.8</u>	<u>64.6</u>
Doctors	0.0	0.0	0.8	2.6
Midwives and Nurses	100.0	100.0	99.7	99.7

Table 1.13 Percentage of the Female Labour Force in Selected Occupations in Leeds Aged under 18 and Aged under 20 in 1911

<u>Occupations</u>	<u>% Aged under 18</u>	<u>% Aged under 20</u>
Indoor Domestic Service	15.1	26.6
Laundry Workers	18.0	28.1
Clerks	24.2	41.3
Messengers <sup>a</sup>	98.2	98.7
Metals	44.2	61.1
<u>All Textiles</u>	<u>25.2</u>	<u>37.2</u>
Wool & Worsted Weaving	16.4	27.7
Wool & Worsted Spinning	45.6	60.1
<u>All Dress</u>	<u>24.2</u>	<u>35.7</u>
Tailors	22.9	34.3
Dressmakers & Milliners	25.6	36.9
Boot & Shoe Makers	30.7	42.1
Printers & Lithographers	49.3	64.1
Paper Box, Bag Makers	44.5	58.1
Bookbinders	34.9	46.1
Total Female Workforce, Leeds	21.7	32.2

<sup>a</sup> 75.5 per cent of all female messengers were aged under 15.

Table 1.14 Percentage of the Female Labour Force in Selected Occupations in Leeds, According to Marital Status, in 1901 and in 1911

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Unmarried</u>		<u>Married &amp; Widowed</u>		<u>Married</u>	<u>Widowed</u>
	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1911</u>
Indoor Domestic Service	90.6	88.7	9.4	11.3	4.8	6.5
Charwomen	21.0	18.1	79.0	81.9	33.1	48.8
Laundry Workers	45.8	63.0	54.2	37.0	20.9	16.1
Clerks	98.5	98.4	1.5	1.6	1.2	0.4
<u>All Textiles</u>	<u>78.6</u>	<u>74.8</u>	<u>21.4</u>	<u>25.2</u>	<u>20.6</u>	<u>4.6</u>
Wool & Worsted	78.5	75.2	21.2	24.8	20.5	4.3
(Weaving)	78.5	72.0	21.3	28.0	23.1	4.9
(Spinning)	88.9	86.3	11.1	13.7	11.9	1.8
Flax & Linen	76.0	70.0	24.0	30.0	23.3	6.7
Metals	89.4	92.1	10.1	7.9	5.7	2.2
<u>All Dress</u>	<u>83.3</u>	<u>80.9</u>	<u>16.7</u>	<u>19.1</u>	<u>15.1</u>	<u>4.1</u>
Tailors	83.7	78.4	16.3	21.6	17.6	4.0
Dressmakers & Milliners	83.5	87.6	16.5	12.4	8.6	3.8
Shirtmakers & Seamstresses	73.4	81.3	26.6	18.7	11.8	6.9
Boot & Shoe Makers	84.6	79.0	15.4	21.0	17.4	3.6
Paper Manufacture	94.0	92.6	6.0	7.4	6.1	1.3
Printers & Lithographers	98.1	96.3	1.9	3.7	3.4	0.3
<u>All Manufacture</u>	<u>83.1</u>	<u>81.0</u>	<u>16.9</u>	<u>19.0</u>	<u>15.2</u>	<u>3.8</u>
Teaching	95.7	95.4	4.3	4.6	3.3	1.3
Medical	56.7	66.7	43.3	33.3	13.2	20.1
Dealers	61.5	58.6	38.5	41.4	29.2	12.2
Inn, Hotel Keepers	22.6	28.1	77.4	71.9	40.3	31.6
Inn, Hotel Service <sup>a</sup>	93.5	86.1	6.5	13.9	9.7	4.2
Food, Drink, Tobacco						
Dealers	49.4	45.0	50.6	55.0	39.7	15.3

<sup>a</sup> Does not include those listed as domestic servants

Table 1.15 Percentage of All Occupied Single, Married and Widowed Women in Leeds Employed in Selected Occupations in 1901 and 1911

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Unmarried</u>		<u>Married &amp; Widowed</u>		<u>Married</u>	<u>Widowed</u>
	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1911</u>
<u>All Dress</u>	37.0	36.6	28.5	29.1	33.7	19.3
Tailors	24.5	22.6	18.5	21.1	25.2	12.3
Dressmakers & Milliners	7.6	10.0	5.9	4.8	4.9	4.5
Boot & Shoe Makers	2.8	1.8	2.0	1.6	2.0	0.9
<u>All Textiles</u>	15.6	14.2	16.6	16.1	19.4	9.2
Wool & Worsted	11.8	11.4	12.3	12.7	15.5	6.8
(Spinning)	( 2.0)	( 3.3)	( 1.0)	( 1.8)	( 2.2)	( 0.7)
(Weaving)	( 7.8)	( 7.3)	( 8.3)	( 9.7)	(11.7)	( 5.3)
Flax & Linen	1.3	0.8	1.6	1.2	1.3	0.8
Paper Box, Bag Makers	1.8	1.5	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.2
Printers	1.5	2.7	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.2
<u>All Manufacture</u>	62.5	62.0	49.3	49.2	57.6	31.4
Indoor Domestic Service	18.0	13.5	7.2	5.8	3.6	10.3
Charwomen	0.8	0.7	11.3	10.2	6.1	19.1
Laundry Workers	1.3	1.4	6.0	2.8	2.3	3.8
Dealers	5.5	6.6	13.3	15.9	16.5	14.6
Inn, Hotel Keepers	0.3	0.7	4.3	6.4	5.3	8.8
Inn, Hotel Service	--	2.5	--	0.7	0.7	0.7

Table 1.16 Marital Status of Women in Selected Age Groups in Leeds in 1901 and 1911

	<u>Unmarried (%)</u>		<u>Married (%)</u>		<u>Widowed (%)</u>	
	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>
15-	98.4	99.0	1.6	1.0	0.01	--
20-	70.8	76.4	28.9	23.4	0.3	0.2
25-	30.0	35.0	68.1	63.5	1.9	1.5
35-	15.0	17.2	78.0	77.0	7.0	5.8
45-	9.9	12.2	72.0	73.1	18.1	14.8
55-	7.2	9.3	55.3	57.7	37.5	33.0
65+	7.6	8.2	26.5	28.8	65.9	63.0

Source: Census of England and Wales, 1901 (PP 1902, CXXI), Table 28, Condition as to Marriage and Ages of Males and Females. Census of England and Wales, 1911 (PP 1912-13, CXIII), Table 9, Condition as to Marriage and Ages of Males and Females.

Table 1.17 Percentage Rate of Increase or Decrease of the Female Population and of Occupied Females in Leeds between 1901 and 1911 in Selected Age Groups

	<u>10-</u>	<u>15-</u>	<u>25-</u>	<u>45-</u>	<u>65+</u>
Rate of Increase of Female Population, 1901 - 1911	-1.0	-2.7	+9.0	+19.1	+33.5
Rate of Increase of Occupied Females, 1901 - 1911	+20.5	+7.1	+32.6	+37.4	+19.3

Table 1.18 Women in Selected Age Groups as a Percentage of All Women Aged over 10, in Leeds, in 1901 and 1911

	<u>10-</u>	<u>15-</u>	<u>25-</u>	<u>45-</u>	<u>65+</u>
1901	12.6	26.1	38.5	18.3	4.5
1911	11.7	23.6	38.9	20.2	5.6

Sources Unless otherwise stated the figures in the above tables have been calculated from the Census of England and Wales, 1881 (PP 1883, LXXX), Leeds Occupations, Table 10; 1891 (PP 1893-4, CVI), Leeds Occupations, Table 7; 1901 (PP 1902, CXXI), Leeds Occupations, Table 35; 1911 (PP 1913, LXXIX), Leeds Occupations, Table 13.



APPENDIX 2: Women in Manufacturing

The figures relating to the number of women engaged in manufacture used in Chapter 1 were calculated from the following census categories.

1881 Orders

9:	1, 2	(excludes publisher, bookseller, music publisher, newsagent)
10:	1-8	
11:	1-3	(excludes art dealer, furniture broker)
12:	1, 2	
13:	1, 2	
14:	1-3	(excludes chemist, druggist)
15:	1	
16:		(includes only maltster and brewer)
17:	1	(excludes woolstapler, cloth dealer)
	2	(excludes merchant, dealer)
	3	(excludes cotton warehouseman)
	4	(excludes Manchester warehouseman, linen draper)
18:	1	
19:	1-3	
20:	1-4	(excludes timber merchant, stationer/law stationer)
21:	3, 4, 5, 7-12	
22:	1	(includes only contractor, manufacturer)
	2	(excludes engine driver)

Wherever possible dealers have been excluded.

1891 As for 1881

1901 Orders X to XIX excluding druggists, dealers and publishers.  
Order XX excluding dealers, tobacconists and category 4.  
Order XXII includes only general labourers.

1911 As for 1901

APPENDIX 3: Processes of Woollen and Worsted Manufacture, 1880-1914

The distinction between "wool" and "Worsted" came from the way in which the wool was treated in the preparatory stages and in the spinning process. Wool was scribbled and spun on mules, worsted was combed and spun on frames. Worsted used a longer fibre than wool.

Woollen Industry

The wool used for the industry came from diverse sources. The fleece may be separated and the various parts mixed with other wool. It may also be mixed with waste from woollen or worsted manufacture, or with unused cloth fragments such as tailors' clippings and spoilt hosiery.

The major processes in the production of woollen cloth were as follows:

1. Sorting Material was sorted into different grades according to quality and the purpose for which it was to be used. Rag picking and waste sorting were done by women and quality sorting by men.
2. Scouring The raw material was scoured in alkaline liquor with soap, washed with clean water and dried in a heated chamber by hot air. Machinery was extensively used and the process was often carried out in shoddy mills. Washing, scouring and drying were performed by men.
3. Willeying The wool was freed from dust and seeds on a willeying machine, usually operated by unskilled men.
4. Blending, Oiling and Teasing Different qualities of wool were mixed to suit the purpose for which the fabric was needed. The wool was sprinkled with oil and teased to open it out and prepare for carding. Usually male tasks.
5. Carding A series of cylinders were used to blend the fibres into a uniform thin sheet of wool. This was then divided into strips and rolled into slivers by a condenser machine. Scribbling and fettling were also part of the carding process. Scribblers, using scribbling machines, opened the wool which

was then carded. Fettleers cleaned the carding set and untangled the wool. This was usually male work, although some women were found feeding the machines, for example the condensers. There was considerable variation between firms in the extent to which machinery was used in these processes and in the type of machinery employed.

6. Spinning Spinning was carried out on a mule frame by male spinners assisted by one or more piecers, often boys or women. The task of the group was to put in bobbins, piece up broken threads and to remove full bobbins.
7. Winding, Warping and Beaming These processes were completed if the yarn was to be used for warp, but not for weft. Each task was completed on special machines adapted to wind the yarn onto the warper's bobbins, then to wind them into warp with the threads parallel and finally, to size the warp threads to make them stronger. The yarn might also be twisted together or doubled to increase its strength. Reeling, winding and doubling were female tasks. In warping the warp yarns were arranged onto the warp bar and then wound onto the beam ready for the loom. Warping was carried out by both sexes. There were great variations in the way in which these processes were carried out in different firms and regions.
8. Weaving The raw thread was woven into cloth with the warp and weft threads visible. Weaving was increasingly a female task after 1880, but it was still an important occupation for men in Huddersfield.
9. Dressing and Finishing After leaving the loom the cloth was looked over and mended by women. It was then finished, often in a separate bleaching, dyeing and finishing mill. The cloth was scoured, washed and dried on the "tenter" or stretching frame. After this it was cropped or "teazled" - it was shorn to a uniform length with the loose ends removed. Female burlers and knotters took out irregularities. The cloth was then shrunk, pressed, steamed and folded. Woollen cloth was also fullled or milled, that is beaten in soap and water by heavy hammers which caused the cloth to "felt" and shrink. The fine mending at the end was carried out by women. Most processes were male tasks.

### Worsted Industry

Three main processes distinguished worsted manufacture from the making of woollen cloth. The wool was received from the fleece and skilled men sorted it according to the length and fineness of the fibres. The fibres

were then combed in order to straighten them and to bring them into one direction, parallel with each other. Combing long wool separated the long fibres, the top, from the short curly fibres, the noil. Combing was a female task during the day and a male task at night. Spinning was carried out on light frames by female workers and there was no fulling or milling in the finishing process.

Sources: L C Miall, ed. Handbook for Leeds and Airedale, prepared for the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Leeds: McCorquodale, 1890), pp 111-12.

Huddersfield Polytechnic Library, G H Wood Collection, Wages Books, CB 84, Notes for the Introduction to the Textile Section of the Board of Trade Wages Enquiry of 1906. The Woollen and Worsted Industries.

Appendix 4: Women's Wages

Table 4.1 Average Wages of Women and Girls Working Full Time in the Dressmaking, Millinery and Mantle Trades (Workshop) in Selected Areas in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

	<u>Adult Women</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Full-Time Hours</u>
Northern Counties & Cleveland	13/7	3/7	52.8
Yorkshire	13/9	4/6	54.2
Lancashire & Cheshire	13/10	3/11	55.6
North and West Midlands	12/-	3/2	53.8
South Midlands and Eastern Counties	10/9	2/10	53.9
London	16/9	4/6	52.8
South East Counties	12/4	3/1	54.6
<u>South West Counties</u>	<u>10/1</u>	<u>2/5</u>	<u>54.5</u>
United Kingdom	13/10	-	-

Table 4.2 Average Wages of Women and Girls Working Full Time in Selected Occupations in the Dressmaking, Millinery and Mantle Trades (Workshop) in the United Kingdom and Yorkshire in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>ADULT WOMEN</u>			
	<u>United Kingdom</u>		<u>Yorkshire</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>
Fitters & Cutters (Time)	1,394	33/5	98	31/2
Dressmakers (Time)				
Bodice Makers	8,141	12/7	541	12/7
Skirt Makers	5,891	12/3	371	12/1
Others	3,945	11/5	278	11/4
Milliners (Time)	3,913	14/3	350	14/8
Mantle Makers (Time)				
Hand	1,699	13/4	81	13/9
Machine	375	14/1	12	14/11
Other Women (Time)	122	12/9	1	10/-
(Piece)	441	14/11	7	8/11
All Women	25,921	13/10	1,739	13/9

<u>Full-Time Learners &amp; Apprentices</u>		<u>GIRLS</u>	
Dressmakers (Time)	6,403	3/6	416
Milliners (Time)	1,859	3/9	135
Mantle Makers (Time)	420	3/10	26
Others (Time)	917	4/10	} 61
(Piece)	6	6/3	
<u>Half Timers (Time)</u>	21	2/9	4
All Girls	9,626	3/9	642

Table 4.3 Average Wages of Women and Girls Working Full Time in the Ready-Made Boot and Shoe Industry in Selected Areas in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

	<u>Adult Women</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Leicester	14/11	7/11
Leicestershire	13/11	8/3
Northampton	12/5	6/3
Kettering	13/3	6/11
Northamptonshire	12/4	6/9
Stafford	10/9	4/9
Norwich	10/6	4/6
Bristol	11/7	6/1
Kingswood	11/2	5/6
London	12/6	6/5
Leeds	13/10	6/6
Manchester	17/6	10/5
Scotland	12/8	6/9
<u>Rest of United Kingdom</u>	<u>12/4</u>	<u>6/9</u>
All United Kingdom	13/1	6/10

Table 4.4 Average Wages of Women and Girls Working Full Time in Selected Occupations in the Ready-Made Boot and Shoe Industry in London, Manchester and Leeds in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>ADULT WOMEN</u>					
	<u>London</u>		<u>Manchester</u>		<u>Leeds</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>
Fitters (Time)	81	13/2	-	-	-	-
Machinists/Closers (Time)	93	13/2	22	12/6	184	13/10
(Piece)	-	-	327	17/6	36	15/1
Others (Time)	69	10/11	6	11/9	23	12/9
(Piece)	3	12/10	81	19/3	10	11/11
<u>All Women</u>	<u>246</u>	<u>12/6</u>	<u>436</u>	<u>17/6</u>	<u>253</u>	<u>13/10</u>
<u>GIRLS</u>						
Machinists (Time)	24	7/9	118	11/8	87	6/2
(Piece)	-	-	-	-	25	9/3
Others (Time)	88	6/-	22	5/8	55	5/10
(Piece)	3	8/4	87	10/-	10	8/6
<u>All Girls</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>6/5</u>	<u>251*</u>	<u>9/9</u>	<u>197**</u>	<u>6/6</u>

\* Includes 24 half timers on 3/4d.

\*\* Includes 20 fitters on 5/3d.

Table 4.5 Percentage of Adult Women Working Full Time Who Earned the Undermentioned Wages in the Ready-Made Boot and Shoe Industry in Selected Areas in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

<u>Machinists (Time)</u>	<u>Average Wages</u>					<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>
	<u>Under 10/-</u>	<u>10/- to 14/-</u>	<u>15/- to 19/-</u>	<u>20/- to 24/-</u>	<u>25/- Plus</u>		
Leicester	4.8	31.6	62.2	1.4	-	376	14/9
Northampton	11.8	77.9	10.3	-	-	195	12/2
Norwich	21.8	77.6	0.6	-	-	321	10/10
Bristol	19.3	70.6	10.1	-	-	109	11/7
Leeds	4.3	54.9	40.8	-	-	184	13/10
Manchester	27.3	40.9	31.8	-	-	22	12/6
<u>All United Kingdom</u>	<u>11.8</u>	<u>64.3</u>	<u>23.5</u>	<u>0.4</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,580</u>	<u>12/7</u>
<u>Machinists (Piece)</u>							
Leicester	7.6	37.3	42.4	12.7	-	158	15/6
Leeds	2.8	44.4	52.8	-	-	36	15/1
Manchester	2.8	22.0	50.5	19.9	4.8	327	17/6
<u>All United Kingdom</u>	<u>6.0</u>	<u>40.0</u>	<u>40.0</u>	<u>11.9</u>	<u>2.1</u>	<u>819</u>	<u>15/7</u>

Table 4.6 Average Wages of Women and Girls Working Full Time in Selected Occupations in the Ready-Made Tailoring Industry in Manchester, Leeds, Bristol and Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

Occupation	ADULT WOMEN							
	Leeds		Manchester		Bristol		Yorks, Lancs & Ches <sup>a</sup>	
	Number	Average Wage	Number	Average Wage	Number	Average Wage	Number	Average Wage
Forewomen (Time)	18	21/10	16	21/3	-	-	14	22/5
Basters (Piece)	32	13/7	33	11/10	161 <sup>b</sup>	12/6	29	13/11
Machinists (Time)	48	15/5	-	-	113	12/5	115	13/5
Machinists (Piece)	1,555	14/4	325	13/6	283 <sup>b</sup>	12/2	662	13/7
Hand Sewers (Piece)	818	11/8	36	11/9	162 <sup>b</sup>	9/9	334	12/6
Pressers (Piece)	131	16/1	-	-	29	9/10	-	-
Others (Time)	127	13/6	66	13/11	45	12/8	20	12/11
Others (Piece)	6	12/-	8	12/3	33	13/11	24	13/1
All Women	2,735	13/8	484	13/7	824	11/10	1,374 <sup>c</sup>	13/6
684								
GIRLS								
Basters (Piece)	20	7/8	-	-	52 <sup>d</sup>	3/9	41 <sup>d</sup>	4/9
Machinists (Time)	21	5/6	43	3/3	96	4/11	84	4/6
Machinists (Piece)	717	8/4	85	7/6	29 <sup>d</sup>	7/2	144 <sup>b</sup>	10/2
Hand Sewers (Piece)	310	7/4	13	7/1	39 <sup>d</sup>	4/11	166 <sup>b</sup>	6/2
Pressers (Piece)	31	7/7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others (Time)	168	4/9	38	5/8	39	5/4	28	5/-
Others (Piece)	3	9/2	4	8/6	8	7/5	5	8/10
All Girls	1,270	7/7	183	6/1	534	5/1	534 <sup>e</sup>	7/10

Notes: a = excludes Manchester and Leeds; b = Time and Piece; c = Includes 176 hand/foot machinists averaging 13/3 on piece; d = Time; e = includes 66 hand/foot machinists averaging 10/5 on piece.



Table 4.7

Percentage of Adult Women Working Full Time Who Earned the Undermentioned Wages in the Ready-Made Tailoring Industry in Selected Areas in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

	Average Wages						Number	Average Wage
	Under 10/-	10/- to 14/-	15/- to 19/-	20/- to 24/-	25/- to 29/-	30/- Plus		
<u>Basters</u>								
Leeds	-	71.9	28.1	-	-	-	32	13/7
Manchester	24.2	54.5	12.2	9.2	-	-	33	11/10
Lancs/Yorks	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bristol	17.0	56.8	25.0	1.2	-	-	88	12/10
Norwich	55.8	41.0	3.2	-	-	-	122	9/7
London	50.0	17.9	14.2	17.9	-	-	28	12/2
All UK	25.1	52.6	17.9	3.9	0.5	-	569	12/4
<u>Power Machinists</u>								
Leeds	10.5	48.1	32.6	7.7	0.9	0.2	1,555	14/4
Manchester	21.2	45.2	24.3	8.6	0.7	-	325	13/6
Lancs/Yorks	19.9	47.4	22.4	8.2	1.8	0.3	662	13/7
Bristol	24.7	54.1	16.6	3.9	0.7	-	283	12/2
Norwich	35.2	52.3	13.5	-	-	-	222	11/1
London	27.6	46.5	22.4	3.5	-	-	170	12/7
All UK	21.5	46.0	24.3	6.8	1.2	0.2	5,325	13/5
<u>Finishers</u>								
Leeds	31.1	51.2	16.4	1.1	0.2	-	818	11/8
Manchester	25.0	52.8	22.2	-	-	-	36	11/9
Lancs/Yorks	27.5	38.8	19.5	10.5	2.6	1.1	266	13/6
Bristol	53.4	43.1	3.5	-	-	-	116	9/5
Norwich	45.5	48.1	5.2	1.2	-	-	77	10/4
London	60.3	36.4	3.3	-	-	-	151	9/6
All UK	37.9	45.9	13.6	2.1	0.4	0.1	2,243	11/4

Table 4.8 Average Wages of Women and Girls Working Full Time in Selected Occupations in the Wool and Worsted Industry in Leeds in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>ADULT WOMEN</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>
Scribblers Feeders (Time)	93		13/1
Drawers (Time)	175		10/7
Worsted Spinners (Time)	243		10/3
Wool Spinners Piecers (Time)	122		10/6
Doublers (Time)	99		10/3
Winders (Time)	40		10/1
Warpers (Time)	39		14/8
	36		17/9
Wool Weavers (Piece)	2,452		14/-
Worsted Weavers (Piece)	355		17/3
Weavers (Time)	179		15/10
Burlers/Knotters (Time)	144		12/-
Menders/Fine Drawers (Time)	89		16/1
	64		17/6
Others (Time)	116		11/4
	49		14/10
<hr/> All Women	<hr/> 4,294		<hr/> 13/9
		<u>GIRLS</u>	
Worsted Spinners (Time)	257		8/10
Wool Spinners Piecers (Time)	151		8/11
Winders (Time)	48		8/4
Doublers (Time)	23		8/5
Wool Weavers (Piece)	90		11/2
Burlers/Knotters (Time)	67		7/5
Others (Time)	112		8/10
	53		10/1
Half Timers (Time)	11		3/8
<hr/> All Girls	<hr/> 812		<hr/> 8/11

Table 4.9 Percentage of Adult Women Working Full Time in the Wool and Worsted Industry in Leeds Who Earned the Undermentioned Wages in Four Weeks, September to October 1906

	<u>Under 10/-</u>	<u>10/- to 14/-</u>	<u>15/- to 19/-</u>	<u>20/- to 24/-</u>	<u>25/- to 29/-</u>	<u>30/- Plus</u>	<u>Number</u>
Worsted Weavers	0.8	20.8	60.9	17.5	--	--	355
Scribblers Feeders/ Condenser Minders	--	82.8	17.2	--	--	--	93
Drawers	4.0	96.0	--	--	--	--	175
Worsted Spinners	33.3	66.7	--	--	--	--	243 <sup>68</sup>
Doublers	22.2	76.8	--	--	--	--	99
Winders	75.0	20.0	5.0	--	--	--	40
Burlers/Knotters	4.2	90.3	5.5	--	--	--	144
Menders/Fine Drawers	--	23.4	56.3	18.8	1.5	--	64
Wool Weavers	9.5	54.0	32.9	2.8	0.7	0.1	2,452

Table 4.10 Percentage of Adult Women Working Full Time in the Wool and Worsted Industry in Selected Areas Who Earned the Undermentioned Wages in Four Weeks, September to October 1906

	Average Wages						Number	Average Wage
	Under 10/-	10/- to 14/-	15/- to 19/-	20/- to 24/-	25/- to 29/-	30/- Plus		
<u>Wool Weavers (Time &amp; Piece)</u>								
Huddersfield	0.3	15.6	40.3	31.5	10.4	1.9	1,453	19/6
Leeds	9.5	54.0	32.9	2.8	0.7	0.1	2,452	14/-
Dewsbury*	7.5	42.0	39.4	9.3	1.4	0.4	3,129	15/4
Halifax	2.1	53.9	35.8	8.2	-	-	243	14/11
Bradford	-	36.2	53.2	8.5	2.1	-	47	15/1
All United Kingdom	6.7	40.8	35.0	14.2	2.9	0.4	9,735	15/10
<u>Worsted Weavers (Time &amp; Piece)</u>								
Huddersfield	0.2	9.6	41.9	37.2	10.9	0.2	952	19/11
Leeds	0.8	20.8	60.9	17.5	-	-	355	17/3
Halifax	5.9	56.2	36.2	1.7	-	-	459	14/1
Bradford	12.5	60.0	25.8	1.7	-	-	745	13/5
All United Kingdom	4.9	34.4	39.4	16.9	4.3	0.1	2,658	16/7
<u>Menders/Fine Drawers (Piece)</u>								
Huddersfield	1.2	13.2	46.8	36.5	2.3	-	914	18/9
Leeds	-	23.4	56.3	18.8	1.5	-	64	17/6
Dewsbury	-	53.3	38.7	8.0	-	-	75	15/2
Halifax	-	33.8	66.2	-	-	-	65	15/8
Bradford	8.9	29.8	49.2	10.9	1.2	-	248	15/7
All United Kingdom	2.4	21.6	46.2	27.8	2.0	-	1,798	17/8
<u>Worsted Spinners (Time)</u>								
Huddersfield	84.9	15.1	-	-	-	-	139	9/-
Leeds	33.3	66.7	-	-	-	-	243	10/3
Halifax	34.3	65.7	-	-	-	-	213	10/2
Bradford	45.7	54.3	-	-	-	-	1,833	9/11
West of England	92.6	7.6	-	-	-	-	39	8/10
All United Kingdom	46.9	53.1	-	-	-	-	3,098	9/11
<u>Doublers (Time)</u>								
Huddersfield	2.0	98.0	-	-	-	-	153	11/-
Leeds	22.2	76.8	-	-	-	-	99	10/3
Dewsbury	1.0	98.0	1.0	-	-	-	104	12/-
Halifax	4.3	95.7	-	-	-	-	582	10/10
Bradford	5.2	94.7	0.1	-	-	-	993	11/-
West of England	76.0	24.0	-	-	-	-	50	9/3
All United Kingdom	10.9	89.0	0.1	-	-	-	2,405	10/11
<u>Winders (Time)</u>								
Huddersfield	-	98.0	1.0	1.0	-	-	96	11/5
Leeds	75.0	20.0	5.0	-	-	-	40	10/1
Dewsbury	-	100.0	-	-	-	-	27	11/9
Halifax	8.6	91.4	-	-	-	-	221	10/4
Bradford	9.1	87.1	3.4	0.4	-	-	264	11/3
West of England	56.0	36.0	8.0	-	-	-	25	9/10
All United Kingdom	17.0	78.6	4.0	0.4	-	-	861	13/2
<u>Scribblers Feeders (Time)</u>								
Huddersfield	-	63.2	36.4	0.4	-	-	280	14/3
Leeds	-	82.8	17.2	-	-	-	93	13/1
Dewsbury	-	88.5	11.5	-	-	-	244	13/4
Halifax	-	100.0	-	-	-	-	37	13/-
Bradford	-	100.0	-	-	-	-	38	12/8
West of England	83.6	16.4	-	-	-	-	67	8/10
All United Kingdom	12.3	70.7	16.9	0.1	-	-	978	12/8

\* Dewsbury figures include Batley

Table 4.11 Average Wages of Women and Girls Working Full Time in Engineering and Boilermaking in Selected Areas in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

<u>All Occupations</u>	<u>ADULT WOMEN</u>							
	<u>United Kingdom</u>		<u>Sheffield</u>		<u>Leeds</u>		<u>Manchester</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>
Time	729	12/7	10	8/7	48	12/4	137	12/8
Piece	349	14/5	2	20/3	12	13/7	153	13/5
Bonus	133	12/9	-	-	-	-	6	13/5
<u>All Women</u>	<u>1,211</u>	<u>13/1</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10/6</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>12/7</u>	<u>296</u>	<u>13/1</u>
<u>GIRLS</u>								
Time	400	7/7	14	5/5	55	7/9	117	7/-
Piece	131	9/10	-	-	1	9/6	-	-
Bonus	14	9/6	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>All Girls</u>	<u>545</u>	<u>8/2</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>5/5</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>7/9</u>	<u>117</u>	<u>7/-</u>

Table 4.12 Average Wages of Workpeople Employed Full Time in the Wool and Worsted Trade in Selected Areas in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Boys &amp; Lads</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>All Workers</u>
Huddersfield	27/4	11/2	17/1	9/8	20/1
Leeds	29/2	10/5	13/9	9/-	15/11
Dewsbury/Batley	27/2	11/1	15/-	9/11	17/11
Halifax	26/-	9/7	12/4	9/-	13/-
Bradford	27/2	9/9	12/7	9/5	13/11
Keighley	26/2	10/3	13/6	10/2	14/-
All Yorkshire	27/3	10/3	13/10	9/6	15/9
West of England	21/9	9/4	11/3	8/6	13/11
Roxburgh, Selkirk & Peebles	27/7	10/6	18/6	8/6	19/8
Rest of Scotland	23/11	8/11	11/8	7/4	14/-
All United Kingdom	26/10	10/2	13/10	9/3	15/9

Table 4.13 Average Wages of Men and Women Employed Full Time in Selected Trades in Leeds in the Last Pay Week of September 1906

	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
Ready-Made Boot and Shoe	28/4	13/10
Ready-Made Tailoring	31/11	13/8
Wool and Worsted	29/2	13/9
Engineering	29/10	12/7

Sources: The figures in the tables above have been taken from the Board of Trade, Enquiry into Earnings and Hours of Labour of Workpeople in the United Kingdom. Textiles in 1906 (PP 1909, LXXX); The Clothing Trades in 1906 (PP 1909, LXXX); Metal, Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades in 1906 (PP 1911, LXXXVIII).

APPENDIX 5: Female Trade Union MembershipTable 5.1 Membership of the Amalgamated Union of Clothing Operatives

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1894	506	--	1900	1,291	109	1906	1,682	140
1895	509	--	1901	1,169	53	1907	1,988	592
1896	827	--	1902	1,406	15	1908	1,919	619
1897	1,042	--	1903	1,451	9	1909	1,780	636
1898	990	--	1904	1,383	44	1910	1,849	1,488
1899	1,222	63	1905	1,404	78			

Table 5.2 Membership of the Leeds Amalgamated Jewish Tailors', Machinists' and Pressers' Union

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1896	1,130		1902	1,130		1908	650	50
1897	1,210		1903	920		1909	730	20
1898	1,055		1904	700		1910	970	--
1899	1,150		1905	610		1911	1,720	
1900	1,150		1906	900		1912	2,455	
1901	1,100		1907	960		1913	4,465	

Table 5.3 Membership of the Leeds Tailoresses' Union

1892	98	1896	53
1893	212	1897	62
1894	61	1898	31
1895	40	1899	50

Table 5.4 Membership of the International Tailoresses' Union (Leeds)

1896	200	1902	40
1897	150	1903	55
1898	83	1904	68
1899	83	1905	49
1900	100	1906	dissolved
1901	60		

Table 5.5 Membership of the General Union of Textile Workers

<u>Male and Female</u>		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		
1886	500	1896	1,375	1,400	1906	2,000	1,905
1887	800	1897	1,150	1,150	1907	2,200	2,000
1888	700	1898	1,400	900	1908	2,500	1,850
1889	1,800	1899	1,200	923	1909	2,000	1,500
1890	--	1900	1,400	414	1910	2,535	2,000
1891	4,500	1901	1,000	568	1911	6,100	
1892	4,700	1902	1,200	900	1912	7,500	
1893	4,000	1903	800	960	1913	12,936	
1894	4,000	1904	900	631			
1895	3,000	1905	900	734			

Sources: Figures up to 1910 have been taken from Board of Trade, Report on Trade Unions for 1894-5 (PP 1896, XCIII), for 1900 (PP 1901, LXXIV), for 1902-4 (PP 1906, CXIII), for 1905-7 (PP 1909, LXXXIX), for 1908-10 (PP 1912-13, XLVII). The figures for 1911 to 1913 have been taken from the Annual Report of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies for 1911 (PP 1912-13, LXXXII), for 1912 (PP 1913, LVII), for 1913 (PP 1914, LXXVI).



## APPENDIX 6

The following list provides a brief description of the family background of the 25 Radcliffe residents interviewed in 1973/4.

	<u>Father's Occupation</u>	<u>Mother's Occupation</u>	<u>Total Number of Children</u>
Mrs A, b 1892	Coal Miner (d 1896)	Domestic Work	3 (1 died)
Mrs B, b 1893	Painter/Decorator	Domestic Work	10 (5 died)
Mrs C, b 1892	Bleacher		2
Mrs D, b 1906	Carter	Weaver	2
Mrs E, b 1902	Bleacher (Calendarer)	Domestic Work	5
Mr E, b 1906	Bleacher (Stamper)	-	9
Mrs F, b 1900	Wheelwright	Winder	2
Mrs G, b 1902	Dyer	Weaver	2
Mrs H, b 1894	Coal Miner	-	9 (3 died)
Mrs I, b 1898	Mill Manager	Winder	1
Mrs J, b 1893	Coal Miner	Domestic Work	3
Mrs K, b 1898	Coal Miner	Weaver	2
Mrs L, b 1892	Coal Miner (d 1896)	Weaver	2
Mrs M, b 1892	Farm Labourer	Domestic Work	5
Mrs N, b 1894	Master Plumber	Assisted in Business	2
Mrs O, b 1900	Bleacher (Stamper)	Ran small grocer's shop	6 (4 died)
Mrs P, b 1902	Engineer/Fire beater	Weaver	1
Mrs Q, b 1901	Foreman (weaving)	Weaver	2
Mrs R, b 1902	Ambulance/Fire Engine Driver	-	4
Mrs S, b 1900	Engineer	Spinner	2
Mr T, b 1905	Bleacher (Mangler)	Domestic Work and Baby minding	8
Mrs T, b 1905	Policeman	-	5
Mrs U, b 1894	Dyer	Domestic Work	9 (5 died)
Mrs V, b 1898	Bleacher	Weaver	1
Mrs W, b 1900	Paper Manufacture	Domestic Work	4

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