

FEMINISTS AND FEMININITY: A CASE-STUDY OF WSPU PROPAGANDA AND LOCAL RESPONSE AT A SCOTTISH BY-ELECTION

PAMPHLET

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Biographical note

Lindy Moore's feminism developed out of her research, as the attempt to discover the history of local women revealed the extent to which their associations had been disregarded by later (generally) male historians. At present she is researching into the nineteenth-century education of Scottish women, an area which has been equally ignored by Scottish historians of education and English feminists.

Synopsis—This article examines the attitudes towards femininity expressed by the WSPU speakers at the 1907 Aberdeen by-election and the response these attitudes elicited from Aberdonians. Although the evidence suggests that a majority of the local population accepted the WSPU's demand for votes (for tax-paying women only) on the grounds of equality, the WSPU felt a need to emphasize the expediency of its proposal. In order to argue that such an extension of the franchise would benefit all women WSPU speakers emphasized the priority of sex over all other social divisions but deliberately accepted the specific differences assumed in popular concepts of 'femininity' rather than drawing attention to the male ideology and social institutions in which such definitions originated. Some of the imputed feminine attributes which led Aberdeen men and women of all classes to accept the popular stereotype of domestic woman are examined, as are the difficulties the WSPU encountered because its campaigning activities clashed with its own concept of woman, a difficulty shared by other women's associations in Aberdeen.

The aim of the article which follows is, firstly, to examine the public propaganda promulgated by the WSPU speakers during their by-election campaign at Aberdeen in January and February 1907.¹ The suffragettes' definition of femininity, of the nature of woman and the relationship between the sexes will be analysed and related to the reasons they put forward for wanting parliamentary suffrage. Secondly, it will be considered how accurately the WSPU's concept of femininity—using that term to imply the perception of both sex and gender—reflected that of the local population and whether, indeed, there was a local consensus.

Kraditor (1965) has shown how the grounds upon which American women demanded the vote altered between 1890 and 1920 as the meaning of 'equality' upon which the claim was based itself altered. Initially the claim assumed the equality of all and therefore women emphasized their common humanity in order to claim their natural right. When the concept of equality began to lose this meaning during a period of increasing social differentiation, the women turned to an argument based upon expediency; woman's suffrage would benefit society. Stacey and Price (1980) have argued that the inalienable right of the individual upon

¹ A large proportion of the WSPU's campaign was spent defending its opposition of the pro-suffrage Liberal candidate. For a more detailed description of the campaign with an analysis of its political impact see Lindy Moore, 'The woman suffrage campaign at the 1907 Aberdeen by-election' (1983).

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which the early English women's suffrage claim was based was a radical notion because for the first time it identified women as individuals rather than as 'relative creatures' (Basch, 1975; p. 5). In contrast the expediency argument could be either radical or conservative depending on the definition of femininity used. The radical feminist would argue that women had something entirely special and different to offer—a whole new vision of society and the political scene quite outside existing institutions. The social feminist saw women acting within the existing parameters of society as the philanthropic or reforming sex, working to help others, never themselves. Women *could* benefit society if they had the vote and therefore it was positively their duty to obtain it.

The WSPU used both these arguments during the 1907 Aberdeen by-election. The suffragettes usually prefaced their remarks with an appeal to the justice or right of granting women the franchise on the same terms as for men and then went on to support their demand on the basis of the benefits it would bring society at large and especially other women.

David Morgan (1975) quotes a Women's Liberal Federation pamphlet of 1913 as evidence that 'men, generally, were not impressed by the justice of Woman Suffrage, but did respond to the offer of future help in pressing for causes which involved them' (Morgan, 1975; p. 127). But the evidence of the Aberdeen by-election does not support such a contention; for most Aberdonians the appeal to justice was quite sufficient grounds in itself. The editorial of the conservative *Aberdeen Daily Journal* was a typical response:

'... the demand the suffragists make is both logical and just. If it be a sound principle that taxation carries with it representation, and if it be right that male householders should have the Parliamentary franchise, it is not easy to conceive by what ingenuity of argument it can be contended that women also possessing the double qualification of paying taxes and being householders should be deprived of the vote (March 9, 1907).

According to the *Evening Gazette* it had been 'alleged that the vast majority of women do not desire the franchise, but however that may be, there is a very large number of men who retain an open mind on the subject and are quite willing to support anything that is just' (February 19, 1907). The *Journal* was even more emphatic that the assertion that most women did not want the vote was no reason at all for depriving the minority who did, a minority which included the Aberdeen Branch of the Women's Liberal Association (AWLA), the Aberdeen Working Women's Political Association (AWWPA) (which campaigned for the Labour Representation Committee's adult suffragist candidate) and many women Conservatives.

There was a general consensus that the question whether the political enfranchisement of women would be beneficial 'either for the race or for women themselves' was a quite separate issue and for most it was less important. As one male supporter expressed it, 'it is right that women should have votes, whether they all use them with discretion or not' (Letter, *Aberdeen Free Press* February 19, 1907). In this respect, the WSPU campaigners helped the local anti-suffragists by placing such emphasis on the effects of woman's suffrage and by their emphasis on a conservative definition of femininity as the basis for this claim.

The concept of the right of the individual to equality before the law *subject to a property qualification* firmly related the women to their position within a capitalist economy. But the WSPU leaders were less concerned with their bargaining power in a class system than with the separate though related issue of social status. That the debate was over the middle-class woman's image of herself (as judged by male criteria) could be seen in the insistence that her claim should be placed before that of working-class men which was why the Liberals' proposed manhood suffrage bill so infuriated the WSPU leaders (Billington-Greig, 1911;

pp. 175–176). The complaint struck a sympathetic note with the middle-class Aberdeen women; when AWLA passed a unanimous resolution in favour of the enfranchisement of taxpaying women during the by-election a rider was added that 'such a measure should have precedence of any further extension of the franchise to men'. One of the liberal *Aberdeen Free Press* editorials referred both to the principle of equality and to the superior status of upper middle-class women contrasted with working-class men; women were not only equal with men, some women were more equal than some men:

'It is a vaunted article of the Liberal creed that representation should always accompany taxation, and on what grounds therefore . . . can a system be defended which denies to the most refined, gifted, noble-minded, and self-denying women in the land rights that are possessed by thousands of men who have no better ideals in life than the savageries of football matches and the rough pleasures of the tap-room?' (*AFP*, February 19, 1907).

Many of the potentially most supportive women were involved in party politics and the WSPU criticized such participation by drawing attention to women's denied status. Local women took up this approach, one writing:

'As a member of the Women's Branch of the Liberal Association, I along with others have been asked to canvass for Mr Esslemont. Now, with the greatest pleasure I would have voted personally for him, but self-respect will not allow me to canvass for him' (Letter, *AFP*, February 12, 1907).

Though the WSPU leaders had long since broken with the Labour Party in spirit, they were still in the process of separating from it in practice and consequently felt a constant need to reassert that they supported neither the Labour candidate nor adult suffrage. In order to counteract the rather negative impression left by their emphasis on votes for middle-class tax-paying women only, they stressed the advantages of such an extension of the franchise, arguing that sex differences cut across and were greater than economic or political differences, so that if even a small number of upper- and middle-class women were given votes all women would benefit. Thus Mrs Pankhurst announced that 'women suffered very much when laws were made by one sex for both sexes' and Helen Fraser was quoted as telling another meeting that:

'Many great changes had taken place in their industrial and economic conditions, and the result had been the passing of unequal laws, not perhaps from any deliberate desire on man's part to act against women, but because man could not see from women's point of view' (*AFP*, February 1, 1907).

The implication was that even if men attempted to make equal provision for both sexes, such laws would be inadequate because women were essentially different and therefore required different rather than equal legislation. The WSPU appeared to be adopting a radical rather than a liberal feminist interpretation. But unlike radical feminists the WSPU speakers in Aberdeen did not look for any changes in the political parameter nor in the relationship of the sexes in two basic areas of social interaction, the labour market and the family. They not only adopted a bourgeois feminism but they accepted the current definition of the inherent nature of woman, of 'femininity' without questioning the extent to which that concept was based on social assumptions about sex rather than on actual biological and psychological gender-related differences. That the question is still unresolved today does not make it any less important. Arguably the local columnist who saw in the shared social experience of

domestic life the way female voters could help other women 'because they understand as men cannot possibly do the conditions which hamper and enslave women and render social life cramped and noxious' was more radical than the WSPU for all his references to woman's 'first duty' and her potential influence for 'greater social purity, sweetness and comfort' (*EG*, February 19, 1907).

The WSPU's conservative approach was chosen quite deliberately however, for several of the speakers had the conceptual awareness to raise the feminist issue and on one single occasion, at an 'ethical' meeting, Teresa Billington-Greig and Helen Fraser adopted uninhibitedly feminist positions. Teresa discussed the cultural origins of girls' subordination within the patriarchal family and the need for changes in the structure of society in order to change the relationship between the sexes, whilst Helen Fraser spoke of the dominant nature of male ideology in one social institution—the church—and of the need for women to develop their own self-awareness through self-help. But in their regular campaign speeches in Aberdeen even these two women, following WSPU policy (Billington-Greig, 1911; p. 159) implicitly defined femininity, not as a cultural concept produced by a male-dominated ideology and confused with physical femaleness, but in precisely the way men had formulated, as a cluster of sex-specific attributes, physical, psychological, intellectual and spiritual which all resulted in the equation of women's 'natural' role with domesticity.

Motherhood was the most stressed facet of domesticity and the suffragettes placed suitable emphasis on this as the most important of women's functions. Being naturally imbued with maternal instincts, even unmarried middle-class female voters would give all women the legal rights consistent with nature's rights in matters relating to the education, medical care and religious up-bringing of their children. Moreover not only would the enfranchised women be especially interested in all matters affecting household management, but surrogate domestic roles were claimed for them too; there were issues such as sanitation and housing 'which were in need of the cleaning up which only women could accomplish'. Thirdly, emphasis was placed on women's supposedly special moral and spiritual qualities; war would be prevented and civilization advanced as a result of the application of feminine influence to social issues with a moral aspect such as religion, education and temperance.²

Aberdonian references assuming women's domestic role and 'feminine' characteristics came from suffragists and antis alike, too numerous to list; indeed, it was rare for a comment about women *not* to include such a reference. Even, or perhaps especially, the most radical felt the need to assure readers that they were not threatening that 'sacred place' or intending to destroy the finest of woman's qualities, maternal love, (a curious but not isolated criticism suggesting that the quality was not instinctive after all, levelled in this instance at the socialist candidate) (Letter, *EG*, February 19, 1907).³ More conventionally, a prominent AWWPA member addressed the local SDF on 'the Passing of the Home', a state of affairs she attributed chiefly to working mothers and a derogatory reference by one correspondent to the AWLA as a 'mothers' meeting' brought an instant response from the secretary:

'We have always considered that motherhood was one of the highest offices and privileges of womanhood . . . one of the chief reasons we take an interest in the affairs of the nation is

² See reports of WSPU meetings: *AFP*, February 1, 1907; February 2, 1907; February 8, 1907; February 16, 1907; February 18, 1907; February 19, 1907. Also letters from Helen Fraser to *AFP*: February 14, 1907; February 16, 1907.

³ For the socialist reply see letter to *EG*: February 23, 1907.

because we desire our children to live in a country of freedom and liberty, in a country wherein the Government endeavours to make it "easy to do right and difficult to do wrong," . . . the "mother's meeting" is working hard and heartily for Mr G. B. Esslemont, as he is the candidate who is in favour of temperance reform, religious liberty, educational freedom . . .' (Annie Allan, letter, *AFP*, February 14, 1907).

Meanwhile Conservative women tended to emphasize the imperial importance of motherhood along the lines described by Davin (1978). In a typical speech addressed to a large meeting of the East Aberdeenshire Women's Unionist and Tarriff Reform Association a few months later Lady Leith declared:

'Women must bring political work into the higher life of service to humanity, and that influence must be for truth and purity, or it cannot avail to do the good which is their high privilege as mothers of the race . . . mothers have the future of the men of the next generation in their hands. Let them teach their sons better ideals to make them better citizens of the Empire' (*AFP*, July 31, 1907).

Underlying all these views of womanhood was woman the 'relative creature', who might work for husband, children or even weaker 'sisters', but never assert herself. Women did not want the vote for selfish reasons, an Edinburgh speaker told the Aberdeen Liberal Association, but to help those who could not help themselves. The anti-suffragist version exhorted women to do their 'duty' and to be 'useful', expressions used by several local speakers, men and women.

So what were the attributes Aberdonians saw as suggesting woman's 'natural' suitability for domesticity? The answer varied depending whether the sexes were perceived as differing qualitatively or quantitatively. In both instances a scientific notion of the division of labour was invoked, but whilst in the former case the qualities 'specific' to women were seen as intended by nature to maximize her effectiveness in the home, in the latter women were judged, Aristotelean fashion, to be merely a weaker version of the male prototype. And as the weaker sex women did not need, and were not looking for independence or equality; they required protection which could best be found in the backwater of the home. In fact, many of those who believed they were basing their argument on sexual differences were actually implying women's natural inferiority as, for example, the anti-suffragist who wrote of the physiological and psychological differences between the sexes 'which bade man set apart and protect woman from the rough and tumble of public life; and which bade woman acquiesce in this setting apart (Letter, *AFP*, February 19, 1907). The *Gazette* lost much of the force of its pro-suffrage argument with its preface, 'woman, it is true, may still be the 'weaker sex' in some respects, but we have got beyond the notion that either intellectually or politically she is the inferior of man' (*EG*, February 14, 1907) and whatever the motives of the man who argued that since women had to be shielded and protected in the labour market (at men's expense) it would be better if they returned to the more appropriate occupation of domestic service, his definition of femininity clearly saw women as weaker rather than different (Letters, *Evening Express*, February 12, 1907; February 15, 1907).

The WSPU tried to argue both ways at once. There were many references to the large proportion and probable future increase of women in the labour force with an implicit criticism of their apparent invisibility, but on several occasions it was implied that their participation in waged-work was unfortunate, the result of man's legislation or discrimination without which women would have been 'able' to stay at home. The WSPU speakers

also referred in general terms to the prejudice and opposition women workers encountered and repeatedly asserted that women's trades unions would not be effective until women had political power. But it was never made quite clear *how* legislative influence would directly assist women's unions, a question made still more relevant by the suffragettes' refusal to campaign for working-class women at all. The implicit explanation was that the middle-class woman would help her poor overworked sister out of a kind of innately feminine philanthropic benevolence:

'They only ask that those women who are already entitled to vote at Municipal elections because they are rate-payers shall also be entitled to vote at Parliamentary elections on the same grounds. Their chief reason for demanding this is in order to have a voice in the making of laws for the protection of women, especially working women. We all know that such laws are exceedingly necessary . . . The exhibition of sweated industries held in London last year . . .' (*EE*, January 19, 1907).

The *Evening Express* reporter quoted above was not alone in accepting the WSPU's approach, not least the emphasis once again on the protection of, rather than independence for, working women. There was no evidence that the Aberdonian middle-class viewed the formation of trades unions for either sex as anything but an evil and where a direct conflict of interests occurred between middle- and working-class women the probable response was indicated by Lady Ramsay (who became involved in WSPU activities during the by-election and was to become president of the Aberdeen WSPU) when she criticized the inclusion of domestic servants in the Employers' Liability Act because it would encourage servants 'to prey on their mistresses'.

Women were not only seen as weaker physically and organizationally, but morally, too, and it was therefore important that they should receive an adequate moral and religious training; indeed it was doubly important because not only were women themselves readily susceptible to influence, but their sexuality and their proximity to young children at an impressionable stage gave them, in their turn, considerable influence.

'In the home circle women have an immense influence on the moulding of the male character. On them to a large extent depends . . . whether men may be good or bad citizens' (*ADJ*, March 9, 1907).

Principal Lang was merely repeating an old adage when he advised the Church of Scotland Women's Guild conference held in Aberdeen that when woman 'was good, by her very presence she elevated human life into its heaven; when she was bad, by her influence she sent human life down to the bottomless pit' (*AFP*, May 1, 1907). (The division of the population into 'humans' and 'women' is itself significant.) It did not take much to tip the balance apparently; as Harrison (1978) has noted men often idolized and degraded women in the same sentence. This sexual influence emanated by women despite themselves was seen as further reason for keeping them secluded at home as Fatima Mernissi has suggested (Stacey and Price, 1980) and a further explanation of their influence over the opposite sex in the home. The Aberdeen Lord Provost objected to women as members of the town council and the *Journal* to women as Members of Parliament for this reason:

'And just as lovely female candidates by their wiles might lead male voters astray, so they

might convert the House of Commons into a scene of Gilbertian topsy-turveydom (*ADJ*, March 9, 1907).⁴

The solution was seen as excluding women from areas of public debate and, above all educating them in a correct morality and rigid self-discipline (presumably in order to control as much of their natural sexuality as possible.) Middle-class women had, of course, received this proper moral education (as the advertisements for 'young ladies' educational institutions' were always so anxious to stress) and thus learnt middle-class morality was easily seen as synonymous with natural 'feminine' morality. Once thus trained, women were seen as 'perhaps the truest conservers of that which is fundamentally worthy' and their influence as something to be welcomed.

As benevolent reformers middle-class Aberdeen women then interpreted their duty as one of encouraging a proper feminine morality amongst working-class women in conjunction with a maternalistic concern for their physical well-being. In practice they were enforcing their own middle-class standards of morality (with a special concern for self-control and discipline useful to employers), bolstering an inadequate and inequalitarian economic structure with a system of individual rewards through the provision of charity in those cases where the fault was not due to any moral dereliction by the individual, and underlining woman's natural moral weakness by their attempts to strengthen it.

Marie Ogilvie Gordon, a suffragist and a leading member of the Aberdeen branch of the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) (an umbrella association for middle-class women's organizations)⁵ indicated the extent of this middle-class controlling philanthropy:

' . . . members of the Union extend a beneficent care over women engaged in industrial pursuits and public works, endeavouring to better their home lives, instil sound principles of economy and conduct, and guide their hours of recreation . . . keep watch over any local movements and legislative measures that affect the wages of working-class women, the sanitation of their homes and workshops, and the physical and educational welfare of women and children' (Gordon, 1904; p. 3).

Similarly a university professor's wife described the methods adopted to entertain local mill girls 'for their good', while the Women's Guild declared its aim as being to win young girls 'to reverence and love and train them in habits of obedience and self-control'.

Local expectations of the feminine role were sometimes indicated by the response to the WSPU's physical methods rather than to their campaign speeches. Those who felt that women should be protected from the 'rough and tumble of public life' considered it quite improper for women to speak in public at all, and the admitted ability of the suffragettes was simply seen as further self-condemnation. Their open-air ('street-corner') meetings and their outspokenness were especially criticized:

'I have heard most of these lady orators, and the one outstanding feature of all their harangues is their utter tactlessness. Tact, in my humble judgment, is woman's saving grace and finest virtue' (George Quirk, letter, *AFP*, February 18, 1907).

⁴ See also the report of the ANUWW meeting: *AFP*, January 15, 1907. It would have been logical to argue from this that it was men who were morally weak.

⁵ Not to be confused with AWWPA. The original and more descriptive title of the ANUWW was 'The Aberdeen Ladies' Union for the Care and Protection of Young Girls'.

Such opponents felt even more strongly that women should not march in public or interrupt meetings, so that criticism of the Government for sending mounted police to charge helpless women was countered by references to 'rolling in the mud' or 'disgracing themselves and their sex'.

'The common sense of most women tells them where their true power lies. The pitiful bauble of a "vote" does not attract them. We have a gift from the gods in our hands if we would only use it and use it wisely. Alack and alas! how that gift, so high and so beautiful, is trampled in the mud by such conduct as last Wednesday's! One wonders if it can ever be lifted again and cleansed from dirt . . .' (Letter, *AFP*, February 19, 1907).⁶

Although a number of people defended the WSPU's actions both in Aberdeen and at Westminster and the liberal Aberdeen press rebuffed the sneers of certain local social cliques and objected that imputations of unwomanliness and want of self-respect were shallow criticisms, nevertheless the suffragettes had difficulty in countering such criticism because they had elected to fight upon precisely this ground, so that their defence that men, too, had been known to shriek in the House of Commons or become involved in platform disputes was the less telling because they had argued that women were in all respects different and 'finer' and that it was for this reason that some of them should be granted parliamentary suffrage.

However, the WSPU was helped by the increasing involvement of women in politics, of which it was only one manifestation. In the Spring of 1907 the most rapidly growing women's political association in north-east Scotland was not the WSPU but the East Aberdeenshire Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Association which, like the Aberdeen WSPU was started in January 1907 as a result of the campaigning efforts of English women. Within 6 months the EAWUTRA had 17 branches, 15 sub-branches and a membership of 1400. The often titled speakers emphasized the domestic origin of women's interests and their selfless concern in politics on behalf of others. But although the speakers hastily disassociated themselves from suffragette activity and generally disclaimed any wish for the vote at all, their desire to influence people and politics through public rather than personal methods and their interest in a wider sphere of politics, including imperialism and international trade as well as matters of social and domestic concern made their rejection of the most effective means of influence seem rather arbitrary. It was all very well for the Unionists to insist that voting at elections was 'not quite woman's sphere', or that 'they would work in women's way and not take men's place in any sense whatever' but when said by women who had organized a dozen meetings and spoken in public about political issues with some of the leading politicians of the day, the distinction was not easily made. And in addition to the various local women's political associations there were other women's organizations such as the Women's Guild and the NUWW which, often for the most conservative of reasons, were nevertheless organizing on a national and even international basis, far from the traditional hearth.

In conclusion it may be asked how research into local attitudes along the preceding lines adds to an assessment of the women's movement at the beginning of the twentieth century? The question is difficult to answer because there is so very little written on the subject of British women's history and still less on woman's suffrage which has been seen as largely irrelevant to the wider issues of the women's liberation movement—an assumption this issue

⁶ These references were to the WSPU's London demonstration which took place during the by-election. Local activities provoked a considerable response to national events.

of *WSIF* hopes to challenge. The first adequate chronology of the WSPU was published only 7 years ago and an analysis of the debate about the issues raised by woman's suffrage, a debate of special interest to feminists, appeared still more recently. Understandably, both these scholarly works are based on central records and what is still required is research which examines the nature and especially the interaction of organization and ideology of both pro- and anti-suffragism at a local level. In order to assess the extent to which the WSPU tactics documented by Rosen (1974) and the various ideological responses described by Harrison (1978) were experienced generally, and so build up a realistic impression of femininity, feminism and anti-feminism throughout Britain, much more local research is needed along the lines of that carried out by Liddington and Norris (1978).

This is particularly true for Scotland for which no research on woman's suffrage has been published.⁷ Scotland tends, by implication, to be seen as a smaller and weaker version of England, yet here more than elsewhere local factors and traditions may have played a decisive part in influencing the organization and ideology of women's associations and the suffrage debate. One such aspect indicated by the Aberdeen by-election campaign for example, was the influence of a strong liberal tradition in Scotland, which led to an emphasis on equality alongside a continuing belief in traditional 'femininity' (King, 1978; pp. 22-23). And at an organizational level, the split between the NWSPU and the WFL was possibly less welcome in Scotland where the disputes of the London headquarters seemed remote and the relative isolation of the suffrage groups encouraged them to work together.⁸

The WSPU leaders saw their by-election campaigns as the most effective means of spreading their propaganda throughout Britain and since the WSPU was the most active and overtly influential part of the women's movement at this date an examination of the nature of the feminism projected during such campaigns and the local responses elicited is long overdue. The comments made by the WSPU campaigners in Aberdeen constituted a rag-bag of different ideas and emphases. They did not attempt to provide any structural theory of sex discrimination and used the traditional stereotype of domestic woman to argue the expediency of woman suffrage. But they emphasized the importance of each individual woman and by describing such a wide variety of instances in which women were disadvantaged or oppressed they must have encouraged Aberdeen women to look again at any situation in which they were personally involved; the movement from individual experience to feminist commitment is not new, even if in 1907 the local women were encouraged along social feminist lines to see if they were prevented from helping others rather than urged to work towards their own independence—an approach in line with that of existing Aberdeen women's organizations, both philanthropic and political, and with the unconscious assumption of the superior social status and approved 'femininity' of middle-class women.

The WSPU's 'militancy' lay in the *priority* it gave to women's issues over those matters traditionally seen as important. That the issue upon which the WSPU chose to concentrate (suffrage) was a conservative one, does not alter the inherent radicalness of the demand for immediate action on behalf of (it was argued) all women. Women representing all shades of

⁷ An exception is the pamphlet *The Scottish Women's Suffrage Movement* (1978) compiled by Elspeth King to accompany an exhibition on woman's suffrage.

⁸ See report of meeting held in Glasgow to consider the position of the Scottish suffrage movement with respect to the division within the WSPU, *ADJ* 5/11/1907 and see also *The Scottish Women's Suffrage Movement*, pp. 16 and 21 for the refusal of the Glasgow and West of Scotland Women's Suffrage Association to affiliate to the London-based NUWSS and the subsequent formation of the Scottish Federation of the NUWSS.

the political spectrum attended the initial explanatory meetings held by the WSPU in Aberdeen and almost all of them supported the WSPU's aim. The differences between them centred around the 'proper' as well as the most effective means of obtaining the vote (in this instance the WSPU's tactics involved opposition to a pro-suffrage Liberal candidate); in other words, over precisely the extent to which women should demand priority for themselves. Since many Aberdonians wanted the vote in order to help others, an attitude the WSPU's expediency argument encouraged, they had to concede that if other means than a vote of their own could more certainly achieve the same ends they should work for that. Nevertheless, an examination of the Aberdeen campaign indicates that strains and splits over tactics did occur as a result of the WSPU's intervention in the local political scene and that some local women were converted to feminism in the sense of giving priority to women's needs as they saw them. The lack of any surviving minutes for this period in Aberdeen makes it difficult to analyse such dissensions however, and more local research from other areas will be necessary before the relative influence of local factors and WSPU propaganda can be determined.

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