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The Missing Two Million: The Exclusion of Working-class Women from the 1918 Representation of the People Act

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Anna Muggeridge

Introduction¹

- ¹ By the turn of the twentieth century, women had gained many legislative rights and freedoms that they had not had fifty years earlier, including the right to property ownership; the right to attend University (although not always to be awarded degrees) and the municipal vote. Despite this, women were unable to truly consider themselves citizens of Britain as they still lacked the right to vote in parliamentary elections. The suffrage movement developed a new sense of resolve around this point, with the two largest suffrage organisations, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), being established in 1897 and 1903 respectively.² By the outbreak of war in 1914, these groups had been joined by many other smaller organisations, including those such as the People's Suffrage Federation, which launched in 1909 to campaign for enfranchisement for all men, as well as women.³ Although these myriad groups all ultimately sought the same end goal—women's right to vote in Parliamentary elections—their methods of campaigning and reasons for taking up the struggle were many and varied. Regardless of whether an individual woman considered herself a constitutional suffragist or militant suffragette (and research has shown that many women crossed this boundary and were members of more than one organisation, particularly during the early stages),⁴ almost all of those involved in the campaign for votes for women wanted more than just legislative change

that ensured women would be entitled to vote in General Elections alongside men; many, as Sandra Stanley-Holton has noted, “were also seeking an overall reform of the political and social systems of Britain” that would change social attitudes towards women.⁵

- 2 Women’s ability to affect this reform and change—both legislative and social—was determined in a large part by their ability to participate in the democratic process as voters. Despite the progress made in other areas, their ability to effect change was necessarily hampered by their lack of parliamentary enfranchisement until 1918. The passage of the Representation of the People Act in this year marked the culmination of decades of work by suffrage organisations in Britain. But it also left millions of women still without the vote. It is well-known that women were only allowed to vote once they had reached the age of 30. However, there is limited understanding of the exclusion of two million working-class women from the vote, even once they had reached 30, due to the property-based nature of the 1918 Act, which in effect forced women to “buy into” the franchise, by requiring women voters to be either property owners, or local rates payers. It therefore excluded the poorest women from the franchise. It was not until the passage of the Equal Franchise Act in 1928 that these women were finally enfranchised, along with women aged 21 to 30. This article will examine in detail the circumstances of the two million women who remained without a vote under the terms of the 1918 Act, and the lack of response by the post-war suffrage movement to their plight. In so doing, it will argue that although partial enfranchisement did result in both legislative change and a change in social attitudes towards some women, both the continued exclusion of these two million working-class women over the age of 30 from the franchise, and the lack of concern over their exclusion shown by the suffrage movement, reflect the prevalence of class biased attitudes within the women’s movement, which persisted into the 1920s.

- 3 The most comprehensive overviews of women’s suffrage after 1918 remain Johanna Alberti’s *Beyond Suffrage*⁶ and Cheryl Law’s *Suffrage and Power*,⁷ but neither focus on the largely working-class women over the age of 30 who remained excluded from the vote in any great detail. Law does note that, although some of the unenfranchised women over 30 were professional or businesswomen lodging in business premises or unfurnished rooms (through which they failed to meet the property qualifications required for enfranchisement), most of those over 30 who failed to qualify were “shop assistants and domestic workers who lived-in”; “daughters living at home” and the very poorest working-class women, but she does not go on to examine the impact of continued unenfranchisement on such women.⁸ Jo Vellacott’s 2007 book *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote* offers a detailed analysis of how and why the 1918 Act came to be so restrictive, examining how splits within the NUWSS during the First World War left the organisation under the control of “a small group of middle and upper-class Londoners” with “virtually no representation of the industrial north” or working-class women from 1915.⁹ These women were prepared to accept the age and property restrictions of the 1918 Act, rather than holding out for suffrage on equal terms with men. Although Vellacott explains how the restrictions on female voters came to be, she does not examine the effects of this after 1918. Meanwhile, the other leading women’s suffrage organisation, the WSPU, had effectively disbanded for the duration of the war: on its outbreak, the Pankhursts called for an immediate suspension of militancy for the duration. June Purvis argues that “the WSPU did not abandon the campaign for votes for women...but changed its strategy”, with the Pankhursts using “patriotic feminism” to “take control of the

discourse, drama and spectacle of war to serve their own ends and further the campaign for female citizenship".¹⁰ However, this decision lacked support from many members, and the WSPU was much diminished when it remerged as the Women's Party in 1917; after Christabel Pankhurst failed to win the seat she contested in the 1918 election, the Party "faded away", disbanding in 1919.¹¹

- 4 Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in the suffrage movement after 1918 and the impact of partial enfranchisement on women's involvement in politics: a 2013 special edition of *Women's History Review* focused on feminists and feminism post-suffrage, whilst 2014 saw the publication of *The Aftermath of Suffrage*, edited by Julie Gottlieb and Richard Toye. Both collections include articles that focus on working-class feminism in the interwar period in general,¹² but there is no discussion in either on the exclusion of older, poorer working-class women from the franchise. Where articles do focus on the franchise extension campaign, such as Adrian Bingham's examination of the media fear surrounding the enfranchising of the so-called "flapper voters" in 1928, the focus is on women voters aged between 21 and 30, rather than those over 30.¹³
- 5 This article, then, seeks to address this gap in the existing literature. It will begin by examining working-class women's exclusion from both the 1918 Act, and the suffrage movement itself in the decade between partial and full enfranchisement, as suffragists chose to largely focus their efforts on obtaining "votes at 21", at the expense of poorer, working-class women who did not meet the property requirements stipulated by the original Act. The paper will then go on to examine the relationship between legislative changes and changes in social attitudes; how these concepts are interlinked, and what drives gendered social change. In so doing, this paper seeks to engage with ongoing debates about the suffrage movement and in particular feminism in the aftermath of suffrage, and also with debates about the intersections of class and gender in Britain.

The "Missing Two Million": working-class exclusion from the franchise and the suffrage movement, 1918–1928

- 6 The 1918 Act disqualified all women from voting in Parliamentary elections until they had reached 30 years of age, leaving approximately five million women aged between 21 and 30 unenfranchised until 1928, when the Equal Franchise Act was passed.¹⁴ Previous research has never before established the exact number of women over the age of 30 who continued to be excluded from the franchise. Through close analysis of the data from the 1921 Census I have shown that 1,941,165 were also left without a vote until 1928. To calculate this number, the number of women aged over 30 on the electoral roll in any given county of England and Wales was subtracted from the total population of women aged over 30 in that county, per the 1921 census.¹⁵ In each county, there were several thousand women who, despite having reached the age limit stipulated by the 1918 Act, were still not present on the electoral register, and who were therefore excluded from the Parliamentary franchise, most likely due to the restrictive, property-based nature of the 1918 Act.¹⁶
- 7 Some degree of caution must be applied here. The census was taken on 19 June 1921, and recorded where an individual was residing on that night, which was not necessarily the individual's permanent address, where they were registered as a voter. A degree of

mobility in the population is therefore to be expected, and will have had an impact on the calculation, using this data, of the number of unenfranchised voters. It is also important to note that, as today, not all potential voters would be interested in, or even know how to, register to vote. Kathryn Gleadle has argued that women could often face cultural pressures that discouraged them from becoming involved in politics; some women may have lacked the necessary cultural capital that enabled them to understand the registration or voting process.¹⁷ Although her work focuses on women in the nineteenth century, it is likely that these obstacles persisted to an extent following the passing of the 1918 Act; a small percentage of the unenfranchised two million may have lacked the cultural capital that enabled them to engage in the voting process. These factors, and others, may therefore have contributed to some of the missing two million's absence from the electoral register.

- 8 However, it is clear from comparing the figures for *male* unenfranchisement in this period that there is a stark gendered difference in the number of unregistered voters. The same data set was used, but this time the number of men aged 21 and over in the county was subtracted from the total male population of that county. In total, 546,147 men aged 21 and over were not registered to vote in 1921.¹⁸ This is, on average, 5.3% of the male population of Great Britain aged over 21. In contrast, the almost two million unenfranchised women account for 21.1% of the female population aged over 30. This is an enormous difference that cannot be explained solely by allowing for a degree of population mobility or apathy. This therefore indicates that the property-based qualifications that affected women voters, but not men, served to exclude more of these women from the vote than any other qualification in the Act.
- 9 There were a number of different ways a woman could qualify for the franchise once she had reached 30. If she was a property owner, or paid local rates, she could become enfranchised, and if she was married to a man who was a property owner or local rate payer, she would also qualify—although it is worth noting that, if her husband was too poor to afford local rates payments, he would still qualify to vote even though his wife would not. Women graduates of universities (including those who had completed exams at Oxford and Cambridge) were entitled to the vote, but a woman married to a man who was a university graduate did not become an elector by virtue of her husband's degree. The rules were complicated and often erroneously misapplied as a result. For example, Cheryl Law notes that, prior to the completion of demobilisation after the First World War in 1922, some electoral officials denied the wives of servicemen the right to vote on the grounds that their husbands were still away on active military service. Although there was nothing in the 1918 Act that served to prohibit women in the military, or the wives of men in the military, from voting once they had reached the age of 30, Law notes that “*the confusion did considerable damage to women's understanding of their legal entitlement*”.¹⁹ Neither the women themselves, nor, in some cases, officials overseeing the registration process, seemed to fully understand the terms of the Act due to the numerous and complicated clauses it contained.
- 10 The property requirements of the 1918 Act did, in some cases, affect middle-class women, but such women had more opportunities to work around them than working-class women. Businesswomen living in unfurnished rooms were prevented from voting, for example (although businessmen living identical circumstances were not). However, they were simply advised by an NUWSS pamphlet of 1918 to “*buy their own furniture [which qualified them to vote] and rent an unfurnished room or rooms, whether in the house of*

their own people or with strangers".²⁰ Not only would this suggestion have been an impossibility for almost all working-class women, they far outnumbered the middle-class businesswomen who were also affected by this qualification.

- 11 It is worth drawing particular attention to the fact that these property qualifications also left women who worked in domestic service unenfranchised during the decade that followed the 1918 Act. By 1921, 1,335,389 women in Britain worked in domestic service. Although this represents a slight fall from 1901, when 1,459,884 were employed in service, a number of factors, including the economic depression of the 1920s and the slow expansion rate of light manufacturing, meant that the number of women working in live-in domestic service actually increased as the 1920s progressed. Indeed, by 1931 the number of women working in service had reached 1,554,235—a higher number than at the turn of the century.²¹ Women were expressly excluded from the franchise if they shared a house with their employer, which, of course, included all those who worked as live-in servants. Those who received lodgings as part of their salary—school teachers, for example—could still qualify for the franchise.²²
- 12 Although domestic service employed a predominantly young workforce, in the interwar period about 50% of servants were aged 25 or younger.²³ This still left those servants aged over 30—just under half of the total workforce—disenfranchised despite meeting the age qualification. This is significant not just because it shows that a large number of women were still excluded from the franchise on the basis of their occupation, even after they had turned 30, but also because domestic service was such a large employer of working-class women—indeed, "*it employed the largest numbers of women of any labour market sector in Britain*".²⁴ This was not, therefore, a relatively small anomaly that affected only a very few women living in very specific circumstances. This was an exclusion of a large proportion of working-class women, and an exclusion of all women working in the single largest sector of female employment at the time.
- 13 Where feminist societies continued to campaign for equal enfranchisement, almost without exception they did so on the basis of obtaining votes for the "under thirties"; working-class women over 30 who were not property owners, or who could not afford local rates payments went without mention in their campaigning. In 1927, anticipating the passing of the Equal Franchise Bill, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), the post-war incarnation of the NUWSS, produced a pamphlet designed as a history of the suffrage movement from partial enfranchisement in 1918 to equal enfranchisement in 1928. The booklet offers a year by year overview of key events, demonstrations, petitions and setbacks, with some commentary. It aimed to be "*a short summary*" of what "*practically every important women's organisation is working [on]*".²⁵ What is immediately noticeable, however, is its almost total lack of acknowledgement of the two million unenfranchised women over 30; the chief focus is on those aged between 21 and 30. Indeed, at no point does this official contemporary history of the suffrage movement post-1918, produced by the largest suffrage organisation in Britain, note the existence of a large number of women older than 30 who were excluded from the franchise, nor does it explain *why* they were excluded. The pamphlet's author does make two vague references to "*inequalities in the present law between men and women*",²⁶ but never explicitly states what these other inequalities in the law actually were.
- 14 July 1927 saw a large demonstration in Hyde Park by over 40 women's societies, pressuring the government to act on the issue of equal suffrage. The societies involved

set out their demands on the government in a letter: they called for “*an immediate Government measure giving votes to women at 21 on the same terms as men*” with a second demand for “*Peeresses in their own right a seat, voice and vote in the House of Lords*”.²⁷ The emphasis of the letter was, once again, placed on securing age parity with male voters. Indeed, although it could be argued that the phrase “on the same terms as men” encompassed *all* the disparities in the current law, the fact that the present women’s franchise was based largely on property qualifications was not highlighted, whilst the age difference was. It is quite clear to see which factor was prioritised by the organisations. Perhaps more tellingly, the need for women to be able to sit in the House of Lords on the same terms as men was considered an equally pressing issue as franchise reform.²⁸ Although this would have undoubtedly been a symbolic victory for women generally, it is arguable how much of an impact the gender composition of an unelected Upper House would have had on working-class women, compared with the impact of being allowed to vote in Parliamentary elections.

- 15 It should not simply be assumed that, with such a strong contemporary focus on votes at 21, the exclusion of poorer women aged over 30 from the 1918 Act was not understood at the time. There is a significant body of evidence that indicates that a number of seasoned suffrage campaigners were aware of the problem of the property-based franchise system, and particularly its impact on excluding older working-class women from the franchise. Eva Hubback and Elizabeth Macadam, in their capacity as secretaries to NUSEC, protested against “*the absurd anomalies which at present prevent...two million women above [30], because they are poor in this world’s goods, from entering into their rightful inheritance of responsible citizenship*”.²⁹ Hubback and Macadam’s figure of two million is corroborated by analysis of data from the 1921 Census; as examined earlier, the total number of unenfranchised women aged over 30 in England and Wales in 1921 was 1,941,165—or just under two million. Their comments also suggest that those who held senior organisational roles within the post-war suffrage movement were aware of the discrepancies in the 1918 Act that left a large number of women unenfranchised because of its various qualifications that were tied to wealth and property. Elsewhere, an anonymous article entitled ‘Demonstration on Equal Franchise’ which was sent to *Time and Tide* magazine in 1927 notes that, in addition to women under 30 not being enfranchised, “*under existing laws, 14 out of 15 of our women wage-earners are disenfranchised*”.³⁰ Although the article’s author gives no indication as to how this figure was calculated—and it is worth noting that it seems to be something of an over-estimate compared with other calculations—it does suggest that the unenfranchisement of older working-class women was understood, even when the exact number of women affected was somewhat misunderstood.
- 16 The issue was also mentioned in various Parliamentary debates on the possibility of extending the franchise. Ellen Wilkinson noted that, “[w]hen I was first elected [at 33] having neither a husband nor furniture, although I was eligible to sit in this House, I was not eligible for a vote,”³¹ whilst fellow Labour MP Margaret Bondfield commented that, “[s]ince I have been able to vote at all, I have never felt the same enthusiasm because the vote was the consequence of possessing property rather than the consequence of being a human being”.³² Conservative MP Katharine Stewart-Murray was present at a debate on equalising the franchise in 1924, where she “*queried whether women really wanted [equal franchise]*” but nonetheless did acknowledge that something should be done about some of the anomalies that existed in the 1918 Act, specifically referencing the women over 30 who were still unenfranchised.³³ Nonetheless, such comments were rare, and not acted upon

until the Equal Franchise Bill was passed, and the general picture suggests that there was very limited discussion of, or campaigning against, the exclusion of working-class women over 30 from a franchise system that was property-based.

- 17 Finally, in July 1928 the Equal Franchise Act was passed, removing all pre-existing anomalies in the 1918 Act. Although the focus of much of the campaigning for the equalisation of the franchise during the ten year period between the two Acts was on obtaining votes at 21, rather than removing the property qualifications for voting that most affected poorer working-class women over 30, women were, in the end, granted the right to vote on equal terms with men. After 1928, all previously excluded women were enfranchised. With this end result—a victory for all women, regardless of age, social class or any other factor—why does it matter that some working-class women had been excluded from the original Act, and that they were largely ignored by those working towards equalisation of the franchise? The second section of this article will attempt to answer this question by considering the relationship between legislative change, and broader changes in social attitudes towards women, both prior to the partial enfranchisement of women in 1918, and afterwards.

The persistence of class biased attitudes within the suffrage movement and politics, 1918–1928

- 18 Although the 1918 Act was the first to allow (some) women the vote in Parliamentary elections, thus granting them full citizenship rights, it was not the first piece of legislation that allowed women to participate in the democratic process. Evidence suggests that in some areas, women were voting in parish elections as early as the 1840s,³⁴ whilst from 1888, women could vote in borough and county council elections. Changes in legislation that allowed women the right to vote in local elections helped to change social attitudes towards women's role in the public sphere, increasing their area of influence, which in turn assisted in increasing the pressure on successive governments to pass legislation granting women the Parliamentary franchise.
- 19 Of course, this pressure was mostly kept up by the suffrage movement. Women from across the political spectrum were united in their desire for the vote, even when their methods of campaigning differed. It is also significant that women from all social classes, including the working-class, were involved in the campaign.³⁵ However, the relationship between the working-class women and the middle- and upper-class women in the movement was a complex one, and reflected entrenched social divisions. For example, in the early twentieth century, as domestic service was the most common form of female employment, most women involved in the suffrage movement would have experienced either employing, or working as, a servant.³⁶ As Laura Schwartz argues, domestic servants were undoubtedly active in the suffrage movement but due to the nature of their work, they often found it “*difficult to participate in the regular round of meetings and demonstrations*”.³⁷ Furthermore, her analysis of servants' correspondence in journals such as *Common Cause* suggests that servants were aware of, and unafraid to point out, “*the hypocrisy of those claiming to fight for women's emancipation while benefitting from the exploitation of women workers in their own home*”.³⁸ The failure of feminists in the period 1918–1928 to fight for the enfranchisement of the two million women who were unable to meet the property-based qualifications in the 1918 Act, which included all live-in domestic servants over the age of 30, suggests that in this case, legislative

change enfranchising *some* women did not lead to a corresponding shift in attitudes towards *all* women. The relative lack of interest in the very poorest women and domestic servants was prevalent within the women's movement before 1918, which in part accounts for their exclusion from the legislation; the failure of feminists to fight for their enfranchisement alongside that of younger women suggests a degree of continuity in class relations within the suffrage movement between 1918 and 1928.

- 20 Considering attitudes towards the new woman voter in the press and party literature is also useful in assessing the relationship between legislative change and social change. Women were quickly accepted as voters by the media, although with some caveats. They were expressly encouraged to vote in the 1918 election, but were encouraged to do so by considering the impact that politics had on their children, homes and welfare. Millicent Fawcett, writing in the *Daily Express* on polling day, implored women to vote for “*the education of your children, the guardianship laws that concern them, your homes [and] your citizenship*” with several other feminist writers using domestic issues to encourage women to vote.³⁹ It is significant that women were accepted as voters by the media, with even the *Daily Mail* reversing its pre-war opposition to women's enfranchisement and encouraging women to vote.⁴⁰ But it is equally significant that they were encouraged to do so through domestic issues. In the Victorian period, when women began to be involved in local politics, they were most often to be found exerting influence “*over the delivery of state welfare policies*”.⁴¹ Such topics had been gendered as “women's issues”, and this continued after partial enfranchisement, on a national level as well as local.
- 21 As this article has argued, the two million women over 30 who were excluded from the franchise appear to have been mostly forgotten by the suffrage movement as a whole. In addition, they were also largely ignored by the political parties in their appeals to women voters. Research by David Thackeray suggests that women were most often appealed to as housewives and consumers, by highlighting issues such as the cost of milk, rather than as waged workers in their own right; he contends that this decision could have been influenced, at least in part, by the fact that there was not yet full enfranchisement for women.⁴² The very poorest women's concerns were not addressed in party literature, and instead, this was aimed instead at well-heeled housewives (the “acceptable” face of the new woman voter).⁴³ Those who were not enfranchised were—like the issues that affected them—ignored by political parties. Although political parties, like the popular press, both accepted and attempted to appeal to the new woman voter, they were uninterested in protesting the exclusion of the very poorest women from the franchise.
- 22 All this suggests that the relationship between legislative and social change is complex. Changes in social attitudes *and* legislation meant that women's sphere of influence had expanded by 1918, which contributed to the passage of the 1918 Act. Through this, both social change and legislative change can be seen to drive each other. This is also illustrated in what did *not* change. In 1918, legislative change excluded two million working-class women from the vote, and there was no campaign by suffrage activists to rectify this—the focus for equalising the franchise was solely on the “under thirties”. It is significant that the poorest women were still excluded from both the franchise and the suffrage campaign, as this indicates a degree of continuity from the earlier period, when the poorest women, and particularly domestic servants, also faced a measure of exclusion from the movement.

Conclusion

- 23 When considering the impact of the 1918 Act, Maria DiCenzo has cautioned against applying unrealistic expectations to the rate at which society could have changed as a direct result of the passage of this legislation:

Given that it took another ten years just to achieve equal voting rights and another fifty to pass equal pay legislation for women, critics have underestimated the extent to which the concerted efforts of feminists met with sustained opposition on the part of constituencies and institutions whose interests would not be served by addressing grievances and extending rights to large numbers of women.⁴⁴

- 24 Even an Act that had guaranteed women voting rights on equal terms with men from the beginning would not have been enough to overcome such institutional opposition, and this is worth bearing in mind, when considering how much change the Act brought to the lives of even those women it did initially enfranchise. It should also, of course, be acknowledged that the Act itself, for all its restrictions, was, and remains, of immense significance to feminists. It marked the culmination of decades of work by those who had campaigned for suffrage rights. And the vote as a concept had always been about more than just the ability of an individual woman to place a cross in a ballot box come election time; it had always, in part, been about “*acknowledging women as human beings*”.

45

- 25 Nonetheless, it is important to consider what the Act did *not* do as much as what it did, and in particular consider the place in society of the two million working-class women who were excluded by its terms. The relationship between social change and legislative change is complex; both can drive each other forward, and at times it is hard to see direct causality from legal change to social change, or vice versa. When laws were changed to first allow Victorian women to stand for election to local councils, their presence there helped to change perceptions of women’s role in the public sphere, changing social attitudes towards women, which in turn contributed to the passage of the 1918 Act. Legislative change—in both the earlier period and post-1918—did not result in an overnight change in attitudes towards women, but it did help to drive gendered social change forward by legally defining women’s right to take up certain spaces. Excluding certain groups from the 1918 Act, then, left these women not only without a vote, but also excluded from the more general shift in opinions on what was—and was not—considered acceptable for women. If the vote had always been, on some level, about acknowledging women as human beings, were those women who remained unenfranchised in the decade that followed 1918 somehow not fully recognised as human beings? It is hoped that this article has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the legislation surrounding women’s enfranchisement in Britain. It is therefore perhaps worth considering who the 1918 Act excluded, as well as who it included, when considering the extent to which this piece of legislation drove forward social change in the decade to 1928.

- 26 **Anna Muggeridge completed an MA by Research at the University of Warwick in June 2016. She is currently working towards a PhD at the University of Worcester, which is kindly funded by a studentship from the university. Her research examines the extent to which war and conflict politicised women in the Black Country in the period 1914 to 1948.**

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NOTES

1. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on my original draft, and the editors of this special edition. Additional thanks to my supervisors at the University of Warwick, Dr Laura Schwartz and Professor Sarah Richardson. I am also very grateful to Professor Maggie Andrews for her advice.
2. For the most comprehensive guide to the numerous different organisations, see: Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928*, (London, Routledge, 2000).
3. Margaret Llewellyn-Davis, 'The People's Suffrage Federation', *The Common Cause*, 21 October 1909, p. 356–7.
4. Leah Leneman, 'A truly national movement: the view from outside London, in Maroula Joannou and June Purvis, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 37–50, p. 31.
5. Sandra Stanley Holton, 'Women and the vote', in June Purvis (ed.), *Women's History: Britain, 1850–1945 An Introduction*, (London, Routledge, 1995), p. 277–305, p. 277.
6. Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace, 1914-1928*, (London, Macmillan, 1989).
7. Cheryl Law, *Suffrage and Power: the women's movement 1918-1928*, (London, IB Tauris, 1997).
8. *Ibid.*, p.183.
9. Jo Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote: The Erosion of Democratic Suffragism in Britain During the First World War*, (London, Palgrave, 2007), p. 95.
10. June Purvis, "The Women's Party of Great Britain (1917-1919): a forgotten episode in British women's political history", *Women's History Review*, 25(4), 2016, p. 639.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 647.
12. In particular, see Esther Breitenbach and Valerie Wright, "Women as Active Citizens: Glasgow and Edinburgh c.1918- 1939", *Women's History Review*, 23(3), (2013), pp. 401–420 and June Hannam and Karen Hunt, "Towards an archaeology of Interwar Women's Politics: the Local and the Everyday" in, Julie V Gottlieb and Richard Toye (eds.), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender and Politics in Britain 1918-1945* (London, Palgrave, 2013), pp. 124–141.
13. Adrian Bingham, "Enfranchisement, Feminism and the Modern Woman: Debates in the British Popular Press, 1918-1939", in Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye (eds.), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender and Politics in Britain 1918-1945* (London, Palgrave, 2013), pp. 87–104.
14. Law, *Suffrage and Power*, pp. 182–183.
15. Census Data, 'Preliminary Report on the population data of the thirteenth Census of England and Wales', compiled by the Registrar General S. P. Vivian, 18 August 1922. Available at <http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/Show?page=Home>, last accessed 06.07.2016. To calculate this figure, Table 7, 'Population and parliamentary electors (parliamentary constituencies)' was used for each county of England and Wales. This gives the population of women aged 30 and over in the county, per the Census of June 1921, and the number of women aged over 30 on the county's electoral register, per the electoral roll of 1921. From this data, for each county the number of women aged over 30, but who did *not* appear on the electoral roll can be calculated. This data was collected as part of my MA thesis at the University of Warwick; full detail can be provided on

request, as space necessarily precludes its inclusion here. Anna Muggeridge, 'To what extent were working-class women excluded from the franchise 1918–1928?', (MA by Research dissertation, University of Warwick, 2016).

16. It is worth noting that, due to availability of figures, these calculations were only done for England and Wales. Were Scotland and Northern Ireland to be included in the data, it can reasonably be assumed that the figure would well exceed two million unenfranchised women over 30.

17. Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain 1815–1867* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009).

18. Census Data, "Preliminary Report on the population data of the thirteenth Census of England and Wales", compiled by the Registrar General S. P. Vivian, 18 August 1922. Available at <<http://www.histpop.org/ohpr/servlet/Show?page=Home>>. (Last accessed 06.07.2016). Again, Table 7, "Population and parliamentary electors (parliamentary constituencies)" was used for each county of England and Wales.

19. Cheryl Law, "The old faith living and the old power there: the movement to extend women's suffrage", in Maroula Joannou and June Purvis, (eds.), *The Women's Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 203.

20. Chrystal Macmillan, *And shall I have a parliamentary vote?: being a description of the qualifications for the women's parliamentary and local government vote in England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland, with particulars as to how to get on the register*, (London, NUWSS, 1918), p. 3.

21. Selina Todd, "Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900–1950", *Past and Present*, 203, 2009, pp. 184–5.

22. Macmillan, *And shall I have a parliamentary vote?*, p. 3.

23. Todd, "Domestic Service", p. 183.

24. Lucy Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in twentieth-century Britain* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 1

25. Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Maitland Sara Hallinan Collection, MSS.15X/2/349/1, "Equal Franchise 1918–1928", September 1927, p.1.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 3. A similar reference is made on page 1: commenting on the Labour Party's 1919 proposed Women's Emancipation Bill, the pamphlet notes that the Bill was designed to 'grant the Franchise to women on the same terms as men', but does not explicitly state that it was just the age limit on women voters the proposed Bill was designed to remove.

27. The Women's Library, London School of Economics, Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee Correspondence and Papers, 5ERI/1/B, "Letter demanding equal franchise sent to Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin", 1926. Copies from over 15 different women's organisations survive within the papers relating to the franchise extension campaign that are currently housed at The Women's Library.

28. This is perhaps because the demonstration was organised by the Equal Political Rights Committee, which was chaired by Margaret Haig, Lady Rhondda, who had also set up the Six Point Group. Although the Six Point Group went on to campaign on a range of feminist issues, it had been first set up by Rhondda in 1921 after she failed to take the seat in the Lords that she had inherited from her father, and the Lords had thrown out her petition for reform. (Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*, p. 140.)

29. Hubback and Macadam, cited in Johanna Alberti, "'A Symbol and A Key': The suffrage movement in Britain, 1918–1928", in June Purvis and Sandra Stanley-Holton (eds.), *Votes for Women* (London, Routledge, 2000), p. 283.

30. The Women's Library, London School of Economics, Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee Correspondence and Papers, 5ERI/1/B, "Demonstration on Equal Franchise". Sent to *Time and Tide* magazine 6 July 1927. The article is typed with a handwritten note indicating that it was sent to *Time and Tide*; its author is anonymous.

31. House of Commons, House of Commons Debate, vol. 215, column 1405, 29 March 1928.
32. *Ibid.*, column 1415.
33. Mari Takayanagi, "Parliament and Women, c.1900-1945", (PhD dissertation, King's College London, 2012), p. 113.
34. Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2013).
35. There is a large body of literature that considers the role of working-class women in the suffrage movement. See, for instance: Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, *One Hand Tied Behind Us: Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement*, 2nd Ed, (London, Rivers Oram Press, 2000); June Purvis, "The Prison Experiences of the Suffragettes in Edwardian Britain", *Women's History Review*, 4 (1), (1995), pp. 103–133; Michelle Myall, "'No surrender!': the militancy of Mary Leigh, a working-class suffragette", in Maroula Joannou and June Purvis (eds.), *The Women's Suffrage Movement: New feminist perspectives* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 173–187; Krista Cowman, "'Incipient Toryism'? The Women's Social and Political Union and the Independent Labour Party, 1903–14", *History Workshop Journal*, 53 (1), (2002), pp. 128–148; Krista Cowman, *Women of the right spirit: Paid organisers of the WSPU, 1904–18* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 1–11.
36. Laura Schwartz, 'A Job Like Any Other? Feminist Responses and Challenges to Domestic Worker Organizing in Edwardian Britain', *International Labour and Working-Class History*, 88, (2015), p. 1.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
39. Bingham, "Feminism and the Modern Woman", p. 91.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
41. June Hannam, "Women and Politics", in June Purvis (ed.), *Women's History: Britain, 1850–1945: An Introduction* (London, Routledge, 1995), p. 225.
42. David Thackeray, "From Prudent Housewife to Empire Shopper: Party Appeals to the Female Voter 1918–1928", in Julie V Gottlieb and Richard Toye (eds.), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender and Politics in Britain 1918–1945* (London, Palgrave, 2013), pp. 38–39.
43. There is an extensive literature on how housewives of all social classes "became" citizens in the interwar years that considers how they were educated and involved in the political process. See, for instance: Maggie Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Institute as a Social Movement* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 2015); Caitriona Beaumont, *Housewives and citizens Domesticity and the women's movement in England, 1928–64* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013) and Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb Domestic Identities: Class, Femininity and Modernity* (London, Bloomsbury, 2004).
44. Maria DiCenzo, "'Our Freedom and Its Results': measuring progress in the aftermath of suffrage", *Women's History Review*, 23 (3), 2014, p. 421–40, p. 423.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 429.

ABSTRACTS

This paper seeks to explore the extent to which the extension of the franchise to some women in 1918 resulted in a measureable change in attitudes towards women, and particularly working-

class women. This article will demonstrate that roughly two million women over the age of 30 continue to be disenfranchised by the 1918 Representation of the People Act, the vast majority of them working-class women who were unable to 'buy into' the franchise through property ownership or local rates payments. The suffragists working on the extension of the franchise between 1918 and 1928 focused almost exclusively on the younger unenfranchised women, with almost no attention paid to the two million women over 30 who were still excluded from the franchise on the basis of their class. It will therefore argue that although partial enfranchisement did result in progress being made in (some) women's legal status, many working-class women continue to be denied citizenship until 1928, while the class bias of the pre-war suffrage movement continued to pervade inter-war feminism.

L'accès de certaines femmes au suffrage en 1918 a-t-il produit un changement d'attitudes envers les femmes, tout particulièrement les femmes ouvrières ? Cet article démontrera qu'approximativement deux millions de femmes de plus de trente ans n'ont pas obtenu le droit de vote en 1918, en majorité des ouvrières qui n'étaient pas en mesure d'accéder au vote car elles n'étaient pas propriétaires et ne payaient pas assez d'impôts locaux. Les suffragistes qui continuèrent à faire campagne, entre 1918 et 1928, pour l'accès des femmes encore exclues au droit de vote, concentrèrent leurs efforts quasi exclusivement sur les femmes de moins de trente ans, en ignorant presque totalement ces deux millions de femmes de plus de trente ans exclues par leur appartenance de classe. Cet article en conclura que si l'accès partiel des femmes au droit de vote fut source de progrès dans le statut de certaines femmes, beaucoup de femmes ouvrières continuèrent à voir leur citoyenneté niée jusqu'en 1928, tandis que le biais classiste du mouvement suffragiste d'avant-guerre continua à irriguer le féminisme d'entre-guerre.

INDEX

Mots-clés: genre, classe sociale, suffrage des femmes, la loi sur la représentation du peuple de 1918, féminisme

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