

WestminsterResearch

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/westminsterresearch>

**'[A] stronger position as women alone': women's associations in
the British civil service and feminism, 1900-1959**

Glew, H.

This is an accepted manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Women's History Review, DOI, 10.1080/09612025.2020.1814511.

The final definitive version is available online:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1814511>

© 2020 Taylor & Francis

The WestminsterResearch online digital archive at the University of Westminster aims to make the research output of the University available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the authors and/or copyright owners.

‘[A] stronger position as women alone’: women’s associations in the British civil service and feminism, 1900-1959

Helen Glew

Abstract: This article examines three successive organisations for women clerical workers in the Civil Service – the Association of Post Office Women Clerks (APOWC), the Federation of Women Civil Servants (FWCS) and the National Association of Women Civil Servants (NAWCS) – which explicitly identified as feminist and which pushed for the same conditions of employment for women as for men. In an era where a significant number of women’s trade unions and associations merged with male-dominated unions, the article explores the significance, politics, challenges and tactics of remaining ‘women alone’ and how the organisations and their members negotiated changing external perceptions of feminism and different generational understandings of the need for feminism. Finally, it offers a case study of the ways in which a women-only organisation based around a professional identity worked with the wider feminist movement for publicity, support and a sense of shared endeavour.

Biography: Helen Glew is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Westminster and works on women’s employment and feminism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Britain. Her monograph, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation: women’s work in the Civil Service and the London County Council* was published by Manchester University Press in 2016. She is now working on a social and cultural history of the marriage bar and married women’s paid work, 1870-1960.

School of Humanities, University of Westminster, 309 Regent Street, London, W1B 2HW
h.glew@westminster.ac.uk

Despite the much greater understanding of interwar British feminism offered by historians in the past two decades or so, we still know relatively little – with the exception of teaching and the medical profession - about the role of feminism in white-collar workplaces and how women in middle-class or professional occupations deployed feminist arguments and principles in negotiations with their employers and in publicising their cause.¹ This article examines three successive organisations for women civil servants in Britain which have hitherto received little attention from historians – the Association of Post Office Women Clerks (APOWC), the Federation of Women Civil Servants (FWCS) and the National Association of Women Civil Servants (NAWCS). Each identified explicitly with the strand of

the feminist movement which continued to argue for equal rights and equal treatment with men. Beyond expanding our understanding of feminism in the workplace, providing a case study of how the interwar feminist movement was translated into a workplace setting, and the tangible effects it had on women civil servants' campaigning, this article further offers an opportunity to re-assess the significance of women-only associations, both to their members and to the success of feminist endeavour in this period. In an era where many women-only unions and associations combined with male or mixed-sex unions, the examination of an organisation which ultimately remained women-only illuminates the use of feminist rhetoric and space and underlines the increasing challenges of doing this, particularly in the late 1930s and afterwards.

The Association of Post Office Women Clerks was formed in 1901 by Minnie Louise Cale in protest at a reduction in the maximum rate of pay for women clerks.² It was the latest in a lively tradition of staff associations in the Post Office, but the first that was women-only – and indeed it was the only employees' association that women clerks in the Civil Service were able to join at this point. It initially affiliated to the National Union of Women Workers but this connection seems to have been dropped around the end of the First World War.³ After growing in membership and strength, the APOWC became the founding organisation and model for the Federation of Women Civil Servants (FWCS) in 1913 when a number of the APOWC's members were promoted or transferred to other Civil Service departments. Thus, the FWCS became the 'parent' organisation, over-seeing and co-ordinating the actions of the individual associations in numerous Civil Service departments. By 1929, there were associations affiliated to the FWCS in the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Board of Education, the Public Trustee Office, the Department of Health for Scotland, the Foreign Office, the Scottish Education Department and two branches in the Ministry of Pensions. There was also a branch for Higher Women Officers, who were in slightly higher grades across the service.⁴ In the early 1930s the FWCS merged with the Civil Service section of the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, which had hitherto

represented, amongst others, temporary women civil servants in the typing and clerical grades.⁵ The new organisation became the National Association of Women Civil Servants (NAWCS) with a central committee and branches in each department. Throughout their lifetimes, then, these organisations campaigned for absolute equality between men and women civil servants, particularly equality of opportunity and pay as well as an end to the marriage bar, the stricture which prevented women from continuing in permanent positions after marriage. In the earliest decades of the twentieth century, there were few avenues of promotion for women, many roles remained closed to them and their pay remained significantly below men's. There were some changes as the interwar years progressed but in practice these often resulted in less than they had seemed to promise on paper.⁶

The women in the organisations were largely lower-middle and middle-class who were doing what was often repetitive book-keeping and clerical procedural work. This required a great deal of accuracy and attention to detail, and was therefore tiring yet comparatively mundane. There was an equivalent organisation from 1920 for women on the higher (the executive and administrative) grades, known as the Council of Women Civil Servants, but its membership was smaller and methods of operation somewhat different, so for this reason and reasons of space it will not be discussed here. The APOWC, FWCS and NAWCS therefore represented women on numerically large grades whose workplace cultures were significantly different to those of women on higher grades, not least spatially because they worked in large offices, in single-sex groups, and were more likely to do work which was interchangeable. They rarely came into contact with members of the Civil Service hierarchy, with the exception of their immediate superiors, who were, relatively speaking, not particularly senior. As an organisation of women, of the Civil Service and of the middle classes, the APOWC and its successors therefore practically straddled divisions between being a trade union (although not formally registered as such) and a 'more respectable' middle-class association, and was, as will be discussed here, a distinct part of the interwar

women's movement whilst being at the forefront of campaigns for workplace equality for women.

When it was set up, the APOWC was not only the first women-only association in the Civil Service but one of the first associations in any type of employment established specifically to represent female white-collar workers, predating the equivalent male association in the Civil Service - the Assistant Clerks' Association - by two years, and the Association of Shorthand Writers, later the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries (AWCS) by the same length of time.⁷ The APOWC's equality feminist underpinnings were evident from the start. In addition to its aim 'to protect and promote the interests of its members' it campaigned for equal pay and equal opportunities for women.⁸ In a Civil Service institutional culture which thought of female labour only in terms of how it would best suit the aims of the organisation, the equality demands were perceived as particularly radical and wildly unrealistic. When Minnie Cale told the Holt Committee on Post Office Servants in 1913 that she envisaged both a female Postmaster General and a female secretary to the GPO in the future, the committee members laughed at her.⁹ The APOWC and its successors also earned a reputation amongst Treasury officials for their persistence and the perceived audacity of their claims. Early in their history, they were referred to as the 'Amazonian cavalry'.¹⁰

The APOWC was of course formed against the backdrop of the growing suffrage campaign and there is evidence that association leaders were involved in the campaign and that they acquired some of their knowledge of organising and the benefits of associational culture in the movement.¹¹ It is clear, for example, that Minnie Cale took part in the 1911 census boycott and other members were involved as a Civil Service section in the procession of June 1911.¹² Millicent Murby, employed in the Money Order Department of the Post Office and an APOWC committee member, spoke at suffrage meetings, wrote pamphlets on women's equality issues and was active in the Fabian Society.¹³ Despite stipulations that civil servants were not supposed to be demonstrably political, Florence Feek, a woman clerk in the Money Order Department and an APOWC committee member, was jailed for a month

after taking part in a WSPU raid on the House of Commons in 1909.¹⁴ It is certainly clear, then, that some of the founding members of the APOWC were well-connected with suffrage and that the prominence and momentum of the movement created a natural point of alignment and allyship for these women clerks. It also served as a means for individual association members - and thereby the association itself - to make wider and long-lasting connections with the feminist movement. As Hilda Kean and Alison Oram have argued with regard to women teachers, a 'key element' in members' politicisation was that 'they were employed by the State, yet disenfranchised and excluded from full citizenship within the State.'¹⁵ For members and officers without formal allegiance to the suffrage movement, the backdrop of suffrage undoubtedly remained influential, even if just to emphasise the possibilities and power of women-only organisations. *Association Notes*, the APOWC's quarterly publication, also highlighted the connections between the APOWC's aims, the wider political, social and economic disadvantages women faced and the significance, therefore, of the acquisition of the vote because of all that it could then empower.¹⁶

By 1912 there were 1383 members of the APOWC, which comprised around 75 % of the eligible staff in those grades.¹⁷ Detailed membership lists have not survived, but the signatories of a memorandum to the Postmaster General in 1908 give some sense of the membership in the Money Order Department branch of the GPO. The average age was twenty-six and a quarter and members lived in inner north, south and west London, with a preponderance in north London near the Money Order Department, and in south London in the lower-middle class housing developments and proximity to transport links to north London.¹⁸

Interwar feminism, women's activism and 'women-only' associations

Until recently, women's activism in the Civil Service typically featured as little more than footnotes in accounts of Civil Service unionism.¹⁹ The historiography has tended to view the

successive women's organisations as less significant and less central to staff politics than other organisations because they were smaller and catered to women only. However, although the eventual gains for women civil servants by the 1950s have to be seen as a combined effort by all staff associations – and, in some cases, the result of external circumstances²⁰ - the landscape of Civil Service staff representation would have been shaped rather differently without the influence of these women-only organisations. Although Betty Vance Humphries acknowledges that the women's associations forced other Civil Service associations to think about women's issues more than they otherwise might have, her assessment that their importance declined in the post Second World War years led her, Lee Holcombe, and other historians until recently to overlook the earlier work of the women's associations more generally, the strength of their feminism, and the sound of their voices in Civil Service agitation.²¹ Indeed, the APOWC, FWCS and NAWCS relentlessly campaigned throughout the early twentieth century for equal pay, equal opportunities with men and an end to the marriage bar, very often instigating initiatives on these issues but also contributing to efforts begun by others.²² It is time, then, to look at these organisations in more depth and to place the APOWC, FWCS and NAWCS fully in the context of the interwar and mid-century feminist movement. This article demonstrates how feminist principles and feminist support networks guided the actions of the women's associations. In so doing, it adds further understanding to the ways in which middle-class women workers campaigned for their rights and adds these women to existing histories of trade unionism and associational politics in public service employment. Indeed, considering these associations adds new dimensions to the generally under-researched histories of white-collar campaigning by illuminating activism by women who could not find the support they required via typical trade union or association alliances and who wanted to remain non-party. It reminds us that just as issues of gender and class representation were present in working class and labour movement organisations, the politics of gender representation remained in wider white-collar union and associational culture.

When the APOWC was formed, and its parent organisation took over in 1913, single-sex associations for women seemed the de facto way of organising, both due to the example of the suffrage movement, the growth of women's trade unions more widely and the fact that the only near-equivalent civil service organisation catered to men only.²³ Pamela Graves and Sarah Boston, amongst others, demonstrate that there was, however, growing scepticism by the interwar years about women-only organisations in the labour movement. Organisations dominated by men were generally suspicious of organisations for women only, arguing that they were putting gender before class or segregating the issues of workers.²⁴ By choosing throughout the interwar years to remain women-only and aligning themselves clearly with the feminist movement the FWCS and NAWCS were making a clear statement about the significance they attached to being women workers first and foremost, rather than workers more generally, and ultimately about their scepticism regarding the ability of mixed-sex organisations to adequately cater to women.

In recent years there has been extensive scholarship on women's activism in the interwar years which overturns the once-common assumption that after the suffrage victories there was no organised women's or feminist movement. Historians have shed light on the extent of activism with which women were involved, both by those women who were willing to use the label 'feminist' and the many more who were not. Work by Cheryl Law, Alison Oram, Kaarin Michaelsen and Pat Thane, amongst many others highlights how women campaigned on a huge range of issues, both those related to the workplace and to society more widely.²⁵ Furthermore, as Caitriona Beaumont has shown, the large, 'mainstream' organisations for women in Britain in this period were involved with a significant number of campaigns for the betterment of women's lives, including equal pay, but avoided the label 'feminist'. Beaumont's work has also been particularly significant in reassessing notions of the 'equality versus difference' divisions within interwar feminism. Although the split within the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC) over this question was very public, there was considerable crossover and shared interests amongst individual

campaigning organisations.²⁶ The women's civil service associations under discussion here were very much positioned on the 'equality' end of the feminist debate, demanding the right to the same treatment as male civil servants and surrounding themselves with women's professional and feminist organisations which largely or fully embraced this position. That is not to say that they necessarily opposed other interpretations of feminism; rather, it is clear that it was equal conditions of employment with men that was most important to them in their professional identities as women workers. They made clear that the marriage bar denied them the possibilities of wifehood and motherhood and so other campaigns relating to these aspects of women's identities were less relevant to them. In 1940, for example, they declined an invitation to promote a new educational film *The Birth of a Baby* on the grounds that the state refused them the opportunity to have children and '[o]bserving that the President of the National Baby Welfare Council which was inviting our co-operation was the Prime Minister, we pointed out that the women with whom we are mainly in touch are presumably prevented by the Government's marriage bar from taking the helpful advice offered'.²⁷ It was a hallmark of their campaigning and strategy to use every opportunity to raise awareness of their campaigns.

The nature of the FWCS and NAWCS campaigning

Throughout their existence, the FWCS and NAWCS found themselves at the intersection of two significant interwar debates: one about the most effective organisation and representation of workers in trade unions and associations and the other about the place for, and need of, feminism in this period. It was in this climate that the first successor to the APOWC - the FWCS - undertook its interwar campaigning. The realisation of equality between men and women in the service was a long-term goal and the organisation was realistic about this. Thus, much of the campaigning took on characteristics akin to pressure groups and consciousness-raising, whilst one eye was kept on immediate developments in staffing policy in the hopes of trying to effect change at critical moments. The FWCS added a catch-all aim to 'remove the artificial restrictions placed on [women's] employment' to its

programme and also pledged to 'secure the removal of the civil and political disabilities of women' bolstering its outward commitment to an equality feminist agenda.²⁸ Clause five of the 1927 Trades Dispute Act, which prevented civil service organisations from taking part in wider political action, forced the Federation to remove this last objective from its official programme, though little in its outlook changed. FWCS and later NAWCS members continued to attend meetings of other feminist organisations, and were "guests" or observers, providing "informal advice" about matters concerning women in the Civil Service.²⁹ As Ray Strachey argued, 'with the granting of the vote all the organisations of women became *more or less* feminist or political' and indeed the 1927 legislation changed almost nothing in practice for the FWCS.³⁰

The years immediately after the First World War were a time of immense change in the Civil Service, in which women clerks fared badly. The Service was restructured and priority was given to both male clerks and demobilised servicemen in need of a job. The women were effectively allocated posts where there was room for them, in some cases losing a promotion.³¹ There was some gradual improvement to women's prospects by the end of the 1930s but disparities between employment opportunities for men and women were still very stark. Women continued to be paid around three-quarters of men's wages for the same or similar work, and were subject to a strict marriage bar.³² The marriage bar had a significant effect on membership, in that members were single and were likely pigeon-holed as 'sex-starved spinsters' as many interwar women who followed careers were.³³ The marriage bar clearly also had an effect on membership turnover, though as membership lists have not survived, it is hard to say how significant this effect was. The lack of surviving membership lists also means it is difficult to find out much about ordinary, non-committee members and their motivations for joining, though we can surmise that not all members necessarily joined because they aligned with the feminist aims of the Association. There were other reasons for joining, such as wanting to join a collective voice in the workplace, or to explore the social opportunities that membership offered.³⁴ As Helen McCarthy's work on the Federation of

Soroptimist Clubs of Great Britain and Ireland and the Women's Provisional Club demonstrates, there was also value in single-sex associations in terms of the space they offered women to develop skills connected with sociability and community.³⁵

The FWCS and NAWCS centred their campaigning around several distinct but interlocking strands. They used every opportunity to pursue their equality agenda, which in practice meant writing to officials in the Civil Service hierarchy, responding to news of questions etc asked in Parliament, consulting with sympathetic MPs, and giving evidence to, for example, the Royal Commission on the Civil Service (1929-1931).³⁶ They also organised public meetings with prominent female speakers, including to coincide with important Parliamentary debates, and joined forces with other professional women's organisations, particularly the National Union of Women Teachers, for rallies and demonstrations on equality issues. All such activities and more were documented in their monthly journal, *Opportunity*, which acted as the public face of the organisation and was clearly written in the knowledge that civil service officials and politicians would read it. It both sought to ally itself with equality feminist discussions and to expose its members to the depth and breadth of this kind of feminism and the structural inequalities affecting women's lives.³⁷

The determination to be 'women alone': the women's associations' campaigning strategy and alignment to feminism

The experiences of the FWCS and NAWCS mirrored many of the interwar discussions about feminism, women's organisations and the best way to represent women's interests. Like many other organisations allying themselves with the equality strand of feminism, they envisaged feminism and women's single-sex activism as a temporary stage on the journey through which equality would inevitably be realised. They believed that whilst women remained unequal to men in the Civil Service, it would be detrimental to join a mixed organisation as women's interests would be subsumed by a male-dominated organisation. In 1913, for example, discussions had arisen about joining a mixed sex organisation. This in turn had partially prompted the creation of the FWCS because 'women could not help feeling

that at present...their interests [would] not [be] safeguarded so closely as they would be by a Federation of their own.³⁸ In 1914 the APOWC similarly decided not to join the proposed Post Office amalgamated society.³⁹ Three years later, the FWCS withdrew from the alliance with the Civil Service Federation in order to pursue their equality campaign 'untrammelled by the considerations of expediency.'⁴⁰ Effectively, equality for women was a campaign item which was continually dropped when mixed-sex organisations negotiated their list of demands with the Civil Service hierarchy.⁴¹ In 1920 the Federation left the Civil Service Alliance after the Alliance compromised on the question of equal pay. Federation representatives found that they were 'swamped by the men and could not retain our individuality as women.'⁴² It was stated in *Association Notes* that 'we have learnt our lesson, which is, that until we have equality we must not seek co-operation. We shall be grateful to those of our male colleagues who will help us in the future as they have helped us in the past, but we cannot work in the same harness until we can pull an equal weight.'⁴³

The issue of remaining 'women alone' had further ramifications after 1919. Thereafter, the Civil Service instituted Whitley Councils as the employer-employee negotiation machinery in an attempt to avoid the need for arbitration in staff disputes.⁴⁴ There were a limited number of staff seats on the Council and by choosing not to ally with one of the larger bodies of combined unions, the FWCS and later the NAWCS did not have representation on the National Council that helped to shape employment policy for the Civil Service as a whole. However, they were represented on the equivalent councils within individual departments, and for the all-important issue of equal pay Whitley representation was in fact moot because the Treasury refused to have this issue discussed by the Councils at all.⁴⁵ Whilst Whitley representation might have theoretically meant further progress on the issues of the marriage bar and vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the service, this seems unlikely given the stance of other organisations on these issues as discussed in this article and elsewhere.⁴⁶ Indeed, such issues remained low on the priority list of the Whitley Council (much as the FWCS had predicted they would) and it was really pressure from the 1929-

1931 Royal Commission on the Civil Service, to which the FWCS among many other bodies gave evidence, which brought about any improvement in women's situation.⁴⁷ By being outside the Whitley structure and thus free to pursue their own agenda and to campaign in a wide array of fora outside the service, the FWCS/NAWCS arguably had more of an impact in publicising the subordination women civil servants faced in the workplace.

The FWCS/NAWCS achieved this impact through their alliances with like-minded organisations and associations for women professionals. As such, equality feminist-aligned groups such as the London and National Society for Women's Service (LNSWS), the Open Door Council, the Six Point Group, the NUSEC (pre-1927) and the Consultative Committee of Women's Organisations were natural allies. The sense of community was evident in the mutual participation in demonstrations and general meetings over issues such as equal pay, and the marriage bar. The FWCS and later the NAWCS regularly featured in interwar feminist press titles such as *The Vote*, *The Common Cause*, and *Time and Tide*.⁴⁸ The LNSWS gave evidence to the 1929-1931 Royal Commission on the Civil Service, and one of Six Point Group's eponymous points was equality of opportunity in the Civil Service.

However, the decision to remain 'women alone' would have increasingly significant consequences as the 1930s wore on.⁴⁹ The fact that the FWCS/NAWCS were associations composed entirely of women meant that they were accused regularly of inciting a 'sex war' or creating 'sex antagonism'. These phrases had peppered pre-war and interwar newspaper articles, asking whether women had in fact now sufficiently advanced in public life, or suggesting that explicit feminist activism was outdated and that women should be grateful for the position they had attained and stop pushing for more.⁵⁰ Even at the height of the suffrage movement in 1911 the APOWC had had to address this, acutely aware of the depths of sex discrimination in society:

'...it is not our striving for equal pay and the removal of artificial handicaps where women are concerned that is bringing on a sex warfare. That state of warfare exists already wherever a woman resents the assumption of a man that his sex alone

renders him superior to every woman. Equality of reward, if coming too late to cure the present generation, would at least save the children, both girls and boys, from growing up with distorted views of their relative value as human beings.⁵¹

Like other explicitly feminist organisations in this period, the FWCS/NAWCS had to fight the misperceptions of feminism in the interwar years and remind critics that having the vote, representation in Parliament and some other legal equalities with men did not preclude the need for feminism or single-sex associations in this period. Feminist organisations also had to guard against a backlash in wider society.⁵² The FWCS and NAWCS, amongst other women's organisations, using the term 'feminism without caveat and with its connotations of absolute equality with men therefore especially stood out.

However, it is not clear how comfortable younger NAWCS members, in particular, were with the overtly and uncompromisingly feminist stance as the 1930s wore on. Membership began to decline and the ramifications of the decision to remain 'women alone' would be played out throughout the rest of the organisation's existence. If there was a rift amongst the membership, all indicators recoverable from available records point to a generational shift in thinking about feminism.

The question of the perceptions of feminism among younger women in the 1930s is starting to emerge in the work of a number of historians. Maria DiCenzo has, for example, shown how women who came of age after the suffrage campaigns were more likely to take women's equal political rights for granted and to see feminism as less relevant to them, perhaps believing the argument put forward every so often by politicians and the media that men and women were in fact now equal in society,⁵³ whereas they still had, as Eleanor Rathbone argued, to move from legal to real equality.⁵⁴ Helen McCarthy's study of professional women's clubs in this period suggests that club members were reluctant to use the term 'feminist' because of the connotations it carried about representing only women's interests.⁵⁵ Adrian Bingham's analysis of the interwar popular press has demonstrated how newspapers over-represented women's gains post-1918 and found it harder to discuss the longer-standing and more

complex structural issues which meant that they remained unequal in many spheres. As a result, feminists and feminism were popularly perceived as out-dated, old-fashioned and often as being deliberately confrontational.⁵⁶ Indeed, as Catherine Clay's recent work has shown, although *Time and Tide* did not lose its commitment to feminist principles, it also became wary by the later 1930s of discussing in too much depth the societies that were focused on egalitarian feminist principles because it 'must tend to perpetuate in the mind of the younger generation a picture of women as a class apart and inferior, always knocking outside the door, never doing, but always claiming the right to do.'⁵⁷ Alison Oram and Kaarin Michaelsen have noted with regard to women teachers and women doctors respectively that the late 1920s seemed to show the beginnings of a shift among younger members who wondered whether the best way to achieve equality with their male colleagues was to unite with them.⁵⁸ Certainly, discussions about the falling sales of the NAWCS' journal *Opportunity* in the early-mid 1930s revealed that some members were reluctant to pay for a journal that was concerned with feminism, women's politics and women in public life, suggesting that they may have had less of an interest in feminism, or at least that they wanted to spend funds and leisure time reading about other topics.⁵⁹ It is also possible that they were embracing wider political and international concerns and joining organisations such as the League of Nations Union (of which there was regular coverage in *Opportunity* in the 1930s) though it is not possible to ascertain this definitively.

Alongside these factors, and symptomatic of a number of them, was the growth and development of the mixed-sex but male-dominated Civil Service Clerical Association (CSCA), which from 1921 admitted women. For two brief moments in the 1920s the FWCS considered merging but again, it was policy differences and the question of adequate representation of women's interests that killed the possibility. The CSCA did not see the segregation of different types of work by sex as problematic or detrimental to women, and for much of the interwar period it and a majority of its membership also supported the marriage bar – positions which the FWCS leadership found untenable.⁶⁰ By the early 1930s, formal relations between the

FWCS and CSCA had worsened and, when the Federation transformed into the NAWCS, the CSCA declared that the APOWC had been inactive and (using a variation of the common phrase) that it and the NAWCS were organisations 'based on sex suspicion'.⁶¹ This set the tone between the two organisations for much of the period. Thereafter, as Vance Humphries has noted, the CSCA determined to recruit as many of the NAWCS' members as possible.⁶² Although membership data is not detailed enough to say categorically that NAWCS' members were leaving the organisation and joining the CSCA, the correlation between the figures, and some anecdotal evidence, suggests that this accounts for a considerable amount of the changing fortunes in membership. Whereas the proportion of women members in the GPO – for which data has best survived – was impressively high until the early 1920s, with 75% being members in 1912 and 80% in 1921,⁶³ proportions thereafter declined. By 1932, the Association represented only 17.4% of its possible membership amongst Post Office staff, compared to the CSCA's 42%.⁶⁴ Part of the NAWCS' decline was self-inflicted: at the Annual General Meeting of 1925, the Federation passed a motion allowing writing assistants - of which there were several thousand across the civil service - to join, having previously been disparaging about them and effectively closing ranks against them. Thus, though membership was open to writing assistants thereafter, unsurprisingly very few of them took this up and the organisation paid the price for having blamed writing assistants rather than the institution that created them for, as they saw it, devaluing women's work.⁶⁵ This is reflected in the figures above.

The declining pattern of membership continued throughout the 1930s: although membership of the NAWCS among Post Office women clerks remained around 30%, the proportions of writing assistants remained dire at less than 5% in many years.⁶⁶ In addition, the FWCS/NAWCS remained very much metropolitan organisations, representing mostly London-based staff and, more exceptionally, staff in Edinburgh. The CSCA, by contrast, had much stronger finances and provincial organisation, which would have considerably increased its membership tally among Civil Service departments with a substantial provincial clerical staff.⁶⁷

This aided the CSCA's publicity about claiming to be the more significant organisation and also gave the CSCA enhanced representation rights for the grades it and the FWCS/NAWCS represented – which in turn of course all contributed to the different perceptions of each organisation. The NAWCS also attempted to institute a youth section to encourage new membership amongst younger women clerks – which again attests to a generational divide in membership - but unlike some other women's organisations, it does not appear to have had success with this.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the NAWCS listed retirements as a reason for declining membership in 1938, suggesting reliance on older members as opposed to new recruits.⁶⁹

In addition to the generational issues, there may also have been the perceived issue of momentum. Although the NAWCS and the CSCA campaigned on many of the same issues – by the late 1930s, they both now opposed the marriage bar, for example - and sometimes employed the same campaigning strategies, it was perhaps the weight of the CSCA's propaganda, its numbers and its resultant perceived momentum that made it the more attractive option. The CSCA was not only represented on the National Whitley Council but also, by virtue of its size, was at the forefront of the Council's negotiations, and it could portray itself as such. Although the NAWCS campaigning alongside other like-minded organisations made important contributions, it was widely propagated by mixed-sex associations that the women's organisations were less capable of affecting policy because of their absence from the National Whitley Council. In particular the CSCA argued that there was no need for a separate women's organisation when the CSCA itself could do all of the required work.⁷⁰ This was, of course, a question of perspective and suggests a willingness to dismiss the potential contributions of the feminist movement in a way that those of the wider trade union movement would not have been dismissed.⁷¹ It is clear that the NAWCS remained visible within the Civil Service hierarchy and in wider feminist circles, continuing, for example, to campaign for equal pay and to protest against the institution of a female-only clerical assistant grade in the late 1930s on the grounds that it would further cheapen women's work.⁷²

There is evidence, too, that some members of the NAWCS started to see the CSCA's point of view on the question of mixed-sex associations, though how much of this was to do with CSCA propaganda and its claiming victories which were jointly achieved, and how much with an interwar generational shift against single-sex associations, is difficult to say. It is possible that the post-suffrage generation was less concerned about identifying first and foremost by gender. Given that the leadership had to reassure members in 1932 that any war they were waging was against 'prejudice, misunderstanding and mistaken ideas' we might infer that some women had come to internalise the notion of the NAWCS supposedly working to create a 'sex war'.⁷³ It is also possible, as one NAWCS commentator suggested, that members had also internalised their inferior position in the service compared to men. Women's downtrodden conditions, compared to men's, had existed for so long in the Civil Service and had become such a part of the woman civil servant's existence, the commentator argued, that they were either resignedly accepted or women no longer believed they could be changed, meaning in turn that they were less engaged with the organisation.⁷⁴

The crunch came in the late 1930s. After a 1937 amalgamation offer from the CSCA was rejected,⁷⁵ a number of women - including some branch officers- left the NAWCS. There were painful debates over the future direction and existence of the organisation at NAWCS meetings and also in print in the pages of *Opportunity* and *Red Tape*, the magazine of the CSCA. The Chairman [sic] of the GPO's Accountant General's Department branch of the NAWCS resigned because she could not agree with her branch on the representation of women's views: she reported wanting a definite policy rather than having members drift one-by-one to the CSCA.⁷⁶ Other members still saw the importance of single-sex organisations in fighting for equality. As one NAWCS member wrote, 'I shall no doubt be dubbed an "old fashioned feminist" but the gibe will not disturb me. ... Believing that the ideal of equality is true, I am encouraged rather than deterred by the knowledge that its truth has already been recognised by women (and men) of an earlier generation.'⁷⁷ By contrast, Miss B. Peacock, a Post Office Savings Bank member who left the NAWCS and joined the CSCA, argued that

'the time is ripe to leave past animosities, and to work shoulder to shoulder with men'. She put the NAWCS' declining membership down to the 'difficult[y]...[of] recruit[ing] people to a feminist movement which is now out of date.'⁷⁸ More pointedly, Clare Gunning, another former NAWCS member, wrote that

'The NAWCS is becoming less and less a Service organisation and more and more a "feminist" movement, and I for one am not satisfied to allow the sub-clerical women to be sacrificed on the altar of "feminism" – whatever that, in these enlightened days, may mean.'⁷⁹

These opinions attested to a clear and growing split between some members in their approaches to equality and the tactics to achieve this, and to changing generational understandings of feminism or its relevance.

Eventually, at the 1937 meeting, NAWCS branch delegates voted 78 to 32 in favour of a resolution to keep the NAWCS in existence, though the record of this decision does not provide sufficient information to determine anything further about voting patterns across the organisation. The resolution stated that

'...since the position of women in the Civil Service has not yet been established on a firm and equal footing with men, it is necessary to retain in being the National Association of Women Civil Servants as a separate entity in order that there may be a body of women with complete freedom to voice their opinions and to safeguard their interests in the Service.'⁸⁰

In imagery and reasoning, the NAWCS' argument echoed its stance from the 1920s. Its unwavering belief in the importance of single sex organisations as a means to achieve its goals defined it in the interwar years and beyond, even if the stance itself clearly reduced the number of members. For the leadership and a proportion of members, the opportunity to organise as 'women alone' and not have to risk compromising or subsuming their interests to those of others was paramount. As an October 1937 article in *Opportunity* put it, 'a man's idea of fair dealing towards women often differs profoundly from the women's claim for absolute equality'.⁸¹

By 1939, it was more than clear that the NAWCS was in trouble. In June, the executive held an advisory conference of branch leaders to consider its future. Both amalgamation with a mixed association and admitting male members were ruled out. The conference discussed fundraising for new organisers to help increase membership, but appears not to have made a firm decision on the issue. The gravity of the situation was emphasised by the declaration that '[t]he NAWCS cannot die while its voluntary officials are of the calibre of those attending the Special Conference.'⁸² However, by 1940, the Treasury took away the NAWCS' rights to represent women clerks in the Post Office on account of its low membership, the organisation having lost representation rights in other departments in the years immediately preceding.⁸³ This must have been a bitter pill for the NAWCS to swallow, given the significance of the Post Office in the association's history. It was now only able to represent individual women's grievances; collective bargaining rights belonged to the CSCA.

'[I]f present discussions [of equal pay] achieve the intended aim, it will surely be the death-knell for the women's associations'⁸⁴

Of necessity, with its representation rights lost, the NAWCS took on a different character after 1940 – although it continued to argue unsuccessfully with the Treasury that its membership composition meant it should be included in discussions about issues which collectively affected women civil servants regardless of their job grade, thus clearly attempting to highlight that gender was integral to the experience of women in the Civil Service.⁸⁵

After the outbreak of the Second World War, the NAWCS' position as a pressure group came to the fore. In 1944, it participated in the formation of the Equal Pay Campaign Committee (EPCC) with numerous other professional women's organisations and women MPs.⁸⁶ Thus, it continued its activities as part of the wider women's movement and remained committed to removing inequalities affecting women civil servants. When equal pay was eventually granted to women civil servants in 1954, partly as a result of the pressure of the EPCC's campaign, the NAWCS was forced to stand on the sidelines during the drafting of the agreement for implementation by 1961. Other Civil Service staff organisations had repeatedly refused to co-opt it onto the Whitley Committee discussing equal pay, quite possibly because of historic animosity between the NAWCS and the CSCA.⁸⁷ Gradual implementation of equal pay was a great disappointment to the NAWCS, who argued that equality was long overdue and now that many of those who had fought the hardest for equal pay were retired or near retirement, full equality should be granted forthwith.⁸⁸ Several other organisations agreed with the NAWCS on this point, but determined that persisting with the demand for full equality would jeopardise the whole agreement. Furthermore, no legal solution could be found to allow retired women civil servants to receive equal pensions as though they had once received equal pay.⁸⁹

With the excitement about much-hoped-for equal pay turning to disappointment and anticlimax, the NAWCS voted at its Annual General Meeting in 1958 to dissolve in March the following year because 'the main reasons for the existence of an association for women civil servants have disappeared'.⁹⁰ It was a quiet end to an association which had begun with such vigour. As far back as the early 1920s, the Federation had envisaged a stage at which women's associations might be combined with men's to form one association for the clerical and related grades, once there was 'no differentiation as regards sex throughout the service.'⁹¹ Now that there was no marriage bar, and at least theoretically greater equality of opportunity and equal pay for women across several Civil Service grades, the 'no difference' point was deemed reached. Notably, though, the NAWCS folded rather than merging with another

organisation in keeping with its lifelong separatist stance. That the association decided to fold after the passage of the equal pay agreement was poignant: it had met its original objectives but now felt it did not have a place in Civil Service associational culture. It is not clear how many of the members joined other organisations.

The NAWCS may have felt that its *raison d'être* was over, but of course tangible equality was far from evident, either in the Civil Service or elsewhere.⁹² As Elizabeth Brimelow documents, in 1979 Women in the Civil Service (WICS) was formed as a specific pressure group. It was 'open to all women civil servants [and] it aim[ed] to achieve effective equality of opportunity for women in the service'⁹³ which was a nod to the various ways in which women remained largely in the lower echelons of the service despite theoretical guarantees about equal opportunity. A generation after the disbanding of the NAWCS, it remains unclear how much of an institutional memory there was of earlier women's activism.

Conclusion

Representing women on the lower rungs of the Civil Service and aiming to bring about equality for them, the APOWC, FWCS and NAWCS were the loudest voice for the amelioration of women's employment rights in the Civil Service in the early-mid twentieth century. This voice was made possible by their determination to remain 'women alone', meaning that they did not have to toe a Civil Service associational line. Their presence outside of the numerically-significant and male-dominated Civil Service organisations meant that they remained a pressure group and focussed attention on women's causes which otherwise would have been considerably less prominent within a Civil Service context. In other ways, of course, the APOWC, FWCS and NAWCS were rarely alone: by collaborating with other professional women's organisations they attained further visibility and intellectual, moral and practical support with their campaigns. Further case studies of the relationships

between white collar and professional women's organisations in this period would expand this picture and our understanding of these networks.

The case study presented in this article gets to the heart of some of the most salient issues affecting numerous overtly feminist organisations in this period. By positioning themselves very visibly as women in the workplace who had very stark equality goals, and by refusing on numerous occasions to work with male-dominated organisations for fear of losing their autonomy, the FWCS and NAWCS exposed themselves to marginalisation, hostility and ultimately a fight for membership which eventually cost them representation rights and therefore some of their *raison d'être*. Their experiences highlight some of the nuances and tensions that feminism and women's activism had to contend with in this period, as well as reactions to perceptions of feminism. The story of the FWCS and NAWCS in the interwar years and beyond is one of a feminist organisation attempting to weather the storms of changing perceptions of feminism, the effect of changing generations and the trend of organisations in the labour movement to become mixed-sex rather than remaining single sex. The story of its changing fortunes presents a microcosm of some of the evolving understandings of feminism and a sense of the importance some women still attached to women-led, explicitly feminist campaigns to bring about change to women's working conditions.

Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank the AHRC for financial support for some of the research on which this article is based. Many thanks also to Pat Thane, Corinna Peniston-Bird and Alexandra Warwick who each offered detailed and helpful feedback on earlier versions of this article, and to the two anonymous peer reviewers for their insights and comments.

¹ For discussions of women doctors' and women teachers' uses of feminism, see Kaarin Michaelsen (2005) ' "Union is Strength": The Medical Women's Federation and the Politics of Professionalism, 1917-30' in Cowman and Jackson (eds.) *Women and Work Culture: Britain c.1850 – 1950*, (Aldershot: Ashgate); Alison Oram (1996) *Women Teachers and Feminist Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); Hilda Kean and Alison Oram (1990) 'Men Must Be Educated and Women Must Do It', *The National Federation (later Union) of Women Teachers and Contemporary Feminism, 1910-30*, *Gender and Education*, vol.2, no2., pp. 147-168

² Women's Library @ LSE [hereafter WL], 6/APC/228-4 'APOWC: Letters and Papers 1908-1924', letter from Miss P. Blanche Mills to Miss Smyth, 27th May 1924.

³ *Association Notes*, October 1913, p.10; October 1919, p.233.

⁴ *Opportunity*, special issue for the Royal Commission on the Civil Service, March 1930, p.12.

⁵ The Association of Women Clerks & Secretaries, in some ways more radical than the APOWC/FWCS/NAWCS, remains under-researched. For a discussion of some of their campaigns and personnel, see Anne Godwin, 'Early Years in the Trade Unions' in Lucy Middleton (ed.), (1977), *Women in the Labour Movement*, (London: Croom Helm)

⁶ For an account of the APOWC's, FWCS' and NAWCS' activism on the issues of unequal opportunity, unequal pay and the marriage bar, see Helen Glew (2016) *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation: women's work in the Civil Service and the London County Council, 1900-55* (Manchester: Manchester University Press) passim.

⁷ Eric Wigham (1980) *From Humble Petition to Militant Action: A History of the Civil and Public Services Association, 1903-1978*, (London: Civil and Public Services Association), p.8.

⁸ The Postal Museum [hereafter TPM], POST 115/1149, *Association Notes*, October 1911, p.106

⁹ TPM, POST 30/3889C, 'Writing Assistants: Service Conditions', Association of Post Office Women Clerks, Minutes of Evidence given before The Select Committee on Post Office Servants, 1913, (Holt Committee), p.5

¹⁰ Meta Zimmeck (1992), 'Marry in Haste, Repent at Leisure: Women, Bureaucracy and the Post Office, 1870-1920' in Mike Savage and Anne Witz (eds.) *Gender and Bureaucracy*, (Oxford; Cambridge, M.A, Blackwell Publishers), p.79. 'Amazon' or 'Amazonian' was a pejorative epithet often applied to feminist women. See, for example, Penny Summerfield ' "Our Amazonian Colleague": Edith Summerskill's problematic reputation' in Richard Toye and Julie Gottlieb (eds.) (2005) *Making Reputations: Power, Persuasion and the Individual in Modern British Politics* (London: I B Tauris), p.136.

¹¹ A similar point is made in Sue Innes (2004) 'Constructing Women's Citizenship in the Interwar Period: the Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association', *Women's History Review*, vol.13, no.4, p.625.

¹² For Minnie Cale, see Jill Liddington (2014) *Vanishing for the Vote: Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the Census*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p.292. Information cross-referenced with 1939 Register and 1881 census, available at findmypast.co.uk. I am also grateful to Elizabeth Crawford for her assistance with this. For the suffrage procession, see *The Vote* 3 June 1911 and 24 June 1911.

¹³ *The Common Cause*, July 15, 1909, p.183. Millicent Murby, *The Common Sense of the Woman Question* (London: The New Age Press, 1908). See also the list of committee members in issues of *Association Notes*, 1907-1908.

¹⁴ Louise Todd, 'Suffragette Florence Feek', *Postal Museum Blog*, <https://www.postalmuseum.org/blog/suffragette-florence-feek/>, accessed 4 January 2019. Feek served as a representative of the Money Order Department on the APOWC committee between 1909 and 1913.

¹⁵ Kean and Oram (1990) 'Men Must Be Educated and Women Must Do It', p.148.

¹⁶ *Association Notes*, 1901-1920, *passim*.

¹⁷ WL, 6NCS, Box FL423, Annual Reports for the Association of Post Office Women Clerks, 1902-1932. Alan Clinton (1984) *Post Office Workers: A Trade Union and Social History*, (London; Boston: Allen and Unwin), appendix no. 25, p.647

¹⁸ Staff list obtained from WL, 6/APC/228-4 'APOWC: Letters and Papers 1908-1924' and cross-referenced with the 1901 and 1911 censuses available at findmypast.co.uk.

¹⁹ See, for example, Clinton (1984); Henry Parris, (1973), *Staff Relations in the Civil Service: Fifty Years of Whitleyism*, (London: Allen & Unwin). The exceptions to this are Meta Zimmeck, 'Jobs for the Girls: The Expansion of Clerical Work for Women, 1850-1914' in Angela V. John, (ed.) *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England, 1800-1918*, (Oxford; New York, N.Y.: Basil Blackwell, 1986) and Meta Zimmeck (1992) and Glew (2016).

²⁰ Glew (2016), 146-173 and Helen Glew (2017) 'Regulating marriage: Gender, the Public Service, the Second World War and Reconstruction in Britain and Canada' in Corinna Peniston-Bird and Emma Vickers (eds.) *Gender and the Second World War: Lessons of War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 88-100.

²¹ Betty Vance Humphries (1958) *Clerical Unions in the Civil Service*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p.137; pp.153-154. Holcombe bases her account largely on Humphries': see Lee Holcombe (1973) *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales, 1850-1914*, (Newton Abbot, South Devon: David & Charles) p.192. Similarly, Godwin marks both the AWCS and the CSCA as significant in women's civil service unionism but neglects to mention the APOWC and its successors. Godwin, 'Early Years in the Trade Unions' pp.106-107.

²² Glew (2016) *passim*.

²³ Other recent work on women's early participation in formal politics post-1918 also examines the dimension of single-sex organising. See, for example, June Purvis (2016) 'The Women's Party of Great Britain (1917-1919): a forgotten episode in British women's political history', *Women's History Review*, vol. 25, no.4, p.640.

²⁴ Sarah Boston (1987) *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart); Pamela M. Graves (1994) *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918-1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

²⁵ Cheryl Law (1997) *Suffrage and Power: The Women's Movement, 1918-1928*, (London: I B Tauris); Oram (1996); Michaelsen (2005); Pat Thane (2003) 'What difference did the vote make? Women in

public and private life in Britain since 1918', *Historical Research*, lxxvi, (2003), pp.268-285; Caitriona Beaumont (2015) *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

²⁶ On this, see in particular Caitriona Beaumont (2000) 'Citizens not feminists: the boundary negotiated between citizenship and feminism by mainstream women's organisations in England, 1928-1939', *Women's History Review*, vol.9, no.2, pp.411-429.

²⁷ *Opportunity*, March 1940, p.38.

²⁸ *Opportunity*, January 1921, p.8

²⁹ See, for example, WL, 6/JCS, Box FL339, Records of the Joint Committee on Women in the Civil Service, file 6/JCS/A1.

³⁰ Ray Strachey (1928) *The Cause* (London, Virago, 1978), p.374.

³¹ See Meta Zimmeck, (1988) "'Get Out and Get Under": The Impact of Demobilisation on the Civil Service, 1918-1932' in G. Anderson, *The White-blouse Revolution: Female Office Workers since 1870*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press) pp.88-120; Zimmeck (1984) "'Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919-1939' *The Historical Journal*, vol. 27, no. 4, pp.901-924.

³² Glew (2016) *passim*.

³³ Sheila Jeffreys (1985) *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930*, (London, Pandora); Oram (1996).

³⁴ For a sense of the social activities available to members, see *Opportunity* and the FWCS/NAWCS annual reports.

³⁵ Helen McCarthy (2008) 'Service clubs, citizenship and equality: gender relations and middle-class associations in Britain between the wars' *Historical Research*, vol.81, no.213, p.542.

³⁶ For more on the collaboration between women civil servants and women MPs, see Helen Glew (2020) 'In a minority in male spaces: the networks, relationships and collaborations between women MPs and women civil servants, 1919-1955' *Open Library of the Humanities* vol.6, no.2.

³⁷ For a further discussion of this, see Helen Glew (2018) 'Providing and Taking the *Opportunity*: Women Civil Servants and Feminist Periodical Culture in Interwar Britain' in Catherine Clay, Maria DiCenzo, Barbara Green and Fiona Hackney (eds.) *Women's Periodical and Print Culture in Britain, 1918-1939: The Interwar Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

³⁸ *Association Notes*, July 1913, p. 180

³⁹ WL, FL 228, APOWC executive committee minutes, 27 January 1914

⁴⁰ *Opportunity*, March 1921, p.3

⁴¹ Glew (2016) p.40; pp.114-115;

⁴² *Opportunity*, Annual Report of the FWCS, Supplement to *Opportunity*, June 1922, p.v

⁴³ *Association Notes*, July 1920, p.257

⁴⁴ Parris (1973).

⁴⁵ Glew (2016), p.112.

⁴⁶ Glew (2016), pp.40-53.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of this, see Glew (2016), *passim*.

⁴⁸ See, for example, *The Vote*, 'Women Civil Servants', October 17, 1930, p.4; *The Vote*, Editorial, July 24, 1924, p.4; *Woman's Leader and Common Cause*, 'Federation of Women Civil Servants – Public Meeting', *Woman's Leader and Common Cause* 'Equal Pay in the Civil Service,' July 12, 1929, p.3; *Time and Tide*, 'Civil Service Marriage Bar', May 20, 1927; *Time and Tide*, 'Civil Service Marriage Bar', May 27, 1927.

⁴⁹ Kean and Oram (1990); Michaelsen (2005); Ellen Jordan (1999) *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain*, Routledge Research in Gender and History, (London and New York: Routledge). For the ethos of the Women's Trade Union League regarding single or mixed organisation, see Sally Alexander, (1994), 'Bringing Women into Line with Men: The Women's Trade Union League, 1874-1921', in Alexander (ed.), *Becoming a Woman*, (London: Virago), p.62; p.67

⁵⁰ See, for example, the 'Is there a sex war?' debate that ran across multiple editions of the *Daily Mail* in February 1921; 'Why Men Leave Home' *The Evening Telegraph and Post* (Dundee) 15 February 1921; 'NO Sex War' *The Western Times* (Exeter) 7 June 1922; 'Woman has seized her chance' *Daily Mail* 6 August 1930; '10 girls defy 500 Men', *Daily Mail*, 6 April 1939. For a further discussion of the use of the terms 'sex war' and 'sex antagonism', see Jane Eldridge Miller (1994) *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel*, (London: Virago), p.43 and Samantha Clements (2008) 'Feminism, citizenship and social activity: the role and importance of local women's organisations, Nottingham 1918-1969' PhD thesis, University of Nottingham.

⁵¹ *Association Notes*, January 1911, p.84. See also *Opportunity*, December 1931, p.200.

⁵² See also Claire Eustance and Maria DiCenzo, (2018) ' "Many More Worlds to Conquer": The Feminist Press Beyond Suffrage' in Cathy Clay et.al. (eds.) *Women's Periodical and Print Culture in Britain, 1918-1939: The interwar period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p.327.

⁵³ DiCenzo (2014) "'Our Freedom and its results": measuring progress in the aftermath of suffrage' *Women's History Review*, vol.23, no.3, p. 431.

⁵⁴ Rathbone as paraphrased in Innes (2004), p.626.

⁵⁵ McCarthy (2008) p.545.

⁵⁶ Adrian Bingham, 'Enfranchisement, Feminism and the Modern Woman: Debates in the British Popular Press, 1918-1939', in Julie V Gottlieb and Richard Toyne (eds.), (2013) *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender and Politics in Britain, 1918-1945*, (Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave MacMillan), pp.99-101.

⁵⁷ *Time and Tide* October 1937, as quoted in Catherine Clay (2018) *Time and Tide: The Feminist and Cultural Politics of a Modern Magazine*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p.243.

⁵⁸ Oram (1996) p.196-197; Michaelsen, (2005), p.171

⁵⁹ For a fuller discussion of this, and *Opportunity* more widely, see Glew (2018) pp.368-371.

⁶⁰ Humphries (1958), p.137. MRC, MSS.415/164-165. Minutes of Women Clerical Officers' Association executive committee meeting, 9 March 1922 and 5 May 1922, 14 November 1924. MRC, MSS.415/164-165, CSCA annual report from 1921; CSCA Annual Report, October 1922-December 1923.

-
- ⁶¹ MRC, MSS.415/164-165, CSCA Annual Report, December 1932, Annual Report of Post Office Section.
- ⁶² Humphries (1958), p.154
- ⁶³ Clinton (1984), p.647; Computations by author using Postal Museum Archives, POST 59/147, POST 59/151 and POST 59/153, 'List of the Principal Officers in the Post Office and particulars of the Metropolitan and Provincial Establishments...'
- ⁶⁴ WL, 6NCS, Box FL423, Annual Reports for the Association of Post Office Women Clerks, 1902-1932.; MSS.415/164-165, Clerical Officers' Association/CSCA Annual Reports; POST 59/156-165, 'List of the Principal Officers in the Post Office and particulars of the Metropolitan and Provincial Establishments,' 1924-1933
- ⁶⁵ *Opportunity*, D. Elizabeth Evans, 'That Knotty Problem of the Writing Assistant Grade', 1925, p.74; *Opportunity*, The Federation of Women Civil Servants. Report for Year Ending 31 March 1925, p.3; *Red Tape*, Correspondence, letter from M. Lawrie of the APOWC, 1929, p.294; *Red Tape*, CSCA women's notes, December 1922, p.84
- ⁶⁶ POST 122/10863, CSCA Official Recognition, 'Figures of Membership in earlier years as furnished in response to the usual Spring enquiry' and 'Latest figures of membership as furnished..' POST 59/166 – 170, 'List of the Principal Officers in the Post Office and particulars of the Metropolitan and Provincial Establishments'.
- ⁶⁷ POST 122/10863, CSCA (Civil Service Clerical Association) Official Recognition: Claim for exclusive recognition in respect of Clerical Officers, document entitled 'History', n.d.
- ⁶⁸ *Opportunity*, October 1937, p.179. For a discussion of a very successful youth section of a women's organisation, see Jane W Grant (2016) *In the Steps of Exceptional Women: The Story of the Fawcett Society 1866-2016* (London: Francis Boutle Publishers), pp. 83-4.
- ⁶⁹ WL, 6NCS/1/C, NAWCS annual report 1937; NAWCS' annual report 1938, p.29
- ⁷⁰ POST 115/184, *Red Tape*, CSCA women's notes, July 1937, p.803.
- ⁷¹ The interwar years were marked by a suspicion of the women's movement by large parts of the labour movement. See, for example, Pamela Graves (1994).
- ⁷² Glew (2016) pp.49-51; pp.132-141;
- ⁷³ *Opportunity*, June 1932,
- ⁷⁴ *Opportunity*, October 1937,
- ⁷⁵ Letter reprinted in *Red Tape*, CSCA women's notes, July 1937, p.803 (letter itself dated 1 June 1937)
- ⁷⁶ *Opportunity*, AGD branch report, March 1938, p.44
- ⁷⁷ *Opportunity*, A Branch Officer, 'Why I Remain in the NAWCS', January 1938, p.6
- ⁷⁸ POST 115/185, *Red Tape*, letter from B. Peacock, 'Why a Rank and Filer Left the NAWCS', March 1938, p.446
- ⁷⁹ *Red Tape*, Clare Gunning, 'Why I left the NAWCS: A Victory of Realism over Sentiment' November 1937, p.186
- ⁸⁰ WL, 6NCS/1/C, box FL279, National Association of Women Civil Servants, 'General Report for twelve months ended 31 December 1937', p.14

-
- ⁸¹ *Opportunity*, 'The Topic of the Hour', October 1937, p.175.
- ⁸² POST 115/92, *Opportunity*, 'The NAWCS Special Conference', June 1939, p.101
- ⁸³ Humphries (1958), p.154. See also WL, 6NCS/1/C, Box FL279, NAWCS Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 1939, p.7
- ⁸⁴ The National Archives (hereafter TNA), T 215/489, 'Equal Pay: Representations by Associations and Outside Bodies', minute sheet by E L Smart, 17 June 1954
- ⁸⁵ TNA, T215/489, 'Equal pay in Civil Service: representations from TUC, staff associations and outside bodies,' memo by AJP to Miss Smart, 15 July 1954, and NAWCS letter of 10 August 1954.
- ⁸⁶ For a discussion of the EPCC and the NAWCS' involvement with the campaign, see Glew (2016) pp.146-169. For more on the EPCC more generally, see Allen Potter (1957) 'The Equal Pay Campaign Committee: a case-study of pressure group' *Political Studies*, volume 5, no.1, pp.49-64.
- ⁸⁷ TNA, T215/485, 'Equal pay in Civil Service: representations from TUC, staff associations and outside bodies'
- ⁸⁸ TNA, T 215/489, letter from NAWCS to R A Butler, 1 March 1954
- ⁸⁹ T 215/489, Memo by AJP to Treasury, 15 July 1954; letter from NAWCS, 10 August 1954; letter from NAWCS, 16 February 1955; letter from NAWCS, 9 May 1955; and T 215/490, Equal pay in Civil Service: representations from TUC, staff associations and outside bodies, letter from NAWCS, 15 July 1955. For a full discussion of the passage of equal pay in the Civil Service, see Glew (2016), pp.146-171.
- ⁹⁰ WL, 6APC, Box FL279, NAWCS Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 1958, p.3
- ⁹¹ *Opportunity*, 'The Bed Rock Principle'. A similar point was reiterated in 1938 by Miss Morris, the NAWCS acting general secretary, during discussions over whether to amalgamate with the CSCA. See POST 115/92, *Opportunity*, Branch Meetings. GPO: AGD, March 1938, p.44.
- ⁹² E. Brimelow, (1981) 'Women in the Civil Service', *Public Administration*, vol. LIX, pp. 313-335; Hans-Ulrich Derlien and B. Guy Peters (eds.), (2008) *The State At Work: Public Sector Employment in Ten Western Countries*, (London: Edward Elgar), pp.36-37. Andrew Hede, (1995) 'Women Managers in the Civil Service: the long road towards equity in Britain', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol.61, no.4, pp, 587-600. Council of Civil Service Unions, (1985), *Equal Opportunities for men and women in the Civil Service*, (London: Council of Civil Service Unions), p.38.
- ⁹³ Brimelow (1981) pp.333-334.